

**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**WOKINGHAM BOROUGH STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIPS
TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FEBRUARY 2011

Task and Finish Group Members:

**Councillor Norman Gould
Councillor Phil Challis
Councillor Charlotte Haitham Taylor**

CONTENTS

Section 1	Introduction	Page 3
Section 2	Background	Page 4
Section 3	Information Gathering	Page 5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General Information	Page 5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of the WBSP, the cog system, finances and governance	Page 6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WBSP (Partnership) Board	Page 9
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WBSP Strategy Group	Page 10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WBSP sub-partnerships and the Sustainable Communities Partnership case study	Page 10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Norreys Neighbourhood Pilot Project	Page 12
Section 4	Conclusion	Page 14
Section 5	Recommendations	Page 16

REVIEW OF THE WOKINGHAM BOROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Report by Task and Finish Group of the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 30 June 2010 the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel received a presentation from Sue Roberts, Partnership Development Manager, about the Wokingham Borough Strategic Partnership (WBSP). At its meeting on 14 September 2010, Sue Roberts also gave a presentation to the Panel giving further details about the WBSP structure and membership.
- 1.2 Following the presentations the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel decided to set up a Task and Finish Group to investigate and review the Wokingham Borough Strategic Partnership further.
- 1.3 Terms of Reference for the review were agreed by the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 18 October 2010 and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee noted the review at its meeting on 8 November 2010.
- 1.4 The Terms of Reference for the review can be found in Appendix A. The key objectives of the review were:
 - (a) To form a clear understanding as to the operation of the Wokingham Borough Strategic Partnership and the manner in which its various groups interact with each other;
 - (b) To research the work of the Sustainable Communities Partnership, ascertain its operation within the wider Wokingham Borough Strategic Partnership and the extent to which this reflects the experiences of other elements of the structure.
- 1.5 It should be noted that the Task and Finish Group conducted its review during a period of transformation, with more changes to come as details of the Big Society Agenda, the Localism Bill, the Health White Paper and associated plans, funding and finance amendments, and new policies developed by the Coalition Government emerge.

Background

- 2.1 Local Strategic Partnerships, of which Wokingham Borough Strategic Partnership (WBSP) was an example, aim to engage community stakeholders and give local authorities broad community leadership responsibilities for their area that extend to all public services. It is a single multi-agency partnership body that brings together representatives from the private, public, voluntary and community sectors. WBSP is reliant on community and partner involvement, and seeks to target all sections of the population, including those “hard to reach”. WBSP is not a legal requirement but operates within a statutory framework.
- 2.2 The current structure, shown diagrammatically in the form of three cogs (see Appendix B), comprises a Board, a Strategy Group and a series of thematic sub-partnerships (e.g. Children’s Trust, Community Safety). It was re-launched in 2009 (when the cog system was introduced) and aims to avoid taking a bureaucratic approach to its work. The restructure was approved by the Council’s Executive on 30 July 2009 and Councillor Simon Weeks was appointed to the Partnership Board as the Senior Wokingham Borough Council voting Member and Councillor Prue Bray as the non-voting Member of the Opposition. As the Senior Wokingham Borough Council Member appointed to sit on the Partnership Board, Councillor Simon Weeks was also confirmed as the Chair of the Partnership Board for an initial period of 12 months.
- 2.3 In particular, WBSP has responsibility for the construction and implementation of joint community priorities through the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020 ‘Innovating Wokingham’ had been agreed by Council and outlines the future ambitions of the WBSP. The Sustainable Community Strategy links to the Council’s Vision and Corporate Plan and key policies and priorities (e.g. Community Safety, Children and Young People’s Plan). There is also a statutory duty to co-operate with key stakeholders.
- 2.4 The Task and Finish Group’s Terms of Reference focused on the operation of the Wokingham Borough Strategic Partnership and the interaction of its constituent elements, using the Sustainable Communities Partnership as a practical case study. Recommendations were to be based on the WBSP and Sustainable Communities Partnership’s operations and communications with other parts of the WBSP. Therefore the work of the other sub-partnerships was not covered in great detail, although the Task and Finish Group did consider them where appropriate during the review, particularly in their relationship with the Sustainable Communities Partnership.

