



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

**Local Vision**

# **Preparing Community Strategies**

**Consultation Draft**

**Statutory Guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government  
on developing and delivering community strategies**

**August 2007**



## Local Vision - Preparing Community Strategies

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***(Consultation responses must be received by Friday 23 November 2007)***

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#### **Data Protection**

*"The Welsh Assembly Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of its author are published along with the response, as this gives credibility to the consultation exercise. If you do not wish to be identified as the author of your response, please state this expressly in writing to us."*

#### **Acknowledgements**

This consultation guidance has been developed with the help of a wide range of individuals and organisations. We would like to thank:

- External partners (including, the WLGA and local authority practitioners, One Voice Wales, the WCVA, the Environment Agency, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Welsh Language Board) and members of the Community Strategy Task and Finish groups and Community Planning Action Inquiry groups; and
- Policy leads from within the Welsh Assembly Government

# 1. Introduction and Purpose

## Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of the community strategy is to fulfil the statutory duty, placed on local authorities by section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000, to set out how they propose to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas.
- 1.2. To meet this purpose a community strategy should provide a long-term strategy for the whole of a local area and its people. This should provide a vision and future direction for the area, based on a set of ambitions and values, discussed and negotiated with local citizens, communities and their leaders. Whilst local authorities have a community leadership role, the strategy should belong to the community, and should be prepared and implemented by the local authority in partnership with its public, private and third sector partners.
- 1.3. Each of these partners is responsible for implementing its contribution to the strategy. Hitherto, this process has been overseen by Community Strategy Partnerships, but in November 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government introduced a new model for ensuring its effective delivery, through Local Service Boards and Local Service Agreements. The advent of Local Service Boards creates the potential for a refocusing, restructuring and re-energising of local partnership working; it will be for local partnerships to decide how to reflect this in line with their local circumstances.

## Why revise Guidance?

- 1.4. This revised Guidance reflects the analysis of the Beecham Review, the decisions set out in Delivering Beyond Boundaries, the evaluation of community strategies and Communities First; the work of the Spatial Plan groups, and the WLGA regional boards; plan rationalisation; from the advice of the Community Planning Action Inquiry Groups/Task and Finish Groups; comments received during other recent consultations including that on local service boards, and more generally the experience gained during the development and implementation of the first round of community strategies.
- 1.5. In particular, this revised Guidance responds to the analysis, expressed in the Beecham Review and the Community Strategy evaluation, that the first round of community strategies had been strong on engagement, but had been less effective in providing leadership for the delivery of integrated citizen-centred services across sectoral and geographical boundaries. The role of Local Service Boards is to provide this leadership, as discussed in Chapter 3.

- 1.6. This statutory guidance replaces that issued in August 2001. It will be supported by a series of Advice Notes.

## Legislation

- 1.7. Section 4(1) of the Local Government Act 2000 requires county and county borough councils in Wales to prepare 'community strategies', for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. Section 2(1) gives authorities broad powers to improve and promote local well-being as a means of helping them implement those strategies.
- 1.8. This Guidance is intended to provide support and guidance to local authorities in the development and delivery of a community strategy and in the exercising of the well-being powers under s2(1) of the Local Government Act 2000. This guidance is statutory under s4(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2000 in so far as it relates to the preparation of a community strategy. Any guidance contained in this document not relating to the preparation of a community strategy, is included for advisory purposes only. Whilst not compulsory, local authorities may wish to have regard to the National Assembly's guidance on the scope of the power under Section 2(1) of the 2000 Act - "The Power to Promote or Improve Economic, Social or Environmental Well Being: Guidance to Local Authorities from the National Assembly for Wales".
- 1.9. The current Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill would also confer on the National Assembly for Wales a broad legislative power covering community strategies and community planning. This Bill is anticipated to receive Royal Assent in autumn 2007 and the annex Possible Legislation sets out our proposals for using that power.

## What is a community strategy?

- 1.10. The community strategy is the long-term strategy for the area and all its population, based on a thorough analysis of needs and priorities, and opportunities for addressing them. It should set out a 10-15 year vision, informed by, and reflecting the strategic priorities set out in, the Children and Young People's Plans, Health Social Care and Wellbeing Strategies, Local Development Plans and other key thematic plans (Chapter 2 - see fig 1).
- 1.11. An area's community strategy should also inform, and be informed by:
- the national priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government;
  - regional priorities, Spatial Plan partnerships and regional partnerships / boards;
  - community strategies for neighbouring areas (including, where relevant, areas of England); and

- plans or strategies for areas, towns, communities or neighbourhoods within the local authority's area.
- 1.12. Community planning is the process by which the community strategy is developed. Local authorities convene this process, and its success depends on strong engagement with citizens, communities and all the partners who contribute to delivery of the strategy.
- 1.13. The community strategy should include a prioritised set of actions that reflect local needs and priorities. It must have a 'sense of place' and be based on reliable information and extensive consultation and engagement involving the widest possible number of local people and organisations. The community strategy should not only shape the local authority's financial and business planning processes but also those of all its community planning partners. The start of the next spending review period in 2008/09 will see the introduction of three year revenue and capital settlements for local authorities in Wales. The successful implementation of three-year settlements will depend largely on strong engagement and integration across all stakeholders.
- 1.14. To ensure effective measurement of progress, the community strategy should include an Action Plan, which sets out how the objectives/priorities will be delivered, will need outcome targets, including those to be captured in the Local Service Agreement (see Chapter 3) (*worked example / case study to be inserted*).
- 1.15. The Local Service Agreement will capture the most important public service partnership delivery priorities as agreed by the local service board. These will not amount to all of the actions associated with the community strategy and arrangements will need to be put in place to ensure that progress is made, in a timely manner, towards delivering the whole of the community strategy.
- 1.16. A community strategy cannot realistically attempt to cover every issue that may be relevant to a local community: it should focus on issues where collaboration between partners can and should add value over the longer term. Local authorities and their partners should therefore seek to draw together the views of their communities to identify a number of broad priorities or themes (*worked example / case study to be inserted*). In doing so, they will also need to take account of what their community strategy might contribute to regional and national priorities.
- 1.17. As well as reflecting the views of local communities, the local service board should ensure that community strategy priorities are based on a proper analysis of needs, and where appropriate, research. This may include assessing the potential impact of different proposed actions or packages of measures on, for example, the environment, economy or health of an area. Such research may occasionally suggest courses of action different from those supported by the community. In such

situations, local authorities and their community strategy partners will need to take account of all of the evidence available before they determine how to proceed. Opposition from sections of the community should not preclude action if the local service board believes that it is in the best interests of the area and can adequately account to the community at large for that decision and its implementation.

- 1.18. In order to meet long-term outcomes, the Community Strategy Action Plan will have to set out shorter-term priorities for action. Inevitably, different local communities as well as groups within communities will have different priorities. The community strategy process should continue to provide a forum in which differences of view can be properly articulated and where there are clear processes for resolving differences. Part One of the Local Government Act 2000 enshrined in law the principle of community leadership, giving local authorities the power to promote the wellbeing of their area. In exercising this power in relation to the development and delivery of the community strategy, local authorities should seek to work through consensus and establishing shared values, rather than adopting a directive and controlling style.

## **Aims and Objectives**

- 1.19. A community strategy should fulfil a number of purposes, namely to:
- enhance the quality of life of local communities through action to improve their economic, social and environmental well-being;
  - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
  - provide a mechanism to debate locally the needs, opportunities and aspirations of local communities and establish priorities (See Chapter 5)
  - inform, and be informed, by the Children and Young People's Plans, Health Social Care and Wellbeing Strategies, Local Development Plans and other key thematic plans
  - provide a focus for continuous improvement in joint working and resource planning between public sector organisations, the third sector and business sector to ensure that they effectively meet community needs and aspirations;
  - help community planning partners develop their corporate priorities;
  - identify how the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities and regionally identified priorities relate to local priorities and how they can be implemented at local authority level;

## **Key Characteristics**

- 1.20. A community strategy must have 5 key components:
- A long-term vision (10 to 15 years) for the area focusing on the outcomes that are to be achieved;

- A prioritised action plan identifying shorter term priorities and activities (the stepping stones) that will contribute to the achievement of the long-term vision. Part of this action plan will in due course form the basis of the Local Service Agreement. (See Chapter 3);
- A clear, shared and equal commitment from community strategy partners to implement the action plan and proposals for doing so;
- Arrangements for monitoring and accounting publicly for the implementation of the action plan, and for periodically reviewing the community strategy;
- Arrangements for ensuring that the work, and actions, of local service boards and the other key thematic partnerships are coordinated and geared to ensuring that they are delivering their objectives.

