

# **Review of Area Management Boards**

Hastings, East Sussex

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# 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The four Area Management Boards (AMBs) were set up in 2006, and this review comes after a year of operation. A very collaborative process has been used in the review, including a survey and a cross-AMB event.
- 1.2 The AMBs bring together local people, elected members and senior managers from service providers, and are supported by the Area Coordination Team. This multi-agency approach should ensure a local fit and more efficient and effective service delivery, to help make the biggest impact on improving the quality of life for local people
- 1.3 National policy appears to be building on previous changes rather than striking in a radically new direction and reflects a more consensual approach. Local Area Agreements (LAAs) will still be the key delivery plan agreed between local areas and the government, and national guidance is being updated. The Comprehensive Spending Review for 2008-2011 will lead to a tougher financial settlement. Neighbourhood Renewal funding (NRF) ends in March 2008. The Government has explicitly said that any similar new funding will have a stronger emphasis on tackling worklessness, promoting enterprise and improving skills.
- 1.4 There is a need for a more focussed role for AMBs, and it is suggested that their focus be to:
  - develop a local voice to influence key services and local decisions
  - influence the LAA to reflect local needs (which should be reflected in the Area Delivery Plan)
  - monitor the delivery of the Area Delivery Plan and performance against the local outcomes in the LAA
  - identify local operational issues
- 1.5 AMBs are valued but also have the potential to deliver more. They bring people together to promote networking and provide an exceptional platform for multi-agency working to tackle complex issues. Criticisms of the way agendas have been structured and information presented, and this report identifies a number of ways this can readily be addressed.

- 1.6** There is currently some excellent evidence at the local level being collected and presented, crucial for performance management and developing the LAA. Good practice suggests that this could be done effectively at a corporate level by Hastings Borough Council (HBC).
- 1.7** Although the current AMB performance management arrangements have been quite powerful and provided a lot of useful information, there is a need for a simpler 'traffic lights' style and to re-emphasise the exception reporting approach. The Area Coordinator and the Area Champion should assume a more direct role on performance management on behalf of the AMB. Since there does not appear to be a joined up approach to performance management generally, HBC's Overview & Scrutiny (Resources) Committee should review the performance management arrangements for the LAA and the associated service monitoring. Similarly East Sussex County Council (ESCC) could consider a shared approach to performance management for the LAA with district councils and with other key public service partners.
- 1.8** There is widespread agreement that the Multi-Agency Task Teams (MATTs) are successful at dealing with local 'crime and grime' issues. The main criticism was about providing feedback, so it is proposed that in future separate quarterly briefing meetings are held in each Area with local councillors and accredited community representatives.
- 1.9** The report also highlights the need for the AMBs to have clear structural links with the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), Theme Groups, the CEN, HBC and the ESCC. This might enhance the democratic process.
- 1.10** With a tighter public funding settlement and continuing uncertainty about any replacement of Neighbourhood Renewal funding, there is a need for public service partners to jointly review their area-related arrangements, as well as other partnership arrangements, to maximise the efficient use of available resources. Alongside this a new framework for AMB meetings is proposed, which provides better strategic contributions and opportunities for wider community engagement, and gives MATTs a distinct platform.
- 1.11** Community participation is a critical element of the work of the AMBs, and the report highlights the need for this to be supported. Options are presented for appointing community representatives. Again in anticipation of tighter public

funding, it is proposed that each Area carries out an audit and review of resources. Also HBC's O&S (Resources) Committee is recommended to review overall communications with the community, along with the sharing of information between partners.

- 1.12** The report sets out suggestions for a package of training and support for AMB members

## 2. Introduction

**2.1** The four AMBs were set up in 2006, and cover the whole of Hastings & St Leonards. They were a development from the previous Local Management Boards which were responsible for smaller priority areas supported by Neighbourhood Renewal funding.

**2.2** The AMBs bring together local people, elected members and senior managers from service providers. They aim to shape services (e.g. location, access, or type of service) to respond effectively by:

- § overseeing the performance of Area Delivery Plans,
- § sharing information about major area developments and
- § providing local and specialist knowledge to better understand the needs of these specific communities and neighbourhoods.

This multi-agency approach should ensure a local fit and more efficient and effective service delivery, and help make the biggest impact on improving the quality of life for local people.

**2.3** There was a commitment to review the new AMBs after a year's operation, and it has been agreed to link this with a similar review by Hastings' Overview & Scrutiny (Resources) Committee.

**2.4** The brief was to facilitate a self evaluation of AMBs by members, and in particular to look at:

- § Fitness to pursue the neighbourhood agenda.
- § How well they empower communities and neighbourhoods to engage in local decision-making.
- § Their relevance to performance managing the outcomes of the LAA with a local focus within the Area Delivery Plans.
- § Whether they are developing a strategic approach to place shaping and other local issues.
- § How they should relate to Council structures and the LSP.
- § How members should be selected in future years.
- § What further support/training members is needed.

