

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE

21 JANUARY 2010

LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT – PARTNERSHIPS TASK GROUP FINAL REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. To present the findings and recommendations of the Local Area Agreement – Partnerships Task Group.

Background

2. Established on 2nd July 2009 the Task Group was asked to propose how scrutiny of partners could work in a Wiltshire context.
3. The Local Government Act 2000 allowed scrutiny to make recommendations to our partners, however recent legislation has extended this power further:
 - 2006 - Police and Justice Act: extended the powers of Overview and Scrutiny Committees to scrutinise police, crime and disorder issues and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs).
 - 2007 - Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act: extended the powers of Overview and Scrutiny committees towards scrutinising the targets of Local Area Agreements (LAA) and holding LAA partners to account.
4. Partners are now required to respond to scrutiny recommendations, to provide information and attend meetings as requested.

Partners Required to Co-operate with Scrutiny

The Environment Agency	Primary Care Trusts
Natural England	National Health Service Trusts
Fire and Rescue authorities	NHS Foundation Trusts
Jobcentre Plus	Joint Waste Authorities
The Health and Safety Executive	Joint Waste Disposal Authorities
The Broads Authority	Regional Development Agencies
National Park Authorities	The Learning and Skills Council
Youth Offending Teams	Sport England
Police Authorities	English Heritage
Chief Officer of Police	Arts Council
Local Probation Boards	Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

Probation Trusts and other providers of probation services	Highways Agency Authorities Others could be added by Secretary of State (by Order)
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Future legislation

5. A range of proposals, set out in the governments recent consultation document *Strengthening Local Democracy* are intended to further strengthen the role of councillors, particularly in relation to their scrutiny of public services and public spending.
6. The measures include giving local authorities a greater role in leading and coordinating services in their area, by enhancing their power to scrutinise the spending and decisions of other local service providers (e.g. utility companies) and broadening the number of bodies which can be subject to scrutiny, not just those partners signed up to LAA targets.

7. Task Group Membership:

- Cllr Roy While (Chairman),
- Cllr Desna Allen,
- Cllr Jonathon Seed,
- Cllr Jane Burton,
- Cllr Chris Caswill.

8. Meetings

Date	Witnesses
25 th September	Sharon Britton – Service Director for Performance and Risk
13 th October	Sharon Britton – Service Director for Performance and Risk Pippa Mcveigh – Head of Crime Reduction on Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
23 rd November	Derek Bishop – Local Government consultant and Centre for Public Scrutiny associate
7 th January	Agree final report

Evidence Gathered

9. In order to identify appropriate future scrutiny arrangements, the Task Group focussed initially on how the strategic partnership works in Wiltshire.

Local Agreement for Wiltshire

10. The 3 year agreement which sets out the vision for the future of the county is called the Local Agreement for Wiltshire (LAW). The partners signed up to this document have all committed to make the LAW part of their core business. The Task Group when considering the new legislation questioned whether they were empowered to review the LAW, or whether the new powers were focused towards the Local Area Agreement. After clarification from the legal department it was accepted that the

scrutiny powers were related to the latter and the targets that had been agreed within that document.