Information Gathering

General Information

- 3.1 The Task and Finish Group met on four occasions, 13 December 2010, 31 January 2011 and 7 February 2011 to meet with witnesses and then on 11 February 2011 to discuss conclusions and recommendations. At the meetings with witnesses the Task and Finish Group gathered information about:
- (a) Local Strategic Partnerships in general;
 - (b) Wokingham Borough Strategic Partnership (WBSP);
 - (c) the cog system – the structure of the WBSP from 2009;
 - (d) the WBSP Board;
 - (e) the WBSP Strategy Group;
 - (f) the WBSP Sub-Partnerships;
 - (g) the WBSP Sustainable Communities Partnership; and
 - (h) the links and interactions between of the elements of the WBSP.
- 3.2 The following witnesses attended the meetings to give further information about the WBSP and answer the Task and Finish Group's questions:
- (a) Heather Thwaites, Strategic Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs, WBC (Office with responsibility for WBSP in job role);
 - (b) Councillor Simon Weeks, Chair of WBSP Board;
 - (c) Councillor Prue Bray, Opposition representative, WBSP Board;
 - (d) Councillor Rob Stanton, Chair of Children's Trust Board (a WBSP sub-partnership);
 - (e) Josie Wragg, Head of Strategic Partnerships, WBC (Officer with responsibility for WBSP in job role);
 - (f) Ian Saxton, Chair of WBSP Sustainable Communities Partnership/Chief Officer of Voluntary Action Wokingham Borough;
 - (g) Rose Green, Senior Community Development Worker, WBC (Member of WBSP Sustainable Communities Partnership);
 - (h) Gwynneth Hewetson, Chair of the Cultural Partnership (Member of WBSP Sustainable Communities Partnership).
- 3.3 The Task and Finish Group were provided with:
- (a) a copy of the WBSP Annual Report;
 - (b) a list of the memberships of WBSP Board, Strategy Group and Sustainable Communities Partnership;
 - (c) a list of the WBSP Chairs;
 - (d) a copy of the latest WBSP Forward Programme;
 - (e) a copy of the WBSP Board Terms of Reference;
 - (f) a copy of the WBSP Board partner roles and responsibilities;
 - (g) a copy of the WBSP Board Standards of Public Life: Nolan Principles;
 - (h) a copy of the WBSP Strategy Group Terms of Reference;
 - (i) a copy of the Sustainable Communities Partnership Terms of Reference;
 - (j) a copy of the Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020 priorities;
 - (k) a copy of the Sustainable Communities Partnership section of a report presented to the Partnership Board and Strategy Group giving

an Action Plan Update, relevant information on the new political and economic context and opportunities and challenges that could lay ahead for it;

- (l) minutes of each meeting with witnesses as a record of discussions (attached as Appendix C).