## **3. Methodology**

- 3.1** There have been six main steps to carrying out this review:
- (1) Desk top review of AMB agenda papers
  - (2) Observation of AMB meetings and the East Hastings Education Conference
  - (3) Interviews range of key individuals including AMB Chairs and the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny (Resources) Committee
  - (4) Survey of AMB members and associated staff
  - (5) Cross-AMB event to discuss provisional findings and consider suggestions for change
  - (6) Final Report
- 3.2** The willingness of participants to be both forthcoming and constructive has greatly aided the process and to developing ideas. The cross-AMB event on the 6<sup>th</sup> September 2007 has played a pivotal role in drawing up the recommendations in this report.

## **4 National Context**

- 4.1** National policy appears to be building on previous changes rather than striking in a radically new direction and reflects a more consensual approach. LAAs (Local Area Agreements - see diagram at Appendix A) will still be the key delivery plan agreed between local areas and the government, but they are being refined with their number of targets greatly reduced (down from a national list of 200-plus to 35 local targets, plus 18 specific local education targets). These targets may be augmented by some 'spatial tags' (specific targets for particular deprived neighbourhoods), but no detail is yet available. Another change is that the funding attached to the LAA will no longer be restricted to specific thematic blocks, although the four themes will remain as a guide to ensure the full range of national priorities are properly considered. Theme Groups can still be a powerful tool for joint business planning and joining up service delivery.
- 4.2** LAA negotiations start at the local level, led by the local authority in its capacity as the community leader with its local democratic mandate. The LSP will have

a central role in convening discussions between local partners and ensuring local priorities have been developed with the involvement of local communities. For Hastings the county LSP continues to be the lead for the LAA (at present there is no coercion for two-tier local authority areas to become unitary, although there has been encouragement for those areas which volunteer).

- 4.3** Local authorities are to take the lead role in 'place-shaping'. When the detailed government guidance is produced later in 2007, a better understanding of this will be possible, including the distinctive local authority roles in two-tier areas. They will also be given an increased role in the development, agreement and scrutiny of Regional Strategies and performance of RDAs (Regional Development Agencies) to ensure improved value for money and effectiveness in increasing economic growth.
- 4.4** The Comprehensive Spending Review for 2008-2011 was announced in early October. It will lead to a tougher financial settlement. Although the current Neighbourhood Renewal funding regime will probably end, nationally there is likely to be further funding targeted on a smaller number of deprived areas but Hastings' position is not yet known. The Government has explicitly said that the new funding will have a stronger emphasis on tackling worklessness, promoting enterprise and improving skills, and will include a reward element to strengthen incentives to improve performance.



## **5 Role of Area Management Boards**

- 5.1** The purpose of the AMBs lists six points in their terms of reference:
- (1) Oversee, monitor and performance manage the delivery of the Area Delivery Plan
  - (2) Provide a mechanism for the community to engage with key public service deliverers and have an input in decisions affecting service delivery in their neighbourhoods
  - (3) Extend good practice from Neighbourhood Renewal (including the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder)
  - (4) Improve public service delivery across the area, with particular focus on “narrowing the gap” between the worst performing neighbourhoods and the rest
  - (5) Work towards eliminating deprivation and disadvantage
  - (6) Co-ordinate service delivery at a local level

Although they all appear worthy they are not necessarily of equal importance. There is also a lack of clarity about the balance between operational and strategic focus.

- 5.2** The survey of AMB members (see Appendix B for a summary of the results) provides a clearer view. The most important role was ‘Developing a local voice to influence key services and local decisions’ (particularly strongly supported by councillors generally and the East Hastings AMB), followed by ‘Influencing the LAA to reflect local needs’. ‘Performance management of local outcomes in the LAA’ and ‘Identifying local operational problems’ were ranked next.

- 5.3** The first part of the guidance on LAAs for 2008-09 has been published, with more to follow. It states: “For two-tier areas, the duty in the Local Government Act 2000 to produce a Community Strategy applies to district and county councils.... Although LAAs will be agreed at county level, they should reflect the Community Strategies of districts and counties”. It also advises that all councillors should be involved in providing knowledge of local areas to inform and feed into the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA. Reflecting the county’s crucial role, it is very important that ESCC contributes to Hastings’ Sustainable Community Strategy and has robust linkages at the local level. This could build on the current arrangements, including the role of local county councillors.

