

August 2006



selling the local development framework: a toolkit



selling the local development framework: a toolkit

The local development framework (LDF) can significantly benefit senior officers and members in their attempts to provide integrated corporate leadership. This publication provides a range of tools to help planners demonstrate how the LDF is linked to wider corporate strategies and the value it can bring to a range of policy and practice areas. The tools are split into three types: supporting, selling and explaining, with explanatory notes to accompany each.

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) aims to facilitate self-sustaining change and improvement in the local authority planning sector. PAS helps councils provide faster, fairer, more efficient and better quality services.

PAS is funded by the [Department for Communities and Local Government](#) (DCLG) and is part of the [Improvement and Development Agency](#) (IDeA). Building on the IDeA's work in the local government sector, PAS supports local planning authorities throughout England to develop both their capacity and capability to deliver services and the best possible outcomes for their communities.

contents

to the chief planning officer.....	1
about this toolkit	2
introduction	2
a suite of tools.....	2
a note on language	2
structure.....	3
choosing the right tool	3
the supporting tools	3
the selling tools	4
the explaining tools	4
supporting tools.....	5
background briefing: making the case for the LDF	6
user note.....	6
government ambitions for planning: why they matter for local authorities.....	7
maximising the corporate value of the LDF.....	8
contributing to strategy development.....	8
supporting corporate and partnership challenge.....	11
efficiency and economy in the use of resources	12
the preconditions for success.....	13
implications for the LDF team	15
background briefing: LDF refresher	17
user note.....	17
the defining characteristics of the new planning system	18
spatial planning.....	18
vision, overall objectives and local strategy	19
the LDF as a key vehicle for delivering the SCS	20
challenging policy orthodoxy and considering alternatives.....	20
sustainability appraisal designed into the plan-making process.....	21
maximising consensus on strategy.....	22
the examination into soundness and the binding inspector's report.....	23
selling tools	25
note for a presentation to senior officers	26
user note.....	26
corporate potential of the LDF	27
powerpoint presentation to senior officers.....	29
user note.....	29
framework report to members	30
user note.....	30

framework report	31
explaining tools.....	43
powerpoint presentation to members	44
user note.....	44
powerpoint presentation to partners and colleagues.....	45
user note.....	45

to the chief planning officer

Are your staff receiving the corporate support they need on the local development framework (LDF)?
Is the authority making the most of the opportunities the LDF offers?

The change to spatial planning and the nature of the LDF system mean that successful plan-making needs effective support from members and senior management. But it is clear that this support is not always forthcoming. LDF teams can experience a number of problems:

- lack of political leadership
- inadequate or short-term resources
- progress impeded by internal political processes
- problems in getting inputs from other departments
- failure to engage and convince partners of the merits of the LDF

Such problems make it difficult to sustain effective progress or achieve the full potential of spatial planning. The corollary is that the corporate organisation misses the opportunities offered by investment in the LDF.

You know from your own experience that securing agreement or support from the management team or senior members depends on getting key messages across effectively. But the new system is not easy to explain, and the wider implications are only now beginning to become clear. This toolkit has been designed to:

- help heads of service make a strong and effective case for the LDF in the authority's policy making, allied to the community strategy
- assist in explaining the new system and its implications to elected members, colleagues and partners

The toolkit draws extensively on the LDF learning and dissemination project run jointly by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and Planning Officers Society (POS).

The toolkit includes a background briefing on key issues identified in relation to the LDF, presentation materials and a draft report to members. You can choose the tools most appropriate to your circumstances and adapt them to suit your authority's style and support requirements.

We hope you find the toolkit a real aid to securing the support your LDF needs and your staff deserve.

about this toolkit

introduction

To successfully deliver a good LDF that tackles the right issues and brings forward an ambitious but achievable strategy for the area requires considerable skills and commitment from within the development plan team. It also needs the right support from the corporate organisation. This toolkit is designed to help you 'sell' the right messages about the corporate value of the LDF so that you can gain the support you need from senior officers and members to develop and implement a successful LDF.

a suite of tools

This toolkit contains a range of different tools, which you can access from this page. They are designed to cover three functions:

- **supporting** you in arguing effectively for better support
- **selling** the LDF – making the case for improved support or working arrangements
- **explaining** the LDF system to elected members, colleagues, partner organisations and other agencies who you need to co-operate with and who will also benefit from engaging with you

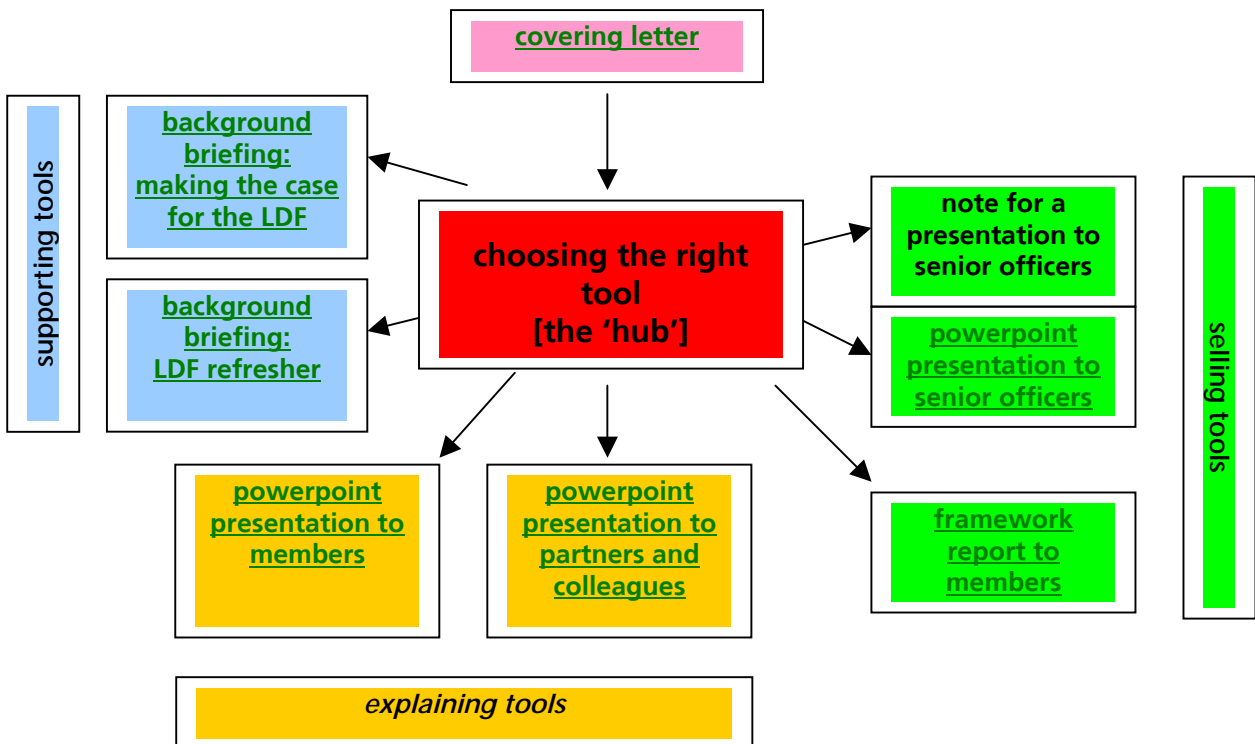
a note on language

To communicate effectively you should avoid the use of jargon and planning language, and keep to simple and consistent ways of writing and talking about the new system. In particular, you can avoid creating immediate barriers with the public by calling documents 'A strategic plan for XXXX' or 'Land development in XXXX', rather than speaking of the core strategy DPD or allocations DPD. The statutory terminology can then be restricted to where its use is unavoidable. This toolkit uses the term 'LDF' because it has been in currency for two years and has become relatively familiar. However, it avoids drawing distinctions between the acronyms from the new planning system such as LDF, DPD, LDD and SPD.

The toolkit also contains a chief executive's briefing. The briefing will be sent separately to all chief executives.

structure

This is the 'hub' of the toolkit, which provides hyperlink connections to the various tools, as set out in this diagram:



choosing the right tool

You should select the tools which are most appropriate to your circumstances. Each of them is designed to be applicable to a wide a range of types of authorities and situations. It follows that, whichever you use, they will need to be tailored to local circumstances and your own style. In particular, you should ask yourself whether individual points are necessary to provide a full picture, or can be omitted because they relate to areas where you are happy that existing support or arrangements are satisfactory.

All of the tools begin with a user note to help you understand the purpose of the tool and whether it is suitable for your needs.

the supporting tools

The toolkit includes two background briefings to help you prepare for selling the LDF:

- [making the case for the LDF](#) provides ideas on how best to go about this, including discussion of the preconditions for success identified by PAS

- the [LDF refresher](#) examines the defining characteristics of the LDF in some detail, and should assist you in explaining the LDF system to others and answering their questions

the selling tools

Once you are clear on the improvements which are needed, the issue will be how best to address them. The approach you take is very much for your own judgement, informed by your knowledge of your authority, its culture and the key personalities. It is possible that some matters are entirely within your own control, but in other cases you will need to secure the support of senior officers and members.