Overview of the WBSP, the cog system, finances and governance

- 3.4 Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are not controlled or formally regulated by statute, and it is not a legal requirement to have one in an area, however it is good practice and the partners involved generally felt it was of great benefit to the area to have one. Wokingham LSP sought to maximise co-operative working between Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and the other bodies involved, and attempted to demonstrate that working together brought better results than working separately. It was highlighted by one witness that the different aims of those involved could potentially prove problematic at times, and relations with the voluntary sector were further complicated by their reliance on WBC funding.
- 3.5 It was reported that a LSP had existed in Wokingham Borough for six to seven years. Previously the LSP had been one level with representation from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors all being involved at the same level and participating in meetings. There were mixed views about the opportunities that this set up brought, with one witness feeling it gave them better access to decision makers and funding sources, however the general feeling was that the meetings had consisted of too many people involved at the same time and so they had not been as productive as they could have been.
- 3.6 The previous LSP structure had been re-considered in 2008/09 and the Wokingham Borough Strategic Partnership (WBSP) had been created in 2009. The new structure was shown diagrammatically by a series of three cogs (see Appendix B) and this new structure was formally approved by the Council's Executive on 30 July 2009.
- 3.7 At the meeting of the Task and Finish Group on 13 December 2010 Councillor Simon Weeks, Chair of the WBSP Board, said that even if partners had different aims at times, common ground could be found around the agreed Local Area Agreements (LAAs) targets and the ambition to obtain central Government funding for achieving these, known as Performance Reward Grant (PRG) funding.
- 3.8 The WBSP monitored the LAA targets, which brought partners together on a number of issues. Performance Reward Grant (PRG) funding had been awarded to Wokingham Borough for targets set out in the first LAA and the WBSP made decisions on how this funding should be allocated (the Partnership Board had delegated the decisions on individual projects to be funded through the PRG to the Strategy Group) . It was expected to be in the region of £3.5 million, however the new Coalition Government had reduced the funding to around half of what was expected. The second LAA had also been expected to have PRG funding attached to the targets, even if at a lower value,

but this was no longer the case and LAAs had since been abolished. This was of some concern for the Task and Finish Group; as if partners had previously come together as the WBSP to try to meet the LAA targets and secure PRG funding would they continue to see the benefit of the WBSP. Heather Thwaites said that she believed that the agencies and partners involved in the WBSP were working together so that they could achieve more collectively, rather than just being involved because of the reward money that was previously available.

- 3.9 Local Strategic Partnerships had, in general, been 'top down' bodies in their early forms; however they now had greater freedom as non-statutory organisations. It had been generally recognised that pooling resources was a more effective way of working in the current economic climate and so continuing to come together as WBSP was in the interest of all partners. Despite this, the fact that some constituent elements e.g. Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) were under threat could complicate the picture.
- 3.10 The 2009 WBSP cog system, which had three cogs linking together, had the WBSP Board at the top, setting the overall vision, then the WBSP Strategy Group sitting to the left acting as the next level down, translating the overall vision into delivery, and finally the third cog to the right of the diagram contained the WBSP sub-partnerships, who enacted the policies. It was reported that the public and voluntary sectors were already heavily involved, which should put WBSP in a good position to respond to 'the Big Society'. However, with the future of Voluntary Action Wokingham Borough (VAWB), who provide support, information and guidance to the voluntary sector and currently represent the sector on WBSP, to be decided following WBC and PCT funding ceasing from 1 April 2011, there was some concern about the representation of this sector in the WBSP in the future. This was especially true as VAWB were currently able to represent the sector as a whole on the Strategy Group and four of the sub-partnerships. The voluntary sector did not have to be part of the WBSP, but all witnesses agreed that, particularly with the Big Society Agenda, it was important for them to be involved.
- 3.11 Although the LSP in Wokingham had already been restructured; further evolution could not be ruled out. Given the potential impact of policies around 'the Big Society', the Localism Bill, the Health White Paper and associated changes, the changes coming out of the Coalition Government and the reductions in public sector funding, there will be a greater impetus for restructuring of current arrangements. Heather Thwaites said that the old format of the LSP had been suitable for its era, and its benefits had primarily involved engaging partners and disseminating information. The 2009 version saw a greater emphasis on action. What was needed in the future, and whether there was a need for a new WBSP structure was yet to be seen. The WBSP Board were considering a report on this very issue at its next meeting, looking at the changing landscape and how best the WBSP could work in the future in terms of the Big Society and Localism Agendas.
- 3.12 Within the current cog system, some of the sub-partnerships have been established for some considerable time such as the Community Safety Partnership, whilst others were more recent, or indeed were still in the process

of being officially set-up such as the Sustainable Places Partnership (although smaller groups (such as the Housing Group) beneath the Sustainable Places Partnership had been in existence for a while). It was reported that the cog system enabled the sub-partnerships and the bodies involved to understand the interrelated nature of the constituent elements. An example given was culture; whilst this was often seen as a small part of WBSP's work, it involved many of the organisations within WBSP. Without WBSP's cogs making such matters clear, co-operative work may be more limited.

