

Faith in LSPs?

the experience of Faith
community representatives on
Local Strategic Partnerships

Phillip Escott & Pat Logan

December 2006



A report from

The Churches Regional Network

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Appendix

An Appendix has been produced separately and may be viewed alongside this report.

It reproduces the questions as contained in the survey and provides quantified data on the range of responses to each of the questions.

Anyone wishing to undertake further study is invited to read that Appendix which is available, as is this full report, on the Churches

Together in England website: www.cte.org.uk

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The Churches Regional Network supports those who work at regional level on behalf of the churches. Its members have as part of their remit to engage with their Regional Authorities, Regional Development Agencies and Government Offices. All are actively involved in supporting regional multi-faith forums.

The CRN is supported by Churches Together in England.



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Foreword

The vocabulary of partnership working for many of us is a new language which has emerged during the past 20 years through the many social partnerships such as Regeneration Partnerships and Local Strategic Partnerships that have impacted on town halls and civic centres. These differ from the many business partnerships which have existed for generations and which carry much stronger legal and fiscal implications. Yet each builds on the same concepts of collaborative working which are the key to changing our communities and have existed since men and women cooperated in the search for food in the most ancient of communities.

In reviewing the engagement of the churches in urban ministry since the publication of *Faith in the City* in 1985, the Commission on Urban Life and Faith devotes much of a chapter to the advantages and obstacles of working in partnership. "Faithfulness", it insists, "demands a critical rather than a docile partnership..." It goes on to recommend that: "A major review of partnership relationships involving Faith communities should be undertaken by Government agencies and Faith communities as a means to ensure better and more consistent practice" (Commission on Urban Life and Faith, May 2006, p.91).

The decision to participate in the work of an LSP requires an element of faith on the part of all concerned: faith in the commitment and competence of each of the partners, faith in the reality of the vision held up for a local community and faith in the suitability of the LSP to make significant progress towards the realisation of that vision. But blind faith is not a virtue. Reality checks are needed from time to time. Sadly, although LSPs have been the subject of numerous evaluations, none has looked in any serious or sustained way at the involvement of Faith communities. There is a gap to be filled. The present survey does not claim to have filled that gap, but it is offered as a kind of reality check.

The Churches Regional Network (CRN), which has commissioned this report, consists of members who are typically involved in partnership activity with regional assemblies, development agencies, Government Offices, and, in some cases, on Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) as well. The best partnerships are very productive but many have yet to bear fruit and some are wasteful of time and resources and simply reinforce the mismatch in power and culture between those who are involved. We know that the benefits can sometimes be hard to calculate but we must become better versed in assessing the difference between those which justify our investment and those that are merely china eggs. It was an awareness of some of these issues that led us to look more widely into the experience of Faith community representatives on LSPs.

The message that seems to be coming through is that, yes, being a Faith community representative on an LSP brings a fair measure of questioning, confusion, and even frustration. But the overwhelming conviction is that it is good to be involved.

At the time of writing, Government's response to its consultation on the future of LSPs has not yet been published. It should provide an ideal context for discussing the findings of this report. I hope that they will be discussed by LSPs, by those involved in selecting and supporting Faith community representatives, and by Government Offices in their oversight of the workings of LSPs. The contribution which Faith communities make to the well-being of every local community needs clear recognition and adequate support so as to help provide a basis for more fruitful partnership working that extends far beyond those who are able to sit at the top table of these partnerships.

Ian Chisnall

Chair

Churches Regional Network

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This survey and report have been produced by the Churches Regional Network. Particular thanks are due to our members in the four Regions surveyed, who distributed questionnaires and collected responses: Monsignor John Devine, Churches' Officer for the North West Region, Jenny Kartupelis, Chief Executive Officer East of England Churches Network, the Revd Ian Zass-Ogilvie and Mr. Paul Southgate, successively Chief Officers, Churches Regional Commission in the North East and Dr Pat Logan with Elizabeth Simon, Executive Officer of the London Churches Group for Social Action.

The project has been funded by contributions from the Network, including from the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber, the Churches Regional Commission in the North East, from churches in the North West and from the London Churches Group for Social Action.

The major contribution to this survey and report has been made by Dr Pat Logan, funded by the London Churches Group for Social Action, who proposed and has headed the project, devised the questionnaire and is responsible for the final version of this Report. We are particularly grateful to him and also to our analyst, Dr Phillip Escott, who analysed and tabulated the returns and wrote a first draft of the report. Elizabeth Simon, Executive Officer of the London Churches Group for Social Action, has provided overall supervision and support.

We are grateful to the Church Urban Fund for their practical and financial support for the production of this Report in PDF format and hard copy.

Above all, we are grateful to those Faith communities' representatives on LSPs who told us of their experience. Many of their comments are used verbatim (but anonymously) throughout this report. It is their experience and insights, expressed through this report, which we hope will influence development of the role of faith representatives in these partnerships.

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Introduction

Local Strategic Partnerships and Faith Communities

The very first words in a recently published report of one London LSP's Community Plan begin: "The Community Plan was jointly consulted on and written by a sub-group of representatives and staff from the [Borough] Partnership organisations. This group was chaired by Revd.".

Strange. How is it that a minister of religion should have such a prominent role in an LSP? And why, amongst the 13 members of that LSP Partnership, should the local Interfaith Forum be included? It makes you think. And that is a good thing. Good because it challenges those who are used to taking it for granted that local governance is a purely secular affair. And good because it demands justification from those who have been pressing for Faith communities to have a role on bodies like LSPs. Faith communities are well represented on LSPs as the table below shows. But by what right?

Faith communities are well represented at one level or another in most Local Strategic Partnerships. By 2004:

- **nearly three-quarters of LSPs (71%) had "Faith organisations/individuals" at some level of involvement in their structures, and**
- **nearly half of LSPs (46%) had "Faith organisations/individuals" on their core group (Board or Executive).**

ODPM, December 2005

Official guidance, issued by the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, encouraged those responsible for setting up LSPs to engage with faith communities: "LSPs...will need to develop a variety of means to work with and consult with local people including faith black and minority ethnic communities (DETR, March 2001 paras. 1.6 and 1.8). It acknowledged that: "The involvement of Faith communities is an area of some complexity, which should be supported by appropriate advice and experience" (DETR, March 2001, Annex C, para. 20).

"Appropriate advice" should have ensured a proper recognition of the role that Faith communities were already playing in the life of their local community so that their contributions in areas such as social care, local regeneration and civic renewal could be built upon. In setting their Neighbourhood Renewal agenda, LSPs might have been encouraged to draw upon the valuable asset of tacit and practical knowledge of the lived reality of local life that comes uniquely from the long-standing 24/7 involvement of Faith communities, especially of churches. In developing their Community Strategies, LSPs might have been pointed towards Faith communities as sources of vision and hope which is so often crushed by the sheer struggle for survival in deprived communities and so often squeezed out by the constraints of short-term considerations and arbitrary targets imposed on local authorities.

Instead, however, the Guidance situated Faith communities within the very narrow context of "hard-to-reach" groups and perpetuated the confusion of Faith with ethnicity, diversity and equalities:

"They [LSPs] will need to make real efforts to involve people who are traditionally under-represented such as faith black and minority ethnic communities" (DETR, March 2001, Summary, para 8).

"In addition to membership of the partnership itself, a variety of methods may be successful including...capacity-building and training to enhance the involvement of hard-to-reach communities (including disabled people, older people, youth groups, and people from faith, black and minority ethnic minority communities)" (DETR, March 2001 para 1.20).

Four years on, a Government-sponsored evaluation of the engagement of voluntary and community sector groups gently suggested that there might be problems with such a narrow approach: "...at least in some people's minds, there is a close link between involving Faith communities and BME groups and that sometimes the primary, and perhaps misplaced, motivation for involving the former is to reach the latter" (ODPM, December 2005a, p.35).

The Need for an Evaluation

There have been several evaluations of the functioning of LSPs, both Government-sponsored and independent, but the role of Faith communities has been virtually ignored. Only one of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's series of evaluations made even passing reference to the role of Faith community members. Two recent reports by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation touch on the issue. Their report on the community engagement of Faith communities in wider community affairs concludes: "Local Strategic Partnerships and Regional Assemblies have often taken significant strides towards the involvement of Faith communities. But our research evidence suggests that there is still much to learn about genuine engagement" (Robert Furbey et al., March 2006, p. 50). A later report on community involvement in local governance by the same Foundation draws at several points on comments by Faith community representatives, for example, in stressing the bridging role that Faith communities play, but the survey is limited to 22 partnerships and at no point did it explore the role of Faith communities as such (Maguire and Truscott, July 2006). There is clearly a gap to be filled.

An Experience-Based Approach

The present survey adopts an experience-based approach. It is the kind of approach recommended by the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA), whose own pilot partnership programme: "...supports arguments for public policy makers to take much greater account of the actual experience of those charged with the implementation of cross-sector partnerships" (I&DeA, June 2006, p.23). It is the approach also followed by the Rowntree survey (Maguire and Truscott, July 2006).

Instead of ticking boxes, respondents are given as much space as they need to describe their experience in their own terms. The value of such an approach, in addition to its freshness, is that "it makes you think". That is to say that it invites observations which offer insights and provoke reactions. It opens a window on what is really going on and how this might challenge unexamined assumptions.

This report is not intended to produce a set of recommendations, a tool-kit or a check-list for action. Instead it aims to mediate the voices of Faith community representatives on LSPs so that the fruit of that experience can be shared, be given the recognition it deserves and may be used to help provide a firmer basis for future policy.

