

Working better together? Case study

An integrated sustainable community strategy for
East Sussex Strategic Partnership



Cross cutting

Case study

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 **audit**
commission

Background

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- 1** Local strategic partnerships (LSPs) have a responsibility to bring together local services to deliver a shared vision for the area. But creating highly effective partnerships is difficult and LSPs must operate across a complex policy environment.
 - 2** The public sector 7S model has been used to interpret the findings from the LSP study. This model enables LSPs to understand how to bring a series of interdependent elements together to achieve their long-, medium- and shorter-term goals. The seven elements of the model are super-ordinate goals, three transformational elements and three transactional elements. The transformational elements are most important when policy problems are complex.
 - 3** An effective LSP needs to link both transformational and transactional activities to achieve its goals. The transformational elements of the model are staff and skills (including culture and leadership), style (identity and how the LSP comes across) and synergies (achieving better results collectively than working alone). The transactional elements are standards (frameworks for partnership working and quality standards), steering (using internal processes to drive change, for example through resource pooling) and systems (performance, resource and accountability).

Long-term objectives

- 4** Pride of Place, the sustainable community strategy (SCS) for East Sussex, outlines nine strategic priorities in support of the Partnership's vision 'to create places where everyone can prosper, be safe and healthy, and live in a high-quality environment.'
- 5** Cutting across all the strategic priorities is a focus on reducing inequalities and narrowing the gap, being sustainable and delivering effective services.

Transformational elements

Leadership and culture

- 6** An LSP coordinators group has been meeting regularly for eight years. The group's principal roles are to maintain communication, share information and oversee projects or carry out tasks agreed by the LSP Chairs. The group comprises the five district and borough LSP coordinators, the county LSP coordinator and assistant, as well as the County Council's local area agreement (LAA) project manager. A similar group operates for the LSP Chairs.

Meetings and joint working

- 7** The Partnership identified a need to improve engagement with communities. In response, it developed its first communication and engagement plan. One of the first areas to receive attention was the Partnership's website, which was completely redesigned and re-launched in June 2007. The website now attracts over 1,500 visits per month, three times the level achieved prior to its re-launch. In addition to the extensive consultation surrounding the new SCS, a monthly electronic bulletin, ESSP e-News, was launched in December 2007.

The benefits of joint working

- 8** Historically, each district had their own SCS, each of which ran for a different period of time and was on a different cycle of implementation, review and update. But towards the end of 2006, the idea of districts and the county collaborating to produce an integrated strategy was discussed.
- 9** A proposal was developed, outlining what an integrated strategy might look like, and taken to each LSP board for consideration. Broad agreement was reached on developing a single, integrated strategy, with the important proviso that each borough and district would retain its individual focus in the document. A project team of the LSP coordinators from East Sussex led on the development of the new integrated strategy.
- 10** The integrated strategy is seen as a starting point for achieving more concurrent community planning across East Sussex and it will start from a more synchronised point than in the past. The process has essentially built greater trust between partners and resulted in a 'feel-good' factor which may translate to stronger relationships and more collaborative working in the future.¹

¹ Progress through Partnership published a detailed case study on East Sussex's integrated Sustainable Community Strategy. The study is available to download from the Progress through Partnership website at www.seemp-staging.hants.gov.uk/ptpabout/shareknowl/

11 The Partnership has been instrumental in creating the type of networks that have enabled new projects to get off the ground. The LIFE Project is a pioneering scheme that educates youngsters about the dangers of vandalism. The project is run by the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and gives youngsters the chance to boost their self-esteem by training with real firefighters for a week. Those taking part include young offenders and victims of crime. They are recommended to LIFE by local agencies, such as the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, Sussex Police, the Youth Offending Team and schools. The project is funded by the county's crime reduction partnerships.

Transactional elements

Getting things done

12 Last year, all six LSPs in East Sussex agreed to pool a proportion of their funding from the Progress through Partnerships programme for joint initiatives. These included a Dynamics of Place workshop which fed into the development of the SCS; a conference in February 2008 attended by partners and elected members; and two joint publications. Partners are currently considering the potential for a similar approach to this year's funding.

Common frameworks for collecting and sharing performance information

13 The Partnership operates an Executive Board and an Assembly. The Executive Board provides overall strategic direction, which includes preparing and monitoring the SCS and LAA. The Assembly advises the Executive Board on local concerns, shared priorities and future action. The responsibilities of the Assembly are to assist the Executive Board to identify the most important shared priorities for improving quality of life in East Sussex.

14 The way the Partnership operates is governed by a constitution and terms of reference. The constitution defines the roles and responsibilities of the constituent partnerships and their members. The Partnership has adopted a set of principles – joined up, social inclusion, equality, openness, and service improvement delivery – to guide its actions and promote confidence in its work and activities.

Systems for understanding and influencing performance, resources and risks

15 Data and analysis of local needs is accessed through a range of partnership-based resources to inform strategic and operational planning and delivery. These include East Sussex in Figures (ESiF), a web-based resource supported in partnership with the Borough and District Councils; the East Sussex Economic Study; and CADDIE (Crime and Disorder Data Information Exchange) which allows the emergency services, local authorities and community organisations to share information to prevent and reduce fear of crime and disorder. All these resources are used to enable appropriate targeting of funding and intervention. This intelligence means that the Council's and partners' aims can be focused on the issues that research indicates are the most important to tackle.

Learning Points

Transformational learning

- A county-wide LSP Coordinators group and a similar group for LSP Chairs help maintain a good working relationship between district LSPs and the county LSP.
- A communication and engagement plan has raised the profile of the Partnership among partners, local organisations and the wider public.
- An integrated SCS, developed jointly between the districts and the county, means community planning is now much more joined-up.

Transactional learning

- Data and analysis of local needs is accessed through a range of partnership-based resources.
- District and County LSPs use partnership development funding for joint initiatives.

Questions for LSPs and their partners to consider

1. What can your LSP do to recognise the importance of both transformational and transactional aspects and their interdependence?
2. Does your LSP take a layered approach to performance and resource management?
3. Multi-tier areas: How has your LSP responded to the challenges of multi-tier working?
4. How well is the relationship between district SCS and the county SCS working?

Further information

Copies of the national report *Working Better Together? Managing local strategic partnerships* are available at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/lsp and www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk/lsp

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