



## AGENDA ITEM: 6

### NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

5<sup>th</sup> March 2007

#### CONSULTATION ON “MAKING THE CONNECTIONS – LOCAL SERVICE BOARDS IN WALES”

**Report by Ian Miller  
Clerk to the Authority**

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To present for Members' consideration a draft response from the Authority to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) consultation document, 'Making the Connections – Local Service Boards in Wales'. The full consultation document can be viewed on the WAG's website at the following web address:  
[http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/403823121/40382213/403822133/LSB\\_consultation-e.pdf?lang=en](http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/403823121/40382213/403822133/LSB_consultation-e.pdf?lang=en)

#### **Background**

2. *Beyond Boundaries* was published in July 2006 by Sir Jeremy Beecham following a major review of public services in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government responded to this report in November 2006 by producing a detailed series of actions and targets to transform public services, backed by a £42m budget.
3. The primary message of *Beyond Boundaries* is that although much has already been achieved in Wales, the performance of public services is too variable, and there remains scope for further improvement. WAG accepts the review's conclusion that better integration of services is key to achieving more within the constraints of a small country.



## **Introduction**

4. WAG acknowledges that the need for better coordination is particularly evident in relation to those groups of people who are deemed to be most at risk - such as the frail elderly, vulnerable children and sufferers from mental illness – for whom support is available, but from different parts of the public service and which is frequently uncoordinated.
5. WAG now proposes that in each local authority area, there should be a Local Service Board (LSB) which brings together the key local delivery organisations with the aim of monitoring service delivery and developing joint action where it is most needed.
6. Boards will be convened by local authorities, and membership is to consist of the leaders and leading officials of existing organisations, both devolved and non-devolved. Local Service Boards are not intended to be new, separate organisations, and should not themselves employ staff. WAG's intention is that LSBs should be an extension of existing Community Strategy Partnerships, providing a focus for the rationalization and effective operation of other existing partnerships.
7. By 2008-09 WAG plans to put in place Local Service Agreements, involving initially only a limited number of LSBs, which specify the key cross-sectoral outputs which the Boards will aim to achieve.
8. Innovations in funding are proposed, to encourage the pooling of budgets in support of Local Area Agreements.
9. Acknowledging the need for consistency of performance information, a new small unit - Performance Wales - will work with existing sources of performance information to provide more coordinated and accessible information to support service improvement.



## **Information**

- 10.** WAG's consultation on LSBs invites comments on the proposals and responses to specific questions by 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007.
- 11.** In the early phases, WAG proposes to work with a small number of development projects to help design a workable model for future LSBs. Expressions of interest are invited to participate as one of these development projects for 2007-08 by 8<sup>th</sup> March 2007, to test specified elements including governance and scrutiny models, the form and content of Local Service Agreements, relationships with existing thematic plans, partnerships and WAG itself, and support and management arrangements.

## **Contents of the Draft Response**

- 12.** The draft response from the Authority is set out in the appendix. It is broadly supportive, and commits the Authority/Service to participating in LSBs, as one of the key public service organisations operating across North Wales.
- 13.** The Service already participates in a range of community and local strategic partnerships in each of its constituent authorities through representation at county level; acknowledging that increased safety can only be improved through joint working with other agencies such as social services and housing providers.
- 14.** The draft response therefore is based on the Authority not having any objection to having a duty imposed upon it to collaborate in this and other areas.
- 15.** No reference has been made in the draft response to the Authority's anticipated level of involvement in the LSBs (e.g. a Member within his/her own county, supported by a Community Safety Manager). Members may wish to consider this aspect, in order to share their view with the unitary authorities.



## **Recommendation**

- 16.** That members:
- (a) consider the draft response and agree the final submission
  - (b) consider the Authority/Service's anticipated level of involvement in the LSBs



## APPENDIX 1

<b>Summary of the Proposals in the Consultation Document</b>	
<b>1.</b>	Development of LSBs to start in 2007-08, initially through a small number of development projects, with a view to having Local Service Agreements in place in all areas by 2010.
<b>2.</b>	LSBs not intended to be additional tiers of administration or decision-making. They should pull together leaders from all public services and key stakeholders, mandated to contribute effectively.
<b>3.</b>	The structure and membership of LSBs to include statutory agencies, WAG, the voluntary sector and the business sector.
<b>4.</b>	LSBs to be convened by local authorities, and will choose their own Chair.
<b>5.</b>	LSBs to work with minimal bureaucracy, aiming to find secretariat and support capacity from existing resources. To be effective, membership of LSBs to be inclusive, yet small enough to be focused.
<b>6.</b>	Testing to take place through development projects in 2007-08. Support will be provided to these development projects to learn how the pooling of responsibility, resources and/or budgets can be done in future. A separate consultation on scrutiny is to be issued later in 2007.
<b>7.</b>	LSBs to consist of people who are already leaders in their own organisations. Expected culture and leadership models include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• willingness to transcend organisational interests in the interest of better delivery for citizens;</li><li>• willingness to consider new ways of providing services, including a mixed economy of provision, with the potential for a greater role for the third sector in delivery;</li><li>• capacity to lead, and to follow others' lead;</li><li>• commitment to jointly discover, understand and act on the experience of citizens and staff who work closely with them;</li><li>• capacity to monitor performance in local service delivery and identify priorities for improvement through joint action;</li><li>• willingness to contribute to work where others lead;</li><li>• willingness to pool both resources and sovereignty as a means to achieving both service improvement and efficiency.</li></ul>