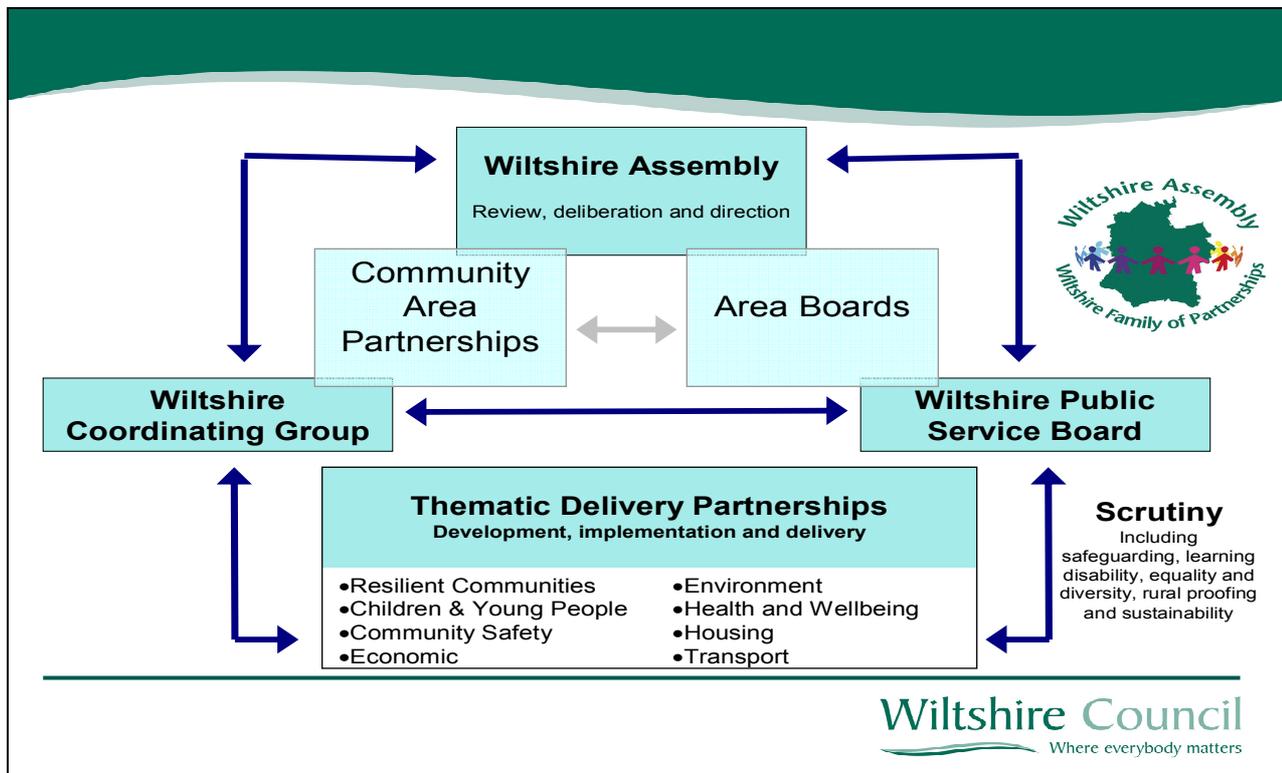
The Local Area Agreement

11. The Local Area Agreement (LAA) for Wiltshire is the delivery document for the LAW. It is a list of targets (a number of local targets, 28 targets agreed with central government and 16 mandatory targets concerned with education and children) which promote the partnership approach for service delivery. Over the next three years the actions and targets listed in the Local Area Agreement will be monitored by the partnership and groups within the family of partnerships; the delivery framework for the Local Agreement for Wiltshire. The 28 LAA targets agreed with government are listed in the Appendix.

The Wiltshire Family of Partnerships

12. The Wiltshire Family of Partnerships has been developed to tackle local issues in a joined up way and forms the Local Strategic Partnership for Wiltshire.

