

Committee: Council

Date: 19 November 2014

Wards: All

Subject: South London Partnership – Establishment of Statutory Joint Committee and resourcing of Partnership

Lead officer: Ged Curran, Chief Executive

Lead member: Councillor Stephen Alambritis

Contact officer: Paul Evans, Assistant Director, Corporate Governance

Recommendations:

- A. Council approves, for its part, the establishment of a Joint Committee with neighbouring boroughs in the South London Partnership with the terms of reference and remit as set out in Appendix A.
- B. Notes that the Procedure Rules for the Joint Committee will be brought to a future meeting of Council for approval.
- C. Appoints the Leader of the Council to serve as the Council's representative on the Joint Committee
- D. Agrees to increase the Borough's subscription to £35k per annum in order that the Partnership is adequately resourced for what it needs to do.
- E. Agrees that Richmond be the host Borough for staffing, with costs and liabilities shared between the constituent boroughs.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report makes proposals for the establishment of a Statutory Joint Committee of South London Boroughs, building on the current South London Partnership, and provision of appropriate resources. This is in order to be able to respond to the Government's growth agenda, possible future delegation of responsibilities and funding and compete successfully with other sub regions in London.

This report is the result of discussions between the Leaders of those south London Boroughs which comprise the South London Partnership (Richmond, Kingston, Merton, Sutton and Croydon). It makes proposals to position the South London Partnership to better respond to the growth agenda access current potential funding streams and be ready for future likely delegations of responsibilities and funding. In order to achieve this the Partnership needs to:

- (1) demonstrate to Government that it has robust governance and mechanisms for decision making in place in accordance with the guidance for the Growth Deal.
- (2) be adequately resourced in terms of staff capacity to achieve its goals, both in support of the Partnership's overall aims but also in support of its specific aims for regeneration and growth.

At its meeting on 10th November 2014 Cabinet considered this report and recommends to Council the above recommendations.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 Introduction - The shared agenda of work for the South London Partnership (SLP) continues to increase particularly in relation to regeneration and growth partly in response to the Government's Growth Deal. There is also possible future scope for the devolution of Government Functions as well as on-going development of shared services both between partners and with partners outside our boundaries. The London Borough of Bromley has also indicated an interest involved in the partnership in view of the importance of the growth agenda and the potential for additional responsibilities and funding.
- 2.2 Context The rationale for our South London Boroughs working together is stronger than ever with the need to maintain and improve public services in a continuingly straightened financial climate and the opportunities afforded through the Growth Deal. Moreover, current discussions on further devolution to England in the light of the Scottish referendum could lead to an increase in powers and funding for London. If these are delegated via the GLA it could work to the disadvantage of outer London suburbs like our own. It seems therefore even more important that there is a strong sub regional governance framework which can provide both a counterweight and a mechanism for devolution of government funds. Vitally it provides a bottom up, voluntary approach building on the individual strengths and characteristics of the constituent boroughs rather than some top down imposed solution which would inevitably work to the detriment of individual boroughs. Any such top down imposition would be vigorously opposed.

However, we need also to consider if the SLP is having the right level of influence with both the GLA and Government in order to achieve our strategic goals and ambition, particularly in relation to growth and regeneration and to achieving a proportionate level of funding from the Growth Deal and other vehicles which are or will become available in future.

In order to position ourselves most successfully, firstly the Partnership needs to develop a stronger narrative about its growth potential, contribution to the success of the London economy overall and barriers to progress. Then it needs to be able to demonstrate to Government that it has robust governance and mechanisms for decision making in place in accordance with the guidance for the Growth Deal:

“to deliver collective decision from all local authority leaders, including district councils, within the LEP, with evidence of underpinning robust partnership arrangements.”

Furthermore, the SLP needs to consider the resources in terms of staff capacity that it is able to bring to bear to achieve its goals, particularly in relation to regeneration and growth.

The SLP must be mindful of how it compares with other sub regional partnerships in London, with which it is in competition in terms of influence and resources, notwithstanding any cross border alliances.

