

LSORA PROJECT BOARD

19th June 2006

REPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT GROUP

Developing a Local Intelligence System

Purpose of Report

1. This paper considers how LSORA should develop beyond 2006/07 and proposes it should become a Local Intelligence System (LIS for Leicestershire). Integrating LSORA and LSI together would be a significant step forward in achieving a Leicestershire LIS.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Project Board:
 - a. Agree to the establishment of a sub-group, chaired by a Board member, to develop a business plan for the development of a Local Intelligence System beyond March 2007 (paragraph 20 refers).
 - b. Nominate a chair and other LSORA Board members to join the sub-group.
 - c. Agree, in the interim period, to the establishment of a single holding page where both LSORA and LSI customers are directed (as outlined in paragraphs 15 and 21).
 - d. Support the discussions that are taking place about aggregating the LSI Advisory Group and the Community Information Initiative.

Background

3. At the Board meeting held on 4th August 2005, Paper B proposed that in the longer term LSORA should develop into a stronger model of a Local Intelligence System (LIS) where it would include, inter alia, the results of consultation, research, partner analysis and where the site would also become a key arena for LSORA users to share ideas and information. It was suggested that the Officer Support Group (now Management Group) would continue to work on more detailed options for realising the development of an LIS.
4. The minutes of the meeting held on 4th August 2005 recorded in section 4.5;

“In conclusion, the Board agreed to the recommendations in the paper ... During 2006-07 consideration should be given to the longer-term future for LSORA and developing it into a strong Local Intelligence

System (LIS). This could include the results of consultation, research, partner analysis and opportunities for sharing ideas and information.”

5. In the light of this recommendation, the LSORA Management Group and members from the Leicester Shire Intelligence Advisory Group have held some preliminary discussions to explore the development of a Local Intelligence System.

Defining a Local Intelligence System

6. In 2004, the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister established a number of e-Government National Projects to ensure that all councils have access to key electronic services and building blocks, without having to build them from scratch. One of the 22 National Projects looked at Knowledge Management and included a workstream looking Local Intelligence Systems. Wiltshire County Council produced a highly relevant document about Local Intelligence Systems and making a business case for their development¹. This document also set out a useful definition of the purpose and characteristics of a LIS, which is set out in paragraphs seven and eight below.

Purpose

7. A LIS provides mostly quantitative information about an area, with the aim of assisting planners and policy makers, community leaders and Elected Members, commercial organisations, the general public and students to view and potentially analyse data. Users can include senior managers making strategic decisions and members of the general public wishing to find out more information about the community in which they live.

Characteristics

8. The key feature of a LIS is that it is accessed via a standard web browser from the Internet or Intranet. A LIS will always include statistical data such as demographics and usually area profiles (key indicators and statistics such as employment, education, crime levels and health information). It may also contain research papers, performance indicators and consultation or survey results. A key feature of every LIS should be an index to what is available.

Where are we now?

9. Members of the LSORA Management Group and the LSI Advisory Group met to consider a number of issues around the development of a LIS in Leicestershire. These included:

¹ Knowledge Management, Local Intelligence Systems; www.localgov.gov.uk
The Business Case For Local Intelligence Systems. Wiltshire County Council
A guide for chief executives, senior management and Elected members.

APPENDIX B

- What are we trying to achieve?
- What outcomes do we want?
- What have we got already?
- What do we need to measure progress against objectives?
- Who are we trying to reach?

The results of the discussions are summarised in table one.

Table One Discussion Summary

<p>What are we trying to achieve?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First choice for information and analysis. • Single source for most information. • Good quality data, analysis and interpretation. • Chance for involvement in developing the system. • Building on what we have. • Focus on priorities. • Mainstream funding – longer-term funding. • Financial commitment from more partners. • High level “buy-in” – many partners. • Increased usage/more users/wider range of organisations and individuals.
<p>What outcomes do we want?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better quality decision-making. • Efficiency savings/lower costs. • Better-informed policy making and planning. • Consistent evidence base for decision-making. • Better informed communities. • Successful funding bids and investment decisions. • Reduced duplication. • Better service delivery. • Better inter-agency working (eg LAAs etc).
<p>What have we got already?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSORA meets many of the data needs • LSI meets the research and analysis needs around economy and labour market issues • LSI and LSORA evolved from strong partnership working • Data sharing protocol signed by many partners • Data providing partnerships exist – Leicester Partnership Information Group (LPIG) and Community Information Initiative (CII). • LSORA and LSI have strong user base and brand awareness. • Other partnerships could be encouraged to participate, e.g. Crime & Disorder. • Expertise. • Growing expertise within the user base. • Positive customer feedback. • Regional links/National presence.

Table One (continued)

<p>What to we need to measures progress against objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to LSI/LSORA in bids/plans. • Case studies. • Increased number of users. • Number of downloads. • Customer satisfaction. • Funding attracted as a result of LSORA evidence. • Type of users/the ways the website is being used. • Cost per user. • CPA ratings.
<p>Who are we trying to reach</p>	<p>Priority groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-makers & analyst support to decision makers: • Managers • Elected Members • Researchers and planners <p>Also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public. • The business community. • Special interest groups. • Voluntary sector.