3.13 Some of the sub-partnerships had statutory obligations and work would have to occur even if WBSP did not exist. There were lots of examples of the positive impact WBSP had contributed. Partners referred other initiatives or actions to other sub-partnerships and these had been amended as a result of this consultation within the WBSP. Without this collaboration, partnership work would have suffered. However, the fact that some parts of WBSP were under threat could affect this co-operation in the future and this needs attention.

3.14 WBC played a leading role in the WBSP given its wider remit in comparison with the single policy areas covered by many of the other bodies involved, and also had better resources. However, it did not control the WBSP and was only one of the partner organisations involved. There was some concern from the Task and Finish Group about how the statutory responsibilities contained within WBSP could be guaranteed to be fulfilled if these responsibilities were not officially controlled. Additionally, what the situation would be if some of these were devolved to Town and Parish Councils was of some concern. However, those present felt that some handing over of responsibility was vital if WBSP's aims were to be achieved; whilst WBC could offer good governance arrangements, the need to empower other bodies without dictating was imperative.

3.15 With regards to finance, WBSP took the approach of 'seed funding'; it did not directly commission a service, but used other bodies to deliver services. The Strategy Group had allocated money to various sub-partnerships (e.g. Community Safety). When the PRG funding came in from central Government WBC received the money and took responsibility for the budget and related administration (and was ultimately accountable for it), but it was WBSP that made the decisions about how it was spent. WBC also took on the role of providing support to the WBSP, such as the administration of agendas and minutes of meetings. There was no WBSP budget to pay for such services at the present time and the work was carried out by various different WBC Officers and costs had not been worked out in detail, although Heather Thwaites thought the costs involved were fairly low. There was some concern raised by one witness about both funding and administration coming from WBC and this seeming to give WBC more control over agendas and governance as the witness said there had been some evidence of censorship on one occasion, although this had not been pursued further by the Task and Finish Group with Officers to confirm the situation.

3.16 WBC was not the sole provider of funding; the Primary Care Trust for instance had also provided financial support to some projects, such as through the

Health and Wellbeing Partnership. The Community Safety Partnership also had a budget from WBC and sometimes drew on police resources. In terms of finance, given the reductions in allocations and available funding from central Government and the pressures on partners individual budgets, future arrangements were unclear; in particular, police forces and health services would be under pressure. However, with more interest nationally in community based budgeting and projects such as the Norreys Pilot looking at the pooling of partners budgets into an area, there were opportunities for finance and resources to be used differently in the future to provide more for less by removing duplication and looking at doing things differently.

- 3.17 In the light of reduced funding and resources across all partners the Task and Finish Group queried with WBC Officers if the Partnership Board and Strategy Group could be merged, but Officers felt that given their distinct remits this would not be suitable.

WBSP (Partnership) Board

- 3.18 The WBSP (Partnership) Board is the 'Executive' body of the WBSP. It meets four times a year, holds an Annual Conference in March each year and participates in the WBSP AGM. The cog system lists the Senior WBC Member as taking the role of the Chair for the first 12 months and Councillor Simon Weeks is the current Chair of the Partnership Board. It was reported that in approximately 50-60% of cases Councillors took on this role, although in some areas it was the local authority Chief Executive or a voluntary body representative. The role of the Chair was not prescribed and so could be decided locally. In some areas it was reported that the Chair was rotated. One witness had some concern about the fact that the current Chair had not been elected by the Partnership Board, but rather appointed prior to its first meeting, which gave the impression to other Partnership Board members perhaps that WBC was not an equal partner, but had more control, although they did not have an issue with the actual Chair appointed, it was more about the process. The present Chair had said that his appointment as the first Chair was an exception and that Members of the Board would elect the Chair in future.
- 3.19 The Partnership Board membership consists of senior figures from the public, private and voluntary sectors, with some members having voting rights and some just being able to participate in discussions. The Task and Finish Group were given full details of who represented which sectors and who had voting rights.
- 3.20 The Partnership Board is responsible for the Wokingham Vision, brought together by the WBSP as the Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020, and Strategic Leadership of the WBSP. Some functions were delegated to the Strategy Group – see Strategy Group information below.
- 3.21 At each Partnership Board meeting one of the sub-partnerships attended to give a presentation on work they had been carrying out and what progress they had been making in general on their work programme. This was an opportunity to highlight the work of the sub-partnerships, get feedback from the Partnership