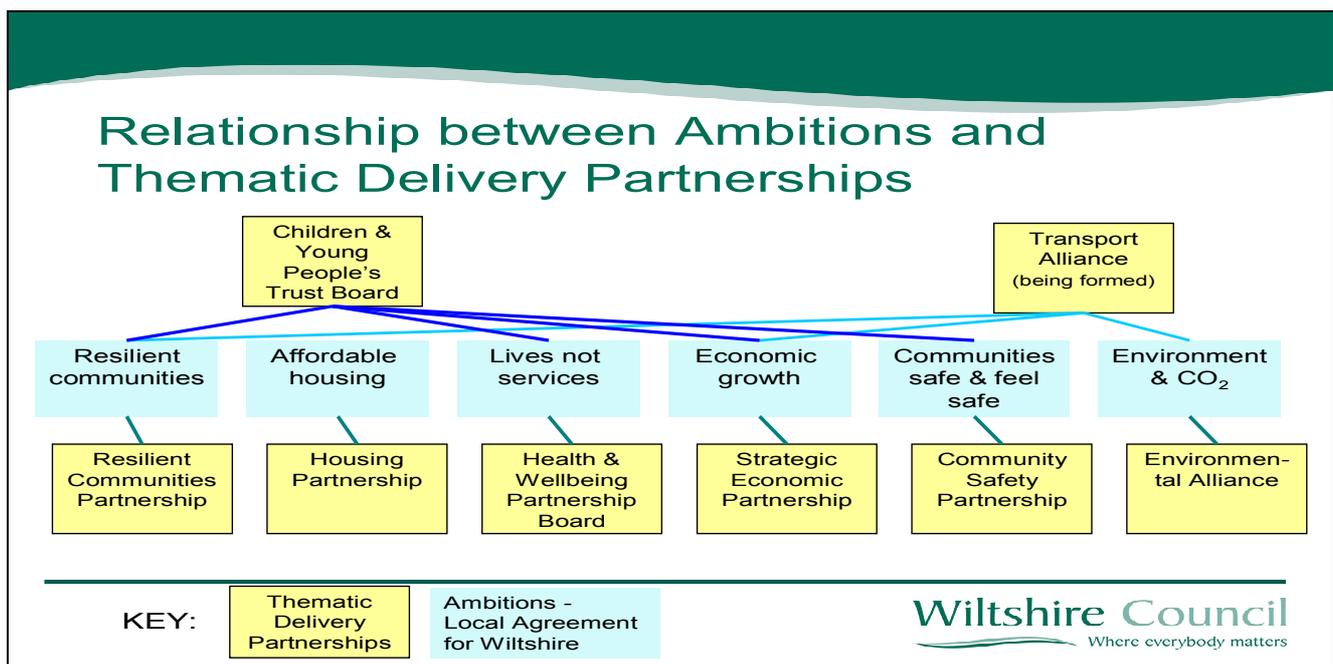
13. Changes to the way these partnerships work have been prompted by many issues, including the changing role of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs); the Government’s focus on communities and ‘place’ and the introduction of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) with its focus on performance and accountability of partnerships rather than of single organisations.



14. The Wiltshire Family of Partnerships is made up of:

- The Wiltshire Assembly (overarching Local Strategic Partnership for Wiltshire).

- The Wiltshire Public Service Board (forum for public sector corporate and financial planning).
- The Wiltshire Co-ordinating Group (Strategic Planning and Monitoring of Performance- joins up the Thematic Delivery Partnerships, Community Area Partnerships and the voluntary sector).
- Thematic Delivery Partnerships (accountable to Public Service Board for the delivery of actions and targets in the Local Agreement for Wiltshire. The Task group explored this relationship by reviewing how one of the delivery partnerships worked i.e. Community safety Partnership).



Community Safety Partnership

15. The Task Group gathered evidence on the role of the Wiltshire Community Safety Partnership (WCSP) which includes members from Wiltshire Police, Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, Wiltshire Police Authority, the Probation service, the Youth Offending Team, NHS Wiltshire and Wiltshire Council.
16. The primary purpose of the Community Safety Partnership in the short term is to ensure the actions within Local Agreement for Wiltshire (LAW) are achieved. Longer term it will aim to carry forward other community safety issues across the county.
17. The Task Group recognised that Community safety requires a creative and co-operative approach that draws in other services and agencies – from licensing, to activities for teenagers, to planning and housing – but also engages the community at large: businesses, faith groups, local charities etc.
18. Priority actions for the Community Safety Partnership within the Local Agreement for Wiltshire are to:

- Work with communities to provide re-assurance, improve neighbourhoods, and increase feelings of community safety
- Reduce re-offending by joining up services such as housing, education and health.
- Tackle domestic violence.
- Reduce alcohol related crime and harm.
- Reduce the number of road traffic accidents in Wiltshire.

Scrutiny of the Local Agreement for Wiltshire and the Local Strategic Partnership

19. In addition to scrutiny of Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets and member involvement in the development of the LAA the Task Group also identified a role for Overview & Scrutiny in looking at both the effectiveness of the Wiltshire Family of Partnerships and the development of the Local Agreement for Wiltshire (LAW).
20. Members, as democratically elected community representatives can have a role in both highlighting priorities and ambitions to be reflected in the LAW, and in reviewing the realities of implementation and outcomes of the LAA, as reflected in the experience of residents.
21. As scrutiny evolves from focusing on council services to looking more broadly at services provided by partners and partnerships, councillors will be able to play a fuller role as ‘community champions’ in their own local areas.