8.	LSBs to enhance capacity and impact across the public service through leadership attributes of: problem-solving to tackle barriers; contributing intelligence, understanding and expertise; creating new opportunities by investing in preventing problems and finding solutions; and increasing confidence and trust in public services thereby facilitating more ambitious change.
9.	A possible board model might be to have a wide membership of full Board members, with a core membership responsible for specific work streams.
10.	The board to include representatives of national bodies, as well as Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs), each according to its capacity to engage at local level.
11.	Ex officio members - such as heads of Health and Wellbeing Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships, and Directors of Public Health - could also be included on the core team to provide strategic advice across sectors.
12.	In addition to direct representation on LSBs, the consultation suggests that wider stakeholder groups or networks be set up to give a voice to wider interests.
13.	LSBs to ensure that their work is strongly citizen-focussed.
14.	WAG to contribute directly to the work of the Boards, with Spatial Plan Ministers taking responsibility for WAG's relationship with Boards, and senior WAG officials sitting on each LSB.
15.	<p>The role of the senior WAG officials to be tested in the development projects, but currently expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be a 'purposeful two-way conduit' between WAG and LSB</li> <li>• inform the Assembly, and give a clear steer to the LSB</li> <li>• identify ways to reduce bureaucratic and other barriers</li> <li>• contribute to problem solving and 'act as honest broker'</li> <li>• resolve conflicting priorities from competing performance frameworks or other tensions</li> <li>• share good practice</li> <li>• contribute to constructive challenge and be lead negotiator of a Local Service Agreement between WAG and LSB</li> <li>• contribute to a change network within WAG to make it more citizen-centred, outward-facing and delivery-focused.</li> </ul>
16.	The LSBs may need to develop relationships with the Spatial Plan groups, and other regional planning and commissioning arrangements.



- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| <b>17.</b> | WAG to seek to co-ordinate Ministerial and official engagement with LSBs and Spatial Plan partnerships, recognising their distinctive roles. |
|------------|--|



**MAKING THE CONNECTIONS – LOCAL SERVICE BOARDS IN WALES  
DRAFT RESPONSE FROM NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**General Comments**

There is much that we welcome in the Assembly Government's response to "*Beyond Boundaries*" and this consultation paper. For example, we welcome Local Service Boards as a development of local strategic or community strategy partnerships; the intention to place a duty on local service bodies to cooperate; the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to remove bureaucratic processes and barriers; and introducing Local Service Agreements consisting of a small number of local and national priorities.

**Comments on specific paragraphs**

The remainder of our response focuses on those issues where we feel further clarification is required or where we have concerns about what is proposed. References are to paragraph numbers.

**10.** If Local Service Agreements are to lead to significant changes or improvements, they are likely to require provision of significant additional resources as has been the case for local area agreements in England. We consider that this is particularly germane in relation to Fire and Rescue Authorities that will presumably be represented on every LSB and be signatories to at least one Local Service Agreement in each of its constituent authorities.

**11.** We support the proposed duty of cooperation, but consider that this duty should also extend to the Welsh Ministers, given the large number of local services for which they have had responsibility since the merger of the Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies in 2006.

**15.** There needs to be clarification of which "partners" will sign the agreement. If the voluntary and private sectors are to sign, does this mean that the Boards will shape the location, timing and nature of





services provided by those sectors? We doubt that this is the intention, and believe that the agreement should be signed by the statutory partners and WAG.

We understand WAG's wish to engage staff representatives in developing proposals and implementing change (paragraph 25). However, in practice, if representative bodies, as key stakeholders, form part of the LSB as an equal partner, they could not be subject to the same duty to co-operate (paragraph 11) as the other members, or to conform to the culture and models of leadership so fully described in paragraphs 45 and 46. (Refer also to our response under paragraphs 54 and 55.)

**17.** We support the proposal to avoid Local Service Boards becoming new, separate organisations. Presumably this intention will be taken into account when the wider legal framework to support them is devised (paragraph 11).

**21.** While the thrust of the final sentence in this paragraph is understood, it does not allow for the possibility that the problem in providing an effective whole-system response for an issue such as community fire safety may lie in a single service or organization. In such circumstances, the Board must be able to tackle the weakness and persuade the organization concerned to change its approach.