The tools in this section are:

- a [note for a presentation to senior officers](#) to persuade them about the benefits of the LDF
- a [powerpoint file](#) which you can use in presentations to senior officers
- a [framework report to members](#) which sets out the ideal structure for a report to inform members on LDF activity, and allows you to input your own information as required

the explaining tools

These tools will help you to inform those who you are trying to persuade about the value of the LDF. They include:

- a 20 minute [powerpoint presentation to members](#)
- a [powerpoint presentation for partners and colleagues](#), which similarly should take about 20 minutes to actually present, but with questions is likely to need a slot of about an hour

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

supporting tools

- [background briefing: making the case for LDF](#)
- [background briefing: LDF refresher](#)

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

background briefing: making the case for the LDF

user note

This tool is designed to assist you to convey to others the significance and potential of the LDF system, and in particular to help you persuade the chief executive, directors and/or senior members of the need for better corporate support. It concentrates on higher level messages about the potential of the LDF system and its corporate implications, and avoids detailed matters of process.

The briefing has overlapping purposes. It will help you to:

- set out the key reasons why the LDF should be recognised as an important corporate project, with the emphasis on the opportunities it offers for tackling significant corporate and partnership issues
- sell the potential of the LDF
- highlight the preconditions that lead to successful LDF preparation
- identify how you can support your staff if they are to successfully take the opportunities you are aiming to create

It is possible that you will be able to secure better support by simply explaining what you need and why. But in many cases this will only be forthcoming if you can persuade senior officers and members that the LDF will substantially benefit their objectives.

The headline message is that planning has a considerable contribution to make to corporate and partnership strategy development. This is reflected in the Government's ambitions for planning and imminent changes in LSPs and community strategies, and supported by a number of practical ways in which LDF work can assist corporate activity. To deliver that contribution the LDF will in turn need effective support from both elected members and senior management.

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

government ambitions for planning: why they matter for local authorities

The Government has made clear the importance it attaches to planning. This is reflected in the reform of development plans, significant changes to development control, the culture change agenda, the creation of PAS and so on. There are also some contradictory messages, but the overall thrust – that planning should be seen as a key function of local government – is remarkably consistent.

Some of the headline changes to development planning aim to further this ambition and push planning closer to the corporate centre, notably:

- the description of the LDF as a key vehicle for delivery of the sustainable community strategy (SCS)
- the change to spatial planning, with its function of co-ordinating and integrating the actions of the authority, partners and other agencies across space
- the emphasis on vision, objectives and strategy, which parallels the expectations of community strategies
- the renewed emphasis on community engagement, and changes in the process intended to make it more influential
- the expectation that existing planning policy orthodoxy will be challenged, which resonates with the concept of corporate challenge
- the formal requirements for consideration of alternative strategies or solutions (depending on the type of DPD), and the political implications of how alternatives are handled
- the examination into soundness, which demands robust evidence and reinforces the importance of some of the key changes by making them the subject of soundness tests

In addition, the Government has signalled the importance it places on LDFs in the proposals which are emerging for how local strategic partnerships (LSPs) will work and the future of community strategies. There are several key documents:

- The Egan report on skills for sustainable communities emphasises the importance of the community strategy as the means whereby the local authority and its partners develop an integrated strategy for the area, and introduces the concept of changing to *sustainable* community strategies (SCSs). It identifies the LDF as a key delivery mechanism for the SCS, which needs to be recognised by the central leadership of authorities. [Egan executive summary](#)
- The ODPM consultation 'LSPs: shaping their future' affirms the importance placed on partnership working towards a common strategy, and the idea of moving to an SCS, and contains repeated references to the significance of the LDF as a delivery vehicle. It also makes the point that there needs to be a solid evidence base for the new SCSs, coupled with effective neighbourhood engagement. [LSPs: shaping their future executive summary](#)
- The interim report of the Lyons review of local government funding and functions makes the point strongly that a key function of local authorities should be to lead the shaping of better

places, which resonates with the ideas of vision and clarity of objectives in the LDF. [Lyons review](#)

- The local government white paper, due in late 2006, is expected to contain firm proposals for the move to sustainable community strategies, based on robust evidence and effective community engagement. It may also introduce a requirement for there to be some form of proof that SCSs really are sustainable, as against mere assertion.

In addition to the features of the LDF system which tend to 'push' it towards the corporate centre, strong 'pull' factors are emerging which should draw the LDF process into being a significant contributor to the key strategy for the area.

These factors are not referred to explicitly in the various selling tools, because at the time of writing the key changes are still subject to consultation rather than firm commitments. However, you will wish to have them in mind and refer to them where it is opportune to do so. Once the local government white paper is published you can revise presentations to make appropriate references.

maximising the corporate value of the LDF

The Government's ambitions for planning and the proposals for LSPs and community strategies are clear indicators of where policy and practice should be moving, but on their own may not persuade senior officers or members that they should improve aspects of the support given to the LDF. However, there are a range of ways in which LDF preparation can considerably assist corporate and partnership activity. Promoting these to colleagues and members should be influential in helping you change their thinking. You will see that these lie at the core of the selling tools.

This tool now considers the potential roles and contributions of the LDF, under three broad headings:

- [contributing to strategy development](#)
- [supporting corporate and partnership challenge](#)
- [efficiency and economy in use of resources](#)

contributing to strategy development

- [integrating preparation of the LDF and sustainable community strategy](#)
- [developing strategies in parallel and pooling capacity](#)
- [strengthening relationships with other agencies](#)

integrating preparation of the LDF and sustainable community strategy (SCS)

Many LSPs have recognised that their current community strategy needs to become more truly strategic, with a stronger focus on deliverables and measurable outcomes. This is particularly the case in areas which do not enjoy access to the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, where a more demanding regime operates. The new requirements for SCSs should add to the impetus to bring forward an early review of existing community strategies. This will be particularly important where an authority (unitary or county) is operating under or developing a Local Area Agreement with Government since the action plan must be based on the community strategy.

This leads to the question of how the SCS will be produced. It will need a robust evidence base, effective community engagement on the strategy, clear vision and leadership by the local authority, and possibly evidence that it really is sustainable. This will put considerable demands on the authority and its LSP partners.

This is where you can offer valuable assistance, because the authority already has an obligation to address these same matters through the preparation of the LDF. There is thus a clear case to bring the two processes closely together, so that they can feed off a common evidence base and an integrated approach to community engagement. The sustainability appraisal framework for the LDF also offers the possibility that (with some broadening) it could be used to demonstrate the credentials of the SCS.

The benefits of integrated working will be two-way. The LSP and the preparation of the SCS will benefit from:

- the way the LDF will co-ordinate physical action across the area, showing how development proposals and the actions of partners will fit together to address objectives
- the LDF becoming a more effective delivery tool for the SCS, particularly through channelling private sector investment
- the opportunity to see how different agencies' actions affect areas, and the possible need for adjustments or mitigation measures
- the skills of the planners involved

Correspondingly, the planning authority and the development of the LDF will benefit from:

- the wider perspectives and knowledge of the area and its problems and opportunities among partners
- an examination of the spatial implications of the SCS ambitions and strategy, and of how they will be reflected in the LDF
- a clearer local strategic context for the LDF than would otherwise have been the case
- interaction with community planners and their skills

How the authority might bring the two processes closer together organisationally is for you and colleagues to consider in the light of what is likely to be both practicable and achievable. It will be

fundamental to secure the support of the chief executive and other senior officers and the council leader, since they will be the primary conduit to the LSP. You will certainly need to be ready to put forward ideas for mutual adjustment, including:

- harmonising the timetables for LDF work and development of the SCS
- developing common processes for the development and evaluation of alternatives and engaging communities
- possibly expanding the sustainability appraisal framework so that it can be used for appraisal of the SCS

You may need to stress to others that the regional spatial strategy (RSS) is now part of the development plan in its own right, and that the LDF must conform generally with it. The authority may be closely involved in the development of the RSS, and will certainly seek to influence its strategy so that it meets the interests of the authority and its area. However, once the RSS is approved its strategy and any sub-regional strategy or component will be a major determinant of the local strategy set out in the LDF. It will therefore be pointless and self-defeating for the SCS to try to take a different line from the finalised RSS.

You may also need to make it clear that you are not proposing a takeover by your department of the community planning function (nor offering the LDF to be taken over by corporate/community planning), and that you fully recognise that the SCS will have a much wider scope than the LDF because it will cover a range of service delivery issues as well as spatial matters.

Of course, the greatest benefits of integration will be available where preparation of the SCS can be aligned with that of the LDF core strategy. However, even where the core strategy has already been produced there should be significant opportunities for bringing the LDF and SCS processes together, including drawing on the existing evidence base developed for the core strategy. The SCS will then become a key shaping factor when the core strategy comes to be reviewed.