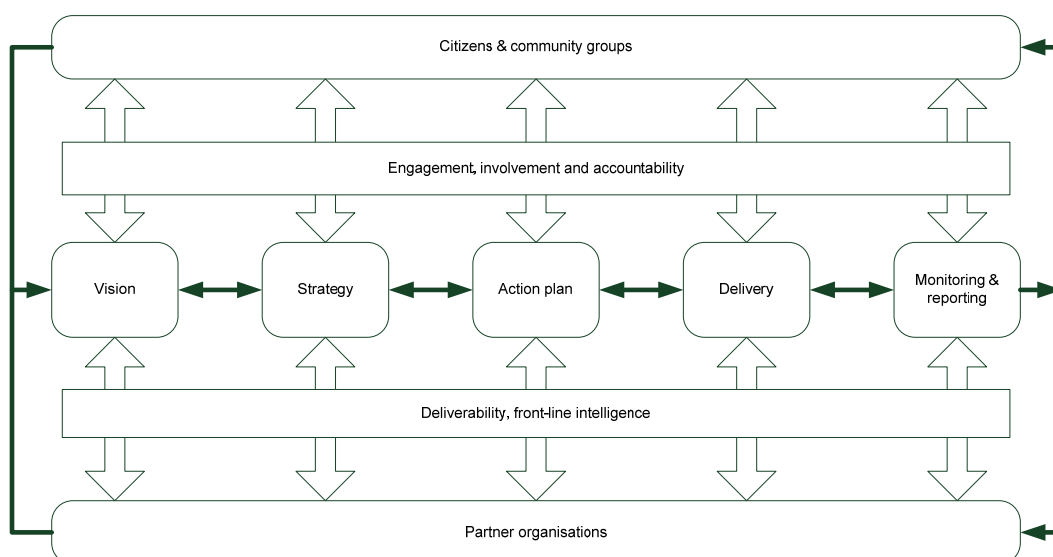


Fig 1.1 – Community Strategy process

## Underlying Principles

1.21. In addressing the Aims and Objectives and Key Characteristics described above, local service boards should keep in mind the statutory purpose of community strategies: to promote economic, social and environmental wellbeing. They should thus ensure that community strategies positively contribute to:

- **prosperity:** building and sustaining a diverse, competitive, high added-value economy, with high quality skills and education, that maximises local prosperity while minimising demands on the environment;
- **social justice:** tackling poverty, including in particular child poverty, and poor health, and providing people and their communities with the means to help themselves and break out of the poverty trap;

- **protecting the environment:** enhancing pride in the community, supporting biodiversity, promoting local employment and procurement, and helping to minimise waste generation, energy and transport demands.

Defining what each of these themes means in each local context is at the heart of community planning – as is identifying and pursuing the means of addressing them. However, there are some key considerations that local partners will wish to bear in mind in making these decisions, as follows.

### **Sustainable Development**

- 1.22. The proposed outcomes of every community strategy should integrate economic, social and environmental considerations. The strategy must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Advice Notes developed will support this area of the Guidance.

### **Equality**

- 1.23. The principle of equality of opportunity should also be applied throughout the development and delivery of the community strategy. All the community strategy partners, should ensure engagement with all sectors of the population, and that all communities are enabled to participate on an equal basis, by taking account of their different needs and interests.
- 1.24. Community strategies should make an important contribution to tackling social disadvantage. They should ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged communities are taken into account in authority-wide strategies, by supporting more localised or specific initiatives, such as the local community action plans drawn up by Communities First Partnerships in the authority area.
- 1.25. Inequality in life opportunities often even precedes a person's birth. It is vital therefore that children receive the best start in life.

### **The Welsh Language**

- 1.26. Community strategies have the potential to ensure that linguistic regeneration becomes an integral part of community regeneration. An Advice Note on community strategies and Welsh Language issues will be developed to support continued learning in this area.

### **Climate Change**

- 1.27. Climate change is one of the most significant challenges facing the world. There are two strands to addressing climate change: tackling its

causes by cutting emissions of greenhouse gases and preserving stores of carbon (mitigation); and responding to impacts of unavoidable climate change that is the result of previous emissions (adaptation).

- 1.28. Communities across Wales can play a role in tackling both these challenges. As part of this process, all the community strategy partners at a local level should look to:
- consider ways to encourage emission reductions from public service facilities and vehicles, homes, businesses, transport and other sources.
  - identify how the impacts of climate change such as an increase in flood risk, pressure on water resources in summer, increased thermal discomfort in buildings, health problems in summer and habitat and species change could be addressed in their community; and
  - raise awareness of climate change and the actions that each of us can take to address its causes and consequences.
  - promote local procurement throughout Wales

## **Community Planning Process**

- 1.29. A strong and credible community strategy depends on high-quality community planning. In particular, local people and organisations should be drawn into determining the future of their areas, setting the direction of local authorities' and other agencies' policies and priorities, and participating in democratic decision-making. It will be essential to ensure wide local 'ownership' of the process. The local service board will be responsible for demonstrating the benefits of co-ordinating action across organisations to deliver policy objectives more efficiently and cost effectively. See Chapter 5 for further details.

## **Partnership Structures**

- 1.30. The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that the extent to which the existing community strategy partnerships have already established some, or all, of the conditions necessary for successful community strategies, and that these will vary from authority to authority. It also recognises that the trust needed to underpin partnership working, the active engagement of local communities, and the arrangements to support fully developed strategies take a considerable time to develop and then maintain. As part of the development process for local service boards an assessment of the established partnership structures should be made, and action taken, to ensure that partnership structures remain 'fit for purpose' in light of changing circumstances.

## Timing/Review

- 1.31. There should be a link between the democratic mandate of the council and the priorities and objectives set out in the community strategy. Community strategies should have a 10 to 15 year time horizon and should be reviewed on a 3 or 4-year cycle with the agreement of the partners.
- 1.32. One option would be after each council election, not in order to start again from scratch, but to enable the partners, in particular authorities' new administrations, to confirm or adjust the main priorities and the short, medium and long-term goals set out in them. Another option would be for community strategies to be updated on the same cycle as the HSCWB strategy and CYPP. It will be for the local service board to agree how frequently the community strategy is reviewed.
- 1.33. Interim reviews of the community strategies should be undertaken annually to track the progress made over the year in implementing the goals. (See Chapter 4, paragraphs 4.6. - 4.8.) These should be reported to the local service board with action taken to address any underperformance. The results should feed into individual organisations' annual business planning processes.
- 1.34. The processes and relationships through which community strategies are produced and implemented should continue to evolve and be refined. In particular partnerships need to:
  - regularly evaluate their effectiveness and adjust their membership and working arrangements accordingly; (*DN – Provide link to Advice Note on Partnership Rationalisation.*)
  - ensure that the development and implementation of community strategies becomes firmly embedded into partners' managerial cultures, corporate, resource and business planning, and budgetary decisions;
  - ensure continued and strong community participation in the preparation and implementation of strategies;
  - ensure that engagement is coordinated across partnerships and where possible within organisations; and
  - ensure that the strategies reflect relevant regional developments including the Spatial Plan.

## Geographical Coverage

- 1.35. While section 4 of the 2000 Act requires every local authority in Wales to prepare a community strategy to improve the well-being of its area, that by no means prevents local authorities and their partners from taking or encouraging action outside that area which would improve the well-being of citizens and communities within it. This recognises the fact that community planning can and should take place at various

levels and across boundaries: many of the issues likely to be addressed by community strategies will not be unique to one area and will transcend its borders. Consequently, there is no single blueprint for the approach to be adopted in developing community strategies. To be most effective the development, and implementation, of community strategies will need to take place at different geographical levels, both beyond a local authority's boundary and for areas or communities within it, as well as for the area as a whole. The important point is that strategies should be developed in ways which best suit the needs of the communities they are designed to serve, rather than the administrative convenience of service providers.

- 1.36. The duty to prepare a strategy does *not* preclude local authorities from conducting community planning jointly and/or producing a joint community strategy, provided that its application to each local authority area remains clear. Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits an authority to discharge any of its functions jointly with another. In practice, the Welsh Assembly Government expects (but does not require) that local authorities will wish to continue to prepare their own community strategies, but in doing so they should take account of similar issues which arise in neighbouring areas and the potential for developing a common approach to them. This includes neighbouring areas of England, where relevant.

**Consultation Questions**

- 1.1.** Does this chapter describe the purpose and context of community planning clearly and comprehensively? If not, where do you think further guidance might be needed?
- 1.2.** What are your views on how often community strategies should be reviewed or updated?
- 1.3.** How important is community planning across boundaries? Can or should anything be done to encourage this?

## 2. Strategic Policy Framework

### Policy Framework/Context

- 2.1. The duty to prepare community strategies should not be seen in isolation, or as a stand-alone task. It is critical to wider changes in public services that aim to ensure that the activities of the various bodies that provide services to the public are:
- Better co-ordinated locally and regionally;
  - Responsive to the concerns of local communities;
  - Delivered in ways that suit the people who depend on them;
  - Socially, economically and environmentally sustainable and take account of the needs of future generations.

### Beecham Review of local service delivery

- 2.2. [The Beecham review of local service delivery](#) reported in 2006, and challenged the way public services are managed and delivered in Wales. In its response, *Delivering Beyond Boundaries*, the Welsh Assembly Government outlined proposals for Local Service Boards and Local Service Agreements. The aim of the Boards is to tackle the issues of capacity, complexity and culture, which Beecham identified as barriers to delivering citizen-centred local services. [Delivering Beyond Boundaries](#) suggested that every local area should have established a Local Service Board (LSB) by the end of 2007/08 and that Local Service Agreements should be in place across Wales by 2010.

#### **Local service board**

Throughout this guidance, we use the term 'local service board' to refer to a set of arrangements for senior-level strategic partnership working between the major local service delivery organisations. We do not mean that there should necessarily be a board with a specific composition or remit, or a particular place within a local decision-making structure. As fig 2.1 and 2.2 illustrate, there are different ways of approaching these design issues depending on local circumstances, and we do not wish to prescribe any particular way of doing so. Whatever design is adopted, it is, though, essential that it is capable of carrying out all of the functions specified in this guidance, and in chapter 3 in particular and it is clear to all partners where and how these functions are being undertaken.

Further details on the structures being adopted by local service boards can be found on the [Making the Connections](#) website.

- 2.3. The local service board should lead the development and then delivery of the community strategy and help to ensure that it takes account of, and links appropriately to, other local strategies and is founded on a strong local commitment to delivery. The local service board will have

an important role in ensuring that difficult issues are confidently managed, not circumvented or ignored.