- 5.4** There was also some interest in the new 'place-shaping' role, but it is difficult to develop this until detailed guidance is provided by the government. As well as being involved in the local outcomes of the LAA, community members were keen to continue developing and monitoring the Area Delivery Plan (ADP).
- 5.5** The lack of any formal relationship between the AMBs and either Hastings' or the county LSPs and their Theme Groups makes it difficult to completely resolve the AMB role. This omission is partially mitigated by various individuals being on a range of bodies but the lack of an overall framework needs to be addressed. In part this difficulty may relate to the current Hastings' LSP arrangements and purpose, in which case this should also be reviewed. Some Theme Groups were seen as being more important than Hastings' LSP because of their greater impact on the planning and performance of services, which reflects the national experience for New Deal for Communities.
- 5.6** HBC is represented on the AMBs by councillors and the Area Champions, but there are no formal reporting arrangements back to the council. Notes of meetings should be reported to the Cabinet with any substantial issues that require consideration by HBC, ESCC or the LSPs highlighted by the Area Champion (with a separate report if appropriate). These notes could also be received by HBC's O&S (Resources) Committee.
- 5.7** It is therefore recommended that:
- (1) The primary role of the AMBs is redefined as follows:
    - (a) Develop a local voice to influence key services and local decisions
    - (b) Influence the LAA to reflect local needs (which should be reflected in the Area Delivery Plan)
    - (c) Monitor the delivery of the Area Delivery Plan and the performance against local outcomes in the LAA
    - (d) Identify local operational problems
  - (2) HBC and ESCC jointly review how ESCC contributes to developing Hastings' Sustainable Community Strategy.
  - (3) The AMBs have explicit roles on behalf of Hastings' LSP and Theme Groups, for them to contribute to the development of Hastings' Sustainable Community Strategy and to the performance management of the LAA.

- (4) Notes of meetings should be reported to the Cabinet with any substantial issues that require consideration by HBC, ESCC or the LSP highlighted by the Area Champion.
- (5) Further consideration be given to the 'place shaping' role once government guidance becomes available.

## **6 Effectiveness of AMB Meetings**

- 6.1** AMBs are appreciated but also have the potential to deliver more (e.g. local scrutiny of services and place-shaping). They bring people together to promote networking and provide an exceptional platform for multi-agency working to tackle complex issues. Community representatives are able to develop relationships with local councillors and service providers, and local councillors are able to be directly involved with a range of services working together. AMBs are also valued by service providers (e.g. police because of information exchange and networking, Health for understanding local barriers) and promote accountability for service performance at a local level. It is developing a local voice for all parties.
- 6.2** It is good practice for partnership bodies to have a simple agreed code for all regular members, similar to a standards protocol or the school governors' model. As the AMBs develop their role this will become increasingly important.
- 6.3** There are criticisms of the way agendas have been structured and information presented, e.g. "bogged down in figures", "talked at", and "like being back at school". Essentially the agendas have been too long, with too much paper, long presentations and overly detailed statistics. This has not left enough time for discussion and there has been insufficient focus on decisions and action to drive change. Mostly this can be readily addressed.
- 6.4** It is therefore recommended that:
  - (1) Consideration is given to developing a 'standards protocol' for AMBs.
  - (2) Agenda planning meetings involve the Chair, a community representative (possibly as Vice-Chair), the Area Coordinator and the HBC champion.

- (3) Agendas deal with fewer items focused on one or two main thematic discussions, be timed, and reports be shorter. To include an item to identify onward reporting to HBC, ESCC, the LSPs or Theme Groups where they can be requested to initiate a change or stimulate improvement in performance.
- (4) Information items (i.e. requiring no decision) should not be included on the agenda for discussion but listed at the end of the agenda under an 'information only' heading. (Anyone with individual queries on an information item should either speak directly to the partner concerned or if they want to raise a query at the meeting they should ask the chair before the meeting starts.)
- (5) Report papers to be circulated well before the meeting (at least 5 working days), with officer contact details for queries.
- (6) Under the information section, provide a news item where partners can contribute short pieces on progress, service and personnel changes, new developments and local news. (This could be based on an electronic message board which partners would be able to use.)
- (7) Minutes are condensed to action/decision lists (with names against actions).
- (8) Partners given a maximum of 5-10 minutes for routine presentations or exceptionally 15 minutes for a major agenda item. The Chair to enforce this robustly (a time keeper could be designated if required).
- (9) A simple 'traffic lights' approach for performance management is used, with the relevant partner providing a short exception report where required (see paragraph 7.2 below).
- (10) Where there is a specific thematic presentation or discussion, the general presumption should be that evidence is provided to ward level only (with SOA level evidence available on a website) unless the SOA information is of critical concern. It should be accompanied by the lead partner's assessment/analysis and any decisions/actions recommended.
- (11) AMBs are large meetings, and sometimes it may be helpful to break into smaller groups for discussion of major topics, then to feed back. (See also chapter 9.)