CHAPTER ONE

Emerging Themes

After decades of neglect (even hostility) [towards] the faith sector by Local Authorities there is suspicion in the faith sector that LSPs are simply a paper exercise. Many are therefore reluctant to engage.

(North West)

To withdraw on the grounds that partnerships involve compromise and getting our hands dirty, only leaves the field open to those to whom getting their hands dirty is less of a problem.

(Commission on Urban Life and Faith (May 2006, para. 7.62)

The Survey - Regional Differences

Four regions from the Churches Regional Network took part in the survey: The four were chosen not because they had a more significant level of involvement by Faith communities in LSPs than did the other five regions but simply because they were in a position to be able to assist with the survey. The four were: North West, London, East of England and North East. These regions are markedly different in terms of their Faith community composition and structures.

North West. This region provided nearly half the survey returns. This very diverse region contains metropolitan areas and fairly remote rural areas. An impressive number of local ecumenical Christian groupings, especially Churches Together bodies, appears to be playing an important role in liaising with statutory structures.

London. This region is home to more than half the Jewish and Hindu populations of Britain and to a third or more of Britain's Muslim, Buddhist and Sikh populations. But within London the concentrations vary enormously. In all boroughs Christians are the majority faith (2001 Census) but in one borough their numbers are evenly matched with Muslims. In another borough Sikhs are significantly represented, in another Hindus and in another Jews. Meanwhile some boroughs do not have substantial numbers of any Faith group other than Christians.

East of England. This region produced a similar number of survey returns to that of London. Since the survey was undertaken, the number of LSPs with Faith community representatives has increased. The region is vastly different from London in terms both of deprivation – only 2 local authorities are deprived enough to qualify for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding – and of faith – only 3.34% of people in the region are members of a minority Faith (2001 Census).

North East. This region produced the fewest returns. The region itself has only 25 local authorities and the majority did not have Faith representatives on their LSPs. An additional factor may also be that there was at that time no regional Faiths Network. Nonetheless, the value of Faith community involvement in LSPs was evident in a day conference on the issue organised by Regeneration Exchange, the Churches Regional Commission and the Government Office for the North East, and in which one of the authors of this report participated.

Profile

Returns were received from 58 urban and rural areas.

Half were in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

Some 90% of responses came from representatives of churches even though the survey form was sent to all Faith community members who had been identified as serving on LSPs. The predominance of church responses may partly be attributed to the fact that the survey was undertaken by a Christian body, but it also reflects fairly accurately and, if anything, understates the underlying demographic reality. According to the 2001 Census, fewer than 6% of the population of Great Britain identified themselves as belonging to one or other of the minority Faiths, whereas nearly 72% identified themselves as Christian (93% of those who identified themselves as having a religious faith).

Although the focus was on those who were members of the "Core" (Board or Executive) group of the LSP, more than two-thirds of respondents also served on one or more sub-groups and fourteen served on Executive or Steering groups.

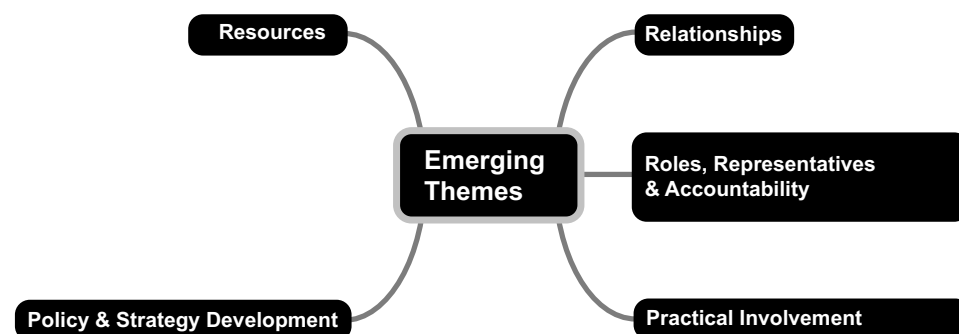
Most of the survey forms were completed in the latter half of 2005.

Among the questions asked was one about the need for training and support but the survey did not focus on this particular area. This issue – as it relates to partnership bodies generally, not just LSPs – is being explored by a recently published survey undertaken by the Church Urban Fund on behalf of the Home Office. The results of that survey complement the present report.

Emerging Themes

The range of concerns expressed by respondents is laid out more fully in the accompanying Appendix. Here in the body of the report, for purposes of analysis, it seemed helpful to group these into five thematic groups, as shown below. These will provide the chapter headings for this report. The quotations used in the report have been chosen not primarily because they are typical - although many are – but because they have something significant and challenging to say. Finally, several specific points are relevant to more than one theme, and will be discussed from different perspectives.

- 1 - Roles, Representation and Accountability
- 2 - Relationships
- 3 - Practical Involvement
- 4 - Policy and Strategy Development
- 5 - Resources



1 Roles, Representation and Accountability

Roles - The Central Issue

Why should LSPs include Faith community representatives? What are they expected to bring to the table - technical expertise? a grass roots voice? access to the network of local Faith communities? extra resources? additional legitimacy? The question is central because the answer will determine the qualification and status sought in prospective representatives, the process of selection and accountability, the nature of links with the voluntary and community sector, the tasks they will be expected to undertake, the space that will be created for them to make their contribution, the evaluation of their performance and their degree of job satisfaction.

Representation - How Faith Communities See It

What should “representation” mean in this context? Does it mean representing **communities** – registering their views, furthering their interests, offering their services - or representing **faith** – ensuring that the spiritual and moral dimensions of issues are taken into account and that visions are shaped by values? How can a member of one faith community claim to be the representative of all local Faith communities and be faithful to the beliefs of all local faiths?

Accountability - Who Cares?

In what form and through what mechanism is accountability best exercised? What competence over matters of faith do Community Networks have? How concerned with social issues are multi-Faith forums? And do local congregations know or even want to know about what goes on in LSPs?

2 Relationships

More than Just a By-Product

Is the developing of personal relationships sufficient justification for membership of an LSP? Will the value of relationships become of declining importance as LSPs evolve from a focus on process to a focus on outcomes? And what about the unequal structural relationships of power and the conflicting relationships of interest that are represented on LSPs - how do Faith community representatives deal with these?

3 Practical Involvement

Building on Strengths

Faith communities are involved in an impressive range of projects quite independently of the LSP. What is the added value of working with the LSP? What benefits will the local community gain by reason of Faith community representation on LSPs? And what benefits will such involvement bring to Faith communities? How far will accommodation to the LSP agenda divert Faith communities from other forms of community work and distort their own priorities for mission and mode of operating?

4 Policy and Strategy Development

Faith and Vision

Policy involves value judgments, which are often implicit or assumed. Strategy involves vision and the ability to see beyond needs and problems to take account of community strengths and aspirations. Although values and vision are at the very core of what religious faith is about they are also qualities that all members of LSPs possess. How much opportunity is there for Faith community representatives to ensure that the moral and spiritual aspects of policy and strategy are properly explored by all and, where agreed, are allowed to influence policy?

5 Resources

Taking Time

Serving on an LSP if taken seriously can make very heavy demands particularly on a member for whom this is not part of their regular full-time job. Are the demands on the time of Faith community representatives fully appreciated? How well are their needs for support being recognised and addressed? What help do Faith community representatives need in coming to terms with the structures, vocabulary, and ways of operating of LSPs? What should they be expected to learn on the job and where do they need training? In the end, is the role really manageable?

CHAPTER TWO

Roles, Representation and Accountability

Prelude - Religious Literacy

There has been a persistent tendency, for which Government policy itself bears some responsibility, to confuse faith with ethnicity and to see faith communities as being somehow “hard-to-reach”. Several respondents commented that part of their task is to ensure that race and faith are seen as distinct, and that each is given due consideration.

Local Authority does not know how to relate to faith (often confused with ethnicity). The presence of a Christian faith rep has forced a recognition that faith is not an ethnicity issue.
(North West)

Apart from the obvious fact that many Arabs and Asians are Christians, many Christians, especially in London, are black, and many Muslim or Buddhist people are white, the fundamental problem with confusing faith with ethnicity is that it undervalues the role of faith as such and thus marginalises the distinctive contribution Faith communities can make. This confusion is but one symptom of what has come to be described as a lack of sufficient “religious literacy” (Farnell, April 2003; Commission on Urban Life and Faith, May 2006, para. 7.23 and 7.52; Lowndes and Smith, June 2006, p. 15).

“Religious literacy” means more than being able to list the major feasts or dietary requirements. It means even more than simply understanding the differences between and within Faith communities. It is also about understanding the internal ethos, ways of relating and of organising their affairs of religious groups and about understanding the important, and often quite explicit, role they see faith playing in their civic life and social action. Without a foundation in religious literacy it will be difficult to understand the role that Faith community members of an LSP are expected to play and by what right they are there.

Roles

My role [on the LSP] was not spelled out on appointment and never has been. This makes it very difficult for newly appointed faith reps who have little idea of what they are supposed to do when they start.

(North West)

The nearest was when someone once said that the reason there were faith community representatives on LSP was probably because Tony Blair said there should be.

(London)

I think it is more a case of making it up as we go along.

(East of England)

Clarity about the role that a Faith community representative is expected to play on an LSP is a central issue. From that all else flows. Without it there will be confusion as to what precisely they are expected to contribute, what qualifications they should have, what support and training they need, or how they should be chosen. If their role is not understood by fellow LSP members, they are unlikely to feel valued. Sadly, the survey found that there was no standard view as to what the role was.