Board and also make any further links between different levels of the cogs, other sub-partnerships and individual partners. At the AGM each sub-partnership provided an Annual Report.

WBSP Strategy Group

3.22 The WBSP Strategy Group is the cog which sits between the Partnership Board and the sub-partnerships. It meets on a monthly basis and also takes a leading role in helping to shape the agenda and coordinate the Annual Conference and AGM for the Partnership Board. The Chair of the Strategy Group is the WBC Chief Executive. The Chair also represents the Strategy Group and has a voting seat on the Partnership Board.

3.23 The Strategy Group is responsible for: translating the Wokingham Vision, currently the Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020, into delivery and action; commissioning and aligning of resources: performance management (LAA and local indicators) and outcomes, including having the ability to 'call-in' any targets that it is concerned about for review. The Partnership Board had delegated the decisions on designing the commissioning methodology and allocating the PRG funding to the Strategy Group. However, given the lower level of PRG funding now allocated from central Government, most of which the Strategy Group had already allocated to projects, priorities had shifted more towards performance management and fulfilling the aims of the Community Strategy.

3.24 The Strategy Group has a small number of core members which represent the Council, the health service, the fire and rescue service, the police service, the voluntary service and business. The members are all senior Officers within their service. The Chairs of the sub-partnerships also attend the Strategy Group meetings collectively once a quarter to give performance and work updates.

3.25 Some of the members of the Strategy Group also chaired a sub-partnership, but it was explicitly stated in the Strategy Group's Terms of Reference that their role on the Strategy Group had to be independent of their concerns as respective Chairs. Witnesses stressed that whilst it would be preferable not to have any sub-partnership Chairs on the Strategy Group, given the size of the Borough such an arrangement was felt inevitable, but the issue was monitored and Chairs were reminded of the need to separate their roles.

WBSP sub-partnerships and the Sustainable Communities Partnership case study

3.26 There are six sub-partnerships of the WBSP, the Sustainable Communities Partnership, the Community Safety Partnership, the Children's Trust Board, the Health and Wellbeing Partnership, the Sustainable Places Partnership and the Business, Skills and Enterprise Partnership. The six priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020 related to the sub-partnerships, with some overlapping which demonstrates the need for joint working, and listed the aims that they worked to and were monitored on.