## **7 Evidence and Performance Management**

- 7.1** Some excellent evidence at the local level has been collected and presented with the function located within the NR Team, and there has been strong cooperation and coordination with non-council partners. This evidence is critical to accurate performance management, and should be used in developing both the Area Delivery Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy. Good practice elsewhere suggests that this function could be done at a corporate level (important now that the NR Research Officer has left), but there must be a robust neighbourhood focus, down to SOA level wherever appropriate, and reliable production with proper accountability to the AMB.
- 7.2** Although the current performance management arrangements have been quite powerful and provided a lot of useful information, it has sometimes been too detailed for AMB meetings. Often attendees have felt ‘talked at’ rather than engaged in performance scrutiny and problem-solving. There is a need for a simpler ‘traffic lights’ style and to re-emphasise the exception reporting approach (for instance 3-4 paragraphs for each exception, explaining what the failure is, what the problem has been, what is being done, and what if any advice or decisions are required from the AMB). A standard format should be used. Together with the Area Coordinator, the Area Champion should assume a direct role on performance management on behalf of the AMB.
- 7.3** Service planning by HBC, ESCC and other public services should demonstrate linkages to the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA, including addressing local inequalities in achieving outcomes. From interviews there does not appear to be a joined up approach to performance management, for instance some service performance management systems do not appear to be integrated with performance management arrangements for the LAA. Given the government is shortly going to be providing a new performance management framework for LAAs, it is suggested that HBC’s O&S (Resources) Committee might wish to review this and promote the development of a common system within Hastings. There is a wider role for ESCC which could take the lead on developing performance management

arrangements for the LAA with district councils and with other key public service partners. Longer-term efficiency savings might be attainable.

- 7.4** It is therefore recommended that:
- (1) HBC considers a robust corporate approach to collecting and providing evidence for AMBs to use.
  - (2) The performance management reporting across Hastings be simplified and an exception reporting approach used, with fuller details being provided through a website.
  - (3) ESCC should consider performance management arrangements for the LAA and how district councils and with other key public service partners could develop a shared approach.
  - (4) Together with the Area Coordinator, the Area Champion should assume a direct role on performance management on behalf of the AMB.
  - (5) HBC's O&S (Resources) Committee should examine how service planning is linked to the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA, how it reflects local inequalities and how the performance management arrangements for the LAA are linked to service monitoring.

## **8 Multi-Agency Task Teams (MATTs)**

- 8.1** There is widespread agreement that the MATTs are very successful at dealing with operational issues, particularly local 'crime and grime' issues, and also extends to joint interventions for young people 'at risk' and their families. This view is shared by service deliverers (who see the increased benefit of working together to tackle local issues), by local communities (who see local problems with nuisance, graffiti and the condition of the public realm being addressed more effectively), and by local councillors (who often assemble a range of complex problems at their surgeries which can be difficult to pass on for action). The workload of the MATTs is problem-driven and therefore usually concentrated in the areas of highest need, but they address problems anywhere in the Area.

- 8.2** At present the MATTs make short reports to AMB meetings, which can mean that AMBs get caught up in individual or basic operational issues rather than engaging more strategically to influence service planning. This limits the value of AMB meetings for the MATTs. Also there are often duplicated meetings with related SIGs (special interest groups).
- 8.3** As the NR Team has extended its responsibilities to Area Coordination, the role of the PAPOs (Priority Area Project Officers) in progressing practical solutions and being out on location as much as possible is essential to help ensure that the problems in priority areas are given sufficient attention. It is important that Area Coordinators and PAPOs continue to work together in an integrated way to 'narrow the gap' for deprived areas.
- 8.4** There are three particular challenges for the MATTs:
- How to improve information to local communities about the responses to reported problems. (It has to be done in a way that preserves individual confidentiality and yet is easily accessible and up-to-date.)
  - How to receive and manage referrals from local councillors and communities. (It has to avoid being bureaucratic but robust enough to ensure that feedback can be given.) A guide is to be produced.
  - How to merge ward policing plans with MATT programmes. (This reflects the proposal to integrate Neighbourhood Policing with Neighbourhood Management in the interim report of the 'Review of Policing' by Sir Ronnie Flanagan.)
- 8.5** It is therefore recommended that:
- (1) The monthly anonymised reports continue to be collated and circulated by the PAPO/Area Coordinator to local councillors and accredited community representatives.
  - (2) Separate quarterly briefing meetings are held in each Area with local councillors and accredited community representatives, involving key members from the MATTs (e.g. the PAPO, the police and major housing providers).
  - (3) The MATTs play a central role in the suggested annual February open event for each AMB, promoting wider community engagement.
  - (4) Area Coordinators jointly review the SIGs.
  - (5) The work of Area Coordination and the PAPOs continues to be closely integrated.
  - (6) Ward policing plans be directly linked with MATT programmes.