When asked: “How was your specific role as a faith community “representative” spelt out to you and by whom” by far the most common response - expressed by nearly half of those who replied to this question - was that it simply wasn’t. When asked: “How well is your role understood by other members of the LSP?”, roughly a third said it was poorly understood, a third said it was well understood and a third said they had no way of knowing.

There is a serious problem here. How to address it? Three measures are suggested here: referring to Government Guidance, asking a few leading questions, and making some distinctions. These will be looked at next.

First, Government Guidance. This acknowledges the value of **local knowledge**, which is not the same as technical expertise: “There is a wealth of resources and activity within communities which are not available to the statutory sector. Individuals, groups and communities provide an untapped pool of ideas, knowledge, skills, experience, energy and enthusiasm which, if tapped, can be a real force for change” (DETR, March 2001, para. 1.19). This sort of knowledge is seen by the Guidance as providing a basis for according the voluntary and community sector an **advisory role** on LSPs: “Community and voluntary sector partners – whether individuals or representatives of groups or organisations – while accountable to their members, should therefore be seen as advisors bringing their knowledge and experience, rather than the sole voice of local people, and any capacity-building should relate to that advisory role” (DETR, March 2001, Annex C. para 17). Faith community representatives have that local knowledge in a unique way in that, unlike most LSP members, even many from the voluntary sector, they live in the local community and – in many cases – have been ministering to that community. Their local knowledge, in other words, provides unique insights into a local community’s strengths and needs.

A second measure is to ask leading questions of Faith representatives who serve on LSPs. The survey, in its only tick-box exercise, did invite respondents to tick as many of the following as they felt helped provide a description of their role:

- ✓ “to ‘represent’ particular views and issues of concern to the faith communities? – **47 ticked this.**
- ✓ to act as an advocate on behalf of those who are marginalised and who lack a voice? – **50 ticked this,**
- ✓ to ensure that discussions take proper account of the dimension of faith/spirituality/values/etc? – **53 ticked this.**
- ✓ to ensure that the practical contribution of local faith communities is identified in the formulation and implementation of policy? – **46 ticked this.**
- ✓ to raise issues, give views, make decisions on the basis of your own personal and professional competence, experience and interest (i.e., pastoral, social work, business, etc)? – **13 ticked this.**
- ✓ Other”

A tick-box approach has as many limitations as it has advantages, but here it at least served to show that there is not total confusion about the role. It may also have helped articulate what had been implicit. But, taken by itself, it does not get us very far.

A third measure, therefore, may also be needed. This involves the drawing of distinctions. It results from reflection on the overall responses to the survey, for example to questions such as: “If you had to give one reason why faith communities should be represented on LSPs, what would it be?” The key distinction is between the two essential dimensions of a Faith community representative’s role. One is about representing Faith communities as distinctive constituencies (**the identity dimension**); the other consists in representing the faith as a distinctive element (**the faith dimension**).

The **identity dimension** is about recognition, respect, acceptance, and engagement. It is part of the wider debate about multiculturalism. It also calls into play the principles that obtain between statutory bodies and the voluntary and community sector as articulated in the Compact (Compact Working Group, July 2003, Annex) and in the framework document for Government collaboration with Faith communities (Home Office, 2004). It should lead to a proper realisation of how much Faith communities, especially churches, have to give (in terms of buildings, commitment, skills, etc). It should make clear that it is not Faith communities that are themselves “hard-to-reach” but that they often provide hospitality to and support for those who are marginalised and excluded.

They speak for a large percentage of the population and deal with values, the quality of life and other less easy to measure issues, and are often most in touch with the most marginalised and hardest to reach people, as they tend to be area based and have some integrity.
(London)

The **faith dimension** is stressed by the Commission on Urban Life and Faith. The Commission cites the Chief Rabbi’s lecture on “The Moral Sense” in a (John) Smith Institute seminar in January 2001, where he

stresses the importance of social relations as different from both the state and the market and which enable us to recognise the role of social goods which grow rather than diminish by sharing. Faith is not a soft option. It is what lies behind Faith communities' stress on the importance of inclusion and social transformation. It is about values, responsibility and a concern for justice as well as for healing. It is a source of hope, creativity and sustained commitment. Where appropriate it can be comforting, but where necessary it can also be challenging.

The Church exists to connect people at the level of their hunger for a new world.

(Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, Commission on Urban Life and Faith, May 2006, para. 5.42)

Representation

LSPs are more than partnerships of collaboration; they are also partnerships of governance. And the more the power of the LSP is increased - for example, by its decision-making powers over Local Area Agreements or by its proposed enhanced commissioning powers - the more do issues of representation and accountability come to the fore. At stake is the whole question about new understandings of local governance. LSPs are instructed by Government to involve local stakeholders. This may challenge the claim that local elections bestow "privileged legitimacy" on local authority members of LSPs (Maguire and Truscott, July 2006, p.13). But is the involvement of non-elected stakeholders a legitimate part of the project of civil renewal? Does it strengthen democracy by encouraging more active participation in the shaping of local policy? Or does it actually increase the 'democratic deficit' by requiring locally elected members to share their decision-making power with people who have not been elected, who have weak systems of accountability and who may not even have a stable and clearly defined constituency?

Should it be a cause for concern that just over 90% of the Faith community representatives who responded to the survey were Christian? Or that, when asked

how they had come to serve on the LSP, only 6 respondents said that they were chosen by some sort of a multi-Faith constituency? To answer this it is necessary to explore some fundamental questions as to what "representation" means and what forms are most appropriate in this context? The question has two aspects: "representing whom?" and "representing what?"

The categorising of opinion as 'uninformed' or 'unrepresentative' was particularly experienced as a way for authorities to dismiss community views that were inconvenient or contrary to their own.

(Maguire and Truscott, July 2006, p. 16)

"Representing whom":

Does being "representative" mean **reflecting the overall composition** of the area? If so, there seems nothing objectionable about the fact that some 90% of Faith community representatives were Christian. In most LSP areas minority Faiths do not represent more than 10% of the population.

What about the **particular composition of the Christian population** itself? 55% of our survey respondents were Anglican and only 36% were from other Christian denominations. This hardly reflects the proportion of Christians from the Roman Catholic Church, from traditional Free Churches and from the more recent independent and Pentecostal churches. What it does reflect, however, is the constitutional position of the Church of England (see below).

"Representing what"

Does representation mean **conveying the actual views** of such constituencies? If so, the role of a Faith community representative, like that of most community sector "representatives", would be almost impossible. This is not just because their own Faith communities may be loosely organised or be dominated by individuals who are not "representative". There is the much more daunting question as to how far it is reasonable to expect a member of one Faith group to understand the views of all the other Faith groups in the locality. Even were this possible, would representation mean giving extra weighting to the

views of larger Faith communities or would it mean making special efforts to ensure that the voices of minorities have an impact on the decision-making process?

Does it mean acting responsibly in favour of the interests of faith communities? If so, it could give the unhelpful impression that Faith communities are just one more interest group, fighting their own corner. But if not, then how to identify what are the legitimate needs of one's constituency and how to tell when it is appropriate to seek to ensure that these are given a fair hearing?

Or does representation mean ensuring that the sorts of moral values and spiritual vision that Faith communities typically cherish are used in such a way as to contribute to the common good?

The above dimensions of representation are not mutually exclusive. Taken singly or together they can help a Faith community appreciate how it is both meaningful and possible to act in a genuinely representative way.

Election, Selection, Commissioning or Appointing?

Respondents were asked how they came to be a member of the LSP. In addition to the 6 who said they had been chosen by a multi-Faith constituency, 23 said they had been chosen by the churches and 16 said they had been invited, co-opted or nominated by someone connected with the local authority or LSP.

There were significant regional differences. In both London and the South East more than half were on the LSP because they had been invited, but in the North West, the most common route was appointment by churches, especially Churches Together bodies. One from the North West region, writing in upper case, commented: **"I DOUBT THERE'S A BATTLE FOR THE POSTS!"**

Respondents were also asked whether they thought the system of invitation, appointment or election needed to be improved and if so how. 18 felt it did not, 15 felt it did and 5 simply offered comments. Of those who felt that the system needed to be improved, 7 said that although ideally this should be via a multi-

Faith forum, no such structure existed. Even the respondent who observed that "The CEN [Community Empowerment Network] has given greater support to faith involvement in the LSP than the multifaith partnership!" nonetheless took the view that "Election should be by the faith communities rather than the CEN." Here, it may be worth noting that the process by which Community Empowerment Networks chose representatives to LSPs was itself criticised by the National Audit Office as being "not transparent enough to sustain the confidence of communities" (National Audit Office, October 2004, pp. 12,34).

So what principles may be applied in seeking to ensure that the Faith community representative on an LSP is indeed representative? Four factors need to be taken into account: the integrity of Faith communities, the legitimacy of leadership roles, credibility with the local communities and the special position of the Church of England.

Respect for the integrity of Faith communities means not trying to make them become something they are not. Faith communities organise their common life and polity according to the tenets of their faith. To insist that their representative be elected by faith forums or community networks – even if such groups were not hampered by being self-selecting, unrepresentative and lacking in transparency - is to do violence to the integrity of Faith communities.

Local leadership is another important factor. As the survey returns indicate, many, perhaps a majority, of Faith community members on LSPs were recognised leaders in the community, either because of their position in their Faith community or because of the important role they were playing in programmes of regeneration or civil renewal.

Thirdly, credibility with local communities is also relevant. The degree of credibility that Faith community representatives have in the wider community relates to the extent of their day-to-day involvement with the life and struggles of those communities. This enables them to articulate what people actually feel but may lack the means to express in the places where decisions are actually made.