Best Practice

22. After gaining an understanding of how the LAW and LAA are delivered in Wiltshire, the Task Group explored the approaches taken by other authorities towards scrutiny of partners.
23. Some authorities have made wholesale changes to their O&S structures to align them with LAA themes, others have adapted existing structures or created new committees. To date, however, there is little evaluation of achievements or the effectiveness of different structures or processes.
24. Most activity around LAA and CDRP scrutiny has so far been concerned with establishing relationships with partners and protocols for effective engagement.
25. Derek Bishop in his evidence illustrated that approaches adopted generally fall into 3 broad categories....

Category	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Specialist	This is where the authority has a dedicated O&S Committee with responsibility for scrutinising partners. This has	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific focus on LAA/CDRP issues • Development of member expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires additional Committee(s) / Panels • Increases scrutiny “overhead”

	<p>been done jointly with other authorities</p> <p><i>E.g. Suffolk County Council – Joint Scrutiny Panel comprising County & District Councillors & 6 independent community members (appointed following open recruitment process)– chaired by a community member</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates relationship building • Clarity amongst partners / public about where scrutiny responsibility lies. 	<p>costs/resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May isolate LAA/CDRP issues from other scrutiny work • May be difficult to handle “cross-cutting” issues
Hybrid	<p>The functions of scrutinising the LAA and / or the CDRP have been added to an existing O&S Committee or panel</p> <p><i>E.g. Brighton & Hove City Council – an O&S Commission, scrutinises financial and central services the LAA, LSP and partnerships and coordinates the work of the 5 O&S Committees.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional committee but specific focus retained • Development of member expertise • Facilitates relationship building • Clarity amongst partners / public about where scrutiny responsibility lies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May isolate LAA/CDRP issues from other scrutiny work • LAA/CDRP issues may not be given a high priority in work programme • May be difficult to handle “cross cutting” issues
Integrated	<p>LAA and CDRP issues are dealt with as part and parcel of the normal business of O&S and cut across Committees or panels.</p> <p><i>E.g. Rotheram – each of the 5 existing Scrutiny Panels has taken one of the LAA targets which best relates to its terms of reference and will follow through the performance of that over a 2 year period. The co-ordinating Performance and Scrutiny O&S Committee looks at overall performance of the LAA/LSP</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of LAA/CDRP issues in O&S work programme • Recognises cross cutting nature of LAA/CDRP • Wider pool of members develop expertise in LAA/CDRP • No additional “overhead) costs or structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clarity amongst partners/public about where LAA/CDRP scrutiny responsibility lies • Does not give a specific focus to LAA/CDRP issues • May not give priority to LAA/CDRP issues from other scrutiny work

26. There are also examples emerging in different parts of the country of Overview and Scrutiny and the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) taking a collaborative approach to scrutiny of partnership work. For example in Southampton, following stakeholder interviews and workshop discussions with City Council Overview and Scrutiny Members and LSP partners, a model of LSP involvement in the scrutiny process was agreed in 2008. The approved model sees the Southampton Partnership suggest potential ‘partnership inquiries’ for the council’s annual programme of scrutiny.

Scrutiny of partners within the existing structure

27. The Task Group also considered the mechanisms for scrutiny of partners which already exist in the current O&S structure:

- i. The Budget and Performance Task Group currently reviews the performance of the LAA on a quarterly basis, highlighting areas where performance is not what was expected. These areas will also now be identified through the Task Groups' consideration of the Comprehensive Area Assessment which brings together the judgements made by external inspectorates about partnership working in Wiltshire.
- ii. The Health and Adult Social Care Committee has looked at some partnership priorities e.g. Wiltshire's alcohol strategy

