



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

Contents

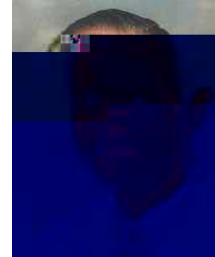
1	Summary	5
2	Summary of Recommendations	7
3	Terms of Reference	9
3.1	Background	9
3.2	Reasons for the Review	10
3.3	Terms of Reference	10
3.4	Methodology	11
4	The National Context	12
4.1	The Move Towards Partnership Working	12
4.2	What are Local Strategic Partnerships?	12
4.3	What Do They Do?	13
4.4	How are Local Strategic Partnerships Monitored?	14
4.5	Councils' Role on Local Strategic Partnerships	14
4.6	Members' Roles	15
4.7	Relevant Research	16
5	Arrangements in Birmingham	17
5.1	How is the Birmingham Strategic Partnership Structured?	17
5.2	Who is a Member?	18
5.3	What Does the BSP Do?	18
5.4	Recent Developments on Local Area Agreements in Birmingham	19
5.5	How is it Monitored?	21
5.6	How Does it Work?	22
6	Findings	24
6.1	What Did the Witnesses Tell Us?	24
6.2	The Role of the BSP and its Achievements	24
6.3	Co	



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

Preface

Councillor James Hutchings
Chairman, BSP Task and Finish
Overview and Scrutiny Committee



The City Strategic Partnership (CSP) was set up at the instigation of the Government to bring together representatives from the City Council and the major public and private sector agencies to work together in a coordinated way. The establishment of the CSP was also an essential condition to access Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

The CSP was subsequently modified and renamed the Birmingham Strategic Partnership (BSP). The BSP is now an important player in the governance of the city.

In a city the size of Birmingham the BSP could not adequately reflect the full range and diversity of interests. Following the Devolution agenda District Strategic Partnerships (DSP) were set up to take account of local interests.

Last year Cllr Les Lawrence led a scrutiny of progress of the DSPs. This scrutiny reviews the BSP. The structure of the BSP and the whole family of partnerships proved to be unexpectedly complex.

The review was set up in response to councillors' concerns that they knew little about what

82131 (t) a82
about what apc02 113.39905 325.998.8 (t)Tj10.07 0 0 10.2 0 0 325.9980602 51apc02 1



Birmingham Strategic Partnership



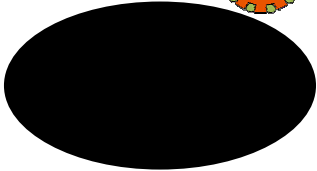
Birmingham Strategic Partnership

1 Summary

- 1.1.1 Partnership working and concepts of multi-agency provision and collaboration have been gathering popularity over the last 20 years, particularly in government circles, as the preferred way of working to address a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues.
- 1.1.2 Partnerships can offer greater involvement of a wider range of interests in decision making processes and as a consequence are seen as an inherently more efficient way of allocating public funds and the most effective way of addressing the multidimensional problems faced by society.
- 1.1.3 Partnerships can offer the promise of many benefits including improved services and better cooperative working between different agencies but there can also be a downside. Partnership working can add to complexity, in that it is not always clear to thg



Birmingham Strategic Partnership





Birmingham Strategic Partnership

2 Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R1	That a report is produced and considered by the BSP Board that sets out what steps are to be taken to develop a more strategic role for the BSP in the future and how this will be supported.	Chairman of BSP January 2006
R2	In order to develop and prepare for the forthcoming Local Area Agreement, the BSP should establish an implementation group. The Local Area Agreement should be Council led.	The Leader of the Council October 2005
R3	That a report is shared with the Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the results of the BSP review of structures and linkages between the levels of the wider partnership. (including the thematic Partnerships and Panels, Sub Committees, Wards and District Partnerships). This report should include the means by which these different elements of the wider par	



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

R5	The BSP should develop a communications strategy to promote greater understanding of the BSP. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Producing an annual report;• Considering the provision of question cards for use by the public;• Revising the BSP website;• Holding all meetings in public where appropriate	Chairman of BSP	January 2006
R6	The BSP should develop a formal 'Partnership Protocol' which is made publicly accessible. This should cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The roles, rights and responsibilities of the members;• Codes of conduct; and• Declarations of interest.	Chairman of BSP	Tc 0.001S40 0 7.98 171.24013773.7



3 Terms of Reference

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 Partnership working has become an increasing feature of the way we do our business in the public sector. It has been estimated that since 1997 national policy initiatives have created more than five thousand partnerships. Countless others have emerged from the activities of councils and others have committed to joining up their programmes to meet local needs.