## **9 Framework for Future AMB Meetings**

- 9.1** To be effective and worthwhile, AMBs need the direct involvement of senior managers like the Area Champions, and effective support so that information is provided to take decisions and then actions pursued. Much of the support for AMBs is dependent on the Area Coordination Team, which has four main functions:
- (1) Supporting networking, relationship building and joint working between providers at the local level
  - (2) Promoting greater involvement of local people in decision making and consultation about services, and supporting local councillors' local democratic role.
  - (3) Identifying local problems, communicating these to providers and pursuing joined up solutions.
  - (4) Targeting services on local needs, particularly neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation.
- 9.2** The support arrangements for the AMBs are largely NRF funded, which is due to end in March 2008. (This funding issue similarly affects Hastings' LSP support.) The Comprehensive Spending Review for 2008-11 has not yet detailed any successor funding arrangements.
- 9.3** Various partners already contribute resources to support area management indirectly (or to parallel arrangements, e.g. MATT briefings, Neighbourhood Policing meetings and SIGs). Partners, especially public service partners, will need to jointly consider the funding implications if Hastings does not receive further deprivation-related funding. For instance both the police and Health have recognised the value of AMBs to their services. It may be possible to partially bridge any funding gap by streamlining arrangements and efficiency savings, mainstreaming some of the functions (e.g. research and performance management), linking area management to other initiatives (e.g. LEGL funding and Millennium Communities) and a more joined up approach (e.g. MATT programmes and policing plans). This suggests a joint review of relevant organisational arrangements is needed.



**9.4** The membership of AMBs is quite numerous (20-plus members) which could make discussion and decision-making at AMB meetings unwieldy. However the general view was that the need for inclusiveness and engagement was an overriding consideration. Some detailed comments were made about the nature of the community membership (see Section 10) but in general the status quo was supported. The recommendations in this section and in Section 6 are designed to offset the difficulties of a large AMB membership.

**9.5** The following options for future AMB meetings have been developed, and reflect the feedback from the cross-AMB event and individual discussions:

**Option 1**

Continue with current style of meetings (subject to improvements set out in Section 6 of this report). To meet three or four times a year.

**Option 2**

Continue with current style of meetings (subject to improvements set out in Section 6 of this report) but with separate short quarterly pre-AMB meetings (MATT-led) to brief local councillors and community representatives and to log issues.

**Option 3**

Annual cycle of 4 events for each AMB along the following approach:

1. Annual performance review and future Area priorities and opportunities. [½-day, May/June]
2. Thematic event co-hosted by LSP theme group and an AMB. This might take the form of a working group or a conference, depending on circumstances and the AMB's capacity. HBC's O&S (Resources) Committee should be involved. (The East Hastings Education Conference and the annual Community Safety event are possible models.) Themes to change AMB partner annually. [Up to 1-day, early September]
3. AMB Board to hold 6-monthly performance review meeting. [October/November]
4. Open event/conference plus workshops with a focus on local communities and service deliverers, to look at how local services are working together, what the local issues are and problem solving. To incorporate into the Area Delivery Plan. MATT teams (with police) to play a central role. [February]

- 9.6** It is therefore recommended that:
- (1) Partners jointly review their area-related arrangements along with their wider partnership arrangements, and consider how to maximise the efficient use of available resources through a joined up approach.
  - (2) A new framework for AMB meetings be adopted as follows:
    - (a) Option 2 be adopted from November 2007.
    - (b) Option 3 be adopted from February 2008.
    - (c) Performance management information be circulated quarterly to AMB members, irrespective of AMB meetings, with the Area Coordinator and HBC Champion responsible for convening special meetings if urgent problems are identified and not readily resolved.

## **10 Community Engagement**

- 10.1** Effective engagement of communities is important to all parties. The government requires evidence of community involvement in developing the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA. Delivering some of the outcomes in the LAA (e.g. health and community safety) is only achievable with the active participation of communities. Target 11 of Hastings' own Community Strategy is to increase voluntary and community sector activity (including community participation) by 5% by 2013. This has been underpinned by a model of supporting community activity based on the government's 'Firm Foundations' model, and completing the current audit in each area will help inform decision-making.
- 10.2** Community representation from the priority areas in particular is generally both experienced and entrenched in established arrangements, but community representation and engagement arrangements need to be regularly refreshed. This requires that some community development and capacity building should continue, and with the possible end of NRF funding, the support for building community capacity and for the community forums is at risk. However each area has its own range of funded community support arrangements (e.g. The Bridge) and of funding streams (e.g. housing associations). Also local councillors often play a crucial role in supporting and nurturing their communities. It is recommended that each Area carries out an audit of local community support and its funding sources, and then discusses how to best

rationalise and use the available resources. The Ore Valley Forum has recently started to do this.