I am in fact the only 'grass-roots' voice on the LSP, which otherwise operates from the top-down. Without the kind of voice I bring, directors and policy-makers in the local authority would constantly be talking about 'them', and trying to guess the feelings/opinions of the communities they serve.
(London)

In... [our] Borough the LSP called a day on community cohesion. I only recognised two people on the attendance list as from the Faith communities. The list was over two foolscap pages long. Three weeks later the local inter faith project ran a similar event. This was packed with people from the Faith communities, but only one Borough official attended, and he only to give his talk. Talk about parallel lives.
(North West)

Fourthly, there is the particular constitutional position of the Church of England. As the established church, it has a legal charge, in England, for the care of every person in every parish – not just those who attend church. “With that presence comes an enduring responsibility to minister to the whole population of a parish – not just those who turn up at services” (Commission on Urban Life and Faith, May 2006, p. 8).

Accountability

My main role has been as a conduit, feeding information for prayer, ensuring that misinformation is tackled, etc.
(East of England)

Respondents were asked what systems were currently in place to help ensure that they could reflect the views and concerns of local faith communities, and to rate those systems on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (extremely good). Out of 45 replies, 26 scored their system for reflecting views 3 or above and 19 scored them 2 or below. There was a significant number at either extreme, with 6 scoring their systems poor and 6 scoring their systems excellent.

They were also asked what systems were in place to enable them to report back to local faith communities. Out of 46 replies to this question, again 26 scored their systems for reporting back 3 or above and 20 scored these 2 or below, with 6 rating them poor. In the North West region, there appears to be a much higher degree of satisfaction with the system for reflecting views than it does with the system of reporting back.

Obviously these are subjective views but they are useful. For even at the subjective level it does matter whether representatives feel they have adequate systems of accountability. The high number of largely positive replies suggests that reasonably effective structures have been put in place.

But questions remain. To whom ought Faith community representatives be accountable? The survey pointed to a great difference between accountability to one's own Faith community and to the whole Faith community sector in one's area.

Finding ways of exercising accountability to the whole Faith community sector posed major problems, partly due to the weakness of multi-Faith structures. This was neatly expressed by one representative from the East of England who rated his system for reporting back as ***“4 for Christians, 1 for other faiths”***.

It is difficult, for example, to feel accountable in any real sense to, say, the local Imam, except at a personal level, where, in fact, relationships are quite good.
(London)

When I get the agenda of each meeting, I email a number of faith leaders (Christian and other) to get feedback on their “take” on the issues that are being raised, but rarely get any response except from a few Christians. It doesn't help that the agenda comes out so shortly before the meeting, so there is no time for the email recipients to consult with their communities.
(East of England)

Exercising accountability to one's own Faith community is easier, at least at the structural level. For example, a substantial number of LSP representatives in the North West region had been elected by local church bodies, which meant that they had a structure to which they could be and were accountable.

But how far down the line does accountability go? Rarely did it seem to extend down to the level of local congregations. This was due not so much to any lack of willingness on the part of the representative to be accountable. On the contrary representatives often expressed disappointment that local congregations were not really interested.

The Faith communities do not know what the LSP is, nor do they really care. They see it as taking my time away from them.

(East of England)

Respondents were also asked whether the procedure for accountability needed to be improved and if so, how. Of those who replied nearly three-quarters (29) felt improvements were needed. As one respondent from London lamented: "We aren't even at square one". Suggestions ranged from the need for better procedures, better methods of communication and better structures to improved links with other faith groups.

It is important to recognise that problems of effective procedures and structures of accountability are not peculiar to Faith communities but are endemic in the voluntary and community sector as a whole (Taylor, April 2006). If anything the systems of representation and accountability for faith communities, however weak they may appear by some measures, are probably far stronger than most other community sector groups.

This is because there is at least a basis in that a) leaders enjoy credibility with their members by reason both of accredited training and of formal appointment b) structures such as local church councils and area synods are well established, and c) the composition of congregations cuts across ethnic, age and gender divisions.

CHAPTER THREE

Relationships

there are many Christians involved in the LSP not necessarily as the 'Church Rep'.

(East of England)

This chapter looks at the effect that Faith community involvement in LSPs has had upon relationships, first with local authorities and secondly with the wider voluntary and community sector. Many respondents were able to report that good working relationships already existed with both these partners well before the introduction of LSPs. One indication of that is the fact that nearly a third of Faith community representatives were on the LSP at the invitation of the LSP or the local authority.

Nonetheless two qualifications need to be made. First these relationships were often at a personal level, between individuals. Important as this is, it must not be automatically interpreted as implying good relations between Faith communities and the voluntary and community sector as a whole. Secondly, not all areas had a good foundation on which to build. In a few there appeared to be a history of mistrust and suspicion.

Relationships with Local Authorities

Respondents were asked in what ways their involvement had helped their local authority understand better the social role of local faith communities and in what ways it had helped local Faith communities relate more effectively to their local authority.

There was a suspicion from other agencies and sectors about the role of faith. Involvement has helped to reduce that suspicion.

(North West)

It has enabled me to understand better some of the roles of the Local Authority and some of the constraints which they have.

(East of England)

But difficulties, some quite serious, were also experienced. These centred around three sets of issues - the mode of operating of the local authority, resistance to the acceptance of religion as part of governance in a secular society (what was described above as "the faith dimension"), and, thirdly, the wisdom of encouraging religious-based identities in a civil society ("the Faith community dimension").

The first difficulty relates to local authority language, culture and modes of operating.

... meetings (which were at 7.30 p.m.) were brought forward to 6 p.m. in order that those representatives of the council, social services, police etc could attend as part of the continuation of their working day. The community representatives were ignored. At the next meeting I was the only community representative in attendance and despite my highlighting the fact that the community representatives were not present (they were working people) it was decided to continue meeting at 6 p.m. A training day was organised - but again it was during the working day. Many of the "partners" on the LSP met each other regularly at various other meetings, and they spoke a language that the lay person is not familiar with. I resigned from the LSP after that meeting.

(East of England)

A second difficulty is a kind of incomprehension about the nature of the challenge presented by faith. At one level, this arises from the specific content of the beliefs and practices of particular Faiths. This can be experienced either as a bit of a nuisance making the process of reaching decisions more complicated, or as the source of actual conflict. At a more fundamental level, this incomprehension relates to the religious dimension as such, regardless of its content. In other words, it stems from the assumed secular nature of political authority.

After 7/7, it is self evident that the official processes of local and national Government do not respect the values of at least one, or perhaps all, Faith communities. This is the main thing that I bang on about at LSP meetings. The secularism (or godlessness as I call it) of official Britain is deeply offensive to many Faith communities.
(London)

A third issue stems from the wider tension between multiculturalism and integration. How wise is it to reinforce Faith as a key determinant of identity? How sensible is it to try to address issues of community cohesion and issues of diversity and equality by selecting – or even privileging – certain groups to serve on an LSP?

These very real problems, however, did not outweigh, in the minds of most respondents, the perceived benefits that Faith community representatives saw of being on LSPs. On the contrary it was the development of relationships with members of the LSP which Faith Community representatives consistently registered as one of the most important advantages of serving on an LSP.

Relationships with the Wider Voluntary and Community Sector

Faith communities are increasingly taken seriously as valuable partners with the voluntary sector.
(North West)

Respondents were asked how they would characterise their links with their local Community (Empowerment) Network and/or Council for Voluntary Service. An impressive three quarters replied “good, very good, excellent, strong, close, or effective”, while only 4 replied “bad, poor, or slight”.

Respondents were also asked in what ways, if any, had association with their local Community (Empowerment) Network and/or Council for Voluntary Services helped to develop a better appreciation and working relationship between them and local faith communities? Replies cited specific examples, such as providing contact details for places of worship, receiving staff assistance on a management committee, helping set up a website, working together on funding applications, providing administrative assistance and working together on the Compact.

we work together in quite close alliance, especially on the compact. This has been a definite result of the LSP... we didn't have much to do with each other before.
(East of England)

There appeared to be a genuine sense of solidarity felt by Faith community representatives with their colleagues from the voluntary and community sector who were faced with insensitive or even hostile attitudes by the local authority:

This Borough Council is immensely hard nosed. It seeks to minimise the voice of the voluntary sector, and it is very difficult to fight against.
(London)

... the general feeling seems to be that these are powerless bodies, dominated by the statutory authorities. The voluntary sector is expected to pitch up, be told what is happening and that is all.
(East of England)

Here there is a distinctive mediating role that Faith community representatives may play:

I have confidence, knowledge and mandate to support CVS officers and other reps in presenting a strong C/V Sector presence on LSP.

(North West)

[Our local authority] has had a very rough time in the development of this area within the community and the building of trust networks. The Faith Community has been a key and stable factor in this growing development.

(North West)

Such findings support the observation made by the Commission on Urban Life and Faith that: "Faith communities, in different partnerships, are ...often seen as the catalyst or 'honest broker' in bringing together federations of community groups" (Commission on Urban Life and Faith, May 2006, para. 7.22).

Finally, what of the sensitive but crucial question as to whether Faith communities should be seen as part of the Voluntary and Community Sector or a separate sector (ODPM, December 2005a, p. iv)? One respondent did volunteer the comment: "There is sometimes confusion as to whether faith communities are part of the voluntary or community sector or a separate sector. This is reinforced if there are separate sections for faith groups, such as on steering groups of LSP or Civic Forum" (London). It is not possible, however, to determine how widely this view would be shared, since this more theoretical question was not part of the present survey.

CHAPTER FOUR

Practical Involvement

The city has recognised that it cannot achieve its objectives without our input.