In areas with Local Area Agreements (LAAs), the action plan must be based on the community strategy. This is a significant incentive for such authorities to work together with partners to strengthen the community strategy and give it a greater focus on deliverables and measurable outcomes. The risk of doing this is that senior officers and members will be so focused on aligning the community strategy and the LAA that they will not be so ready to see the potential value of the LDF as a corporate tool. However, many of the elements of the four 'blocks' within LAAs – children and young people, safer and stronger communities, healthier communities and older people, and economic development – are highly relevant to planning and the LDF will be a significant tool for tackling them. There is a useful summary of the elements within the four blocks on the DCLG website.

www.communities.gov.uk/pub/14/LocalAreaAgreementsGuidanceforRoundThreeandRefreshofRoundsOneandTwo_id1165014.pdf

How to best relate the LDF to the LAA will depend on the circumstances of the authority and the state of development of the LAA. If the leadership has not yet begun to make connections between the two, a good starting point would be to provide a note on the elements which are addressed by the existing UDP or structure plan, and how the spatial approach of the LDF will be able to contribute to tackling a wider range of elements.

developing strategies in parallel and pooling capacity

Apart from preparation of the SCS, there is potential for work on the LDF to contribute to the development of strategy in other authority services and vice versa. This could be done by agreeing to work together on a common strategic framework, which will then be carried into both the LDF and the service strategy. This will contribute to joined-up working and offer scope to economise and rationalise activities. Working in this way will, of course, require give and take in relation to negotiating timescales, specifying research and working towards agreement on the actual strategy.

strengthening relationships with other agencies

Preparation of the LDF will require close working with a range of agencies so as to understand the issues they face, obtain and share information, and consider how their and your activities can better support each other and meet common objectives. This should reinforce existing co-operation, whether at strategic, senior management or operational levels, and thereby strengthen relationships.

supporting corporate and partnership challenge

- [contributing to corporate challenge, and supporting CPA](#)
- [articulating how key initiatives and projects fit together and support objectives](#)
- [examining how well the authority's and partners' strategies and programmes fit together](#)

contributing to corporate challenge, and supporting CPA

Good local authorities are self-challenging, asking themselves whether there are better ways of organising themselves or delivering services to produce better outcomes for their residents and stakeholders. The ability to demonstrate this is an important aspect of CPA.

Spatial planning requires the authority to challenge current planning policy orthodoxy and ask whether better solutions can be found. The requirement for explicit consideration of alternative strategies and their evaluation supports this. There is therefore the opportunity for senior officers and members to use the spatial LDF process as one of their tools for corporate challenge. In particular, they could examine aspects of current policy or service provision where different approaches to delivery can be expected to have distinctly different effects upon different localities.

articulating how key initiatives and projects fit together and support objectives

In areas of significant change there will be a range of major development projects or other initiatives going forward, all of which aim to tackle local problems or needs, but developed and led by different agencies or departments. The LDF as a spatial plan can examine how well they fit together, what their aggregate effect will be and how well they will collectively address objectives. This can assist the authority and its partners in seeing whether particular projects or initiatives should be revised or adjusted to produce a better net effect. It is also likely to expose any consequences for local communities which need to be addressed, and potential solutions.

examining how well the authority's and partners' strategies and programmes fit together in localities

A common feature of community planning is that agencies examine their service provision and consider whether realignment is desirable to better meet objectives. The LDF can contribute to this process by considering how service delivery is affected by local circumstances in particular *localities*, especially where area action plans are being prepared.

efficiency and economy in the use of resources

- [joint research with other services](#)
- [integration of community engagement with other corporate consultation](#)
- [an authority-wide approach to sustainability appraisal](#)

joint research with other services

This is a less ambitious variant on parallel strategy development. Liaison with other departments will bring out areas where they are planning new research or would wish to see it take place. The specification can then be written so that the results will be of use to both the planners and the other service.

integration of community engagement with other corporate consultation

This briefing has already considered the potential for a common process of community engagement as part of integration between the LDF and SCS processes. There will be corporate benefit in co-ordinating the planning of LDF engagement with other consultation. This can both reduce the risk of consultation fatigue on the part of residents and community groups, and save resources. Particular matters to consider are:

- using the results of recent corporate consultation which are relevant to the LDF, rather than asking the same (or much the same) questions again
- considering how surveys of the citizens' panel or other corporate consultations can be used as part of LDF consultation
- incorporating questions in relation to other services in consultations on the LDF
- so far as practicable, timetabling engagement for periods when you do not expect large-scale corporate consultations to be taking place
- keeping other departments and partners informed about the engagement you have carried out on the LDF and the main messages that emerged

It might be tempting to consider whether the statement of community involvement (SCI) could cover all consultation by the authority. However, you should avoid recommending this because the SCI is subject to examination and it will cause confusion to include consultation which is not related to planning, and which the inspector cannot address. A better approach would be for an authority to have an overall consultation strategy which covers engagement on the LDF, with the SCI clearly relating to it.

an authority-wide approach to sustainability appraisal

Other public strategies which may affect the environment are potentially subject to the EC Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. To date, most authorities have in effect ignored the directive, but in due course it is likely that this approach will be challenged and the directive will need to be taken seriously. Certainly, SCSs seem likely to require assessment under the directive, especially as they become more explicit about spatial issues.

Given that a sustainability appraisal framework already exists (or is being developed), it makes sense to put other corporate strategies through sustainability appraisal rather than a separate process of environmental assessment. Indeed, it would seem quite irrational to assess the *sustainable* community strategy for its environmental effects alone. To use the sustainability appraisal framework in this way will probably require some re-scoping to ensure coverage of the full scope of the SCS, and care will be needed to ensure that you meet all the SEA procedural requirements.

You should be ready for colleagues to suggest that since the planners must carry out sustainability appraisal of the LDF they could also do so for other strategies. While there is an obvious issue of resources here, there could be considerable benefits to planning if the service could take the work on. This is because of the way sustainability appraisal requires intimate involvement in the development of the strategy including challenge, development of alternatives and their evaluation.

the preconditions for success

Having set out how the LDF can assist the corporate organisation, and the support it needs to enable the potential to be realised, it is timely to consider just what improved support may be required. PAS has identified a number of preconditions for success in LDF preparation:

- [shared understanding among elected members, senior officers and partners of the principles of the new system, its main implications and the opportunities it offers](#)
- [political support, commitment and priority for the LDF, including champions among senior members](#)
- [support of senior management in addressing both the implications of the LDF and the opportunities](#)
- [co-operation of other departments in providing information and developing policies or proposals](#)
- [sufficient human and financial resources to handle the processes, gather evidence and collaborate with partners](#)
- [support to secure effective co-operation with community planners and the local strategic partnership](#)
- [effective steering and decision-making structures to allow expeditious progress](#)
- [recognition that all concerned are going through a learning process and need time and support to master new concepts and approaches](#)

shared understanding of the new system

The new system is radically different from what it replaced, not just in processes but in its ambitions and the principles which underpin it. Other key players – elected members, senior officers and partners – will only give the support you need if they understand the nature of the new system and are enthused about the opportunities. This is partly a matter of training, and this toolkit includes several presentations which can assist.

However, this also needs a more sustained process of communication to ensure that messages are successfully conveyed and retained by the recipients. This could include further presentations, information reports, briefing sessions before or after cabinet or planning committee meetings and informal discussions with individual members or officers. You should not underestimate the scale of the task of getting the messages across, nor the benefits of an ongoing process of communication. The emphasis should be on principles and issues, keeping discussion of procedures to the minimum necessary to enable members and colleagues to understand the coming stages of work.

political support, commitment and priority for the LDF

If the LDF is recognised by workers as a priority for the authority, then this will assist in securing effective support, including resources.

support of senior management

Senior management support is more likely to be forthcoming if they recognise the value of the LDF corporately, and see that you are keen to realise it in practice.

co-operation of other departments

This should flow naturally as a consequence of senior management support.

sufficient human and financial resources

There are two points to make here. The first is that most planning authorities initially underestimated the staff time involved in familiarisation with the new system and uncovering the complexities of the procedures. If your authority is just making the transition from completing a UDP or local plan to work on the LDF, you may find it helpful to talk to others who are further forward about their experiences in relation to resourcing and timescales.