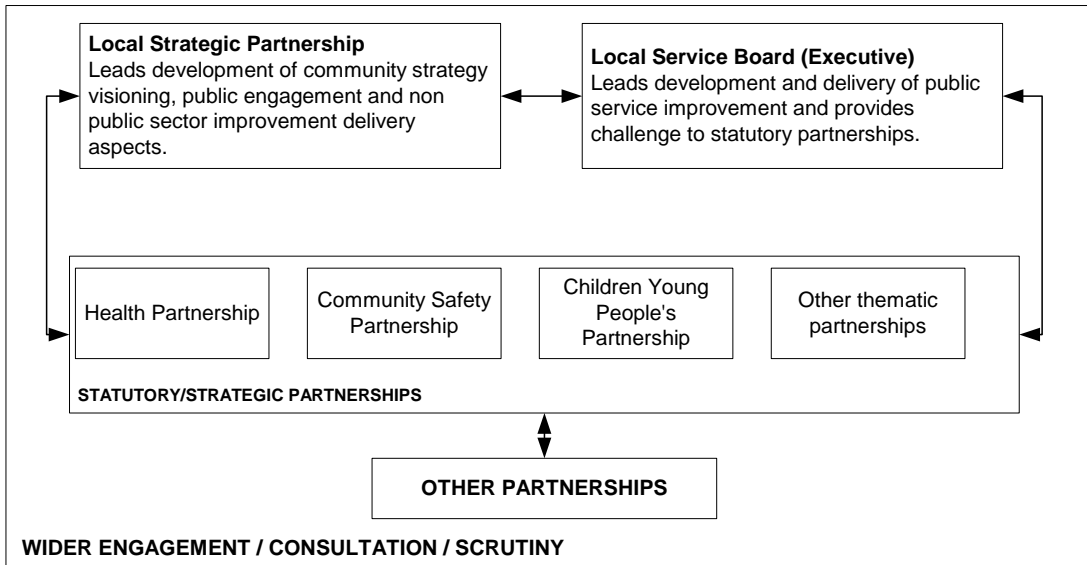


Fig 2.1 – potential local partnership structure

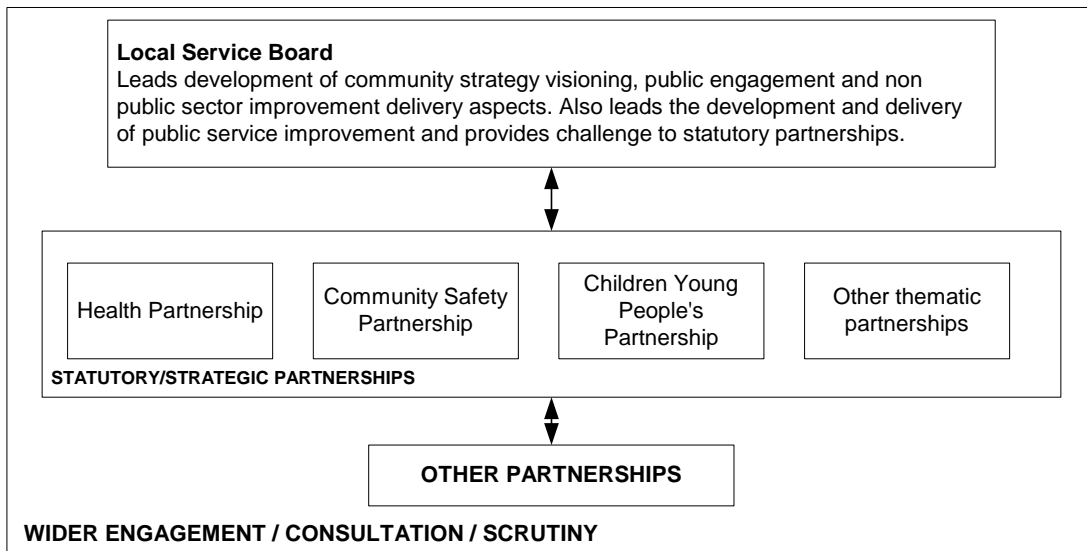


Fig 2.2 - potential local partnership structure.

2.4. The role of the local service board will be to provide support and challenge to the implementation of key local strategies and plans. This might include tackling barriers to cooperation and delivery, providing a challenge to partnerships and taking action to enhance capacity and expertise in partnerships. During both preparation and implementation, the four local authority statutory plans<sup>1</sup> should be interlinked and cross-refer to one another, and their overall impact continually reassessed. It is important that all partners, stakeholders and the local community are

<sup>1</sup> Children and Young People's Plan, Community Strategy, Health Social Care and Well-being Strategy and Local Development Plan.

clear how the rationalisation process will be taken forward at local level. (See Chapter 3, Local Service Board and Agreements)

## Community Strategy Evaluation

- 2.5. [The National Evaluation of Community Strategies in Wales](#) reported in 2006 and made 29 recommendations. Although the evaluation was undertaken at a relatively early stage in the community strategy process, it identified a number of strengths and weaknesses. In very general terms the report highlighted that community strategy formulation had been largely successful, but that delivery and evaluation needed further work.
- 2.6. This Guidance seeks to build on the lessons learnt from the first round of community strategies, whilst still providing freedoms for motivated, innovative and dynamic partnerships to develop real improvements to their area/region.

## Community Strategies and Plan Rationalisation

- 2.7. In developing community strategies local authorities must take account of the plan rationalisation process. In late 2005 the Welsh Assembly Government agreed plan rationalisation proposals which will ultimately see the number of plans that local authorities have to submit to the Welsh Assembly Government reduce from 32 at the time of the review to just four: (i) the Community Strategy; (ii) the Health Social Care and Well-being Strategy (HSCWBS); (iii) the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP); and (iv) the Local Development Plan. During both preparation and implementation, the four plans should be interlinked and cross-refer to one another, and their overall impact continually reassessed. It is important that all partners, stakeholders and the local community are clear how the rationalisation process will be taken forward at local level.
- 2.8. [Plan rationalisation](#) confers significant freedom in local planning structures and timetables, but does not remove the necessity to plan. So where, following rationalisation, specific plans and strategies no longer have to be prepared, it is important that local authorities continue to ensure that strategic and operational goals are met and monitored. They may choose to do this by developing their own plans or by maintaining current planning arrangements aligned as necessary with the four remaining statutory plans, or by ensuring that the issues are addressed through the four statutory plans. Being clear on the chosen approach will enable them to demonstrate to regulators or others how they translate strategy into action and monitor progress.

## Communities First

- 2.9. The Welsh Assembly Government's [Communities First Programme](#) exists to provide local people with opportunities to play an active role in shaping the future of their community. There is at least one Communities First area in every local authority area in Wales. The expansion of the Programme during 2007-08 (to include areas identified in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005) will bring the population coverage up to 20%.
- 2.10. Partnership working and community engagement are fundamental to the Communities First Programme. In each area a local partnership is set up with representation drawn from the statutory business and community sectors. Each Partnership is supported by a local team led by a Co-ordinator with communication resources – all funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. The local Communities First team are charged with building links with service delivery organisations and engaging with the local community to draw up a local community action plan which sets out where the community wants the area to be in 5 – 10 years time – and how that vision can be realised.
- 2.11. While the community strategy covers the whole local authority area, the Community First partnerships focus on the specific needs of smaller areas. There will need to be links between the two, since the overarching community strategy will be a way for Communities First partnerships to make vital links to other strategic themes, including the delivery of mainline services, and to other deprived neighbourhoods. Equally, the Communities First partnerships should help to shape the community strategy, in particular to ensure that it adequately reflects the needs of deprived communities.
- 2.12. Thus, as community strategies set out the councils', and their partners', key priorities it will remain important that they fully consider the needs of Communities First areas that reflects local authorities' legal duty to consult and seek the participation of all appropriate local interests in preparing a community strategy, and it is important that such consultation and participation includes Communities First Partnerships.
- 2.13. To encourage seamless working between the county-wide and local levels it is important that the local service board and Communities First Partnerships communicate and liaise frequently. How this is done will be a matter for local agreement. A possible approach would be for those local authority areas with many Communities First Partnerships to establish a formal liaison arrangement, such as a board, to enable the Communities First Partnerships to establish their collective views and to input to the community strategy process.
- 2.14. In those local authority areas where there are few Communities First Partnerships, the local service board should establish and maintain mechanisms that enable the views of Communities First Partnerships,

and the wider community, to be heard. It is important that Communities First Partnerships and other community networks play a part in not only establishing community strategy priorities but also in delivering the agreed priorities.