- 10.3** The current arrangements for appointing community representatives from the priority wards to the AMBs are based on previous representational structures (Neighbourhood Forums and the Greater Hollington Pathfinder), and need updating. One option is to advertise one of the two representative places per ward each year and then appoint through an interview. Another option is to seek nominees directly from Forums and Residents Associations (direct community elections would place too heavy a burden on restricted budgets). It might be appropriate to coordinate the appointment of community representatives with the appointment of AMB Chairs. As the Chairs are local councillors, this could also be coordinated with the start of the municipal year. It is good practice for all members on partnership bodies to sign up to a standards protocol.
- 10.4** In at least one AMB there was no regular representation from the non-priority part of the area, but there were volunteers from the priority neighbourhood within the area and the suggestion was made that in those circumstances an interim representative could be appointed from the priority part.
- 10.5** It was also commented that the selection of community representatives to the LSP was not rigorous enough (although community representation on LSPs is required, national experience is that effective Theme Groups can be a more valuable forum). Here the link between the CEN and the AMB community representatives needs to be strengthened, possibly by providing places on the CEN for at least one representative from each AMB. Whilst the focus on community representation for AMBs should be locality, there might be value in an umbrella organisation having a place so as to be able to report back and make appropriate linkages where required with 'communities of interest or identity'.
- 10.6** The regular AMB meetings afford only a limited opportunity to directly engage a wider section of the community. The proposed new framework for AMB meetings (Section 9) enables much more community participation in major events, and provides opportunities for both public services and Theme Groups to exploit.

- 10.7** A number of interviewees raised the issue of representatives of single issue groups being invited to take a full part in AMB meetings. Apart from potentially undermining the formal community representatives, there were complaints of undue time at the meetings being given over to narrowly based one-to-one discussions with specific senior officers. Whilst this report proposes a new framework for AMBs which promotes a wider community involvement, it is recommended that general participation in ordinary business meetings is not extended beyond the prescribed community representation unless there is a formal motion for co-option. (Co-option could also be used for other bodies like local schools and businesses where appropriate.)
- 10.8** Community representatives are volunteers, and may have limited personal resources. They play a very important role in AMBs (and elsewhere), so it is crucial that they should be refunded any associated expenses, and provided with training and with the tools to do their job, e.g. e-mails and printing agenda documents, etc. It is recommended that there is a clear support package available to them.
- 10.9** Good two-way communications is the life blood of strong community engagement. This not only applies to the AMBs, but also the LSPs and Theme Groups, and it has to extend beyond designated representative structures to the community at large. Not only is a realistic communications strategy needed, but also a practical plan for giving effect to it. Many of the partners have their own communication resources and arrangements. It is recommended that HBC's O&S (Resources) Committee look at this issue, along with the sharing of information between partners. Again the Ore Valley Forum is looking at this for its own purposes.
- 10.10** It is therefore recommended that:
- (1) Each Area carries out an audit of local community support and its funding sources, and then discusses how to best rationalise and use the available resources.
  - (2) New arrangements for appointing community representatives to AMBs be agreed.
  - (3) At least one representative from each AMB should be a member of the CEN.
  - (4) General participation in ordinary AMB business meetings is not extended beyond the prescribed community representation unless there is formal co-

option, and that co-option is extended where appropriate to local schools and businesses.

- (5) Consideration be given to providing one place on each AMB for an umbrella organisation so as to be able make appropriate linkages where required with 'communities of interest or identity'.
- (6) There is a clear support package available for community representatives on the AMBs.
- (7) It is recommended that the O&S (Resources) Committee review communications with the community, along with the sharing of information between partners.

## **11 Training and Support**

**11.1** The suggestions for training and support fall into four broad categories:

- Briefing / information sessions
- Team events
- Individual training opportunities
- Support arrangements.