- 2.3 Governance Proposals In London, we have worked hard to establish a relationship with the Mayor and Local Enterprise Partnership which will enable funds to be delegated to sub regional partnerships. It has been made clear that such delegation requires strong sub regional governance, which the SLP does not currently have.

The proposal is therefore to create a Joint Committee which can exercise decision making over:

- Delegation of funds from the London Mayor and LEP to meet local economic growth need.
- Access to and approval of the allocation of additional funds as part of the City Growth Deal process
- Greater control over local economic investment and prosperity at a more localised level
- Existing economic assets across the area to be built upon and maximised
- Current joint working on areas such as procurement and shared services (underpinned by the current Memorandum of Understanding between 4 Member authorities) to be further developed to maximise efficiencies and growth.

Further details are set out in Appendix A. The intention is to submit proposals through each Council's decision making machinery during November so that the Joint Committee can become operational from 1 January 2015.

The aspiration is to use this governance arrangement to go beyond obtaining funds from the Mayor and LEP but also to persuade Government to delegate additional responsibilities and their funding – eg in relation to getting people back into work, boosting skills and developing innovative local solutions to ensuring economic growth and prosperity.

Critically this proposal also positions us strongly if, in the context of greater devolution for England, the GLA is proposed as the vehicle for London, to the possible detriment of the suburbs generally, including South London.

- 2.4 Staffing Resources and Capacity Proposals London Councils work on Devolution and Public Sector Reform is welcomed but underlines the amount of work that is required by each sub region to develop a coherent offer and ensure our voice is heard, in order to take advantage not only of the Growth Deal but other future developments.

A comparison of the SLP's funding and resources with that of other sub regional partnerships is set out below.

Partnership	No of posts	Subscription per partner	Total
West London Alliance	9	£34,333 x 6	£206K
North London Strategic Alliance	6	£40K x 3 £15K x 3	£165K
South London Partnership	2.5	£15K x 5	£75K
Central London Forward	2	£25K x 8	£200K
Growth Boroughs	5	£60K x 6	£360K

In terms of staffing capacity the majority fund dedicated resources for their joint effort, as well as some of the work being led within individual boroughs.

In terms of skills mix, the additional staffing capacity in the other partnerships compared to SLP's is specialist economic development, regeneration and transport resource.

If the SLP is to increase its influence both generally within the pan London arrangements but also specifically within the context of the Growth Deal it will require more specialist resource who can argue authoritatively for our own strategic position against those of the rest of London. Most SLP boroughs do not currently have this level of resource within their own organisations which can be shared, and so it is proposed that it is specifically appointed to support the Partnership. This is considered a more cost effective solution than buying in consultancy support on an on-going basis.

In addition more capacity will facilitate and enable a wider network of borough officers to work together more efficiently on joint projects.

It is therefore proposed that the SLP borough subscription level is increased to £35K each. This would bring the SLP more in line with other similar partnerships in terms of funding and enable additional resources to be put into a senior capability to engage in specialist regeneration policy work on behalf of the Partnership and some delivery support to sub regional projects. However, it remains a modest amount in relation to the task and it will be necessary for Borough staffing to support the effort as well as the periodic commissioning of one off pieces of consultancy for particular, specialist, needs the Joint Committee may identify.

Currently the employment of the existing staff is with Croydon, whilst Kingston takes responsibility for line management. It is suggested that we take this opportunity to regularise the position with one Borough assuming employment and line management responsibilities on behalf of us all (recognising that costs and liabilities will be shared equally between partners). Richmond has offered to take this on.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

To remain with current arrangements. This is not recommended as detailed.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

As detailed above.

5 TIMETABLE

It is proposed the Joint Committee operates from 1st Jan 2015

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

The current SLP subscription is £15,000 so that this proposal requires an increase in expenditure of £20,000. The additional funds required are justifiable in view of the benefits which the Joint Committee and additional staff resource will deliver, in particular the fact that there will be a strong sub regional economic case and appropriate governance to take on additional responsibilities and funding. The additional funding will met from existing Chief Executive's running cost budgets.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

The Council has the powers to establish and be a member of a Joint Committee.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

There has been considerable discussion and engagement with relevant Members and staff in the relevant South London Boroughs and London Councils.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None identified

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. No significant risks are identified.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE.