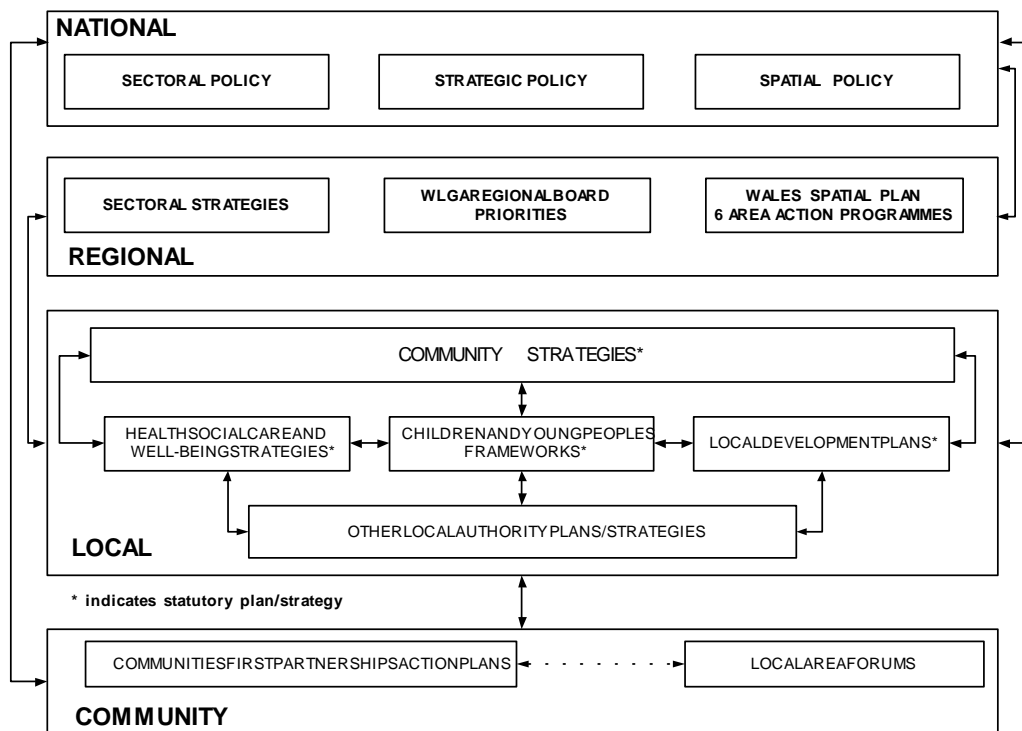


Fig 2.3 Strategic Planning Framework

## Children and Young People’s Plan

2.15. The Children and Young People’s Plan will be the defining statement of strategic planning intent and priorities for all children and young people’s services in the area. In this respect it will act as the reference point for all other plans. The agreed priorities and commitments set out in the CYPP should be referred to, where necessary, in other plans. For example the community strategy, HSCWBS and other relevant local authority plans that remain after plan rationalisation. Relevant links will also be included in the plans of non-devolved services such as the statutory Youth Justice Plans, police and the National Offender Management Service, and in the shorter term corporate, business and operational plans of all partner agencies.

2.16. Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes and Safeguarding Children: working together under the Children Act 2004 gives advice on co-ordination of planning across Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Children and Young People’s Partnerships, Health Social Care and Well-being Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships, where there is a common core membership of statutory partners (for this, see Annex 1 of *Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes*).

## Health Social Care and Well-being Strategy

- 2.17. Community strategies can make a major contribution to improving the health of a population and tackling the inequalities in health that exist in Wales and need to draw on and complement each area's Health Social Care and Well-being Strategy (HSCWBS). The local authority and the local health board are jointly responsible in law for the planning of services, which promote the health and well-being of the community, and the delivery of appropriate treatment and care as an integrated concept. They discharge this responsibility through preparing and implementing the HSCWBS. Statutory guidance on preparing the next round of HSCWBSs, which will cover the period 2008/09 - 2010/11 sets out the aims as:
- addressing the full range of issues that affect people's health, social care and well-being, addressing the broad public health agenda at local level to achieve health gain targets through the most appropriate and effective local response
  - improving the provision, quality and delivery of and access to more integrated NHS, local government, 'third sector' and private sector services and other functions which affect health, social care and well-being, giving full recognition to the need to develop bilingual services;
  - establishing a stronger basis for planning, investment, commissioning and performance review at the local level; and
  - promoting joint delivery of the vision.
- 2.18. The HSCWBS must provide a co-ordinated response to all the policy objectives and requirements relating to health and social care services in the local area, including tackling the social determinants of health e.g. employment, housing, good nutrition, crime and fear of crime; promoting self care and independent living; making a sharp shift towards positive health promotion, illness prevention and early intervention; moving care closer to users; improving service quality to meet published standards; and identifying and reducing inequality.
- 2.19. Although the HSCWBS will be the primary mechanism for defining the local response to [Health Challenge Wales](#), the Children and Young People's Plan; the Local Development Plan and the community strategy itself should also reflect the importance that the wider determinants of health and public health have on the health of the nation.

## Local Development Plan

- 2.20. Development plans have been statutory requirements for many years under the Town and Country Planning Acts. Most of the 25 local planning authorities in Wales are changing from Unitary Development Plans to Local Development Plans (LDPs) under the Planning and

Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Local Development Plans will start being adopted around Wales from 2011 onwards.

- 2.21. Development plans and community strategies need to be complimentary. In preparing revised community strategies account will need to be taken of policies and proposals in any existing adopted development plan. Once a community strategy is adopted the development plan will provide the means to take forward those elements of the strategy that concern land use or physical development. Along with the Wales Spatial Plan, community strategies should set the overarching strategic policy framework for the LDP which:
- should provide the strategic land use expression of the shared vision of how an authority area will develop, change or be conserved;
  - will deliver the land use aspects of the shared vision over 10 to 15 year period; and
  - will set out monitoring indicators to be reported every year.
- 2.22. As part of the first stages of preparation of LDPs, local authorities are required to agree and adopt a Community Involvement Scheme, which sets out how local communities, third sector organisations, the business and public sectors and the Welsh Assembly Government should be engaged in the process. Depending on timing, the Community Involvement Scheme should reflect or inform the local authority corporate approach to community engagement. Where the timing is favourable, engagement in developing the community strategy and development plan can be done jointly and this approach is recommended.
- 2.23. The LDPs will be monitored on an annual basis and a full LDP review is required every four years after adoption. The Welsh Assembly Government LDP policy is set out in [LDP Wales \(2005\)](#) and technical guidance in the [LDP Manual \(2006\)](#). The [Planning Policy Wales Companion Guide \(2006\)](#) sets out guidance on the content of LDPs.

## **Environment Strategy**

- 2.24. [The Environment Strategy for Wales \(2006\)](#) articulates a strategic vision for the environment for the next 20 years. It sets out desired environmental outcomes under five themes – addressing climate change, sustainable resource use, distinctive biodiversity, landscapes and seascapes, the local environment, and environmental hazards.
- 2.25. Community strategies should play a role in addressing the priorities set out with the Environment Strategy for Wales and an Advice Note will be developed to further support work in this area.

## Wales Spatial Plan

- 2.26. The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 placed a duty on the National Assembly for Wales to prepare a Spatial Plan. The Government of Wales Act 2006 further embeds the Spatial Plan as a policy the Welsh Ministers must agree and keep under review.
- 2.27. The current plan – [People, Places, Futures](#) - was adopted by the National Assembly for Wales in November 2004. Its purpose is to ensure that what is done in the public, private and third sectors in Wales is spatially integrated, that actions support each other and jointly move forward a vision for Wales and for different parts of Wales, that is shared.
- 2.28. The plan identifies six distinct areas of Wales with no hard boundaries, but each comprising several local authorities. In each of these areas local authorities, the private and third sectors and the Welsh Assembly Government and its agencies are working together to define and implement the priorities for action to achieve the joint vision for that area. These agreed visions and priorities set an important regional context for the community strategy process, which needs to be informed by them. In turn, it is important that the local vision and strategy is fed up to the Spatial Plan area level. The most efficient channel for this two-way flow is likely to be via the representatives of each local authority on the Spatial Plan areas' collaborative structures.
- 2.29. There is no mandatory period after which the plan must be reviewed, but it is envisaged that the plan will be reviewed on a four-yearly cycle following an initial update in 2007/2008.

## WLGA Regional Boards

- 2.30. An early key element of the local government response to the Welsh Assembly Government's public sector improvement strategy "Making the Connections" was the formal constitution of four Regional Partnership Boards in Wales. The objective of constituting the Boards was to meet the challenge of increasing public expectations of service improvement by changing direct service delivery patterns and back-office support. Through collaborative working, councils can reduce the number of service delivery vehicles thus enabling improvements in the quality of services, greater access and better efficiency.
- 2.31. Many local authority services have a regional spatial dimension and others require a critical mass for efficient service delivery that is bigger than the size of some Welsh councils. Regional partnership board arrangements provide a focus for planning the delivery of such services at the regional level that may then lead to joint commissioning or procurement.

- 2.32. The Boards give strategic direction to joint working policy at a regional level in Wales, initiate specific projects and monitor their progress. The Boards consist of local authority Leaders and Chief Executives and are supported by representatives of particular professional groups as appropriate. Boards have been established in South East Wales, South West Wales, North Wales and Central Wales. The Central Wales partnership also includes other councils with significant rural populations.

### **Police, fire and national parks authorities**

- 2.33. Police, fire and National Park authorities should not prepare their own community strategies. They have an important input to make into local authorities' community strategies and to participate in relevant thematic or area partnerships. In the case of police and fire authorities these will cover directly relevant topics such as community safety but may also lead to links with wider topics such as children and young people / education and training. In the case of the national park authorities the National Park Management Plans should implement relevant community strategy objectives relating to national park areas.

### **Action Outside an Authority's Boundary**

- 2.34. While the duty to prepare community strategies refers specifically to each local authority's area, Section 2(5) of the Local Government Act 2000 enables local authorities to use their power to promote community well-being in a way which affects areas outside their own boundaries, if that action contributes to well-being in their own area. Some of the issues that concern local communities will be best tackled by action at a regional level. This might mean that such action will depend on the Spatial Plan or WLGA regional board structures and/or a number of authorities working together to take action in one area that benefits each of their communities. In some cases, there may be communities that, while outside an authority's boundary, are particularly dependent on that authority for access to services.
- 2.35. Local authorities which lie on the border with England should ensure that their community strategies take account of any relevant needs and priorities of neighbouring English communities and local authorities, and of any reliance that citizens and communities in their areas have on services provided in England. English county, district and unitary authorities are also obliged to produce community strategies, and a collaborative cross-border approach to community planning may thus be feasible and desirable.