**31.** Since WAG will be represented on each Board, the discussion about WAG's requirements should be within the Board, not separately (as implied by "following discussion").

**31 & 33.** Concerns have been expressed about the coherence and size of the framework of national performance indicators, minimum standards and shared outcomes that will be reflected in Local Service Agreements. We share the view that there should be a coherent, simple set of measures/indicators that are useful to and understood by the public. However, until the definitive performance management and measurement frameworks for fire and rescue services in Wales are published, it would be impossible for any LSB to include the performance of the fire and rescue service in the



integrated summary of service performance in the way described in paragraph 33.

**54 & 55.** These paragraphs are confusing. There cannot be “core” and “full” board members. We support a single board, with a relatively small number of members although the precise number would be for local decision: any wider engagement should be achieved through a stakeholder group or similar mechanism as suggested in paragraph 60. This would also clarify issues relating to representative bodies, voluntary and private sector organisations described in our response under paragraph 15.

**56.** Which national services and agencies are involved should be a matter for local decision, and should not be mandated. Likewise it should be for local decision whether any Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies should be involved. This should not be mandatory for two reasons:

- (i) the main “service” ASPBs have been abolished and merged into the Assembly Government;
- (ii) the WAG representative on the Board can just as easily provide a feedback/coordinating role for ASPBs as for departments within WAG. Indeed we recommend that this should be explicitly confirmed.

**75.** First and second bullet points:

See comment on paragraph 56 and our suggestion that the WAG official should also coordinate input from and feedback to ASPBs.

**75.** Sixth bullet point:

See our earlier comments (paragraphs 31 and 33) about coherence of the performance framework. In simple terms, WAG should remove conflicting priorities between performance frameworks, and there should not be “competing performance frameworks” in the first place.

**75.** Penultimate bullet point:

The wording requires clarification. The WAG official should act as lead negotiator on behalf of WAG, not on behalf of the Board. We do not think that a WAG official should negotiate with WAG.



**79.** North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority covers the whole of the six councils that make up North Wales. North Wales is split into three spatial plan areas. We would not therefore support bringing together LSBs on the present spatial plan areas. Unless spatial plan boundaries are aligned with county boundaries, we feel that it would be better to bring LSBs together on the basis of the WLGA's four regional partnership boards which better reflect regional "communities of interest", and the boundaries of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

### **Response to specific questions**

#### **Q. Does this definition of the roles of the Local Service Boards provide a clear and workable mission for 2007-08?**

In general, yes it does. However, much of the thinking behind the proposals relates to councils, with little or no consideration of how, in practice, a Fire and Rescue Authority (or similar) that straddles several unitary authorities but which lacks their complexity and their level of available resources, is expected to service a multitude of different priorities identified by a number of LSBs. The citizen-centred ideology is more complex for us.

For example:

Parag. 22 – 'areas of critical importance for the locality'

Parag 20 – 'engaging with citizens and communities coherently at area level'

Parag 27 – 'the Board (will ensure) that arrangements (...) at regional level are working effectively at the local level'.

#### **Q. How should the Local Service Boards be positioned in relation to the delivery partnerships to ensure that they add value and help the partnerships be more effective?**

Presumably, this will be picked up through the development projects, and continued through the legal framework. However, as stated in our comment on paragraph 10, authorities that operate across a



number of local authorities may find their resources being spread quite thinly across several LSBs, which should be taken into account during the development projects.

**Q. How do we achieve an action learning model for the implementation of the Local Service Boards across Wales, including creating effective networking to spread the learning from the development projects?**

Wales is particularly proficient at effective networking, which, coupled with the more formal structures proposed in Beyond Boundaries (parag. 6.93) will contribute greatly to the sharing of learning.

**Q. How can we ensure that the Local Service Agreement forms a broadly based partnership work programme, but is also sufficiently narrowly drawn to ensure discipline and effective action?**

**How should the structure and membership of Boards deal with the tension between inclusive membership and small team focus and discipline?**

The tension between inclusivity and “small team focus” is best resolved by having a relatively small board and a wider stakeholder group – we do not support the three tier model implied by paragraphs 54 and 55.

**Q. How should services or agencies organised at an all-Wales, England and Wales or UK level engage with the Boards?**

We wonder whether there should be a UK Government representative who would perform a similar role for UK Government departments and their agencies/public bodies as we advocate the WAG representative should perform for WAG departments and ASPBs.



**Q. Does there need to be a national template, or should local areas devise their own membership and working arrangements, and demonstrate that they are fit for purpose to provide the ambitious and problem-solving public service leadership and citizen-focused challenge for the area?**

We do not support a national template for membership or working arrangements, the key being local flexibility to meet local requirements.

**Q. If there needs to be a national template, what should it be?**

Not applicable.