

Individual Decision

Title of Report:	Representation on Outside Bodies – Community Legal Service Partnerships		
Report to be considered by:	Cllr Anthony Stansfeld	on:	3rd November 2005
Forward Plan Ref:	ID1109		

Purpose of Report:

To consider a nomination to the Berkshire Community Legal Service Partnership

Recommended Action:

To agree the Council's representation on the Berkshire Community Legal Service Partnership

Reason for decision to be taken:

Vacancy has arisen due to the need to nominate an elected Member to the Berkshire Community Legal Service Partnership

List of other options considered:

None

Key background documentation:

None

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Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 In 1998 in response to national government, all area Legal Service Commissions (LSC's) set up Community Legal Service Partnerships (CLSPs). Currently, there are more than 200 Community Legal Service Partnerships that have been established across England and Wales. These Partnerships bring together organisations offering legal and advice services - such as solicitors in private practice, Citizens Advice Bureau, Law Centres, Local Authority in-house services as well as representatives of the Legal Services Commission. All the Partners act together to improve access to, and delivery of, legal and advice services in their local community.
- 1.2 In Berkshire the area was split into two areas Central & West Berkshire. West Berkshire consisted of West Berkshire Council, Reading Borough Council, Wokingham District Council and Bracknell Forest Borough Council. James Mole was the Councillor rep on this strategic partnership that aimed at helping people in the community to get access to legal advice and information, especially in the wake of the tightening up of the legal aid budget.
- 1.3 CLSP meetings were held quarterly in Reading and during the first 2 years, they were involved in the setting up of a local directory of services which was published and circulated to all councils, parish clerks, libraries, Citizens Advice Bureau's and other similar voluntary sector/statutory bodies that were a source of legal advice and information.
- 1.4 West Berkshire Council with Stephen Smyth as the lead officer, were the lead Council that led the CLSP over the years 2001 - 2004 on the delivery of a project called the Community Advice Training project (CAT) across Central and West Berkshire. During that period, £300,000 of funding was awarded for the CAT project.
- 1.5 The project finished in May 2005, and the LSC reconstituted the CLSP on a Berkshire wide basis by merging the two Berkshire CLSP's into one single partnership and a representative from West Berkshire is now required to be on this strategic body.
- 1.6 Ideally Member representation is desired as the CLSP will now be about policy, delivery and resourcing, not project based as previously. This would mean for this Council, local policy for the delivery of legal advice and information services centralising on provision in the rural areas and of resources that can be made available to charities such as CABs, Mind, Age Concern etc. The Council's Trading Standards team will offer technical advice as required.
- 1.7 The membership period will be for the term of the Council year.
- 1.8 Further information about the CLSP can be found on the LSC web page on <http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/>
- 1.9 The sole representative from West Berkshire Council will have voting rights; travelling and subsistence costs will be covered by the Council
- 1.10 Meetings will be held on average four times a year and are held in the Legal Service Commission Offices based in Reading.
- 1.11 Councillor Andrew Rowles and Councillor Alexander Payton have been nominated for this role.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference for the Community Legal Service Partnerships as quoted by the Legal Service Commission.

Implications

Policy:	The proposals outlined in this report do not contradict any of the Council's existing policies, including those outlined in the Corporate Plan.
Financial:	Travelling and subsistence costs
Personnel:	None
Legal:	None
Environmental:	None
Equalities:	Promotes social inclusion in line with the Council's Equalities Strategy.
Partnering:	None
Property:	None
Risk Management:	None
Community Safety:	None

Consultation Responses

Members:

Leader of Council:	Cllr Graham Jones
Select Committee Chairmen:	Cllr Gordon Lundie
Ward Members:	N/A
Opposition Spokesperson:	Cllr Roger Hunneman
Advisory Members:	N/A
Local Stakeholders:	N/A
Officers Consulted:	David Holling, Andy Day, Stephen Smyth, Steve Clark and Chris Gee
Trade Union:	N/A

Appendix 1

Terms of Reference for Berkshire and West CLSP

In terms of the activities described under each objective it is anticipated that partner members will carry out *some* of the activities detailed and they are simply examples of some of the activities that could fulfil the stated objectives.

Aims:

- To improve access to, and extend the scope of, good quality legal advice services within the partnership area that meets identified need amongst local communities.
- To promote access to justice to all groups within the partnership area, ensuring particular attention is paid to the needs of excluded communities.

Objectives:

- To promote and enhance networking between providers to develop mutual understanding and share good practice.

Activities: Attending partnership and sub-group meetings, facilitating seminar/conference events. Attending local events and meetings representing the CLSP, explore and improve methods of communication between partners and associated agencies. Consider the direction and recommendations of the CLSP when planning own service developments. Actively promote the CLSP to other organisations who may not be represented within the partnership, ensuring representation is balanced amongst all sectors of the legal advice providers.

- To facilitate the exchange of practical information aimed at improving inter agency operational arrangements links and referrals.

Activities: Promote the referral procedure and utilise a referral procedure that can be monitored. Facilitating seminar/conference events. Represent the CLSP at local events and meetings with a view to gathering and sharing good practice and operational processes. Review own practices to ensure accessibility to all partner organisations and be prepared to be flexible where possible.

- To identify and agree a strategy for information and legal advice provision within the CLSP area.

Activities: Contribute to information gathering exercises, share stats, case studies etc to identify and evidence need. Review and actively participate in consultation exercises around an emerging strategy. Embrace new methods of analysis to assist in identification of gaps etc. Actively promote the need to gather evidence etc from organisations who can contribute but may not be able to participate directly in partnership activities. Ensure local and national agendas (e.g. Social inclusion agenda) are taken into consideration and reflected in a local strategy.

- To shape the development of new services and models of provision needed to achieve that strategy.

Activities: Participate in consultation exercises around new service development. Be prepared to review, comment on and endorse new projects and service developments that have a partnership strategic fit. Work in partnership to access funding streams to support new project development that meets local need. Support member partners in developing new services. Agree clear criteria for projects wishing to be endorsed by the CLSP including for example, consideration of access, excluded groups, methods of delivery etc.

- To link funders and service providers together to achieve a co-ordinated and strategic approach to funding and service provision.

Activities: Share information with partner members that could improve access to funding streams. Circulate information on current funding streams that has a strategic fit. Support partner members in bids for services that meet identified need. Undertake activities to collaborate with and endorse partnership bids.

- To link strategically into other partnerships and forums operating locally to enable the CLSP to take a consistent and co-ordinated approach to development.

Activities: Identify other local partnerships and review the methods by which the CLSP could effectively engage with those partnerships (e.g. Crime and disorder reduction partnerships, LSPs etc). Undertake activities that would ensure a co-ordinated, cohesive strategic approach is taken by all partnerships working locally including the CLSP. Represent the view of the CLSP at other partnership seminar/conference events and meetings. Undertake activities that ensures duplication of services and initiatives amongst all local partnerships are avoided.