(East of England)

If the church was not involved in the LSP, the LSP could lose out on the input from a large section of the community who are motivated by their faith to help those in need. The LSP would perhaps not have such easy access to the church's previously mentioned resources if they had no relationship with it.

(East of England)

It speaks volumes that, in a Government evaluation of community participation programmes, a representative of the voluntary sector should comment: "It takes a long time to get down to street level" (ODPM, March 2005, p. 49). Faith communities are already "down at street level". Their practical involvement at this level is precisely one of their great strengths.

...we are there at the coal face already and always will be.

(North West)

Faith communities are already heavily involved in social care, neighbourhood regeneration and civic life generally. They are working with the young and the old, with community groups and with refugees and homeless people, in education and in training. They possess valuable assets in terms of buildings, skills, networks and local knowledge (Furbey et al., March 2006).

We have more buildings than anyone in places where there is nothing else, we have more staff than anyone except District Council and the Education Department and we get into more homes than anyone at all.

(North East)

They've discovered that the Faith communities are involved in everything in the district, and sometimes we have answers to the problems, or can do things better than the secular organisations.

(East of England)

To be sure, there is a scarcity factor. The practical resources of Faith communities are limited and are subject to competing demands. But there are also opportunities for synergy. It was found in some of the sample responses that there is substantial overlap between the agenda of the LSP and that of one or more Faith groups. The question to be explored here is about the extent to which Faith community involvement in LSPs enables such valuable but limited resources not just to be mobilised, but to be used wisely and strategically.

The engagement of Faith community representatives in projects or other forms of social action can be looked at in two main ways. First, in terms of the involvement of Faith communities and secondly in terms of their own personal involvement.

In terms of the involvement of Faith communities, representatives can help ensure that, as particular programmes of action are being discussed or consultation documents prepared, questions are asked both about the potential contribution of local Faith communities and about the impact of such programmes on local Faith communities. They ought also to be allowed to make the case for additional resources for Faith communities in pursuit of programmes and policies agreed by the LSP.

Even if I often find myself just listening, it provides me with information that can helpfully be passed through the network so that we are better prepared to participate in and benefit from relevant initiatives. My frustration remains that folk don't grasp the opportunities!

(London)

I have been able on many occasions to help Faith communities to direct queries and questions on community issues to an appropriate department or individual, where I know their concerns can be heard.

(London)

[Faith communities] have been able to access funding through better partnership working.

(North West)

In terms of their personal involvement, perhaps the best evidence of the added value of having Faith community representatives on an LSP is the fact that so many - more than two-thirds - were also involved in LSP sub-groups; indeed 13 respondents indicated that they were involved in more than one sub-group. When asked what difference their involvement had made in actual outcomes, respondents most often mentioned work in deprived areas or with marginalised people. Such a reply is perhaps predictable for those in LSPs which have Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. What is particularly encouraging is the fact that the survey shows that Faith community representatives voiced a particular concern about poverty and deprivation in non-NRF LSPs as well and even in very affluent areas.

Other LSP work in which respondents were involved included working on Primary Care initiatives, on community safety and crime reduction programmes, on issues relating to children and young people and on housing.

When health was being discussed, I was able to report on the concerns of women, especially Muslim women, that there should be enough women doctors in a local hospital. This was, in fact, implemented.

(London South)

We are doing quite a bit at the moment to get the faith communities involved in supporting various targets in the Community Plan, esp in relation to Health and to Community Safety.

(London East)

Outcomes would include a document of good practice in terms of faith matters being adopted by the LSP and some of its partners i.e. the local authority and the primary care trust.

(London Central)

When the night-time economy was being discussed I was able to introduce considerations as to what was good/bad about it.

(London)

It has brought the opportunities and needs of the faith based communities more to the fore and enabled them to be better involved in strategic thinking and development especially in the community sector re crime and other community development areas.

(North West)

Some mentioned what might be called specifically religious initiatives such as appointing a "missioner" to a large new retail development, providing a prayer room and achieving "some change of direction on making sure spiritual issues were included in the agenda".

I have the LSP support for a 'retail missioner' post which has been set up on the (.....) retail park, and have managed to ensure the missioner is networked to other service providers (Connexions, PCT and the Borough Council); I have arranged for a 'prayer breakfast' to which leaders in the community - private and public sector, voluntary and faith groups - have been invited.

(North West)

CHAPTER FIVE

Policy and Strategy Development

The vision of [our] LSP Community Strategy... is one which can inspire and engage any faith community in their care for God's people and his world.

(North West)

There is a good working atmosphere on the LSP exec; I have argued that well-being includes the spiritual dimension; I have managed to put the faith communities on the map of local government to a degree.

(North West)

Community Strategy: A Requirement for All Local Authorities

Every local authority must prepare a community strategy "for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom" (Local Government Act 2000, Part I, para. 4 [1]). The production and delivering of such a strategy is seen by Government as a central task of all LSPs (ODPM, December 2005-b, para 38).

More recently the Government has added the element of sustainability so that the focus now is on Sustainable Community Strategies. This aims at ensuring a better balance between the economic, social and environmental aspects of the plan, a firm evidence base, the establishment of local development frameworks, the use of medium-term forecasting, clear action plans and a delineation of responsibilities (ODPM, December 2005b, p. 18).

"Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future.

They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all."

(ODPM, December 2005b, Annex A, pp. 47-50)

Community Strategies and Faith Communities

The Guidance sets down the general principle that: "The degree to which organisations need to be involved in preparing the community strategy will vary, depending on the nature of their work, their potential contribution to establishing the long-term vision (for example, as representatives of 'hard to reach' groups), or their contribution to delivering the action plan" (para. 23). It fails to apply this principle in any significant way to Faith communities, which receive only one passing mention: "Specific efforts should be made to involve representatives from under-represented groups such as ethnic minorities, women, faith communities, older people, young people and children, and disabled people. Such groups need to be taken seriously as contributors to both the preparation and delivery of a community strategy" (para 48).

What do Faith Community representatives feel they bring to Community Strategies? Three things: vision, a commitment to the common good and help with strategic thinking.

Faith communities can bring to public affairs, and the interface between the private and the public, an important extra dimension of experience, access, commitment and integrity.
(North West)

Vision

my main contribution has been to building a sense of vision and purpose, countering the potentially overwhelming presence of the Borough Council, and having time from the community and voluntary sector to attend meetings (many others do not). I hope also that I have, from time to time, asked questions which question the values and objectives of society overall.

(London)

...Faith communities are about a vision for community well-being which is the raison d'être of LSPs.

(North West)

Community strategies require long-term thinking and vision – and vision is one of the characteristics that respondents identified as being an important qualification for Faith communities' representatives. Its importance is underscored by the Commission on Urban Life and Faith, which noted that what faith-based organisations bring to partnership activity is a "...radically inclusive vision of human flourishing and ... something to be shared across the boundaries of faith". (Commission on Urban Life and Faith, May 2006, para 1.39).

Commitment to the Common Good

Perhaps more than any other voluntary, community, statutory or commercial organisation, Faith communities embrace commitment to the common good as an integral part of their mission. The dawning of the new millennium was marked by a Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment by the Faith Communities of the United Kingdom, in which the Faith community leaders professed: "We commit ourselves as people of many faiths to work together for the common good, uniting to build a better society..." (3 January 2000). As two different respondents from the North West region noted:

... nearly every other body on the LSP is an interested party in allocating of moneys, and meetings often only deal with the allocating of money to the various projects.

(North West)

We are one of the only groups who can speak without any political bias in many instances.

(North West)

Strategic Thinking

One indicator of the recognition of the contribution Faith communities can play to policy and strategy development was the fact that fourteen respondents said that, in addition to being members of their LSP, they were also members of its Executive or Steering group.

... We should bring an extra dimension to debates which is always looking beyond the immediate and challenging vested interests.

(North West)

We have reasons for actions other than for political gain.

(East of England)

The experience of working on LSP strategies has also fed back to the practice of at least some Faith communities as well as by helping them to think more strategically about their own mission to the local community:

It has helped us do things together as churches and Faith communities that we were not doing before and led us into strategic engagement rather than just running our own social programmes.

(London)

Policy Issues

Faith perspective needs to be embedded within all strategic policies and priorities and action plans developed to be appropriately implemented and monitored/reviewed regularly for further improvement/development.

(North West)

Policy decisions are never value-free. Many members of LSPs recognise this and most bring to the LSP their own moral values and ethical principles. In no sense is this an area on which Faith community representatives can claim a monopoly. What they can do, however, because of their specific remit, is to signal the presence of the moral and spiritual dimension and to legitimate the opening up of a discussion about those dimensions. Indeed to fail to do so would be to shrink from one of the distinctive aspects of their role. The moral dimension is not just about woolly “values”; it is also about a concern for justice:

I have, from time to time, asked questions which question the values and objectives of society overall.

(London)

I have had some influence in focussing activity on our poorer wards.

(North West)

As for the spiritual dimension, it is worth noting responses from three different Faith community representatives from the North West region. One felt that without his presence on the LSP, “the spiritual dimension of life would not be raised.” Another said that without the presence of a Faith representative on the LSP: “any awareness of a spiritual dimension would have been unexpressed, as far as I can discern.” And, illustrating how this is a two-way process, a third noted that his involvement on the LSP led him to attempt to: “help them [Faith communities] to see the spiritual dimensions of the city developments.”

CHAPTER SIX

Resourcing

The [representatives] must come with the conviction that this is an important role and that they will be giving it a high priority.