**Consultation Questions**

**2.1.** Is the place of the community strategy in the wider policy framework clear enough? Are there any national or local areas of uncertainty that need to be clarified?

**2.2.** How readily can community strategies be integrated with other strategies and plans, whether statutory or not? What, if any, are the obstacles to this?

**2.3.** How readily can community strategies reflect regional and national issues and planning frameworks? Again, what, if any, are the obstacles to this?

## 3. Local Service Boards and Agreements

### Introduction

- 3.1. The role of local service boards is to achieve better outcomes for citizens in their area through ambitious joint planning and delivery of services. The local service board should be the hub of a local leadership and delivery system which needs to encompass the following dimensions, across organisational and sectoral boundaries:
- shared visioning and political leadership;
  - a local leadership team model of executive leaders;
  - shared intelligence on needs;
  - shared resources, capacity, challenges and opportunities<sup>2</sup>;
  - shared approaches to engaging with citizens and communities; and
  - effective engagement and integration with regional and national priorities.
- 3.2. The Welsh Assembly Government is developing this model in a new way, through action learning, which enables local areas to design the system in ways that fit their local context, including the delivery priorities captured in the Local Service Agreement (LSA). During 2007-08 the Welsh Assembly Government is working closely with 6 development projects<sup>3</sup>, to test how to introduce this system with the minimum of bureaucracy, through action on a small number of agreed service outcomes. To reflect the learning from these development projects, and elsewhere, a series of advice notes on local service board and local service agreement related issues will be developed to support this guidance.
- 3.3. The focus is on local ownership of the structures and processes required to deliver the partnership priorities for the area.

### Culture

- 3.4. The local service board should lead an innovative, can-do, citizen-centred approach to problem solving that is cascaded through all of the organisations involved in public service delivery. Partnership working does not begin and end with the individuals who constitute the Board: the local service board is part of the whole system of public service delivery in an area and the whole system, not just the local service board must be pulling in the same direction.

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<sup>2</sup> There will be further advice on pooling resources, the Welsh Assembly Government are working on a series of advice notes which bring together existing legislation and guidance in this area, as well as providing practical examples of how to approach pooling. Other aspects of sharing capacity are emerging from the six Local Service Board development projects.

<sup>3</sup> Caerphilly, Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Gwynedd, Neath Port Talbot and Wrexham

## The development phase

- 3.5. The focus is on the role of the local service board and the outcomes of its work, not primarily on structure or process. The question for local leaders is: 'what do we need to do to improve service delivery from the perspective of the citizens of our area?'

### Citizens First

- 3.6. This requires the Board to evidence, through engagement and research, the citizens' experience of services, and take the lead in solving problems and removing barriers to delivery across sectors. This means joining up systems, behind the scenes, for the citizen, not expecting the citizen to do the hard work of joining up for themselves.
- 3.7. This includes: removing barriers, integrating services and streamlining systems, as well as eliminating waste, including unnecessary processes. The focus should be on pooling resources to both support integrated service delivery for citizens and, pooling expertise that supports citizen engagement, knowledge management and delivery support for partnerships. The latter is essential to ensure that shared, agreed priorities for action are reflected in the Local Service Agreement based on a shared, trusted evidence base<sup>4</sup>.
- 3.8. Local service boards and agreements are a system for creating coherence of public service delivery at a local level and eliminating the organisational, provider based approach which can leave citizens in the cold and exasperated. The Welsh Assembly Government will be part of each local service board to ensure that any national barriers to local joining up can be tackled.
- 3.9. The local service board should lead in developing innovative and flexible models of service delivery. It should champion the pooling of resources across organisational boundaries. Cost shunting must be turned into benefit sharing with a focus on what is best for the citizen.
- 3.10. Local service boards are not new institutions, but a means of enabling existing organisations to work together more effectively. The local service board should evaluate its own effectiveness from the start and, then on a regular basis - the local service board system should be catalytic, organic, adaptive and permeable to learning from experience from outside its own boundaries.

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<sup>4</sup> The Wales Audit Office (WAO) are part of a national stakeholder group which is helping to inform the development of the local service board model and the WAO is convening a group to consider potential governance issues.

## **Understanding what citizens want and prioritising**

- 3.11. The work of the local service board should be based on a thorough understanding of what it is citizens want and need as identified in the community strategy and other statutory plans, as well as, when appropriate, direct engagement with citizens. The role of the local service board in this respect is not to duplicate the work of other partnerships and/or organisations, but to identify local priorities for action to form part of the Local Service Agreement. (See paragraph 3.15.)

## **The Local Service Agreement**

- 3.12. This is not intended to be a panacea to solve all of the public service delivery issues in an area. It should be an outcome-focussed approach to managing the delivery of a small number of priority issues that requires the commitment of multiple organisations in an area to integrate their delivery and pool their resources to do so. It is an agreement between partners to take a joint approach to solving problems and improving the delivery of services that span organisational boundaries. The Agreements will be medium to long term. The Agreement should set out what is to be achieved and how to achieve it. It is the business plan to support the delivery of the identified priorities and should have clear actions, milestones and timelines.
- 3.13. The local priorities should be based on those identified by the community strategy. The LSA is about moving these shared, agreed priorities from vision to action. The LSA focus should be on improving performance not simply measuring it. The dialogue and constructive challenge between partners, and the actions flowing from this, are as much a part of the LSA as the measurement process. Sustained improvement comes from developing a relationship based on clarity of purpose, and a shared accountability for delivery amongst all of the partners.
- 3.14. The LSA should express the priority outcomes from the perspective of citizens, with a focus on impact and effectiveness, not just volume of activity. The aim is to have local service agreements in place, across Wales by 2010.

## **Relationships with other local service boards**

- 3.15. Local service boards should take a view whether the transformation and improvement of some services might be best tackled in conjunction with another local services board or boards. This approach could be captured in a multiple local service agreement. In addition local service boards should seek to work together and share learning on issues of mutual interest.

## **The relationship with other partnerships**

3.16. The role of the local service board in respect of other partnerships is to create a local public service delivery system that enables these partnerships to deliver better outcomes for citizens. It is not to take over all that the thematic partnerships (CYPP, HSCWB, Community Safety) are charged with, but to support and enable them to deliver on existing plans and strategies. This can be achieved by:

- ensuring there is horizontal coherence across plans and partnerships;
- ensuring there is vertical coherence between plans and partnerships e.g. with Communities First partnerships and Spatial Plan Area Groups;
- acting as a challenge and support agent to ensure high levels of ambition and provide support, and unblock systems;
- identifying duplication and waste both horizontally and vertically in the partnership landscape;
- ensuring that all partnerships and the local service board have support teams with the right skills to act as networkers between the partnerships, and that this valuable resource is deployed as effectively as possible;
- ensuring that there is effective, shared knowledge management horizontally and vertically between all partnerships, including co-ordinated use of research resources, engagement with the workforce, and the joining up of needs assessments; and
- ensuring that there is effective joined up engagement of citizens and communities across all of the partnerships and organisations in the area, both in identifying and determining priorities for action and in reflecting perspectives on the quality of outcomes.

## **Structures, membership, governance and accountability**

3.17. Following the action learning model, the Welsh Assembly Government does not envisage a one-size-fits-all local service board structure. Experience suggests that what works for one area may not be suitable for another. Structures and governance should enable the local service board to fulfil its roles and, must be flexible enough to accommodate the fact that different organisations might need to be involved, at different levels, dependent on the issue being addressed. Thinking in respect of structures and governance needs to extend beyond the local service board itself, it should consider the whole system in terms of relationships with other partnerships and the ways in which shared priorities are reflected in the corporate and business plans of local service board members and stakeholders.

3.18. Examples of governance protocols, structures and membership have been developed by the [local service board development areas](#). These reflect differing local circumstances and illustrate that it is essential for local partners to discuss, develop and create a governance structure which is capable of supporting the delivery of the outcomes to be achieved. The approaches reflect local circumstances but have a number of key aspects in common, the:

- local service board should not be constituted as a stand alone partnership, it must relate to the whole system of collaborative public service planning and delivery in the area;
- local service board should bring together the leaders of local organisations, from across the public and third sectors with the responsibility for citizen focussed improvement of joined up services, other partners, for example from private sector may be involved depending on local circumstances and priorities;
- local service board is about action and delivery of shared, agreed priorities as expressed in the Local Service Agreement;
- local service board should ensure the robustness of the whole system of collaborative planning and delivery, including the design, development and delivery of the community strategy;
- system should include accountability arrangements to a wide range of community groups and citizens including, for example, annual reporting and scrutiny.

3.19. Corporate Governance is the framework of accountability, to users, stakeholders and the wider community, within which organisations take decisions and lead and control their functions to achieve their objectives. Governance arrangements will be a key issue for local service boards and should be considered and agreed at the earliest possible juncture. When establishing their Corporate Governance arrangements local service boards should address the following key questions (D/n link to Governance Advice Note):

- What is the local service board's purpose and the desired outcomes for citizens and service users?
- Are members clear about their functions, roles and responsibilities?
- What values and standards does the local service board want to set for itself, including conflict resolution, and how will it demonstrate the values of good governance through behaviour?
- How will the local service board ensure that it makes informed, transparent decisions and effectively manages risks?
- How will the local service board develop the capacity and capability of the partnership body to be effective?
- How will the local service board ensure continuous and meaningful engagement with stakeholders and making accountability real?