- 3.27 The sub-partnerships were established in partnership with the partners that made up the WBSP and all were expected to co-operate and liaise with the other partners involved in the WBSP. Representation on each was from a wide range of organisations and whilst Officers felt the right people were involved, it was highlighted that this may need to be reviewed in light of all the national and local changes taking place. Some partners were looking at their own organisations and may have limited time available in the future, and some organisations such as the PCT would no longer exist in their present format. Members were sometimes involved in more than one sub-partnership and some worked across several on certain projects to build strong links. Those involved were there to represent wider organisations, such as the Cultural Partnership, who could represent smaller cultural groups, or the Black and Ethnic Minority Forum Representative who was able to speak on behalf of its members. So whilst it was not possible for smaller organisations/groups to all be involved individually, they did have a way of linking into the WBSP. The system had to be dynamic and flexible.
- 3.28 To facilitate communication and information passing between different levels of the cog system, as per paragraph 5.1 above, one of the sub-partnerships attend a meeting of the Partnership Board on a rota basis to give a presentation on current work, all sub-partnerships provide an Annual Report to the WBSP AGM, all three cogs are involved in the WBSP Annual Conference in March each year and the Chairs of the sub-partnerships attend the Strategy Group meetings once a quarter for performance monitoring.
- 3.29 The Sustainable Communities Partnership sat in the middle of the third cog, and this was intentional as there were lots of links to the other sub-partnerships within the cog and it was seen as the one that could bring them all together. It was generally felt by the witnesses that the people involved in this sub-partnership were the right people and they were there to make things happen. If the sub-partnership did not exist they were the sort of people who would make things happen anyway, but by working together more had been achieved, links had been made that might otherwise not have been, and work may otherwise have taken longer to achieve or been limited in some way.
- 3.30 The Towns and Parishes were represented on the Sustainable Communities Partnership via a Town and Parish Clerk Representative and a Town and Parish Councillor Representative. Communication to and from the Towns and Parishes could take place through these representatives, although Officers agreed it was hard to find the best way to represent Towns and Parishes without widening the membership too far and communications had not been as good as they could have been in the past. Officers reported that improvements had been made and new processes put in place which should help, such as having a standing item on the Borough/Parish Working Group meeting Agenda for feedback each way.
- 3.31 The community/residents were represented on the Sustainable Communities Partnership in various ways through the attendance of: one of the WBC Area Managers; the WBC Community Partnerships Manager; a Black and Ethnic

Minority Forum Representative; a Faith Groups Representative; a Rural Communities Representative; a Community Development Network Representative; and three WBC Councillors. Also in attendance at the meetings were the WBC Senior Community Development Officer and the WBC Social Inclusion Officer. Some of these representatives also attended the Borough's Multi-Agency Groups and so were able to make links back to residents through those. The Task and Finish Group noted that there were no Housing or Tenant representatives on the Sustainable Communities Partnership, although they did have links in the WBSP through the Housing Group which sat under the Sustainable Places Partnership.

3.32 The voluntary sector was represented on the Sustainable Communities Partnership through the Voluntary Action Wokingham Borough (VAWB) Representative and two representatives from Wokingham Borough Voluntary Sector Forum – the Forum Chair and a Volunteer Organisation representative. With WBC and the PCT no longer funding some of VAWB's work from 1 April 2011, the Task and Finish Group heard how the organisation was having to consider its future and may not be able to continue after this time. If that was the case they would not be able to continue involvement with the WBSP, both in terms of the Sustainable Communities Partnership and the Strategy Group. Concern was also expressed by the Chief Officer of VAWB about future commissioning of voluntary services and the issue of safeguarding with regards to children and young people's voluntary groups now that VAWB would not be carrying out a role in this area since that funding had been withdrawn as well. The Task and Finish Group noted that not all voluntary and community groups were members of VAWB and wondered whether all of the work that was going on in the rural towns and villages was being picked up and therefore represented in the WBSP by VAWB.

3.33 The Sustainable Communities Partnership had not been allocated a budget, with the item in the Terms of Reference still stating it was to be decided. The Chair of the Sustainable Communities Partnership believed that if WBSP wanted the Sustainable Communities Partnership to work and actually do things, particularly in the light of the Big Society Agenda, then it needed a budget assigned it. Some Members of the Sustainable Communities Partnership felt that the idea of the big society was already happening locally, but there were also concerns about the finite resources of the voluntary sector and that without funding it would be hard to make it work.

Norreys Neighbourhood Pilot Project

3.34 In terms of examples to demonstrate the potential of collaborative working and the benefits of a multi-agency approach, the Task and Finish Group were told about the Norreys Pilot, which had gained national publicity. The WBSP sponsored project gave regular updates to all levels of the cog system and was very much about looking at the needs and aspirations of the Norreys area from a bottom-up approach. Following that work, what could be done to meet those needs was considered, looking at what the community could do themselves and what the partners and statutory agencies involved could do by all working

together. This information would be used to inform future commissioning decisions.