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

3.2 Reasons for the Review

- 3.2.1 It was this development that has aroused a concern amongst some City Council Members that there is a gradual shift developing in decision making away from democratically elected bodies to non-elected bodies. This can be seen to be resulting in a downgrading of the role of local authority



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

3.4 Methodology

- 3.4.1 The Committee received verbal and written evidence from a range of individual members of the Birmingham Strategic Partnership.
- 3.4.2 A questionnaire (Appendix 2) was sent to all City Councillors to ascertain their level of knowledge of and their involvement with the Birmingham Strategic Partnership.
- 3.4.3 The evidence sessions were attended as follows:
- December 2004 – Jason Lowther Head of Policy and Performance presented the context and described how the Birmingham Strategic Partnership operates.
 - January 2005 – Councillor John Hemming MP, (the then) Deputy Leader of the Council and Chairman of the BSP.
 - February 2005 – Professor Michael Clarke, member of the BSP Board representing Furthe

•

•

•





Birmingham Strategic Partnership

4.3 What do they do?

4.3.1 The original, defined tasks of Local Strategic Partnerships were to:

- Prepare and implement a Community Strategy;
- Bring together local plans, partnerships and initiatives to provide a forum through which mainstream public service providers work effectively together to meet local needs and priorities?

•

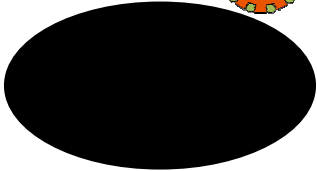
•

•

•



Birmingham Strategic Partnership





Birmingham Strategic Partnership

... This does not mean that once an LSP has been established that the local authority's leadership role has ceased. Irrespective who chairs the LSP someone has to take responsibility and be accountable for ensuring that:

- *The membership and me*



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

- Do these not cover much of the same ground?

4.7 Relevant Research

4.7.1 Alongside the national policy context we wanted to examine what other research or reviews had been carried out

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-



5 Arrangements in Birmingham

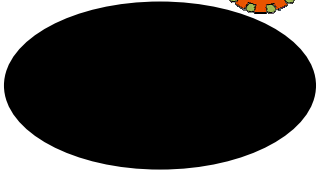
5.1 How is the Birmingham Strategic Partnership Structured?

5.1.1 Initially, the Birmingham Strategic Partnership (BSP) (formerly the City Strategic Partnership) was established with a core group of representatives from 14 key agencies / sectors bringing together the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. However this was always seen as only part of the equation. In addition, it had always seen the need to build links with the wider family of partnerships in the city such as the Lifelong Learning and Community Safety Partnerships. In summary the BSP at the start of our review comprised of the following:

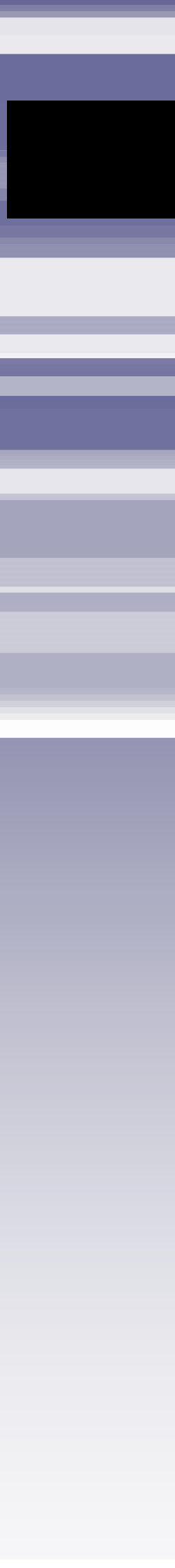
-
-
-
-



Birmingham Strategic Partnership









Birmingham Strategic Partnership

5.4.11 LAAs are led by the Coun



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

- 5.5.6 One of the main documents to which the BSP contributes, the Community Strategy, is subject to scrutiny by virtue of the fact that it is part of the City Council's policy framework. However, the position is less formal with regard to the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. This is not to say that scrutiny committees may not scrutinise the plan but that they are not formally required to do so. We believe that this role in relation to the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy should be carried out by the Local Services and Community Safety O&S Committee.
- 5.5.7 In order to qualify for NRF Local Authorities have to show that they



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

- 5.6.2 On the basis of this model we were of the view that the BSP currently operates largely in the 'Advisory-70.082001 4769.01999 773.10 0 0.12 509.1546



6 Findings

6.1 What did the Witnesses Tell us?

6.1.1 We sought the views of a number of organisations that are members of the Birmingham Strategic Partnership Board. In addition we conducted a survey of all Birmingham City Councillors to assess their knowledge, understanding and involvement with the BSP. The key themes that emerged from these exercises were:

- The role of the BSP and its achievements;
- Composition and size of the Board;
- Focus on Neighbourhood Renewal Funding;
- Business involvement;
- Links with the Districts and the wider family of partnerships;
- Voluntary and Community Sector representation;
- Accountability and transparency.