APPENDIX A

Terms of Reference / Delegations

The Member Councils of the proposed South London Joint Committee would need to agree the Terms of Reference and initial scope of delegations from their respective organisations to the Joint Committee. The level of delegation would remain under review during the Joint Committee's initial period of operation and could be amended (subject to the agreement of Member Councils) as required.

The Joint Committee would also need to understand and determine its relationship with existing statutory and non-statutory governance arrangements operating within South London (e.g. the Waste Partnership) and across London (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership Board.) A Memorandum of Understanding is suggested as an appropriate way to define and govern this relationship.

1. Role and Purpose of the Joint Committee:

- (a) To form collaborative South London views on issues affecting economic growth, regeneration and competitiveness
- (b) To undertake activities which promote and improve economic growth and wellbeing in the South London area
- (c) To determine strategic objectives and barriers to growth for the local area and develop solutions
- (d) To take on additional responsibilities and funding delegated from Government where the Committee judges this to be in the area's best interests.

**The aim of the Joint Committee will be collaboration and the Terms of Reference would not prohibit any of the Member Councils from promoting economic wellbeing in their own areas either in addition to, or independently, from the Joint Committee*

2. Terms of Reference

1. To act as a strategic body, setting and reviewing objectives for strategic growth, regeneration and investment across South London including:
 - Providing a coherent single position on the City Deal and Growth Deal issues
 - Coordinating the contribution of all Councils to the Strategic Economic Plan
 - Agreeing allocation of spending as required
 - Agreeing major priorities
 - Considering and determining any issues made by the Advisory Officer Board to the Joint Committee
- A. 2. To formulate and agree appropriate agreements with Government, ensuring their delivery
3. To influence and align government investment in South London in order to boost economic growth locally.
4. To jointly review as appropriate consultations on plans, strategies and programmes affecting South London, encouraging alignment with the London Enterprise Partnership Plan.

5. To agree, review and amend options at any time for City Deal and Growth Deal Governance which is fit for purpose.
6. To agree and approve any additional governance structures as related to the Joint Committee. (e.g. setting up sub committees etc)

Membership

It is proposed that each Council appoint its Leader to sit on the Joint Committee.

Each Council could also appoint a named substitute (to be an Executive Member for those operating Executive Governance arrangements) to attend in the Leader's absence. Continuity of attendance would be encouraged.

Support Arrangements

In its work the Joint Committee would be supported by an advisory Board comprising each Council's Chief Executive working alongside and giving direction to the existing officer groups on Growth and Transport, respectively.

Local officers can be brought in to support the advisory arrangements based on the expertise and technical knowledge required at a particular point in time.

Each Council could, as required, through its Leader and Chief Executive, put in place any local processes for other Elected Members to input in an advisory capacity into the work of the Joint Committee.

Procedure Rules

In order that meetings of the Joint Committee are conducted properly and that the business is carried out openly and transparently a new set of Procedure Rules for its operation will be prepared.

These will cover all procedural matters, Access to Information regulations and voting rights.

The following key principles are proposed for consideration and inclusion in the document:

1. The Chairman of the Joint Committee will be appointed on an annual basis.
2. No business of the Joint Committee will be transacted unless a minimum of 4 of the 5 appointed members are present (Quorum) The Joint Committee's decision making will operate on the basis of mutual co-operation and consent.

2. Any authority can withdraw on the basis of a six month notice period

Support for governance matters and meeting support will be provided in turn by constituent Member authorities. Richmond has offered to take this on initially and if it passes on annually then each authority takes its turn in a reasonable time period and we might avoid complicated charging processes.

4. The development and approval of a Memorandum of Understanding with the London Enterprise Partnership Board.

The role of the Officer Advisory Board would not form part of the formal governance arrangements of the Joint Committee but would have its role, operation and purpose defined in a separate document.