(London)

The individuals who represent Faith Communities on LSPs will have been chosen because their professional and life experience appeared to equip them for what the role was deemed to be and because they are in a position which seemed to allow them to give LSP work the time and attention it is likely to require. Most already have full-time roles not related to the LSP, many occupy leadership roles within their Faith communities and many are already deeply involved in social concerns and civic affairs. But precisely what qualifications are most needed to serve effectively as a Faith community representative on an LSP and what further forms of training and support are needed? That is the focus of this chapter.

Respect has to be earned on an LSP, especially when you represent a sector that not all may agree should even be represented!

(East of England)

Qualifications

Respondents were asked what they felt were the most important qualifications that a member of a local Faith community should have - in addition to religious faith - before serving on an LSP (e.g., vision, technical knowledge, ability to work collaboratively, status, experience, time, etc). The reference in the question itself to items such as vision and ability to work with others is likely to have influenced the response, since respondents commonly singled out these two qualities as important.

Among other qualities most frequently mentioned without such prompting were:

- ✓ Experience and knowledge of the local community - described as “contacts”, “a finger in a lot of pies” and “clout enough to be able to deliver practical engagement in on the ground projects”.
- ✓ Time.
- ✓ Communication skills - including the ability to speak to have a “strong voice” to have debating skills, and “a willingness to be outspoken”.

Also mentioned, though less frequently, were:

- ✓ Ability to read and understand the documents.
- ✓ Personal qualities such as commitment both to the whole community and to the LSP process, respect for others, willingness to listen and the three H’s - humour, humility and humanity.

...preparedness to challenge powerful people and entrenched positions. Also: the rep needs the humility to accept they can be wrong and still have much to learn. And be prepared ‘to look for that of God in everyone’.

(North West)

Two qualities which were notable for the infrequency with which they were mentioned were knowledge of other Faiths or of local Faith communities and technical knowledge.

Technical knowledge per se is not so important, as it can be picked up on the job, but intelligence is required in order to be able to do this!

(East of England)

The Faith communities’ representative, ideally, is not just a voice, but someone who can speak with authority. This includes being able to speak out, to offer relevant resources (people, buildings, etc.), and to deliver on their promises. To do this, they must be trusted by the Faith communities, and must be efficiently persuasive to generate the necessary support.

Lay or Clergy?

Should be a lay person – otherwise it is their job and the views could be seen as biased.

(London)

Being a member of the clergy helps a great deal. This is not to say that a lay person could not do the job, but they would have to be someone with authority.

(London)

Although most of the respondents were clergy, when asked if it mattered whether the faith community representative was a cleric or a lay person, nearly two-thirds (63%) felt that it did not. Of those who felt that it did, even these often said that it should not but that in practice it did because a recognisable status such as comes from holding a visible position of leadership in a Faith community was seen to put them on a par with other LSP members. This would suggest both that the role was being taken seriously and that the person was seen as needing to be able to deliver.

Time

Respondents were asked how many hours per month they felt were required in order to fulfil adequately their role as a member of the LSP. Of the 38 who felt able to suggest a figure, only 6 said they felt the role required fewer than 8 hours per month, 22 said between 8-20 hours, 10 said between 20-50 hours and 5 said more than 50 hours. Such a wide variation is not as surprising as it sounds. It suggests that when taking on such a role, account needs to be taken of specific factors such as what being a member of a “Core” body will entail, how many sub-groups the person might be expected to serve on, how much travel time was required - a major factor in rural and county-wide LSPs - and how significant a role the LSP itself was playing in a particular area.

When asked how many hours they were actually able to spend on the role, most gave a figure that was about half what they said the role required - even though 3 in fact were devoting 45, 50 and 69 hours per month to their work on the LSP. Of course to a certain extent this is a subjective feeling, depending

on how conscientiously the role was taken. Also, the sense of needing much more time to do a job well is an increasingly common feeling by over-worked people in almost any occupation today. But for a Faith representative there is the added stress factor that serving on an LSP tends not to be seen as part of the person’s mainstream work. Time given to the LSP is time taken away from their primary duties. For clergy this may mean resentment by the members of their congregations and criticism by their superiors. For lay people this may mean a loss of income by activities during normal working hours.

Support

Respondents were asked what forms of support they felt were needed to fulfil their role and what forms of support they actually received.

Among the most commonly mentioned factors was a supporting forum of advisers or a place where Faith community representatives’ experiences could be shared (“I find the regional meeting of Faith LSP reps very helpful”). Also high on the list was training on LSPs and help with the jargon and processes of the LSP. Several mentioned the important role that could be played by the LSP’s Policy Officer. One suggested “one-to-one mentoring in the early months” but another reported that they had received “Some mentoring but has not worked well”. Some expressed the need for appreciation of their role by local Faith communities and congregations (“being valued by the faith communities at all levels”), administrative help and “prayer cover.”

When commenting on the amount of support they actually received, 7 of the 51 respondents said they were getting none or very little; 10 gave replies that suggested they were getting very good/excellent/all support. What was valued particularly was support from the wider voluntary and community sector (even though this was not always geared to the specific needs of Faith community representatives), support from an officer on the LSP and support from church or faith structures. A few were provided with administrative assistance whether by the Community (Empowerment) Network, the Faith network or the local authority.

The problem is not only that support needs are often unrecognised but that addressing this issue would itself increase rather than reduce the time commitment. Perhaps it is not surprising that one respondent said what really was needed was "Paid leave".

Training

Respondents were asked what kind of on-the-job training they had had for their role on the LSP. Of 51 replies, just over half (27) said they had received none. The training that was reported sometimes was of a more formal nature, such as away-days/seminars (4), an induction course, awareness training, information training, a computer-model role-playing exercise, and training in how to chair an LSP. Some was done with fellow LSP members, and some in conjunction with members of the voluntary and community sector. In London two respondents mentioned that help had been available from the Government Office. Not one reported that they had received training specifically geared to improving the effectiveness of a Faith community representative.

But how much training is actually needed?

Respondents were also asked what kind of on-the-job training they felt should be made available to enable a Faith community representative to play an effective role on their LSP. Suggestions ranged from broad issues such as formal induction, mentoring and explanation of the LSP processes and structures, looking at models of good practice and help with their role, to training on very specific matters such as legal and political issues and funding. Some simply felt that sufficient learning would come by getting involved in the work of the LSP.

There was some overlap with the question asked about support, including the desire for some way of sharing, exchanging or reflecting on experiences with Faith community representatives on other LSPs and of having this understood and appreciated by their own Faith community. One mentioned seeking advice from nationally-based church urban ministry staff.

Some felt that before they could justify investing yet more of their time in undergoing training, LSPs had to prove their usefulness. Others made the point that their years of experience in church ministry or

other professional life (one was a trained lawyer) was sufficient. One pleaded: "Not more training please!!!!!!!!!!!"

...people in the 'game' are used to processes, decision making, dealing with paper work – graphs, tabulations etc.; these can be rather daunting for others less familiar, and again catch up time is required.

(North West)

Many of the "partners" on the LSP met each other regularly at various other meetings, and they spoke a language that the lay person is not familiar with.

(East of England)

Finally, one noted that it is not just Faith community representatives who need training:

LSP needs Diversity training for their staff.

(North West)

Reimbursement

I wish that [the local authority] would stop handing out lunches and start handing out expense forms.

(North West)

The lack of funding to pay for attendance at meetings or associated expenses is an issue noted in the Government's evaluation of voluntary and community sector participation in LSPs (ODPM, December 2005a, para 6.1).and in a recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Maguire and Truscott, July 2006, p. xiii). Respondents were asked who reimbursed them for the expenses incurred and how adequate this reimbursement was. Few saw this as a major issue, even though in most cases it meant drawing on their existing budget. Whether or not this is fair, however, is a separate question.

Conclusions

I think that they [LSPs] are a crucial instrument, bearing witness to the belief that human beings are variously gifted and working in partnership allows individual gifts to flower and together become more than the sum of the parts.

(North East)

[part of my role is] to affirm what is good in the way in which the borough addresses its affairs. We can remind people – symbolically by our presence as an indefinable faith representative – that the good part of them does care about those who are marginalised.

(London)

This final chapter presents some of the main conclusions that it seems possible to draw from the survey. It is neither a summary nor a set of recommendations. It is an exercise in reflection not repetition.

Perhaps the most significant general conclusion is that the experiences reported by these respondents seem on the whole rather more positive than some recent reports about Faith communities and local partnerships. An Economic and Social Research Council report, for example, highlights a number of “great gulfs or chasms” between faith and social policy: the gulf on the value of money (salaries), the gulf in funding, the gulf in language and concepts, the gulf in information, power and skill and the gulf of faith (Lowndes and Smith, June 2006, pp. 10-16). The present survey does not suggest that these problems have been overcome. Far from it. The problems are real and have led a small minority of respondents to express disenchantment with the whole enterprise. On the whole, however, the findings offer grounds for believing that LSPs provide a context in which some of the suspicion, misunderstanding, distrust and exploitation are being reduced and in which common goals are being identified and pursued.

When asked to describe their experience of the LSP in one word, well over half used terms with a positive connotation (“creative”, “full of potential” “valuable” “stimulating”) while fewer than a quarter used negative terms (“frustrating” “tedious” “dismal” “de-motivating”), with a smaller number adopting neutral terms such as “interesting”. For some the experience was “subterranean” or simply “hilarious”. This suggests not so much a gulf as a gap - and one that can be, and often is being, bridged.

Work needs to be done to bridge the gap so that faith communities see the potential for engagement with the “movers and shakers” in a district council. There is little understanding both ways and issues of faith can be easily misunderstood and ignored by the LSP.

(North West)

A bridge is being created whereby the Faith communities are feeling that at last their contribution to community development is being valued.