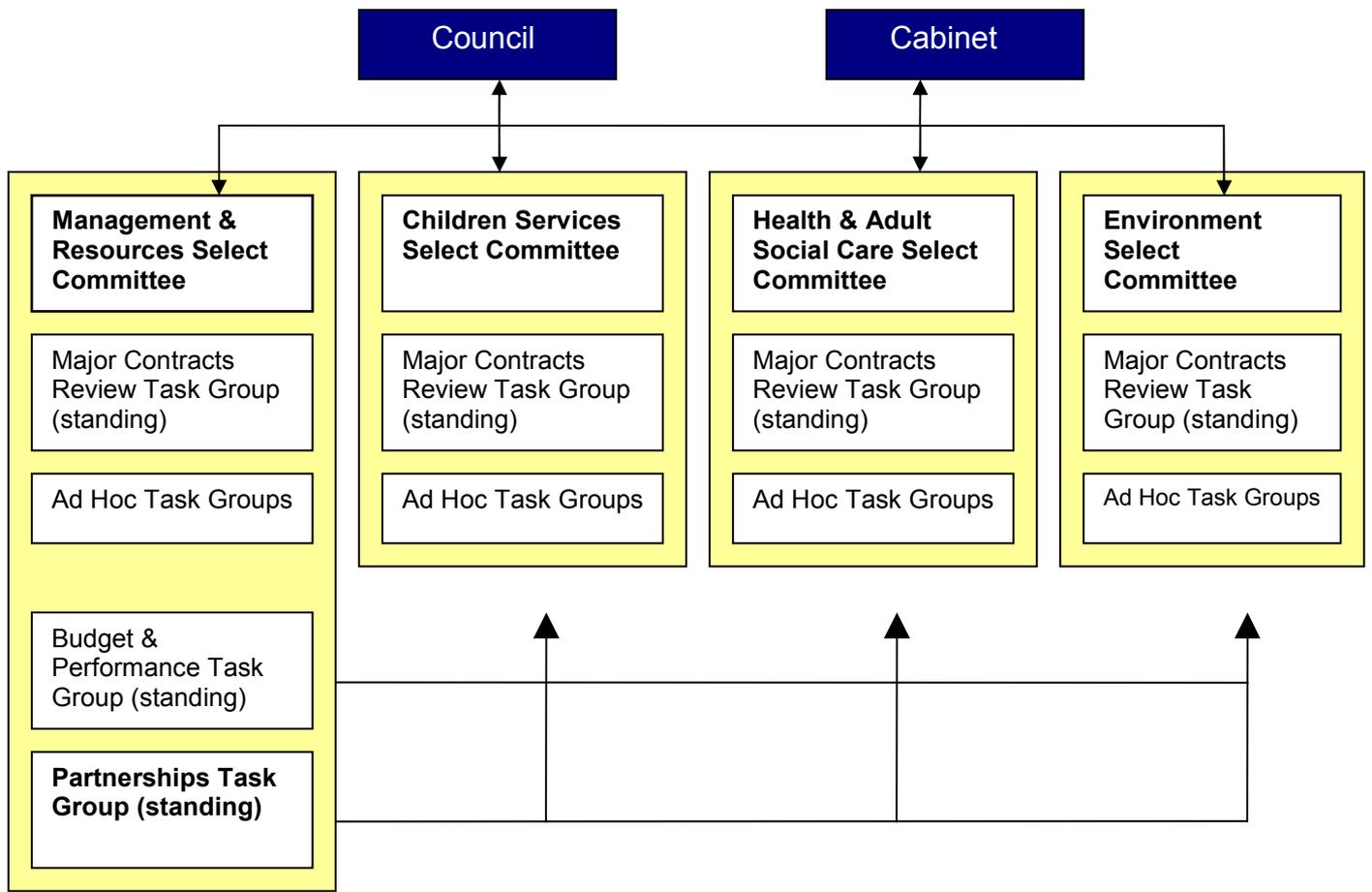
Conclusions

28. The Task Group has recognised the increasing amount of work and resources being channelled through partnerships reflecting the need to address complex community issues in a joined up way.
29. One of the problems identified by the Task Group is the complexity of partnership arrangements and the multiple accountabilities of many public services, which are subject to inspection, auditors and government intervention.
30. The Task Group felt it was important that Wiltshire Council's proposals do not duplicate work but recognise the complexity of the scrutiny map and find ways in which scrutiny can genuinely add value.
31. Throughout its work programme the Task Group has explored a number of key themes to develop an understanding of the way the LAA and partnerships work in Wiltshire. The evidence gathered has led the Task Group to conclude that scrutiny of partners would be most effectively carried out at Task Group level.
32. Task Group members expressed concern with adopting a full Committee model due to the limited number of meetings that would take place. A Task Group would enable a more flexible approach to partnership scrutiny and would be responsive to a large and varied work programme.
33. This arrangement would also allow specific focus to be retained on LAA/CDRP issues and will provide clarity amongst partners / area boards and the public about where the scrutiny responsibility lies. A Task Group would also enable the development of member expertise and would facilitate relationship building with our partners.

Proposal