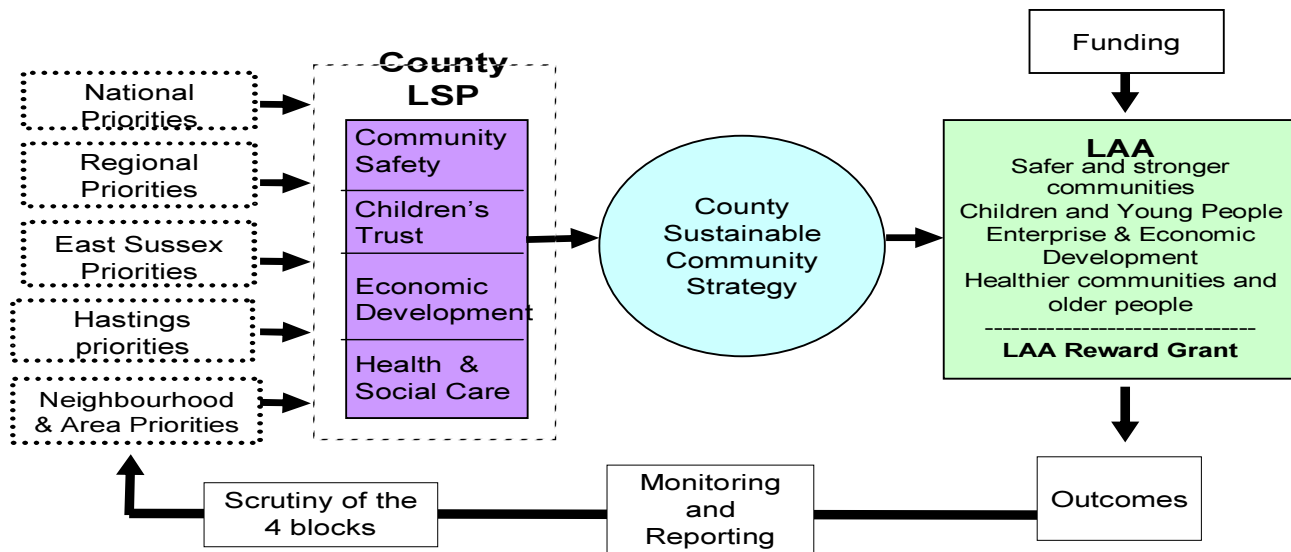
**11.2** It is suggested that a programme of periodic briefing sessions be held on suitable topics, e.g. MATTs, LEGI, LAA process, performance management, place shaping, and partner organisations. These can be aimed at AMB members and staff from partner organisations. Depending on demand, they could be repeated at different times of day to suit different constituencies. They should be short (no more than 1 hour including time for questions) and provide suitable summary handouts, and can be accompanied by simple refreshments (e.g. sandwiches or tea and biscuits).

**11.3** Team events are good for both team building and creative working on bigger issues. It could help to identify solutions to complex issue as well as promote a more decision oriented approach to meetings. An annual event for each AMB might be a regular feature.

- 11.4** Access to external training courses can be provided to AMB members, and a budget allocated to the Area Coordinator for community representatives. It is suggested that access to external courses should be linked to a personal development plan. There should also be an induction course for new members, perhaps linked to an optional 'buddy' system.
- 11.5** A number of support suggestions were also made, including:
- Web-site to refer to.
  - Designated ESCC Champion as contact for County Councillors on AMB matters.
  - Regular AMB slot on HBC's induction course for new staff.
  - Pre-meeting 'walk-through' of reports with community members.
- 11.6** It is therefore recommended that a package of training and support is developed in line with this section.

# APPENDIX A

## Local Area Agreement Framework



3

**Note:** - Hastings priorities based on its own Sustainable Community Strategy.

# Appendix B

## Summary of AMB Survey Results

### 24 surveys returned:

Councillors	9	Central	4
Community	7	East	9
HBC Officers	5	South	5
ESCC Officers	2	North	5
Other	1	None	2

Note - One person surveyed was a member of both East and North AMBs, and not all responses ranked all the options

### Qu - Ranking of AMB tasks

	Task	Ranking of Choice		
		First	Second	Third
1	Developing a local voice to influence key services and local decisions	12	3	6
2	Influencing the Local Area Agreement (LAA) to reflect local needs	5	5	4
3	Performance management of local outcomes in the LAA	1	5	7
4	Identifying local operational problems	2	4	5
5	Place shaping	1	4	2
6	Communications	2	1	0

One respondent ranked other choices as first (exception monitoring the ADP) and second (approving changes to the ADP.) and one comment was received:

*Communication is obviously important but is it really a task of the AMB – surely it is encompassed in the identification of local issues (one can't do so without communication) and all other tasks. There has to be an additional mechanism for communication to ensure that the AMB is truly reflecting the needs of the wider community. '*



### **Qu - What works well at the AMB?**

Good cross-sector attendance, networking opportunities

- § *Multi-agency approach to issues raised and solution focussed*
- § *Forum for improved communication*

Information sharing, presentations and reports from senior officers

- § *Good debate cross-sectors based on data provided*
- § *Identifying service performance both good and poor*
- § *Discussing and debating issues never discussed elsewhere*
- § *Reasonably consistent reporting across activities*
- § *Good contribution from key agencies*

Community engagement

- § *Opportunity to represent views of local residents and traders*
- § *Gives local people a voice*

Focal point for area management

- § *Tracking how interventions are benefiting local area*
- § *Exception monitoring of area delivery plan*
- § *Drilling down to performance on detailed issues at SOA level*
- § *Potential to become a major influence in decision making within each area*
- § *Roles of Champion and Area Co-ordinator*
- § *Understanding of bigger picture with regard to local issues*
- § *East Education Conference*