- 3.35 The work had been evaluated by Reading University and the findings would inform future work. A tool called the Community Signature had been used to map the needs of the area with residents, but this was an expensive tool and so WBC was looking at developing a similar tool of its own for use in other areas in the future. This would give them the ability to shape the tool more for the Borough, whilst being good value for money.
- 3.36 It was felt by witnesses that the Norreys Pilot had greatly benefited from the WBSP cog system, as it had given a structure which helped to shape how partners linked together and ensured that the right people were coming together in the right way. It was thought a key example of the work happening on the ground as a result of the strategic work taking place at a higher level.
- 3.37 A decision on how to roll out the pilot to other areas had not yet been made, but the plan was to use the work in the Norreys to inform future work with other similar areas in the Borough. Multi-Agency Groups were already established in some other areas which drew on a lot of the same principles as the Norreys work and also demonstrated what could be done in the community by working together with local agencies and residents.
- 3.38 Some concern was expressed by a number of witnesses about the ability to roll out the project to other areas against the backdrop of less resources and funding, and also about the project becoming weighed down by Council bureaucracy in the future.

Conclusions

- 4.0 The 2009 WBSP management structure (termed the “cogs system”) was designed to address the size and unwieldy nature of the previous LSP. Those involved in the WBSP generally feel that the cog system works at the present time and the links that have been made have been beneficial. The role of WBSP to maximise co-operative working between WBC and the other partners seems to have been achieved on the whole. In the light of the changes coming out of the Coalition Government, the Big Society Agenda, the Localism Bill, the Health White Paper and associated changes, as well as funding and financial challenges, this may need to be reviewed to be fit for the future.
- 4.1 The voluntary sector involvement has been good to date, but the uncertain future of some organisations through loss of local and national funding, and changes being brought about through commissioning, mean future involvement could reduce. A lot of good voluntary and community work is also going on at a very local level that may not be acknowledged within the WBSP. Whilst it is not for the sub-partnerships to control or take responsibility for this activity, an understanding of what is happening at this level and how towns and parishes assist this activity is important.
- 4.2 The Big Society Agenda will require more partnership working in the future and the ability to engage and work with the voluntary sector in the provision of services that were seen previously as the role of other WBSP partners will be a key success factor. The WBSP will need to take a greater role in engaging and empowering others in the future.
- 4.3 The Chair of the Partnership Board is currently the Senior WBC Member, but this is not a requirement and other members of the Partnership Board could take on this role if appointed. Although the Council Member is often the Chair in other areas this is not always the case.
- 4.4 Some of the Chairs of the sub-partnerships are also Members of the Strategy Group, although their role on the Strategy Group is independent of their interests as a Chair there may be a perception that they represent their sub-partnership rather than take a Borough strategic view.
- 4.5 The WBC role has had to date been different to that of other partners, as it has a broader remit and has been in a position to provide more resources. Other partners are generally single sector.
- 4.6 The allocation of Performance Reward Grant (PRG) funding was a major role for the WBSP, but now that this has been allocated and there will be no further funding of this kind, there has been a shift to performance management.
- 4.7 There appears to be good levels of communication and interaction between partners, sub-partnerships and the different cogs of the WBSP.

- 4.8 WBSP partners have their own individual budget pressures and threats to their future emerging. They may be involved in discussions about their own futures which could take their focus away from co-operative working.
- 4.9 Statutory requirements for some partners/sub-partnerships have and continue to change and the financial situation with regards to certain Government grants is still unclear.
- 4.10 Statutory and legal responsibilities need to be more clearly defined and separated from 'voluntary' partnership work. Corporate responsibility falls on WBC in many of the sub-partnerships, although the other public sector organisations also have certain statutory and legal responsibilities (such as the Police Service, Fire and Rescue Service, and PCT). To maintain equality of partners it is important to separate the responsibilities of individual partners in these matters from those of the sub-partnerships collectively. There are also elements of personal responsibility required from all partners, such as when looking at the issues of vulnerable adults or children.
- 4.11 It is important that representation on the WBSP is from a wide range of organisations without making it unmanageable.
- 4.12 The Norreys Pilot is an example of what is possible within a multi-agency approach. This approach will continue to be important in the future.