The second point applies if your department has not previously been involved closely in corporate partnership activity. Do not underestimate the staff time demands this will create. Effective partnership working requires a substantial investment in building relationships of understanding and trust with other agencies, learning their operational language, appreciating their governance and decision-making structures, agreeing approaches, and negotiating mutually acceptable policies and solutions. You may find it helpful to tap into the experience of your colleagues who are responsible for leading corporate partnership working with the LSP.

support to secure effective co-operation from partners

This is where an effective champion will be particularly valuable. If your chief executive or leader tells the LSP that the LDF is an important initiative which needs and deserves their co-operation, that is likely to be conclusive. Of course, this message will need to be sustained. This could include ensuring that provision is made for reports on LDF activity and progress in LSP meeting agendas, that either the full LSP or (more likely) one of its theme partnership groups takes on responsibility for steering collaboration and input, and that the LDF features prominently in key LSP events, information and publicity.

effective steering and decision-making structures

Most authorities have set up an LDF steering group to provide ongoing guidance and make process decisions which do not require formal consideration by full council, cabinet or other decision-making committee. If your authority has not, and this is causing delay, you should make the case for improved structures. You can stress the desirability of more significant member control and ownership, and the benefits for officers of regular member input. You can present enhanced speed as a secondary benefit.

recognition of the learning process

There is no harm in making the point occasionally that the new system is still relatively untried, and that the authority will do very well if it gets everything right first time.

implications for the LDF team

Effective corporate support will be important, but success in delivering a quality LDF which will make a positive difference to the future of the area will depend primarily on the energy, commitment and confidence of the LDF team. There are some negative pressures on staff arising from the new system. It is important to understand them so that you can give your staff the personal support they need.

Although the new development plan system has been in place since September 2004, the extent of change in both processes and principles took some time to become apparent. It is hardly surprising that there is quite a lot of anxiety among LDF team members, especially team leaders, that they may inadvertently get the authority or themselves into trouble. At the worst this can manifest itself in some understandable but ultimately self-defeating behaviour. Staff may:

- preoccupy themselves with processes, sometimes at the expense of the vision and ambitions of the plan
- try to continue familiar local plan/UDP practices which may not be appropriate to the new system
- collect large amounts of information without any clear idea of how it will be used
- have a general tendency to play safe

If you recognise some of these symptoms in your own LDF team you will wish to provide the right support to help them overcome the underlying causes. You know your own staff and how they will

respond best, but there are some lessons from work led by PAS and POS which you may wish to draw on:

- recognise that the process of adaptation may be most difficult for those who have the most experience of the old system. This is because, in addition to a lot of learning, they have significant *un-learning* to do, which is more difficult
- ensure that the work programme explicitly provides regular review stages when staff can reflect on what they have been doing and consider what they might do differently in the future, discuss and think through what is coming next, and lift their sights back up from the processes to the vision and ambitions
- encourage the use of the [soundness self-assessment toolkit](#), both for reassurance that they are getting things right and to enable them to apply more of their mental energy to the exciting task of preparing a plan which successfully tackles the big issues
- make it clear that you are looking for a bold and courageous approach, and you understand that risks and mistakes will probably be inevitable (but that they can be quickly rectified)
- contribute to the process of challenging current planning policy and show you are open to considering alternative strategies or approaches – you may find that there are significant opportunities to be gained from re-thinking some established practice

This toolkit gives considerable prominence to the desirability of bringing the LDF closer to the SCS and partnership working. If this has not been a significant aspect of your department's work, staff initially may not be as enthusiastic as you would wish, because it will involve yet more change and moving into unknown and unfamiliar areas of practice and relationships. You may need to demonstrate your commitment to partnership working and, at least initially, lead the process of engagement. One possible approach would be to break the ice by bringing representatives of some of the key partners together to meet your LDF staff and talk about issues and ideas.

Finally, you should keep in mind that in addition to your leadership you bring to bear some attributes which can help the LDF team:

- a more strategic view and distance from the detail of process
- proven adaptability
- communication skills, which will be critical in getting the principles of the LDF across to others

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

background briefing: LDF refresher

user note

This tool is designed to enable you to refresh and reinforce your awareness of the principles underlying the new system. It sets out the key features and qualities that are the 'defining characteristics' of the new system.

The tool assumes that you already have a good understanding of the main elements of the new system, such as:

- the format of the LDF as a folder of documents
- the roles of the core strategy, development policies and allocations DPDs, area action plans and SPD
- the requirements for sustainability appraisal, two statutory stages of community engagement, and the examination into soundness

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

the defining characteristics of the new planning system

This tool concentrates on what are called the 'defining characteristics' of the system, that is, the key features or qualities which should shape approaches and practice. They are:

- spatial planning
- the emphasis given to vision, overall objectives and local strategy, and tackling the distinctive issues of the area
- the LDF as a key means of delivering the SCS
- the emphasis on challenging policy orthodoxy and explicitly considering evaluated alternatives to identify the best solution
- sustainability appraisal designed into the plan preparation process
- an emphasis on maximising consensus with stakeholders and communities and having effective engagement with them before firm decisions are made
- the examination into soundness and binding inspector's report

spatial planning

How you go about explaining spatial planning will depend on the depth of your grasp of both the concept and what it will mean in practice. You need to try to instil a simple concept of spatial planning into the minds of colleagues and members. This could concentrate on four aspects of spatial planning:

- the broader scope
- its co-ordinating and integration function
- the way it deals with space (or geography)
- the focus on delivery

the broader scope

While you may wish to make the point that spatial planning goes wider than the previous concept of land-use planning, bear in mind that many of the people you talk to have little understanding of what the term 'land-use planning' means, nor the limits it imposed. You are likely to find it more effective to talk in terms of the kinds of additional matters which can now be included in plan policies or proposals, giving examples from the local situation.

The limits of spatial planning are not defined, but will emerge from the combined effect of inspectors' reports into DPD examinations, appeal decisions, legal challenges and established practice. Be ready for elected members or colleagues to ask whether issues which were previously ruled out as material considerations can now be taken into account in considering planning applications. There is as yet no guidance as to whether a wider range of considerations can be taken into account immediately or whether this will only be permissible when such matters are covered by LDF policies. However, you could argue that the latter is more logical and sensible in practice.

co-ordination and integration

Spatial planning seeks to use the development plan to integrate development proposals with wider corporate strategy and the strategies and programmes of other agencies. Of course, this does not mean that it directs or somehow has precedence over other strategies. But it will reflect them and show how they fit together in addressing objectives. This means that planners will need a productive dialogue with colleagues and staff of other agencies to find out about their strategies, programmes of action and relevant actions.

Most agencies only have three-year capital programmes and their strategies may not look very far ahead. They may recognise the need for, say, a piece of infrastructure, but may not be able to commit to it some years in advance. This will make it necessary to agree with them just what the LDF *can* say on particular projects, in the knowledge that the deliverability of the plan will be considered, and possibly contested, at the examination.

dealing with space (or geography)

Allied to the previous point is the fact that a key function of the LDF is to deal with how change will affect different parts of the city, town or area. The corollary of this integrating function is that it shows how the land development proposals and actions of other agencies will work together, giving members, colleagues, partners and other stakeholders a clear picture of how areas will change. It also enables the impacts and consequences of proposals and programmes on localities to be examined, so that the council can identify the need for adjustments or mitigation measures.

delivery

The new system presents a real opportunity to redress some of the negative image of planning because, while there will still be planning applications to deal with, spatial planning is about delivery of change for the better, and not merely regulation. Your success will depend on the department as a whole embracing the new vision for planning, with all staff showing their commitment to an enabling rather than a controlling role in both their words and their actions.

vision, overall objectives and local strategy

Many authorities are finding it demanding to develop a truly distinctive vision for their area. Developing a coherent vision requires a concerted effort to really expose the true situation of the area, the characteristics of the spatial relationships and future needs. This should be addressed in concert with partners and representatives of a range of different interests.

You should be sensitive to how the chief executive and/or leading members react to your need to develop a vision because they will have developed one already, and will not want there to be a different, competing version. In this situation you may need to explain that the LDF vision will further develop the corporate one rather than be an alternative. You should stress that the more detailed LDF vision will provide the means for the council and its partners to articulate their consensus on ambitions.

You need to focus on the distinctive issues of the area and the specific local solutions which you and your team will develop. This focus on distinctiveness will be assisted by embracing the opportunity to move away from lengthy documents with large numbers of policies to slim, readable ones. Apart from making the development plan much more accessible and usable by all interests, this will allow

the energies and skills of the team to be concentrated on what matters most – finding the best solutions to the big problems and capitalising on the best opportunities. This should also be an attractive message for senior manager colleagues.

Some authorities have found that elected members are wary about losing the subject-based policies they are used to, reasoning that this may reduce their scope to influence development. Development control staff may also be nervous about the loss of familiar policies. One way to overcome these concerns is to set out how the criteria in individual policies from the current UDP or local plan will be covered by generic policies. Nothing will actually be lost: it will simply be expressed more concisely.

the LDF as a key vehicle for delivering the SCS

This is dealt with in the tool [making the case for the LDF](#). You may find it helpful to explain that the wording in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act – that DPDs should ‘have regard to’ the community strategy – is actually a more demanding requirement than it sounds, and that it expects the LDF to take forward the objectives and strategy within it.

challenging policy orthodoxy and considering alternatives

The term ‘alternatives’ is used throughout this toolkit to mean sets of options which, taken together, form distinctly different strategies or approaches. The requirement to develop and consider alternatives was not made clear in early Government guidance, including PPS12, and it is only more recently that it has become clear that this is a central feature of the new system. (It is also a key requirement of the SEA directive, and the process for sustainability appraisal of DPDs is modelled on that set out in the directive).