34. The Task Group proposes the creation of a standing 'Partnerships' Task Group falling within the remit of the Management & Resources Select Committee.
35. The Task Group would undertake scrutiny reviews on cross cutting issues in relation to the LAA and partnership scrutiny (for example NI 8 Adult participation in sport) but would also carry out a co-ordinating role and where necessary make referrals to each relevant parent Committee to undertake further scrutiny.

Structure Diagram

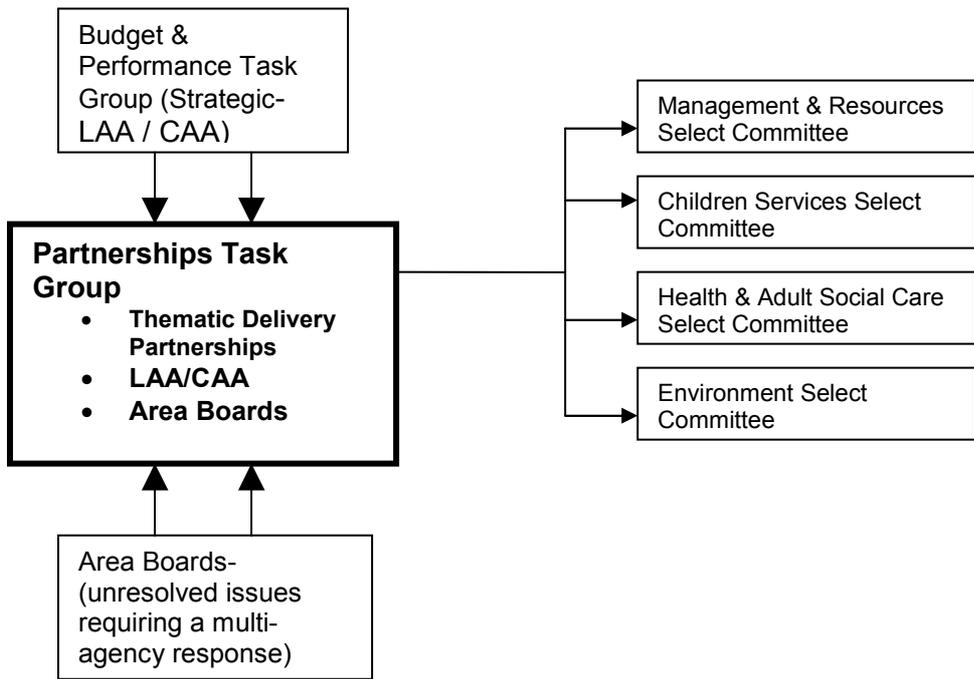


Work Programme

36. In addition to formulating its own work programme, the Task Group will receive referrals for scrutiny reviews from two levels:

- i. Strategic level – Areas where performance has not been what was expected will be identified through the Budget & Performance Task Group's monitoring of the Local Area Agreement and Comprehensive Area Assessment. Recommendations would then be made to the Partnership Task Group to carry out more in depth reviews of the areas concerned.
- ii. Local Level – Area Boards will be considering local issues which will require effective partnership working in order to be resolved. Where issues are not resolved locally at Area Board level, a referral for review can be made where appropriate to the Partnerships Task Group.

37. The Partnerships Task Group will also consider the work programmes of each of the Thematic Delivery Partnerships for areas to focus throughout its work programme.



Recommendation

38. The Committee is asked to consider and endorse the above proposal.

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