(North West)

This really has enabled several non-church people to change their view about the church: ‘I had no idea that the churches were doing so many things’.

(London)

Admittedly there may be an element of bias that would tilt the findings in a positive direction, in the sense that respondents are people who have enough faith in LSPs to warrant committing their time and energy to it. Their attitude, however, does not necessarily reflect that of most of the members of their Faith communities. On the contrary, that is precisely one of the gaps that several respondents lamented. But that is not the point. The point was to look at and to acknowledge the importance of voices of those who have actually taken the plunge, rather than those who are standing on the shore. That experience just might have something important to say to others less involved in or simply unaware of LSPs.

In attempting to draw conclusions it is important to take account of the very marked regional differences which sometimes emerged. The one-word description of their experiences referred to above is a good example. In London and the North West, positive terms outnumbered unfavourable terms by four to one, whereas in the East of England negative terms were used more often than positive, while in the North East (a very small sample) there were roughly equal numbers of each. Faith community representatives from the East of England, furthermore, were the least enthusiastic about their role and also had the lowest level of training. The fact that only two local authorities in the entire region were eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding may have been a factor in leading some Faith community representatives to conclude that the costs of involvement outweighed the benefits. It is also possible that the views of fewer than a dozen respondents from that region may be too small a sample to make any sort of generalisation. Indeed, recent work in that region has led both to an increase in engagement with Faith communities and to the emergence of good practice. In any case, sweeping generalizations are less useful than careful identification of particular factors which contribute to productive engagement with LSPs.

LSPs seem to be effective when either, they have moneys to spend (i.e. the allocation of some significant funds are channelled through the LSP) or where they have developed from some existing, established structure. In the case of our [LSPs]... neither of these situations arises. In all cases the general feeling seems to be that these are powerless bodies, dominated by the statutory authorities.
(East of England)

Nonetheless some general conclusions may also be of use. The next section attempts to do precisely that based on reflections on the five “emerging themes”.

Emerging Themes Revisited

Theme 1 Roles, Representation and Accountability

Religious Literacy

A proper appreciation of the role of a Faith representative on an LSP requires a degree of “religious literacy” on the part of other members. The report by the Economic and Social Research Council puts it very strongly, stating that there is a “lack of understanding and low level of religious literacy among many statutory agency staff, in some cases amounting to prejudice against Faith groups” (Lowndes and Smith, June 2006, p. 15). It is not safe to assume that such literacy will come simply by the presence of a Faith representative. It will often require training.

Roles - All Clear?

One step towards a clearer understanding of a Faith representative’s role might be to distinguish two essential dimensions of that role: the ***Faith community dimension***, which facilitates solidarity with partners in the community sector, and the ***Faith dimension***, which legitimates discussion about the spiritual and moral aspects of the LSP agenda.

Representation - Respecting the Need for Flexibility

The fact that some Faith community representatives were invited to become members of LSP, some appointed and others elected need not be seen as a problem. There are different paths by which a person can be genuinely representative. What is appropriate for one locality may not be appropriate for another, because, for example, of differences in the size of different Faith communities or because of the different degrees of development of structures of multi-Faith activity. The assumption that the selection process should be left to Community Networks, although it may appear to be the most democratic, is highly problematic given the often unrepresentative nature

of such Networks and their lack of understanding of - and possible lack of sympathy with - the specific role played by religious faith.

Accountability - Filling the Gaps?

It may seem paradoxical that whilst nearly 75% of respondents said that the system needed improving, nearly 60% gave reasonably high scores to the existing systems of accountability. Most did not have any clear answers as to what form such improvements should take. This points to some inherent problems about accountability in this context. One is the potentially wide range of Faith communities to whom the representative is expected to be accountable. Another is the degree to which local congregations actually want to know what is going on in their local LSP. The wisest answer must be to develop systems that are realistic and useful in particular circumstances so that Faith community representatives are not burdened with unnecessarily cumbersome and inefficient procedures.

Theme 2 Relationships

“Relationships matter” is one of the recurring themes struck by the Commission on Urban Life and Faith, which also affirms that: “Faith is a vital - often essential - resource in the building of relationships and communities” (Commission on Urban Life and Faith, May 2006, paras. 1.13 and 1.28). The survey found both that in many cases there were very good previously existing relationships between respondents and their local authority and voluntary and community sector and that involvement in the LSP had deepened that relationship and had resulted in mutual benefits.

In the case of relationships with other Faith communities, however, the situation was very different. The problem was not so much in the relationships between individuals or groups, though there may be tensions for historical and other reasons, but in the absence or weakness of structures for multi-faith representation. In many places these structures are at an early stage of development. This is a long, slow process and it must be questioned whether

the presence of Faith community representatives on LSPs should have to wait until such structures are in place. Nor, in the meantime, is it right to expect the LSP Faith representative to be responsible for the very considerable, and often time-consuming, task of setting up such structures.

Theme 3 Practical Involvement

In future, LSPs will be expected to have a greater focus on outcomes. It will mean that the focus is sharper and that relationships and processes will have to be tightened to prove their efficiency. But there is no reason to believe that this should reduce the importance of Faith community involvement in LSPs. The practical resources which Faith communities can bring - buildings, volunteers, commitment and faith itself - have been mentioned time and again by respondents as assets which it would be foolish - indeed tragic - for LSPs to ignore. The Guidance on Local Area Agreements continues to make the point that “The expectation is that successful LAAs will ensure the inclusiveness of relevant stakeholders including in particular the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and local people themselves in helping to **identify shape and deliver local services**” (*LAA Guidance*, para. 21).

Theme 4 Policy and Strategy Development

The Community Strategy dimension of LSP activity is one in which Faith communities have a distinctive contribution to make in terms of helping to shape a long-term vision for the community. Here is where the spiritual and moral values of policy making are particularly relevant, both in terms of hope and justice. And here is where Faith communities can utilise their independence from political parties and from special interest groups so as to bring to bear their deep commitment to the common good. The only bias one would expect them to have is “a bias towards the poor” and the sense of a mission to help the voices of the marginalised. And indeed that kind of bias was clearly shown in the survey.

Theme 5

Resourcing: Time, Training and Support

Faith communities' representatives are, quite simply, poorly resourced. They bring to the task a high level of professional skills, local knowledge, life experience and personal commitment - indeed, two respondents said that this was all that was required. Most, however, felt they needed more. This issue needs attention, as consistent under-resourcing in this way may lead to disenchantment with the whole process. A representative may feel that he or she is under-performing and decide that ending the commitment altogether is better than continuing without the means to do the job well.

Time - The Scarcest Resource

Far and away the most important resource that was needed was more time - time to read and struggle with lengthy reports, to deal with correspondence, to take part in working groups as well as core group meetings, to consult with and report back to constituents, to take part in training days and away days - all this usually without any additional administrative support. Almost every single respondent said that the role demanded twice as much time as they were able to give to it.

Merely ensuring more administrative support, however, does not get to the heart of the problem. Releasing the representative from some of their other duties may be the most sensible option in some situations.

Qualifications

The likely increase in pressure on LSPs to focus on outcomes rather than processes does not imply that Faith community representatives will need to become experts with technical skills and policy competence in order to justify their existence. It simply underscores the contribution made by the practical knowledge that comes precisely from deep day-to-day involvement in the struggles of local communities and the ability to make the connections between faith and policy.

The Guidance on Local Area Agreements, for example, stresses that "The agreed outcomes should be derived from evidence of local circumstances ..." (LAA Guidance, para. 47). Local knowledge still counts.

Support

The struggles involved in seeking to be an effective Faith community representative are not well understood either by local congregations or by other partners on the LSP. Respondents mentioned the value of mutual support and of sharing experiences with others in the same position.

One solution is the kind of occasional gathering of Faith community representatives that has been found helpful in two of the regions. Another might be the providing of each Faith community representative with a Reference Group whose members would be appointed by local faith communities. Such a group could fulfil several functions by providing a forum where the Faith representative(s) could share their aspirations and frustrations, where issues could be explored and strategies developed, where systems of accountability could be looked at, where training needs could be identified and where sources of support and assistance could be sought. The value of such a group would be enhanced not diminished by the fact that it would not have actual authority to choose the Faith representative or to demand accountability.

Training

Training is a two way process. As much as we need in House training of Structure, Communication and Information, and Time management, LSP needs Diversity training for their staff.
(North West)

In spite of the lack of formal training for their roles, what was wanted was not so much a great deal more training - training, too, exacts a cost in terms of time - but training which was better targeted. To some extent this would address the same needs as those of other community sector representatives - training in the jargon, the policy framework, the processes of decision-making, etc.

Where such training has been provided, it has generally been valued. But more important are: a) opportunities for networking and sharing experiences, and b) well-focused induction sessions. The fact that the Church Urban Fund is doing its own focussed research into this area should be very much welcomed.

Creating specialists?

...we cannot keep widening the role of 'ministers' of religion whether they be priests, imams, rabbis or ministers. It is now necessary to invest in roles other than those of minister or priest, specialist roles which could operate across denominational or even faith boundaries. (Commission on Urban Life and Faith, May 2006, para 8. 47).

A more radical option might be to designate and equip a special type of partnership ministry. This could be helpful especially where engagement in an LSP and one or more of its sub-groups is likely to make heavy demands on the time of a Faith community representative, or where the overcoming of serious tensions existing between Faith communities is likely to require considerable skill.

The practical advantages are apparent in terms of the building up of competence. But the risk is that too exclusive an involvement at this level may cut Faith community representatives off from precisely one of their primary assets, viz. intimate knowledge of local community life. More specialists are not necessarily what LSPs need, nor are Faith communities the places they ought to turn to if they do.