### **Qu - What would improve AMB?**

Meeting arrangements

- § *Breaking up into smaller groups/areas of interest*
- § *More input from Champion*
- § *Table reports in advance and make all paperwork available 10 days ahead as agreed*
- § *Agenda shaped to decision making and actions pertinent to local community with measures in place to address issues*
- § *More structured timed agendas*
- § *Simpler agenda as too much addressed at each meeting*
- § *More opportunities for informal networking within or outside meetings*
- § *Real dialogue about shared solutions to identified issues rather than questioning of officers by Board*
- § *Dates set well in advance and not changed*
- § *More effective chairing and keeping to timed agenda*

- § Consider rotation of Chairmanship of meetings to engender sense of equitable partnership since AMB Chairs do not influence direction or exercise responsibility/authority between meetings
- § Better templates for agencies to use in reporting
- § AMBs to adopt GHP Board model – code of conduct for meetings and supportive challenge to deliver clear concise local objectives and continuity between meetings
- § More focused and less discursive contributions from members at meetings
- § Consider a complete change from formal committee structure to a more workshop type meeting

#### Community engagement

- § All wards to have active representatives
- § Difficult to sustain in present format
- § Accountability and selection of community members needs more clarity
- § Residents from all wards to be fully aware of what's happening in their neighbourhoods
- § More training and encouragement for community members to enable them to participate more fully (and same for Councillors)
- § Letting wider community attend meetings to voice views and opinions through structured opportunity to ask questions
- § Free up more time for meaningful community involvement/engagement at the meeting
- § Amplify and advocate grassroots initiatives

#### Area delivery plan

- § Draw up ADP to provide narrative of progress with less emphasis on dry statistical feedback
- § NRF and LEGL interventions reported as to impact in area with AMB taking responsibility for oversight
- § AMB becomes more active in setting corrective measures/revised objectives in response to red/amber tags
- § AMB engages in developing changes and enhancements to ADP
- § AMB recommends changes to targets/outcomes in LAA
- § AMB takes ownership of ADP – both LAA activities and actions to meet more local community needs
- § Maintain focus on exception reporting
- § Less formal reporting – questions and highlights only - based on papers sent out in advance

### Membership and Partnership issues

- § More formal and transparent links to other representational structures (LSP, thematic partnerships, HCN, MATTs, Community SIGs)
- § Endeavour to slowly increase ESCC buy in and presence
- § More time getting commitment of agencies as to how they will tackle detailed problems within a specific SOA and holding them to account as to subsequent performance
- § Look at how best each agency can do their part to address local issues within their remits

### Other

- § AMB to have own budget
- § Opportunity to take decisions
- § Wider surveys (not just Citizen's Panel) to gather statistical information
- § Consider open days with displays
- § Summary of each meeting provided within a week for community members and others to pass on to wider community
- § Improved back of house support – officer response and pro-active investigation and analysis of service delivery and local issues
- § Clearer mandate for area co-ordinators to be brokers with stakeholders in achieving smaller tangible steps towards overarching targets

### **Qu - What support or training would help you?**

- § Topic based meetings e.g. education conference
- § Web-site to refer to
- § Training to enable all AMB members to work together, understand roles and responsibilities, identify potential solutions to shared issues
- § Designated ESCC Champion as contact for County Councillors on AMB matters
- § A link with area co-ordinator to support preparation of items for presentation
- § Aims and operation of the LAA
- § Induction for new members
- § Training on place shaping
- § A 'vision' event
- § Not formal training but improved understanding of how other parts of system work e.g. MATTs
- § Information about what the LSP does how it works, who is on it and how AMBs fit in.
- § Briefing to all HBC staff (including Heads of Service) about roles and function of Area Co-ordination and AMBs
- § Regular slot on HBC's induction course for new staff
- § Understanding partner organization and purpose
- § Understanding performance management and indicators

- § *Understanding the difference between talking shops and pro-active meetings*
- § *More detailed understanding of area delivery plan including NRF and LEGI interventions*
- § *Interpretation and use of statistics*
- § *Guidance and encouragement for community members*
- § *Re-introduce 'pre-meeting' walk-through of performance reports with community members and advise service providers of any potential problems so responses can be prepared*
- § *Development of Area Delivery plan with community input*
- § *Empower area Co-ordinators to enforce better respect for local community's ability to problem solve*
- § *Upskill members to be more action plan orientated at meetings*

# Appendix C

## Abbreviations used in report

ADP	Area Delivery Plan
AMB	Area Management Board
ESCC	East Sussex County Council
HBC	Hastings Borough Council
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LEGI	Local Enterprise Growth Initiative
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NR	Neighbourhood Renewal
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
MATTs	Multi-Agency Task Teams
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
O & S	Hastings Borough Council's Overview & Scrutiny (Resources) Committee
PAPOs	Priority Area Project Officers
RDAs	Regional Development Agencies
SIGs	special interest groups
SOA	Super Output Area