Recommendations

Recommendations for WBC Executive:

- 5.0 That the WBC Executive promote a move towards WBSP holding and managing its own budget created by funding from WBSP partners and that this then be allocated through a commissioning model (such as that used as part of the PRG funding process) by WBSP. The budget is to pay for administration and support for the WBSP, as well as commissioning voluntary sector services on behalf of the WBSP partners involved.
- 5.1 That the WBC Executive promote the role of the WBSP to WBC Members and Towns and Parishes to keep them informed about the work being carried out by WBSP and to give WBC Members and town and parish Councils the non-voting opportunity to participate in sub-partnership meetings when appropriate.
- 5.2 That the three WBC Councillors involved in the Sustainable Communities Partnership come from each of the three neighbourhood areas so that all communities of the Borough are represented, including if possible a rural representative.
- 5.3 That the WBC Executive support the recommendations the Task and Finish Group would like the WBSP to consider.

WBSP to be asked to consider the following recommendations from the Task and Finish Group:

- 5.4 That the WBSP role be clarified as being to promote partnership working and reverse the real and/or perceived shift towards governance and performance management. Ensure that WBSP focus is on engagement and empowerment of the constituent parts, with particular emphasis on the voluntary sector, and that it takes a supporting and nurturing role to enable Wokingham Borough as a whole to respond to the needs of the Big Society Agenda.
- 5.5 WBSP to take actions to demonstrate that WBC is “just another partner”.
 - WBSP to commission support and administration from its new budget and apply normal budgetary control.
 - Clarify that where WBC departments and officers are commissioned to work on WBSP matters that their responsibility for deliverables is to WBSP not their WBC line manager. Time spent on WBSP administration should be time bounded and costed in line with the service commissioned.
 - Increase the number of Chairs allocated to non-WBC Officers and Members.
 - The Partnership Board Chair to be elected at a Partnership Board meeting like all other Chairs.

- 5.6 That WBSP clearly divides the role of sub-partnership Chairs from Strategy Group Membership thereby avoiding members taking on two roles. This could be achieved by selecting the sub-partnership Chairs from a more operational pool of personnel and/or by seeking and maintaining more senior representation at the Strategy Group level. Where sub-partnership members are voting members of the Board or Strategy Group, then they should be precluded from being the Chair of a sub-partnership but could be a voting member.
- 5.7 That the Partnership Board oversee a review of the membership of the Partnership Board, Strategy Group and sub-partnerships to make sure representation remains appropriate and that all sectors are represented where required after the loss of representation from Business Link, the PCT and VAWB.

Terms of Reference to make clear that membership at all levels is to represent Sectors rather than their own specific organisation/group. The member must give emphasis to the role of identifying, engaging, empowering and supporting other organisations/groups operating within the sector they are there to represent.

It is proposed that all documents listing members should include a column to indicate the sector being represented as well as their own organisation/group and a summary of their remit.

- 5.8 That the Terms of Reference of each sub-partnership make it explicit where elements of the work it undertakes are statutory and the associated responsibilities so that anyone taking on the role of being a Member of that sub-partnership are clear about any statutory element of the role.
- 5.9 That sub-partnership Chairs continue to attend Strategy Group meetings, at least once a quarter, for performance monitoring.
- 5.10 That, once the Town and Parish Clerk Representative and Town and Parish Councillor Representative roles that become more established, the WBSP review whether these roles are sufficient to represent all the Town and Parish Councils within the Borough on the Sustainable Communities Partnership.

Recommendation for the WBC Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- 5.11 That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel be asked to consider reviewing in future the arrangements for monitoring safeguarding for voluntary groups that work with Children and Young People, as it was reported this was a role that VAWB had played a part in previously but would no longer be carrying out.