Have Faith Community Representatives Made Much Impact?

When asked what difference their presence on the LSP had so far made to the LSP "in hard terms/ outcomes (e.g., influencing the direction of policy, the shape of projects, the provisions of services, etc.)" of 57 responses to this question 9 said "little" or "none" with a further 6 expressing serious reservations, but nearly three-quarters came up with positive answers. This suggests that at the very least people felt they were making an impact. Examples are given in Chapters 4 and 5.

In order to evaluate such a finding fairly and helpfully, it is important to use, as far as possible, the same standards that apply to other non-statutory sector partners. When the ODPM was conducting its research into voluntary and community group participation in LSPs, it found not only that the impact was hard to measure but also that there were questions both about the sector's limited access to resources and its lack of executive authority vis-à-vis its members (ODPM, December 2005a, pp. 40-43, 49). When the National Audit Office assessed the contribution that community groups in general were making to LSPs they found that Community Empowerment Networks were having little influence on LSPs' policy making (National Audit Office, October 2004, pp. 13, 36). From this they concluded, not that community groups had no contribution to make but that they were being prevented from making this contribution partly by their own lack of capacity (support, training time, etc) but also by the structure and processes of the LSP itself. Thus, in making any fair impact assessment, account needs to be taken of potential as well as actual impact and how that potential might be released.

There is huge potential, but the complexity, time and capacity needed make it seem unrealisable. (North West)

Measured against those standards, Faith communities might actually have more latent potential than most groups in the voluntary and community sector as a whole. Faith communities have more resources to be mobilised and Faith community representatives, while obviously lacking executive power, will often have considerable standing and influence within their communities.

What Difference Would It Make...?

Respondents were asked what difference it would make to the LSP if it lacked a Faith community representative. 12 respondents said "little" or "none" or "no one would notice". But this represents less than a quarter of those who took part in the survey. The differences that were mentioned most often had to do with what has been called here "the faith dimension" - loss of a faith perspective (9), conflating faith and ethnicity (3), - and with the "the Faith community dimension" - the loss of grass roots voice (6), a lack of recognition of faith-based activities (6), the unavailability of their resources (3) and

an exclusion of Faith communities from partnership activities (2). A few felt that the LSP would simply be diminished and impoverished.

Respondents were also asked what difference it would make to the mission and life of Faith communities if they were not represented on LSPs. Again just under a quarter of respondents said it would make "little" or "no" difference. Most (20) felt that, in one way or another, it would reinforce the insularity of Faith communities, including their ability to serve the community. Like the LSP itself, Faith communities, too, would be impoverished because they would be unaware of what was going on, and less involved in the future development of their area.

Should LSPs Have a Designated Place for Faith Communities?

Churches represent a huge section of the local community and because "we are a key player in the life of the community".

(North West)

If Faith communities have such significant and distinctive contributions to make, should LSPs ensure that a place is reserved for Faith community representatives? A few respondents did volunteer the observation that LSPs should set aside a place for Faith communities and one even reported that he had fought to ensure this was the case. But this was not a question that was asked. The survey was never intended to serve as a means of promoting a particular agenda.

Reserving a place for Faith communities to be represented opens up the sensitive process question as to how the Faith community representative would be chosen and by whom? This, too, is not an issue that the survey was intended to address, much less to resolve. What does emerge from the survey, however, is that factors such as demography (the size of diverse Faith communities in a particular locality) and the special role of the Church of England (with legal responsibility for the pastoral care of every person in every parish) are highly relevant. If they are not faced squarely they are unlikely to enhance the credibility of the LSP in the eyes of local Faith communities and may fuel resentment. These are

sensitive issues. But that must not be used as an excuse for avoiding them. To do so would risk weakening LSPs by depriving them of the very important contribution which Faith communities can make.

Faith in LSPs?

From my commercial background my first action if appointed as dictator would be to abolish 50% of these [partnership] bodies – the LSPs in their current form in [our region] would be among the first to go!

(East of England)

This survey is the first serious look at the experiences of Faith communities' representatives in Local Strategic Partnerships. It provides insights which, it is hoped, will enable the issues to be discussed in a more informed manner. It may also suggest areas and methods for further research and evaluation. It drew only on the views of Faith community representatives on LSPs. Might it be useful to take stock of the views of other members of LSPs about the appropriateness and usefulness of having Faith community representatives on LSPs?

Structures come and go and structures such as LSPs are only one feature in a much broader and richer landscape. LSPs entail costs on the part of all their members. The costs are easier to identify than the benefits because the costs are felt here and now but the benefits are likely to spill over, well beyond the prescribed outcomes, and produce ripples that extend into the future in terms of generating a shared recognition of how the diverse sectors that make up local communities can work together for their common well-being. That is the theory. But it still requires an element of faith. The test is not whether partners begin to feel more comfortable with each other. It is how far they promote a spirit of collaboration and how well they help turn that spirit into practical effect. The world of LSPs and the world of local congregations remain far apart. Miracles have not been reported yet. It is still a matter of believing rather than seeing. But the experience of Faith community representatives as reported here may at least help us see more clearly a few more steps along the way.

we – the Churches – will be here long after companies and businesses have gone.

(East of England)

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ANNEX:

Local Strategic Partnerships

Effective engagement with the community is one of the most significant aspects of LSPs' work and they will have failed if they do not achieve this.

(Social Exclusion Unit, January 2001, para. 5.28, and DETR, March 2001, para. 4.12)

Local Strategic Partnerships: Work in Progress

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are a relatively new and evolving form in the development of local partnerships and indeed of local governance, in which decision-making is shared by recognised stakeholders, whether elected or identified by other means. At the time of writing, the results are awaited of a Government-sponsored Consultation Paper on the future of LSPs. If the proposals in the Consultation Paper are accepted, the role of LSPs will be even stronger than it already is.

LSPs' Tasks

The role of LSPs is spelt out in a recent Government consultation paper as:

- “1. To be the partnership of partnerships in an area, providing the strategic co-ordination within the area and linking with other plans and bodies established at the regional and sub-regional and local level.
2. To ensure a Sustainable Community Strategy is produced that sets the vision and priorities for the area agreed by all parties, including local citizens and businesses, and founded on a solid evidence base.
3. To develop and drive the effective delivery of their LAA [Local Area Agreement].
4. To agree an action plan for achieving the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities, including the LAA outcomes. (ODPM, December 2005b)”.

Other key features of LSPs are:

- ✓ LSPs lack any executive power. That remains with each of the individual LSP members. But the gradual introduction of Local Area Agreements, which give local authorities the power to pool various streams of funding, has enhanced the role of LSPs, which have been seen as providing the appropriate framework for developing and delivering the Agreement.
- ✓ LSPs are not mandatory except for the 88 most deprived local authorities in England which are eligible for **Neighbourhood Renewal Funding** (NRF). Attached to that funding is a further obligation to establish and support Community (Empowerment) Networks whose role is to enable the community sector to participate effectively in the work of the LSP.
- ✓ LSPs, nonetheless, have been adopted by 360 local authorities in England as the most appropriate body for developing their **Sustainable Community Strategy**, which is a statutory requirement. Some have followed the example of NRF local authorities and have also established Community (Empowerment) Networks.
- ✓ LSPs do not have to take any prescribed form. They can vary greatly in terms of size and structure. Some have seen themselves as having a largely advisory role; others have taken a more active role in the commissioning of services. Three different models that have emerged are the **assembly model** (with a large and inclusive membership), the **forum model** (with a number of thematic or area-based sub-groups) and the **forum plus executive, model** (with a small steering group or board) (Local Government Association, September 2002).

LSPs and Community Strategies

Every local authority must prepare a community strategy “for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom” (Local Government Act 2000, Part I, para. 4 [1]).

The production and delivering of such a strategy is seen as the central role of all LSPs (ODPM, December 2005-b, para 38). According to Government Guidance, a community strategy must have four key components:

- a long-term vision for the area focusing on the outcomes that are to be achieved;
- an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes;
- a shared commitment to implement the action plan and proposals for doing so;
- arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the action plan, for periodically reviewing the community strategy, and for reporting progress to local communities.” (DETR, 2000 para. 11)

Community Participation

The original statutory Guidance stresses the role of community participation in the development of the Community Strategy (DETR, March 2001):

- “...a community strategy will only lead to effective action to improve the well-being of an area if it involves all the statutory, non-statutory and voluntary organisations that provide services, or whose actions affect local quality of life” (para. 23) .
- “Community strategies offer a fresh opportunity to put local people at the heart of partnership working and should be grounded in the views and expectations of those people” (para. 50).
- “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” (para. 50).
- “It will be vital to ensure wide local ownership of the community planning process, which should therefore be predominantly ‘bottom up’ rather than ‘top down’ ” (para. 16).

Tensions

LSPs represent the coming together of three separate strands of Government policy.

In addition to the *partnership agenda* (aimed at promoting joined-up working amongst the key contributors to the well-being of local communities), there is also a *civil renewal agenda* (aimed at increasing citizen participation in public affairs), and, thirdly, a *public service reform agenda* (aimed at making services more responsive to consumer demand).

Admirable as each of the aims are, they do not necessarily sit easily together. Partnerships are not necessarily the most efficient way of delivering services. And partnerships can emasculate as well as empower local leadership by co-opting people who might otherwise be engaged in citizen organisation and community action.

For further information about the survey and conclusions - please contact:
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The Churches Regional Network supports those who work at a regional level on behalf of the churches. Its members have as part of their remit to engage with their Regional Assemblies, Regional Development Agencies and Government Offices. All are actively involved in supporting regional multi-faith forums.

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