Each of these is discussed more fully in the following sections.

6.2 The Role of the BSP and its Achievements

6.2.1 All of our witnesses felt that the primary purpose of the BSP was to provide formal channels of communication to aid partnership working. It was also widely recognised that to access NRF funds a partnership had to be in place.

6.2.2 Some witnesses stressed that a key role in the future for the



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

- 6.2.5 Another stated that the key benefit of the BSP was the provision of the only forum which brings together the key policy makers in the city. It enables collaboration to take place which otherwise would not happen.
- 6.2.6 The view was also expressed that the BSP should provide a framework to consolidate and make best use of the budgets held by the various partner organisations (approximately £5bn). However, it was felt that it had become preoccupied with NRF (£22m).
- 6.2.7 It was pointed out to us that the BSP should be the place where the difficult issues across the city can be discussed and more importantly acted upon. It was felt that there had been little reflection by the BSP on how our services can be transformed to narrow the gap between different communities and areas across Birmingham. This is a priority for the future of the city and bigger than just the accountability for the NRF.
- 6.2.8 The Councillors who responded to this question in our survey generally had an understanding of the reasons for which the partnership exists. They saw these as being to bring together the key agencies in the city and to coordinate partnership activities. One Councillor (w









Birmingham Strategic Partnership

6.7 Voluntary and Community Sector



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

6.8 Accountability and Transparency

6.8.1 We received a number of suggestions as to how the accountability and transparency of the BSP could be improved. These are outlined below:

- One witness felt a code of conduct should be put in place so that when, for example, the Board discussed the allocation of funding, Board members would be required to declare any interest. In addition it was thought it might be helpful to adopt a protocol to regulate members' behaviour at meetings.
- Another felt that the Chairman of the partnership and or the Cabinet Members on the BSP should be in a position to answer questions at City Council meetings in terms of giving account for the BSP back into the City Council.
- It was also suggested that transparency could be improved by the production of an annual report.
- All witnesses agreed that the BSP sh
-
-
-
-



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

6.9 Comparison with the Core Cities

- 6.9.1 The following is a summary of the characteristics of LSPs operating within other Core Cities which we have used to compare with the BSP to identify best practice.

Structures

- 6.9.2 Most of the Core Cities' Strategic Partnerships have fairly complicated and multi-layered structures. However, they ultimately tend to have similar elements to the Birmingham model with a core group or board, thematic groups and links into local areas. Some, in addition, have an executive group which ma



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

Relationships between City Level and Local Area Structures

- 6.9.11 There is some variety between the cities, but all of them have either established or are seeking to develop links with the local areas. Sheffield has Area Action Panels which have delegated authority to spend Neighbourhood Renewal Funds. Leeds has five District Partnerships with their own boards and a degree of autonomy where decision making is concerned, although they do not control NRF. It is envisaged that they will inform decisions regarding NRF in the future via their involvement in the Leeds Regeneration Plan. Manchester also seems to be working to develop stronger links between their thematic and area based structures, particularly in the development of local plans.

Frequency of Meetings/Open to the Public

- 6.9.12 Bristol and Sheffield allow public admittance to their meetings. The other five Core Cities hold their partnership meetings in private. Timing of board meetings varies from monthly to as little as four or five times a year.
- 6.9.13 In addition, members of the public in Sheffield are able to attend the partnership meetings as observers for the first two hours. They cannot join in but are invited to submit question cards after the meeting.

Transparency

- 6.9.14 All of the Partnerships have websites where information on the partnership along with documents, papers, minutes or summaries of meetings can be accessed. Liverpool's website has a dedicated promotion and publicity page which contains information about conferences and other events and press articles. It also invites the public to give feedback via a dedicated email address. Sheffield has an online newsletter.
- 6.9.15





7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

7.1.1 In summary, we believe that that the BSP can and should be a useful body for promoting partnership working and cross agency and cross sector cooperation in the City (or as one witness called it "a Chief Executives Club"). However, it needs to be sharpened up in a number of ways. Our recommendations are set out below in more detail but broadly cover the following themes.

- Developing a more strategic role.
- Regularly reviewing core membership.
- Promoting greater transparency through the development of a communications strategy and the adoption of partnership protocols.
- Enhancing accountability.