The alternatives should grow out of the issues and options identified during initial consultation, and reflect real choices of direction or approach. It may be that some of the key choices for the area need to be addressed as part of your work with the regional planning body rather than the LDF, to influence the RSS so that it addresses the needs and concerns of your authority’s area. But once the RSS is in place it will, together with Government policy, pre-determine some of the key issues so there may not be radically different alternatives available for the LDF to address.

However, there will still be significant decisions and choices to be made within the LDF and your approach should be geared to highlighting them. In developing alternatives you may find it helpful to focus initially on the most important decisions to be made and the key choices within them. Your team can then consider the implications of those choices for other decisions, and you are likely to find that some options fit better with one key choice than another. Through this process recognisably different alternatives should emerge. These should be discussed carefully with elected members to get their understanding and agreement that they are valid and deserve to be examined.

The nature of the alternatives will depend on the DPD being produced. For a core strategy the alternatives should reflect different strategic approaches to seeking to meet the LDF objectives. In the case of an allocations DPD or development policies DPD the main choices will have been made already in the core strategy, so the alternatives will be more limited in their scope. However, particularly in the case of the allocations DPD, there may be some very tough and contentious choices to be made. These need to be brought out clearly so that the authority can evaluate them, consult their communities and provide evidence for the examination.

Spatial planning and the consideration of alternatives require that current planning policy is challenged to assess whether it is really meeting its objectives or perhaps has other, unintended effects. You can also expect developers or other interests to put forward their own ideas on what should be done, and implicitly to challenge the current strategy or policy in doing so. You can draw on their ideas in developing alternatives and this will also ensure that the more credible options will be considered and evaluated.

There are potential political risks in considering alternatives, especially where the tradition of the authority is not to be particularly open about choices when making policy decisions. Senior members may feel that formally putting up alternatives for evaluation could play into the hands of the opposition or factions within the authority, or external interest groups. That is why the **framework report to members** addresses the matter. If this is a potential concern you should get it raised with the management team with a view to agreeing with them a protocol to be followed in talking or writing about alternatives. It will be important to avoid any implication that the consideration of alternatives is only a matter of 'going through the motions', and that there is therefore no real prospect of any change of direction or policy.

When it comes to the evaluation of alternatives the starting point should be the evidence from the sustainability appraisal since this is intended to be a key consideration in decision making. The evaluation process will also need to take account of evidence from technical studies and other research, how well the alternatives fit with Government and regional planning policy, how well it takes forward the vision and objectives of the community strategy, the results of community engagement and political judgements by elected members. In the interests of transparency (and to ensure that robust evidence can be provided for the examination), the analysis presented to elected members should address the more 'objective' considerations first, so that political judgements are demonstrably made in light of the evidence.

sustainability appraisal designed into the plan-making process

When considering what form the new development plan system should take the Government was faced with the need to address how the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive should relate to the new plan-making process. It made two decisions:

- rather than require planning authorities to comply separately with the directive, the various procedural steps of the directive would be incorporated into the plan-making procedures
- there should be a full sustainability appraisal and not merely an environmental assessment

Provided the procedures for plan-making are fully complied with, this will automatically ensure compliance with the directive. However, the provisions are complex, and this is reflected in the length of the Government guidance on sustainability appraisal.

It is important to recognise that the Government intends that sustainability appraisal should be a significant part of the plan-making process, and a key factor in decision making. This makes it necessary to ensure that work on sustainability appraisal is timetabled into the stages of LDD preparation so that the results at each stage are available for consideration, and that they are given appropriate weight in decision making. There is a misconception in some quarters that sustainability appraisal should function as a separate, independent process which validates the decisions made, rather than shaping them. Apart from misunderstanding the integral role intended for sustainability

appraisal, this runs the risk of the authority being shown not to have been influenced by the results of its sustainability appraisal when a DPD comes to examination.

The [framework report to members](#) tool describes some common problems in sustainability appraisal practice to date.

maximising consensus on strategy

As part of the culture change agenda for planning, the Government is seeking a move away from the model of planning as a system for the resolution of conflict to one which seeks consensus with communities and stakeholders. This has been clumsily presented as suggesting that lots of community engagement will lead to consensus, whereas naturally there will always be those who feel threatened or denied opportunity by plans and will oppose them. However, if approaches to community and stakeholder engagement are adopted which set out to find the *maximum* of consensus, then there is every prospect that it will be found. Such consensus is more likely at the level of principle, that is, the overall vision, objectives and strategy of the core strategy, rather than at the detailed proposals stage.

The idea of building consensus does not presume that the authority will simply try to give people what they want. There are higher level policy constraints and targets in Government policy and the RSS which plans must conform with, and elected members have the right to make political choices. Rather, it can be seen as paralleling the concept of the local authority leading partners and stakeholders in developing the SCS, which carries with it the expectation of advocacy by leading elected members. The same kind of approach is equally appropriate to the LDF, with elected members and senior officers seeking to lead communities and stakeholders towards an ambitious and confident strategy.

An allied aspect of Government thinking is reflected in the move away from the main statutory consultation taking place at the end of the process, when a UDP or local plan was put on deposit (though many authorities carried out extensive consultation earlier). The new system carries with it the concept of 'front-loading' community engagement (although it would be better if you used the more meaningful term 'early engagement'). This means that, following consultation on issues and options to bring out the choices the DPD needs to address, the key stage of community engagement should be when the authority is coming to conclusions about the direction of the plan but has not yet firmly made up its mind – that is, the preferred options stage.

Incidentally, the term 'preferred options' should be taken to mean the preferred strategy in the case of the core strategy, the preferred sites in an allocations DPD and the preferred policies in a development policies DPD.

What should happen in preferred options community engagement is that the authority will set out the alternatives it has developed, its evaluation and its preference. Communities and stakeholders will then be able to influence the key decisions. The authority will need to help them understand the considerations which led it to prefer a particular alternative over the others. The authority is entitled to have the confidence in its vision to seek to carry people with it rather than merely respond to them. Following preferred options engagement, the authority will decide in the light of the results whether to stick with the preferred option or change to another alternative. It is likely that there will be a process of refinement to address concerns which can be resolved by amendments or mitigation measures.

To promote consensus and engage in debate about the choice between alternatives requires different approaches to community engagement to those developed as part of UDP or local plan practice. At issues and options stage the authority should design the approach to bring out all the issues and the options so that they can be addressed in sustainability appraisal and other plan-making activity. There should then be an ongoing process of working with partners and other stakeholders and communities to build consensus on the main principles of the DPD. At preferred options stage the main effort should go into approaches to engagement which enable dialogue with different groups to allow them to understand the alternatives and the reasons behind the judgements which led to the preferred options, and make informed comments. At the same time the arrangements at preferred options stage should ensure that anybody who has not been brought into the dialogue processes can still find out about the alternatives and have their say.

The [framework report to members](#) tool makes the point that, if the authority is to lead a process of consensus building, elected members will need to agree arrangements to manage disagreements between themselves. If this is a matter of concern for you in the context of your authority, you will no doubt wish to raise the matter of how it might be tackled with the chief executive and directors, together with the elected members who champion the LDF. It would be sensible to address this matter at the same time as considering how to manage the public discussion of options and alternatives since there are likely to be common political issues.

the examination into soundness and the binding inspector's report

A feature of the new system is that there are procedural requirements throughout the LDF process, and at the very end the examination will ask whether they have all been met. This creates the risk that an authority will get to the end of a costly and challenging DPD preparation process only for the inspector to conclude that a procedural failing earlier means that the DPD is non-compliant and cannot go forward to adoption. Where there *appear* to be procedural failings the inspector may arrange an open meeting with the local authority (which any other interested party may attend) to clarify matters and provide the opportunity for the authority to rectify the failing if that is possible, before going forward to examination.

PAS has encountered a high level of concern among forward planning staff about the risks of a DPD being found to be non-compliant with procedures or unsound at examination. This led it to commission the [soundness self-assessment toolkit](#). The toolkit is designed so that evidence of compliance with statutory procedures and the tests of soundness can be built up progressively throughout DPD preparation. Apart from giving staff comfort that they are meeting the process requirements, the toolkit should encourage them to devote the greater part of their energies and minds to preparing a good plan.

Clearly the authority will need robust evidence if it is to come through the examination with its DPD substantially unchanged. The resources put into research and investigation should be proportionate to the importance and sensitivity of the particular topic. It will make sense to focus resources on what are seen as the key areas, but officers should remain alert throughout the process and be ready to carry out additional work if a particular area emerges as more significant than was originally anticipated. This may make it desirable to keep some funds in reserve for such a contingency.

Evidence for the examination will include technical studies as well as all the soundness tests and what is necessary to meet them and to demonstrate that they have been met. It will therefore include evidence about the results of community engagement, compliance with national and regional policy

(including confirmation from the government office and the regional planning body that they are satisfied that the DPD conforms generally), coherence and consistency with neighbouring plans, the mechanisms for implementation and monitoring, and flexibility to cope with changing circumstances.