- 3.20. Who is at the local service board table is just one issue to be considered, but of far greater importance is what happens when the partners walk away from the table and have to turn the commitments they have given into action. Communication in and between partner organisations at all levels, not just the top should be addressed as part of the development of the local service board system. Likewise, how the agreements and commitments given to the local service board by partner organisations will be reflected and driven as part of those organisations' financial and business planning processes. Translating shared outcomes into joint delivery must form part of developing the whole system in which the local service board sits.
- 3.21. The ultimate accountability for the work of the local service board is to the citizens of the area and the local service board should report, at least annually, to local citizens on the quality and performance of public services in its area. Accountability should also be considered to wider stakeholder groups that might not form part of the local service board itself or other relevant partnerships. The role of scrutiny should also be developed as an important aspect of the development of local service boards. (see Chapter 4, paragraphs 4.1 to 4.4)

### Where to go for support and ideas

- 3.22. The Performance Wales team in the Welsh Assembly Government are creating learning networks to support the development of local service boards and agreements across Wales. Further information can be found at:  
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/strategy/makingtheconnections/?lang=en>

#### **Consultation Questions**

**3.1.** Is the role and purpose of local service boards and local service agreements sufficiently clear at this development stage?

**3.2.** Do you think LSBs / LSAs as described will adequately improve (a) local partnership working and (b) long-term wellbeing and quality of life? If not, what improvements or alternatives would you like to see?

## 4. Delivering the Community Strategy

- 4.1. It is vital that local people are consulted about the development of the community strategy but, to maintain credibility and complete the loop of accountability, it is equally vital that they are kept informed about its delivery. This includes: keeping people informed about the reasons why particular decisions or actions were taken (or not taken), reporting on the outcome of the community planning process – and, later, on the progress that is being made. This reporting process should take account of the role of elected members through the scrutiny process.
- 4.2. Each local service board should consider how best to achieve effective reporting of performance, both between the partners and partnerships, the local community and, as appropriate scrutiny committees. Issues to consider include: the manner in which the local service board and thematic partnerships have involved their communities in the decision-making process, and the preferences of communities themselves. However, it is important that reporting should be clear and understandable and that all sections of the community should have ready access to it.
- 4.3. It is for local service boards to decide how best to meet both their own need for performance information and its frequency and also the best format or formats for reporting to the public but, a summary report should be produced, or up-dated, normally at least annually. This report should contain a broad restatement of the long-term aims of the community strategy and a balanced summary of the effectiveness of the delivery during the last twelve months in terms of:
  - the impacts that the local service board has had on delivering the community strategy outcomes and the well-being of communities;
  - progress that has been made in delivering the agreed outcomes of the LSA;
  - a summary of what action the local service board is taking to address potentially negative impacts; and
  - future plans for engagement and accountability in relationship with communities and other stakeholders and, the scrutiny arrangements for the coming year.
- 4.4. It will be important to avoid unnecessary duplication of the existing reporting requirements for local authorities and other bodies. Reports need only include sound evidence of progress from any relevant source. However, they could also usefully act as 'signposts' to the detailed activity being taken by each partner body by indicating sources of more detailed information on their performance (such as WPI Improvement Plans, corporate plans, health authorities' Performance Assessment Frameworks and so on).

- 4.5. Equally, reporting should be honest and balanced, and should avoid presenting an unduly positive view. Many sound community strategy objectives will only be deliverable in the longer term, and progress may, in the early years, be slow or imperceptible. Partners should nonetheless avoid at all costs any tendency to focus or report only on 'quick wins' or on what can be demonstrated in the short term.

## **Making delivery happen**

- 4.6. The local service board will need to establish robust systems for monitoring progress on the community strategies, ensuring that the activities identified in the action plan are carried out effectively. This is not simply a data collection exercise, it should be evaluative, reflective and result in action to celebrate success and address under achievement. It should ensure that lessons are learnt from what is working well and what is not.

## **Performance management systems**

- 4.7. It is important that performance management is based around a constructive dialogue between those partners delivering community strategy projects. Any supporting monitoring systems should involve the local authority, other partners and the wider community. The nature of the arrangements will be a matter for the local service board to decide but the arrangements should be clear to all, agreed and adopted by all those with a stake in delivery. For example, one approach is to establish a series of multi-agency groups to monitor or manage the delivery of specific activities identified in the action plan, or to monitor progress against the goals and priorities identified in the community strategy. In order to minimise overlap or duplication, whatever systems are established they must be clearly linked and coordinated with the existing monitoring systems established around other key plans, strategies or policy areas.
- 4.8. Good performance management arrangements are essential to improve efficiency and service outcomes for citizens. Effective delivery of the community strategy, including the Local Service Agreement will require the building of a performance management culture across organisational, and sector specific, boundaries. Before a local service board can manage performance it must be able to measure it and compare performance of relevant services in similar areas. Each partner organisation will need to establish what action it will take to contribute to the delivery of the community strategy priorities and to manage risk accordingly. [Ffynnon](#), the pan-Wales performance management system, will provide the supporting architecture for managing performance, projects and risks across organisational boundaries.

- 4.9. Whatever arrangements are agreed locally, it is important that they enable the partnership to readily identify the progress made and the areas where action looks like being ineffective and where objectives are in danger of not being met. The local service board will be expected to take prompt and decisive action to address any areas where objectives are in danger of not being met. Likewise it is important that local partners can identify and celebrate improvement in services and outcomes for citizens.

## Measuring delivery

- 4.10. In order to establish effective monitoring arrangements, local service boards will need to consider how they will measure progress. Community strategies are about achieving specified outcomes. It follows that progress should be monitored against those outcomes, rather than focusing on inputs or efficiency measures. The monitoring process should provide a means to bring together data collected by a range of bodies into a single, accessible summary. Fig 4.1 provides an example.

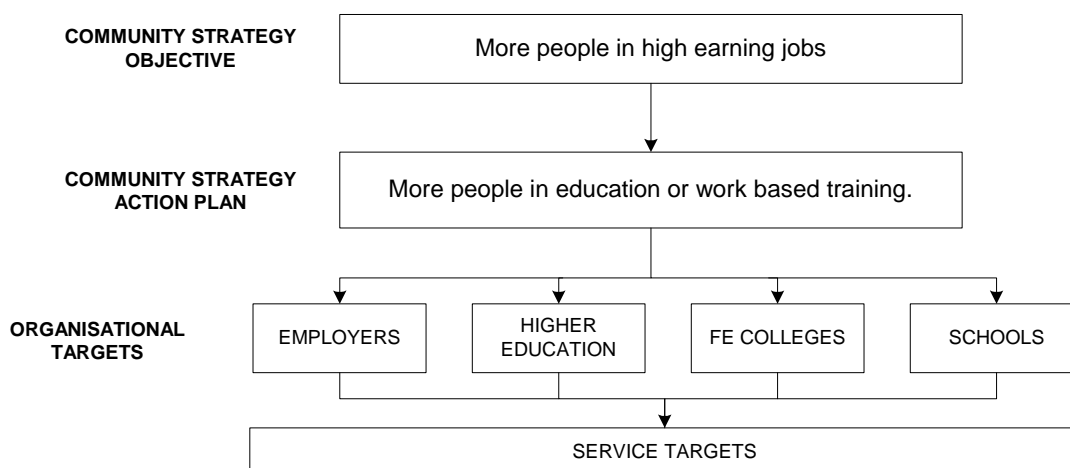


Fig 4.1 – Example of output measures underpinning outcome achievement.

- 4.11. Local authorities and their partners already have in place a range of indicators for measuring their own performance and efficiency, notably through the performance indicators developed through the performance measurement framework. Under the Wales Programme for Improvement local authorities are already required to account for their performance using data from national strategic indicators and data from other indicators (such as core set, shared outcome, local or survey), which illustrate progress towards the authority's key objectives and/ or alleviation of key risks in their annual Improvement Plan.
- 4.12. These plans, and those of other partners - such as the Health Care Performance Management Regime and high level performance indicators - will provide the means of demonstrating the effectiveness of the contribution of individual bodies to tackling the priorities identified in the community strategy. Further, the local service board will also

need to draw upon those data sources developed from the four key partnerships that underpin the community strategy such as the shared outcome indicators developed for use by the Health Social Care and Well-being partnership and joint surveys undertaken to find out peoples' views of public services, utilising the forthcoming national framework for local satisfaction research.

- 4.13. The development of the community strategy should include identification of how better outcomes for citizens will be delivered and how success will be measured. This is an integral part of the process, not an add on. Monitoring progress on community strategies should then focus on providing clear and accessible progress reports for delivery partners, back to the community and for scrutiny.
- 4.14. It will be for each local service board, as part of developing the community strategy to determine the most appropriate indicators of progress from any source, or sector, supported by targets or milestones where appropriate. This includes looking for opportunities to better align sectoral performance management systems, reduce duplication and inefficiencies in reporting processes. Performance management of the community strategy is not about creating a new bureaucracy or performance framework, it is about better management and alignment of existing systems. For example, by utilising *Ffynnon*, partner organisations will be able to avoid duplication and minimise the data collection burden across partners contributing to the delivery of the community strategy.
- 4.15. The focus must shift from cross organisational data collection and reporting to the constructive use of the information by partners to manage their collaborative performance and deliver results for citizens.

**Consultation Questions**

**4.1.** How readily can community strategy objectives be measured and reported? Are there any obstacles to this?

**4.2.** How should local service boards account for the progress they have made in a way which adds value to individual organisations' accountability mechanisms?