7.2 s Developing a more ~~clear~~

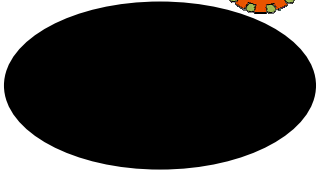


Birmingham Strategic Partnership

- 7.2.3 We recognise that real partnership working takes time to become embedded and this has been and continues to be a challenge for the BSP and indeed for the City Council. Work is currently underway through the commissioning of a Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor to assist the Partnership to explore how to develop the future operation of the BSP and its relationship with the District Partnerships. We welcome this development and therefore have refrained from making specific recommendations on this matter.
- 7.2.4 The BSP has the potential to be the place where the difficult issues across the city can be discussed and acted upon but from what we heard the administration of the Neighbourhood Renewal Funding has taken up so much time and energy it has pushed the more long term strategic issues down the agenda. We believe it is essential that the BSP is now able to give some time to workin

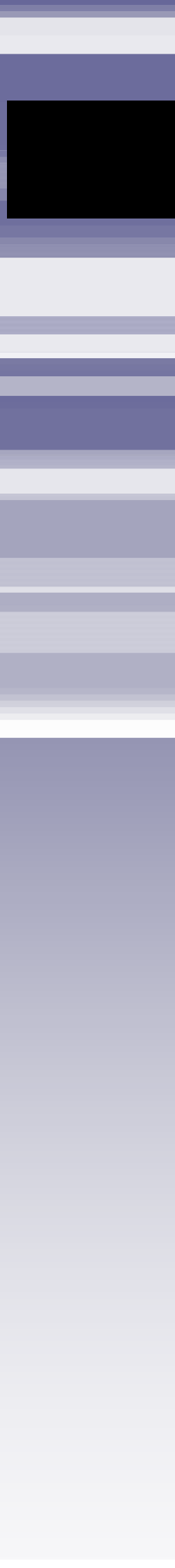


Birmingham Strategic Partnership



Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
should be Council led.		

7.3





Birmingham Strategic Partnership

7.5 Transparency

7.5.1 The definition of transparency we used was based upon the degree to which anyone who has dealings with the BSP can easily determine;

- Who is responsible for decisions and;
-





Birmingham Strategic Partnership

- 7.5.13 Transparency and ultimately public accountability can be aided by the provision of a comprehensive and detailed action plan for the LSP being produced which sets out who is responsible for what and when. This allows local people to track progress made in implementing the LSP work programme.

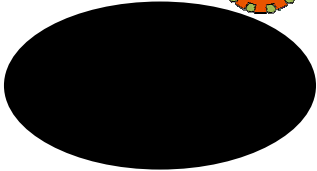


Birmingham Strategic Partnership

7.5.14 In addition, written and oral questions can be asked at Council



Birmingham Strategic Partnership







8 Appendix 1 Relevant Research

Introduction

- 8.1.1 Alongside the national policy context we wanted to examine what other research or reviews had been carried out to explore the realis.46a



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

8.1.7 Members wished to see an end to the contradicti

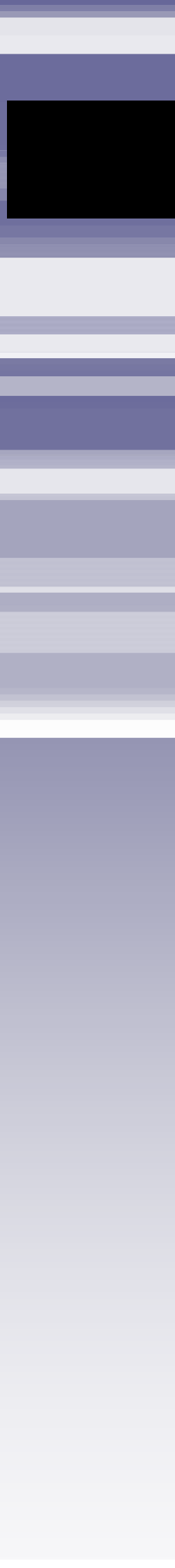


Birmingham Strategic Partnership



Birmingham Strategic Partnership

- 8.1.14 LSPs are also charged with being strategic and action focused. Several of the London LSPs saw this as contradictory and therefore a dilemma. This can sometimes be addressed by the structure whereby the board deal





9 Appendix 2 Questionnaire sent to City Councillors

- 9.1.1 What do you think is the main role of the Birmingham Strategic Partnership (BSP)?
- 9.1.2 How do you currently relate to the Birmingham Strategic Partnership if at all? E.g. attend partnership meetings, involved with wider family or partnerships, attend District Partnership meetings?
- 9.1.3 How well and in what ways are you informed about the BSP activities both on a Strategic and District basis? E.g. attend meetings, view website, and see minutes or briefings / newsletters.
- 9.1.4 In what ways are you able to engage with or influence it at a District or Strategic level?
- 9.1.5 What is the relationship between the BSP and your District Strategic Partnership?
- 9.1.6 How do the Ward Advisory Boards and Ward Committees link in?
- 9.1.7 Are there ways in which the Partnership could be made more transparent/accountable at both Citywide/District level?
- 9.1.8 Do you have any other comments you would like to share with the Committee?



S





Birmingham Strategic Partnership