Only you and your LDF team can review and quantify the requirements for evidence and whether additional resources may be needed. However, be sure that any review of resources also addresses the implications of the LDF being brought closer to the preparation of the SCS, particularly the staff time demands which go with partnership working.

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

selling tools

- [note for a presentation to senior officers](#)
- [powerpoint presentation to senior officers](#)
- [framework report to members](#)

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

note for a presentation to senior officers

user note

This tool is designed to support a short verbal presentation (say 20 minutes) to the chief executive and/or management team on key corporate issues raised by preparing an LDF. It is designed primarily for use where you are already clear on the areas where you need improved corporate support. It draws on the defining characteristics of the LDF system, preconditions for success and maximising corporate value, all of which are explored in the background briefing tools: [making the case for the LDF](#) and the [LDF refresher](#).

You should arrange for the note to be circulated beforehand so that the intended audience will have (hopefully) already looked through it. Colleagues will find it particularly helpful if you can suggest specific actions, changes or support which you are seeking.

Your verbal presentation should emphasise those aspects under 'maximising corporate value' which you feel are likely to be most fruitful for the authority to pursue corporately, and how best to achieve them. You can then present the need for support or changes in arrangements as necessary consequences rather than as ends in their own right. The reality is that senior colleagues will wish to know what will be the corporate benefit of giving greater attention to the LDF (in the language of selling, 'what's in it for me?').

While not specifically designed for the purpose, the note could also be used where you want to begin raising consciousness about the LDF but do not have specific proposals in mind. If you do use it in this way, it will be best to focus your verbal presentation on the corporate potential of the LDF, again concentrating on a handful of key points.

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

corporate potential of the LDF

defining features of the new system

- spatial planning: wider scope, integration with corporate strategy and partners' programmes
- a developed vision for the area, explicit objectives, and broad strategy, and a focus on the distinctive issues
- the LDF as a key delivery tool for the sustainable community strategy (SCS), channelling private investment
- explicit consideration of genuine alternatives and challenge to planning policy orthodoxy (but within the context of Government policy and the regional spatial strategy)
- sustainability appraisal built into the process and intended to be an important factor in decision-making
- community engagement before key decisions are made so stakeholders can genuinely influence them, and the need to work towards achieving maximum consensus
- examination into soundness and binding inspector's report, which demand robust evidence
- complex and demanding procedures

maximising corporate value from the LDF: getting the most from the investment

The LDF can:

- help to make the community strategy more strategic and explicit about key actions
- articulate how key initiatives and projects fit together and support objectives
- contribute to corporate challenge and support CPA
- help to examine how well partners' strategies and programmes fit with the council's and with each other
- lead to parallel strategy development and opportunities to pool capacity
- rationalise activities and create economies in the use of resources, for example, joint research with other services
- strengthen relationships with other agencies, particularly at operational level
- integrate community engagement with other corporate consultation so as to use what is already known and avoid duplication
- be part of an authority-wide approach to sustainability appraisal: other strategies may be caught by the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

preconditions for success: what the planners need

- shared understanding of the principles of the new system and opportunities it offers, and recognition that all concerned are going through a steep learning process
- political and corporate support, commitment and priority: champions
- support and input from other departments
- resources: to handle the processes, gather the evidence and work with partners
- support in engagement with the local strategic partnership and review of the SCS
- effective steering and decision-making structures

issues for senior management

- working with elected members to manage the politics
- developing consensus within the authority and with partners, and enabling wide member ownership
- fitting together the timescales and processes of SCS review and development of the LDF
- managing the consideration of alternatives
- recognising the significance of sustainability appraisal and the results of community engagement as evidence

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

powerpoint presentation to senior officers

user note

You can download the [powerpoint presentation tool to senior officers from the PAS website](#). This tool will help you to get agreement in principle for the changes that are needed to ensure that the LDF is supported at a high level corporately. You can use the tool:

- where the authority is just beginning work on the LDF and you need to make the case for a full briefing
- as a follow-up to the short presentation (see the [note for a presentation](#) tool)
- where the management team is willing to give sufficient time for a fuller presentation

Each slide is accompanied by an explanatory note so you should read the file in 'notes' mode.

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

framework report to members

user note

This tool sets out the framework for a report that could be presented to the cabinet, planning committee or other decision-making body with responsibility for the LDF to explain the need for the LDF and to secure better support for LDF work.

While some of the matters covered will fall fully within your own remit, some won't – they will include the kinds of issues that the senior management of the authority normally take an interest in. If that is the case, you will need to report first to the management team or other relevant officer body to identify where you consider arrangements need to be strengthened and seek their support, using the [note on a presentation to senior officers](#) tool or possibly the [powerpoint presentation to senior officers](#) tool. They may well give a firm steer on how the issues are to be raised with members, in whose name(s) reports are to be presented and so on.

You should have informal discussions with senior members before reporting and these will influence the way in which you report. You may find it helpful to prepare the ground using the [powerpoint presentation to members](#) tool.

The report provides a framework to address the particular aspects which you consider require improved support or working arrangements. The heart of the report is Section 4. This covers all the main aspects of LDF preparation and points to where improved support may be needed. Only some of these will be relevant to your situation – you should select and address only those which are and delete the rest.

The report follows the convention of using text in this format - (Go on to explain what you propose) - to indicate where you should draft in your own text to describe the local situation or to identify what you feel needs to happen differently. The background briefing, [making the case for the LDF](#), suggests some possible responses for particular areas where it appears most likely that authorities need to strengthen their approach.

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

framework report

Note: the framework report is available from the PAS website as a rich text format (RTF) file. You can open and edit this file in Microsoft Word and other word processing software. It is also possible to copy and paste the relevant text below from within the Adobe Acrobat reader however the formatting may not be retained. To download the RTF file please click the link below:

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pagelId=25337>

Review of progress on the local development framework

Recommendations

The recommendations should be inserted by the report author, and will reflect the issues identified as needing to be addressed

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report reviews progress on development of the council's local development framework (LDF). There is growing understanding of the implications of the new system both within the authority and more widely, which makes it timely to review present arrangements and whether there are aspects which would benefit from change.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 It is now two years [*update as necessary*] since the new system of development plans became operational. Previous reports have brought out how the new LDF system is very different from the previous local plan/UDP [*delete as appropriate*] system. The new system includes complex new procedures and significant changes in how we think about planning and go about it.
- 2.2 There is a growing body of information and guidance published by the Government, the Planning Inspectorate and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS), which was not available when the authority first began to get to grips with the new system. PAS was set up by the Government to assist planning authorities to improve their planning service and adapt to change. It has produced particularly helpful guidance on how approaches need to change if the new system is to be used successfully.
- 2.3 It is therefore timely to pause and review our progress in working toward the LDF, and reflect on how well the arrangements and approaches taken to date are working. [*Where the authority has been finishing off a local plan or UDP, the following alternative is suggested*]. The recent/imminent completion of the review of the local plan/UDP makes it timely to consider the approach to be taken to preparation of the LDF. That will enable us to take advantage of the learning of authorities which have acted as pioneers in tackling the new system, and both avoid their mistakes and apply emerging good practice.

3 Progress to date

(This should be a concise review of which DPDs have been progressed and the stages reached, as a matter of factual record, together with any key lessons. It will also be appropriate to celebrate any good progress that has been made against a demanding timetable OR acknowledge that the original LDS was over-ambitious and slippage has occurred)

4 Taking stock

4.1 Work by PAS has identified the following as key features of the new system:

- 1) Spatial planning brings a wider scope to planning, with a strong focus on the vision, key objectives and strategy for the area. Spatial planning is intended to integrate planning policy with corporate strategy and the programmes of partners and other agencies, and show how they fit together across the area
- 2) There is an expectation that documents will be much shorter and that they will focus on the distinctive issues of the area
- 3) The LDF will be a significant contributor to the delivery of the sustainable community strategy (SCS)
- 4) The LDF should explicitly consider and evaluate alternatives to arrive at the best strategy
- 5) An authority should adopt engagement which seeks to maximise consensus between it and stakeholders
- 6) Community engagement should be focused on the earlier stages of plan preparation so that communities and stakeholders can influence decisions before they become firm
- 7) Sustainability appraisal should be undertaken throughout the preparation process, and be a major influence on decision making
- 8) An examination into soundness takes the place of the previous local inquiry, and leads to a binding inspector's report

4.2 In the light of this authority's experience to date with LDF, it would appear timely to give further attention to *number* of these key features, namely *name them*.

(Alternatively the following may be used where the LDF has not been started or the authority is at a very early stage).

4.2 While each of these will need to be addressed successfully in LDF work, at this time it is suggested that particular attention should be given to *number* of these key features, namely *name them*. The other features will be addressed in due course in further reports on the LDF.

(Draw upon the following where you have identified them as features to address further).