**4.3.** What, if anything, do local partners and national organisations (including the Welsh Assembly Government) need to do to strengthen performance management and performance measurement by partnerships?

## 5. Engagement and Scrutiny

### Roles and Responsibilities - Giving the Public and Partners a Voice

- 5.1. The formulation and implementation of community strategies requires all partners to work together to ensure that public engagement and community involvement in community planning is as inclusive as possible. Many local authorities have already established a corporate approach to consultation and engagement, either establishing a corporate team or ensuring that policy leads meet regularly to coordinate forward work programmes and structures. The local service board should ensure that engagement processes and structures are coordinated and linked to existing public engagement and community involvement schemes and activities undertaken by the other key partnerships, the third sector and individual organisations. Where appropriate these processes and structures should be rationalised, both to increase their effectiveness for the partnership and to avoid duplication, avoidable costs and "consultation fatigue" on the part of communities and third sector organisations. It is important that engagement on the development, and implementation, of the community strategy, CYPP, HSCWB strategy and local development plan is joined up and co-ordinated at a local level.
- 5.2. The local service board, thematic partnerships and individual organisations at the local level should involve the community throughout the community planning process, and consider:
- ensuring all involvement is continuous and meaningful - and always feeding back decisions taken on issues;
  - involving a wide range of people through the many networks, forums and third sector groups operating at a local level;
  - involving senior people - executives, Councillors and Board members - in participative events;
  - reaching out to those who tend not to participate and actively facilitating their involvement; and
  - being creative in how to engage people - town hall meetings are not for everyone [*DN – Develop Advice Note - ideas / good practice?*]
- 5.3. The processes of public engagement, when supported by committed leaders, offer a major opportunity to develop broader community understanding of the challenges, and to establish a positive on-going dialogue with the community and its constituent groups. The Welsh Assembly Government will be issuing a Public Engagement Policy Statement in the autumn and the principles set out within it should be used to drive the development and delivery of the next round of community strategies. Existing guidance on engagement and consultation is also set out in the guidance supporting the other key

strategic plans. ([\*Welsh Health Circular Shaping Health Services Locally WHC \(2004\) 084\*](#) should be followed and further advice is included in the [\*Community Services Framework\*](#).)

- 5.4. Community strategy partners must ensure that community planning and the engagement techniques they employ do not discriminate against particular groups. It will be important that whatever engagement techniques are used that Welsh language issues are fully considered for and by all sectors. Specific efforts should be made to involve different ethnic communities, gender, faith communities, young people, older people and disabled people who have a positive contribution to make to the future development and well being of their communities. This includes making sure that venues used for consultation are accessible for people with physical or visual impairments; that audio loops are provided at meetings and that sign language interpreters or interpreters for minority languages are available when necessary. Written information should be in plain language. It should be available in large print, audio, Braille or minority languages on request or where the need arises. Hard-to-reach groups can, inadvertently, be under-represented by the methods chosen to engage communities. Third sector groups can provide practical advice on good practice, training for council staff and contacts.
- 5.5. The local service boards will need to take the requirements of existing equality legislation in respect of gender, race, and disability into account in developing such measures, but these measures should go beyond the statutory minimum and should also encompass the other equality strands of sexual orientation, religion or belief and age. The new duties on race, disability and gender, which the UK Government has placed on all public sector bodies, means that local authorities and their public sector partners must ensure that the techniques they employ do not discriminate against these specific groups. Using a variety of different methods is more likely to avoid this problem, and much good practice already exists. Partnerships will need to be imaginative and flexible in their approach and take advantage of the range of available methods that have been successfully used for achieving the widest participation.

## **Reporting and accountability**

- 5.6. Engagement is a two-way process and must entail regular and honest feedback to, and dialogue with, contributors if it is to be meaningful. More generally, local partners are of course individually and collectively accountable to those they serve. That accountability includes in particular a responsibility to demonstrate progress in developing and delivering the community strategy, and responsiveness to expressed views in doing so.
- 5.7. Local service boards should therefore report publicly on the progress they have made in this regard. The Welsh Assembly Government does

not seek to prescribe a particular format for this, and partnerships should be wary of, on the one hand, devising excessively rigid reporting arrangements (such as an annual report with a defined structure and content) which cannot accommodate the fluid and evolutionary nature of much good community planning; and on the other hand of losing public support and engagement by failing to communicate progress effectively or regularly enough.

## **Engagement in Community Strategies**

### **Local Authority Councillors**

- 5.8. The success of any community strategy will depend on the sense of ownership it generates within and outside the local authority. In exercising its community leadership responsibility to initiate and facilitate the community strategy, the local authority will wish to draw on the expertise and skills of all members of the council. All councillors should be involved as:
- representatives of their wards, leading and listening to formal and informal discussions and consultations, and representing these community views;
  - members of overview and scrutiny committees. (see paragraphs 5.33 - 5.35 below) ;
  - members of area and neighbourhood forums and committees. Many councils have or are considering establishing area committees; one of their roles could usefully be to contribute to the community planning process;
  - council representatives on outside bodies, ensuring that their views receive full expression in drawing up the community strategy.
- 5.9. Councillors and officers engaged in the development of a community strategy will need the relevant authority to commit the local authority to take action to deliver the priorities agreed as part of the action plan. Since the full council must ultimately adopt the community strategy, the executive (in councils operating executive arrangements) or the relevant policy committee (in councils operating alternative arrangements) will need to ensure that all councillors are informed of emerging developments and outcomes and have continuing opportunities to contribute to the process. Non-executive members of scrutiny committees should examine the performance of the local service board to monitor the achievements of the local authority, and other accountable partners such as health authorities, in the activities that they have promised to deliver as part of the action plan, as well as monitoring progress against long-term outcomes.

## Community and Town Councils

- 5.10. There are 736 community and town councils in Wales, covering 96% of the land surface and 70% of its population. As the tier of local government closest to individual communities, community and town councils have the potential to contribute both to the development and delivery of the community strategies, helping to ensure citizen understanding and involvement at the very local level. Where the local authority has established area committees or forums and has given them a role in developing a community strategy, they should always liaise with community councils - as should the local authority itself when considering setting up area committees or forums.
- 5.11. Community and town councils, either singly or jointly with neighbouring town and community councils, might wish to prepare visions for their local areas which outline how they would like their areas to develop and identify the contribution that they and others could make to implementing them. The visions could form the basis of town and village appraisals and plans that some community councils produce. These visions should be realistic, based on solid research and full engagement with the public and other bodies, including the local authority. The relationship between town and community councils' visions for their areas and the community strategy should be the subject of local agreement between town and community councils, local authorities and local service board.
- 5.12. [The Welsh Assembly Government, together with the Welsh Local Government Association and One Voice Wales](#), has developed a resource pack to encourage closer working relationships between community and town councils and their respective unitary authorities. The model charter forms the basis of a possible formal agreement, including in particular on community planning. It is anticipated that this resource pack will enable an increasing number of community and town councils to engage with unitary authorities and make a positive contribution to this process.

## Community involvement

- 5.13. The involvement of local people is central to the effective development and implementation of community strategies, and to wider change and improvements in the longer term. There is an often untapped pool of ideas, knowledge, skills, experience, energy and enthusiasm among individuals, groups and communities as a whole which, if realised, can be a real driver for change. Community strategies should provide an opportunity to put local people at the heart of partnership working and should be grounded in the views and expectations of those people.
- 5.14. If community strategies are to respond to public concerns, there needs to be genuine public engagement throughout the process. It is important that community planning enables communities to be fully

involved in establishing both the long-term vision and the shorter-term priorities for action. It would not be sufficient simply to consult communities on a range of options determined by the authority and its partner organisations. Attention should be given at an early stage to ensuring that all sections of the community have the opportunity to participate - not just the 'usual suspects'.

- 5.15. Local service boards will need to continue to consider the various methods by which they can involve communities in the preparation of community strategies. These will need to recognise that individuals belong simultaneously to a number of communities, of both place and interest, and will identify with different communities according to their circumstances and the issues under discussion. Community strategies should reflect this complexity, and the partnership should accommodate it by putting in place a variety of routes into participation, employing different mechanisms. In this way the full range of perspectives and contributions can be accessed and included. Each local service board will need to consider how best to involve the different communities that make up their area, and devise techniques that are most appropriate to local circumstances.
- 5.16. As a starting point, local service boards should, wherever possible, use existing mechanisms that have already been proved to be effective, rather than setting up duplicate processes. This should then form the basis for considering how to equip local groups with the knowledge and support to make a meaningful and continuing contribution to the community planning process. Consideration should be given to the role that councillors, public sector staff and the third sector, particularly local community groups (among them Communities First Partnerships), can play in helping to ensure that all communities have access to independent sources of information and advice to support their involvement.
- 5.17. The nature and degree of community involvement will inevitably vary at different stages of the process and according to the issue. Moreover, community engagement is likely to reveal differences of view - particularly about priorities for action - not all of which will be reconcilable. The local service board at the local level, and the other key partnerships, will need to consider:
  - how community views are going to influence and inform the decision-making process;
  - how differences of view are to be aired and resolved within the local strategic partnership; and
  - how decisions are to be explained to communities (see Chapter 4, paragraphs 4.1. - 4.4.).
- 5.18. It is important that in seeking the views of communities, councils and their community strategy partners do not inadvertently raise expectations that they cannot meet. Clear parameters need to be

established and communities must be given full information about the context and constraints within which public service providers operate (e.g. national expectations and targets, resource levels and statutory limitations). The process is about dialogue, including communication about limitations as well as possibilities. Where there are genuine constraints, these need to be explained so that the partners – including local communities – can understand them and work within them.