(Possible issue)

- 4.x **Spatial planning and the sustainable community strategy (SCS):**
Spatial planning is essentially about co-ordinating activity in spatial (geographic) terms, by showing how the authority's planning policy, its corporate strategy and the programmes and planned actions of partners and other agencies taken together will shape the future of the **city/borough/district**. Its scope is therefore wider than that of the old system and presumes the involvement and collaboration of other agencies.
- 4.x A key feature of the new system is the emphasis it puts on setting out in the core strategy in some detail the vision for the future of the area (developed from the corporate vision and that of the community strategy), the objectives which flow from it, and the strategy for how they will be achieved. Other development plan documents should then function as delivery tools.
- 4.x These features require a change in thinking about the purpose of planning. It is moving from regulation and control of development to a vehicle for promoting and enabling desirable development and working with others to ensure delivery. This makes it necessary to challenge current policy to ask whether it is truly effective in delivering the vision and objectives of the authority.
- 4.x Moreover, the Government has made it clear that its ambition is that the LDF should become an important vehicle for the delivery of the SCS. The LDF is expected to reflect the strategy and objectives of the SCS (while conforming generally with the regional spatial strategy), and show how physical development can contribute to implementing this strategy. This will require effective co-operative working with the local strategic partnership and its support staff.
- 4.x *(Amend the following paragraphs to fit local circumstances)* The community strategy is currently focused on building trust and co-operation between the partners, and showing how services can be more effectively fitted together. This means that it does not generally address spatial issues (for example, the particular areas which will receive priority for concerted action) and contains only a limited amount of policy which can be taken forward through the LDF. However, the council and its partners have identified the need to make the review of the SCS more truly strategic and more explicit about the key actions and deliverables which will shape the area in the future.
- 4.x Consequently, there is the opportunity for parallel work on the SCS review and the LDF to contribute to and benefit from each other. This should assist in making the SCS more truly strategic by drawing on the planners' expertise, and enabling the LDF to be a more effective tool for delivery

because there will be greater clarity as to what it needs to do to promote SCS objectives.

4.x *(Go on to set out what you feel needs to change to enable effective collaboration with the LSP and community planners and point to the decision(s) you seek from the meeting. If the authority is operating under or developing an Local Area Agreement, you may wish to set out how the LDF can contribute to the delivery of the blocks within the LAA).*

(Possible issue)

(It is not anticipated that many users of this toolkit will need to address the following point, but here is some suggested introductory text in case it is an issue for you).

4.x **Shorter documents but focused on the distinctive issues:** A criticism of some plans produced under the old system was that they contained large numbers of policies, but actually said very little about the distinctive issues of the area or the particular solutions required. In the new system authorities are encouraged to focus clearly on this matter of distinctiveness and reflect it in their vision, objectives and strategy. *(Go on to say what you feel needs to be done, or done differently in future, to bring out the distinctive issues and address them).*

4.x The intention is that the LDF should be influential in securing change and used not only by the authority but partners, other agencies and developers. This makes it desirable that the various development plan documents (DPDs) which make up the LDF are effective communication tools – ideally they should be concise and readable.

4.x Government guidance aims to assist in making the new documents shorter. It recommends that, rather than have a lot of separate policies for particular types of development, authorities should use what are known as ‘generic’ policies to cover all the considerations which are likely to need to be taken into account. It has also given formal status to its own planning policies as set out in Planning Policy Statements (and in the interim, existing PPGs), so there is no need to repeat them in development plans. Nor is there any need to repeat policies from the regional spatial strategy, since it is now part of the development plan in its own right. These changes should assist in making DPDs much more concise, and help to bring out particular issues and solutions, to the benefit of all users.

4.x *(Go on if necessary to set out what should be done).*

(Possible issue)

4.x **Consideration of alternatives:** Recent guidance from the Planning Inspectorate and PAS stresses the importance of the explicit consideration

of alternatives in the preparation of DPDs. The term ‘alternatives’ is used here to mean not just options within a particular issue or area for decision, but sets of options which, taken together, constitute materially different possible strategies or approaches. Early guidance by the ODPM did not make this clear, and many authorities are only now recognising that this is a fundamental feature of the new system.

4.x Having consulted stakeholders on the issues and options, the authority should review the evidence and information available to build up alternatives. These can then be evaluated to establish which appears likely to be best. There should then be participation with stakeholders and communities on the preferred approach and the reasons why other alternatives were rejected. This is a big change from the way the old system worked, where the authority was not required to formally address alternatives or consult on them.

4.x The alternatives developed for evaluation must be realistic and reasonable. They will not necessarily be radically different from each other, because key decisions about strategy will be made at regional level [*Or in the London spatial development strategy or structure plan where relevant*]. There are likely to be more real alternatives available in preparing the core strategy than a development policies DPD because decisions on the core strategy will have narrowed the remaining choices. The important thing is to identify the key decisions to be made, and the alternative approaches which flow from them.

4.x The process of considering alternatives needs to be handled with some care. It would be easy to give the impression that the council has already decided on a particular course or change of policy, when the reality is that it has not yet made any decisions and is considering all the ideas put forward as part of the process. Of course, there might be those who would wish to suggest that a decision has been made because this would suit their own purposes. Since this is a new area of planning practice, members and officers will wish to consider carefully how to enable genuine examination of alternatives yet minimise the pitfalls. (*You may wish to read and edit this section carefully in awareness of the situation within the authority, to avoid sending unintended messages*).

4.x (*Go on to set out your message about how you feel the council’s approach needs to change and what decision you are seeking*).

(Possible issue)

(There are two issues taken together in the following section, which may not both be relevant).

4.x **Community engagement:** In developing its proposals for reform of the planning system, the Government wanted to give communities more influence over the plans for their areas. It decided that to achieve this, statutory participation should not continue to be left to the end of the plan making process (as it was in the previous system), but should take place

earlier, before decisions are finalised. Accordingly, the new system has two statutory stages for community and stakeholder involvement:

- the 'issues and options' stage at the beginning of the process, which is designed to bring out all the issues which need to be considered. Any person or organisation can identify issues they feel should be considered and/or options within them, and the authority will be expected to consider them
- the 'preferred options stage', when the authority has developed alternatives for evaluation and has an emerging view on which is the best, but has not yet worked through all the consequences of that choice in terms of final detailed policies

4.x The Government has also sought to promote a shift in thinking about plan-making away from managing conflict to working with partners and communities to find the maximum of consensus. Planning authorities should engage communities in ways that assist in identifying consensus where it can be found, rather than unintentionally following approaches which mainly identify where there is disagreement. No matter how successfully an authority works to find consensus on the strategy or proposals of the LDF, there are bound to be those whose interests will be harmed by the outcome and will oppose the proposals. But this does not deny the potential benefit of the authority leading a process of consensus-seeking.

4.x Consensus building clearly requires different approaches to working with stakeholders and communities. It implies an ongoing process of communication, with clarity on the part of both elected members and officers as to how it should be conducted. In particular, there needs to be honesty about the actual room for manoeuvre within government and regional policy and targets. Seeking to maximise consensus is not just about the council asking people what they do and do not want. It is quite legitimate for the authority to provide a strong lead as to what it believes is likely to be the best strategy or solution (depending on the particular DPD), and seek to build a consensus around it.

4.x If there is to be an emphasis on seeking to maximise consensus, it goes without saying that this needs to be reflected in the way the authority addresses the preparation of the LDF. This suggests that there should be arrangements among elected members as to how they will manage disagreement between themselves. Stakeholders and communities will need to recognise that sincere disagreement is part of the political decision-making system, but at the same time will wish to see an orderly and structured process which acknowledges disagreement but is not disrupted by it.

4.x *(Go on to suggest what should be done, either in setting up a process to address the issue, or the specific arrangements which you feel will serve).*

4.x Moreover, there needs to be a clear focus on the choices which have to be made. Since the emphasis of engagement at the preferred options stage will be on the alternatives, people will only be able to respond effectively if they understand the process and have some understanding of what the alternatives will mean. It will still be important to ensure that anybody can have their say and have it considered, but this suggests that the main emphasis of engagement should be on processes of dialogue, where explanation can be given and the relative merits of alternatives.

4.x *(You may wish to comment here on how well the methods used to date have worked. Go on to say what you wish to do to enable effective dialogue processes in future LDF work).*

(Possible issue)

4.x **Sustainability appraisal:** The LDF system requires a sustainability appraisal of each DPD, with the intention that it should be a key factor in decision making. Evidence of the impacts of alternatives on sustainability should be available to inform each stage in plan preparation. The procedures also incorporate the processes required in accordance with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. Provided the authority carries out appraisals properly it will automatically meet the requirements of the directive.