- 5.19. Local service boards will also need to consider the part that residents and community groups can play in implementing community strategies. In some areas, the management of social housing and policing, there are well-established ways of involving communities in both the planning and delivery of services. Partnerships should be responsive to the wishes of local communities in this regard, and help to create the conditions for a greater degree of community involvement where this is being sought.
- 5.20. Where they exist, Communities First Partnerships bring together representatives from the local community, local authorities, public agencies, the third and private sectors. They have a specific remit to involve local residents in devising and implementing strategies that address the issues arising from deprivation. Communities First partnerships provide established structures for communicating and engaging with key sectors of the population. It is therefore important that if seamless working at a local level is to be delivered that the local service boards develop mechanisms to enable effective communication with these partnerships.

## **Involving other organisations**

### **The Third Sector**

- 5.21. The third sector has a crucial role to play in improving the quality of life for local communities through its expertise in effectively engaging citizens, services users and potential users; through service design, commissioning, procurement and evaluation; through joint delivery partnerships; through contributing to a mixed economy of service provision and through engagement in scrutiny and review of services.
- 5.22. The third sector is often best placed to reach and involve those sections of the community that the mainstream public sector may find hard to reach, and to access funding that is not available to public bodies. As with other partners, third sector bodies remain responsible for decisions on how best to deploy their resources. Specific efforts should be made to involve representatives from under-represented groups in the wider community planning structures, such as ethnic minorities, women, faith communities, older people, young people and children, and disabled people. All partnerships should ensure that third sector organisations are in a position to play a full and equal part in multi-agency partnerships alongside statutory authorities and better

resourced partners.

- 5.23. The local service board, which will include the County Voluntary Council, should ensure that a constructive dialogue takes place with the wider third sector and citizens locally. The County Voluntary Council will be able to advise on this. In turn, the third sector and public sector should find that the community strategy provides a valuable framework for their work.
- 5.24. The local service board should ensure that the diversity of the third sector is reflected in all partnerships that support the development and implementation of community strategy objectives, and that any organisation speaking on behalf of others has a fully representative and accountable structure that mandates them to do so. The Voluntary Sector Compact should provide a framework within which the relationship between the third sector and the local authority can be defined and developed. Many of these compacts have already been expanded to include other public sector partners such as LHBs, Health Trusts, the Police and Police Authorities. This is a continuing trend, which is encouraged, as is the monitoring of Compacts and their associated action plans, by county level Joint Liaison Committees.

### **Public sector organisations**

- 5.25. The public bodies that should be involved in preparing and delivering community strategies may vary from one authority area to another. At the least, however, an effective community strategy would need to involve the key public sector organisations that operate at the local level and control the majority of the resources going into the local area for instance: Local Health Boards (particularly when there are shared aims/objectives around reducing health inequalities), NHS Trusts, police authorities and forces, fire and rescue services, education (at all levels including higher/further education), Job Centre Plus and the Environment Agency Wales.

### **Private Sector**

- 5.26. The private sector must be fully involved in the community planning process, as it is a significant user and supplier of local services, as well as a key provider of local employment. Business activity contributes both directly and indirectly to community prosperity and quality of life.
- 5.27. The local service board should consider how best to engage the business community in the community planning process and reflect on how the skills that the business community can 'bring to the table' can be most effectively utilised. Whilst relationships will vary from area to area, it may be that the skills of the business sector are best utilised in specific projects or scrutiny role rather than in more general strategic management.

- 5.28. Private sector participation will be encouraged by approaches to community strategies that are based on clear, relevant goals and practical means to achieve them. Many businesses work on a regional, national or international level and will already have experience of working on regional economic partnerships and their energies may be best focused in contributing to regional structures that are coherently linked to the local service board.
- 5.29. Councils and their partners should build on approaches to business involvement that have already been shown to work - there are many examples of good practice - and should ensure that local businesses, economic development agencies, local chambers of commerce, trade union councils and other representative organisations are properly involved in preparing community strategies. *(DN –develop an Advice Note to bring all this together).*

## **Welsh Assembly Government**

- 5.30. The Welsh Assembly Government is a significant player at the local level, both because of the resources and services that it provides and because local government and other public bodies are often involved in delivering national priorities. The aim of community strategies is to allow local communities to articulate their needs and priorities. However, action at the local level will inevitably take place against a backdrop of priorities established at national and regional level.
- 5.31. The Welsh Assembly Government also has a key role to play in providing the optimum conditions for effective local partnership working, including taking a co-ordinated approach to rationalising requirements for local plans and partnerships (see paragraphs 1.32, 2.7, 2.8. and Advice Note?). In 2006 there was a consolidation of the NHS Acts for England and Wales, section 33 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006 now replaces section 31 of the Health Act 1999. Section 33 still enables local authorities and health authorities to work more closely together, including providing the ability to pool resources. The Local Government Act 2000 also enables local authorities to improve their partnership working arrangements with other bodies. A series of Advice Notes on Pooling Resources will support work in this area.

## **Regional bodies**

- 5.32. The Spatial Plan Area Groups, WLGA Regional Boards, regional transport consortia, regional economic fora and other partnerships which operate at a regional level all have specific responsibilities that may be relevant to the preparation of a particular community strategy. The local service board will need to consider how best to involve these

and other regional bodies in the preparation of their community strategies; the regional boards, groups and partnerships in turn will also need to take account of relevant community strategies.

## **The role of overview and scrutiny**

5.33. Overview and scrutiny committees are an essential and integral part of a local authority's executive arrangements. A community strategy's place at the centre of the strategic policy framework, and in delivering citizen focused services, means that it should have a central position in Overview and Scrutiny committees work programmes. The cross cutting nature of community strategies means that a co-ordinated forward work programme should be developed, and agreed, by the various scrutiny committees to ensure that all relevant policy areas incorporated within the strategy are all given appropriate attention. Scrutiny committees should look at the:

- Process by which the strategy is produced and refined, including the membership composition of the local service board, the extent and appropriateness of consultation/engagement utilised during the development of the strategy.
- Policy implications of the community strategy;
- Delivery of community strategy priorities.

### **Consultation questions**

**5.1.** How effectively can partnerships engage with all community and citizen interests in the community planning process? What obstacles are there to this, and what might be done about them?

**5.2.** Does this chapter adequately describe other organisations' role in, and contributions to, community planning?

**5.2a.** Are there other ways in which those contributions could be maximised? and/or

**5.2b.** Are there limits to how far other organisations can or should become involved? Does the guidance raise unrealistic expectations in this area?

## **Possible Legislation**

- A.1. As part of this consultation, we are also seeking your views on the possibility of inviting the National Assembly for Wales to legislate to create a duty on local partners to co-operate in developing and delivering community strategies. Please note, however, that this is subject to the Assembly acquiring the necessary powers in the current Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill.
- A.2. It is not anticipated that any legislation will pass into law before mid-2008 at the earliest, and any references to it in the final guidance on community strategies will not have statutory status. If we do proceed with this, we would issue further guidance on the meaning and application of the duty in due course.

### **Duty to Cooperate**

- A.3. The policy statement [A Shared Responsibility](#), published in March 2007 signalled the intention to invite Welsh Ministers to use their powers to create a duty on named public-sector organisations to co-operate in developing and delivering a community strategy.
- A.4. That remains the view. Without calling into question partner organisations' levels of informal commitment to community planning, we believe that placing co-operation on a statutory footing would create greater clarity and consistency. It would generate greater equity between partners, and ensure that community planning is treated as a core purpose of each organisation, not an optional extra to be accommodated if and when day-to-day operational management allows.
- A.5. However, it is essential that such a duty focuses on the outcomes of community planning: of delivering improved well-being to local citizens and communities. A duty which required local partners to follow specified processes or to establish detailed collaborative ways of working could be unduly burdensome, adding little to the pursuit of common goals.
- A.6. Therefore, and subject to this consultation, we propose to invite the National Assembly for Wales to legislate for a duty to co-operate similar to that which applies to community planning partners in Scotland<sup>5</sup>. That duty would require local partners to participate in developing the community strategy, to identify and agree the contents of the action plan, and to carry out those elements of the action plan for which it was responsible. It would not prescribe how the duty was to be carried out, whether in terms of objectives or working practices and structures.

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<sup>5</sup> See sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

- A.7. The National Assembly for Wales's powers would allow this duty to apply only to public bodies; it could not apply to (for instance) third sector or private-sector bodies or representative organisations in those sectors. At this stage, we propose that it would apply to the following as a minimum:
- county and county borough councils;
  - fire and rescue authorities and fire and rescue services;
  - National Park authorities, where established;
  - local health boards;
  - NHS Trusts;
  - police authorities and police forces;
  - regional transport consortia;
  - town and community councils, where established.
- A.8. These proposals would be subject to the National Assembly for Wales passing the required Measure and are not likely to come into force until the summer of 2008 at the earliest. We would issue further guidance on the meaning and application of the duty.

### **Scrutiny Reform**

- A.9. It is hoped that the National Assembly for Wales will acquire measure-making powers in relation to overview and scrutiny and that the Welsh Assembly Government will bring forward proposals for the reform of scrutiny so as to enable it to operate more effectively in the new era of cross border partnerships and local service boards. Any such proposals are likely to form the basis of a separate consultation exercise during the autumn of this year.

#### **Consultation Questions**

**A.1.** Do you believe that the proposed duty to co-operate would enhance community planning? If so:

**A.1.a.** Do you agree with its focus on delivering outcomes rather than prescribing processes?

**A.1.b.** Do you think that the list of bodies to which the duty would apply is appropriate? Do you think any should be added (or deleted)?