4.x The regulations governing sustainability appraisal are complex and make it a demanding process, which effectively introduces a specialist new area of practice. Because of the scale of work involved, many authorities have made the decision to use consultants to carry out sustainability appraisal on their behalf **as indeed we have** *[delete if not applicable]*. Sustainability appraisal is an area where good practice guidance has been slow to emerge. However, better guidance is now emerging, and PAS has identified some common problems from experience to date:

- in some cases sustainability appraisal has not been adequately integrated into the plan-making process. In such cases it has tended to function as a separate check on the decisions made, rather than truly influencing them
- there has been a tendency to carry out large-scale exercises considering every policy or site option in detail. This has resulted in very lengthy reports which do not actually provide usable evidence, and have therefore not assisted decision making
- because of their scale such reports are unmanageable in use, whether by officers or members, and not always translated into accessible reports and summaries
- where consultants have been engaged to prepare the sustainability appraisal, inadequate arrangements have sometimes been made to

ensure that officers fully understand the detail of the work. This has caused difficulties in using it as evidence and in explaining it effectively to others

4.x *(Continue from here to identify those aspects of SA practice can now be seen to have presented difficulties and what can be done in the future to avoid or reduce the problems.)*

(Possible issue)

4.x **The examination into soundness:** The former inquiry into objections to a plan is replaced by an examination into its 'soundness'. Each DPD must be the subject of an examination by an independent inspector, who will be charged with doing two things:

- checking that all the statutory procedural requirements have been complied with
- deciding whether the DPD is 'sound' in the light of all the evidence provided

4.x How soundness will be assessed is set out in Government guidance (PPS 12) which identifies nine tests against which DPDs must be assessed. The Planning Inspectorate has published guidance on how the tests will be applied. The tests are wide-ranging and demanding, and all have to be met for the DPD to be found sound. The tests are set out in the Annex to this report.

4.x The report of the inspector following the examination will be binding on the authority. Should the inspector conclude that some aspect of the DPD is not sound he or she may, if the matter can be addressed through a reasonably straightforward change, require such a change to be made. However, if there has been a failure to comply with procedural requirements which cannot be readily rectified, or the inspector finds that there is a fundamental failing in terms of soundness, he or she is likely to refer the matter back to the authority to resolve.

4.x Clearly the authority would not wish to reach the very end of the plan-making process and go through a high-profile public examination, only to be instructed to go back over significant aspects of the plan and re-work them. It is therefore critical that all the statutory requirements are fully complied with, and that good quality evidence supports the strategy or proposals of the DPD. Indeed, one of the key features of the new system is that it is evidence-driven. It should be noted here that the evidence will include the findings of sustainability appraisal, research and studies carried out by the authority, other information which supports the decisions made (for example, statements by the regional planning body, statutory consultees and partners), and the results of community engagement.

4.x *[Go on to explain the arrangements made to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and any strengthening proposed, including future use of the soundness self-*

assessment toolkit, and signal whether it is considered that additional resources will be needed to provide evidence of adequate robustness].

5 Maximising the corporate value of the LDF

5.1 The preparation of the LDF requires a significant investment by the authority, and it is entitled to get back benefits from that investment. The change to spatial planning and the move to the LDF being a significant contributor to delivery of the SCS means that it needs to be seen as a significant corporate initiative. It follows that its preparation should tie in efficiently with other corporate activity, and that the authority should capitalise on its potential contribution to corporate strategy development. There are a number of opportunities here, including *[Select as appropriate from the following list, some of which may not be relevant to a small or mainly rural authority] -*

- **as discussed earlier** *(delete if not applicable)*, to use co-ordination between LDF preparation and the review of the SCS to enhance the resources and range of skills available for both, and draw on planners' expertise to assist in making the SCS more strategic and explicit about key actions
- using the LDF as a means of showing how key initiatives and projects across the authority fit together and support objectives, but also to spot where there may be negative impacts which need to be addressed
- harnessing the challenge aspect of LDF preparation as a tool to support CPA
- using LDF work as a vehicle for examining how well partners' strategies and programmes fit those of the council and of each other
- using the collaboration which will be necessary with partners and other agencies as a means of strengthening relationships with them, and identifying potential opportunities for further fruitful collaboration
- carrying out research studies jointly with other departments so that the findings can inform both the preparation of the LDF and their service planning
- seeking opportunities to rationalise information gathering and other aspects of plan-making with other corporate activity, for example, in developing mapping systems
- integration of community engagement on the LDF with other corporate and community planning consultation to secure economy in the use of resources, avoid repetition and avert consultation fatigue among communities
- taking an authority-wide approach to sustainability appraisal by setting up the appraisal framework so that it can also be used for the community strategy or other council strategies which may be caught by the SEA directive

- 5.2 There are many opportunities here, although it may not be timely or expedient to try to tackle all of them at this time. *[Go on to refer to any discussions which have taken place with senior managers about the opportunities and which they feel are most important or interesting, and how it is proposed to approach them. It may well be that interest by the Management Team in such ideas will suggest that the best way to take them forward is through a report to cabinet/policy committee jointly with senior colleagues].*

(Use the following if it is relevant to your situation, selecting accordingly).

6 Issues for elected members

- 6.1 Drawing the preceding discussion together, it is apparent that there are some significant issues for elected members. The most fundamental is that strong and effective member support will be needed to enable effective working on the LDF so as to produce a good quality plan which sets out a clear and ambitious strategy for the future and is endorsed at the examination.
- 6.x A key aspect is the internal machinery for managing LDF work. The preparation of the LDF is a substantial programme of work, which needs to be well managed if expeditious progress is to be made. There **will be / is** *(delete as applicable)* a regular need for officers to take instructions on the approach they should take, discuss with members how they should be involved in a particular aspect of the process or take advice on particular aspects of policy. Without such opportunities there could be a lack of awareness on the part of officers of members' priorities and concerns, and the plan-making processes could be delayed while waiting for **NAME OF DECISION MAKING BODY** meetings.
- 6.x *(Go on to set out what you feel is needed to provide effective steering. Subject to what may be acceptable to the political leadership it is suggested that this should involve cross-party representation, allow meetings to take place at relatively short notice, and have an informal style which encourages discussion and enables the members involved to fully understand the issues before giving a steer).*
- 6.x The delivery of the policies in the LDF will fall predominantly to the **Planning Committee/other title**. It is therefore important that its members are effectively involved in the development of the LDF. This will enable them to appreciate all the issues addressed in developing the LDF and the reasons behind policies, and to take effective ownership of the policies they are expected to apply. To address this need without detracting from the formal decision-making role of the *name of decision making body*, it is proposed that *(Go on to set out your proposal).*

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The preparation of the LDF is a substantial initiative and this report has brought out the benefits of addressing it as a corporate function rather than being restricted to the work of the **Planning Department/other**

title. *(Go on to reprise or reinforce your own key points so that the recommendations flow naturally from them).*

Annex *(For use only where you have included an issue about soundness and evidence in the report)*

The tests of LDF soundness

Procedural

- 1 It has been prepared in accordance with the local development plan scheme
- 2 It has been prepared in compliance with the statement of community involvement, or with the minimum requirements set out in the Regulations where no SCI exists
- 3 The plan and its policies have been subjected to sustainability appraisal

Conformity

- 4 It is a spatial plan which is consistent with national planning policy and in general conformity with the RSS for the region, or in London the spatial development strategy, and it has had proper regard to any other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the area or adjoining areas
(it will be noted that there are in fact three constituent parts to this test)
- 5 It has had regard to the authority's community strategy

Coherence, consistency and effectiveness

- 6 The strategies/policies/allocations in the plan are coherent and consistent within and between DPDs prepared by the authority and by neighbouring authorities, where cross-boundary issues are relevant
- 7 The strategies/policies/allocations represent the most appropriate in all the circumstances, having considered the relevant alternatives, and are founded on a robust and credible evidence base
- 8 There are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring
- 9 The plan is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances

Planning Policy statement 12: Local Development Frameworks

explaining tools

- [powerpoint presentation to members](#)
- [powerpoint presentation to partners and colleagues](#)

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

powerpoint presentation to members

user note

The [powerpoint presentation to members](#) is available from the PAS website. It will be appropriate for use:

- with all members where the authority is making the transition from completing a UDP/local plan
- with new members following their election
- where the authority is already engaged in LDF work and members would benefit from a refresher or update, or to brief members who become closely involved in the process as it progresses

Each slide is accompanied by an explanatory note so you should read the file in 'notes' mode.

The presentation should take about 20 minutes but you should also allow time for questions.

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)

powerpoint presentation to partners and colleagues

user note

The [powerpoint presentation to partners and colleagues](#) is available from the PAS website. It will help to convey the significance of the LDF to these stakeholders and stimulate interest in how they might collaborate with LDF development. The presentation will need to be followed up with further discussions, especially if there is a need to build effective engagement with the local strategic partnership.

Each slide is accompanied by an explanatory note so you should read the file in 'notes' mode.

The presentation should take about 20 minutes but you should also allow time for questions.

[\[back to 'choosing the right tool'\]](#)T



Planning Advisory Service (PAS)
Improvement and Development Agency
76–86 Turnmill Street
London
EC 1M 5LG

tel: 020 7296 6880 (ihelp)
email: pas@idea.gov.uk
web: www.pas.gov.uk

Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS)
English Partnerships
Central Business Exchange II
414–428 Midsummer Boulevarde
Milton Keynes
MK9 2EA

tel: 01908 353 912