10. To date, the meetings have concluded that if the LSORA and LSI websites and supporting resources are brought together, then we have a sound basis for a LIS moving forward. However, this group is not a decision making body and recognises that approval will need to be sought from the LSORA Board, and the LSORA establishing partnerships (the LSEP, the Leicester Partnership and Leicestershire Together).

What is LSI?

11. Board members may not be fully familiar with the Leicester Shire Intelligence project. This project was established in 2003 to build on the work of the Leicestershire Economic Research Partnership. The project provides economic and labour market research and intelligence about the sub-region. The project is funded by the LSEP and other local partners, with significant in-kind contributions from partners, especially Leicestershire County Council. The website www.lsint.info provides summary statistics about Leicester Shire and is used to disseminate the research reports commissioned by LSI and research conducted by other partners. LSI provides analysis and interpretation of statistics, it also commissions research to fill gaps in local intelligence and aims to reduce duplication in research projects.

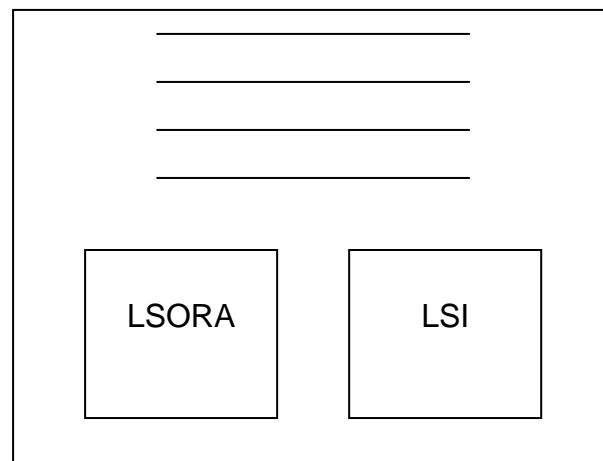
12. The LSI site has always been available to the public and has a strong user base. In 2005, there were 9,055 unique visitors to the site in 2005 and the year to date figures for 2006 show 5,837 unique visitors. The most popular reports for downloading in 2006 have been the Baseline Study (2,415 downloads), the Incapacity Benefit report (929 downloads), the Access Centres studies (1,240 downloads), and the Business Survey (468 downloads). Placing reports on the website has achieved cost savings in terms of printing reports, postage and staff time to handle enquiries. An independent evaluation of LSI in August 2005 concluded that the project was highly valued by local partners and needed in the future. This positive evaluation was used as evidence to support the funding application to emda for the period 2005 to March 2007.
13. It is important to note that the LSEP's financial contribution to LSORA has come from the LSI project budget. In the funding application for LSI to emda in 2005, emda raised questions about the relationship between LSORA and LSI, indicating that they felt there was a strong rationale for bringing the two websites (and projects) together.

Bringing LSORA and LSI together

14. In their informal discussions, members of the LSORA Management Group and the LSI Advisory Group concluded that there was a strong rationale for bringing the two sites together, for the following reasons:
 - In considering progression towards a LIS for Leicester Shire, bringing the two sites together would represent a significant step forward. This will bring information and analysis together.
 - There is potential confusion by having two sites with a similar purpose. Questions have been raised about the reasons for having two sites by elected members, emda and other partners.
 - Although the sites were originally set up for different reasons and have separate management arrangements, there is some overlap between the two (this could potentially increase now that some research reports are going onto LSORA).
 - It is more expensive to maintain two sites, for example, hosting costs, promotion costs, management arrangements and staff time involved in attending meetings.
 - The matter has been discussed at the LSI Advisory Group meeting and members have agreed in principle that a merger is a good idea.
 - Both LSORA and LSI have established user bases. A merger could potentially increase the number of people accessing both the statistics on LSORA and the research reports on LSI.
15. A preliminary investigation of the technical implications of merging the two sites has indicated that it should be relatively straight forward and could be accommodated within the existing resources allocated to LSORA and LSI during the 2006/07 financial year. One suggestion, for

the short term, would be to create a “holding page” where both LSI users and LSORA users are directed (using the current website addresses). From this page they could then go to either LSI or LSORA. This would be an interim step in the process of developing the LIS in the longer term. Figure one refers.

Figure One Holding Page for Bringing LSORA and LSI together



16. Both LSORA and LSI have been underpinned by effective partnership working and collaboration in terms of conducting research and collecting data. There are a number of partnerships involved:
 - a. LSORA Project Board
 - b. Leicester Shire Intelligence Advisory Group
 - c. LSORA User Group
 - d. Leicestershire Community Information Initiative
 - e. Leicester Partnership Information Group

In addition, the LSI Advisory Group establishes sub-groups to manage individual research projects.

17. There is some overlap between the membership, roles and remits of these groups and there is a strong case for rationalisation. This will be investigated by some of the individual partnerships/groups over the coming months. The primary objective will be to have effective and efficient partnership working that ensures that the sub-region’s research and information needs are met. As an initial step, on 8th June the LSI Advisory Group and the Community Information Initiative Steering Group discussed a potential merger to form a “New Group”. This “New Group” would oversee economic and social research for the sub region. This joined up approach to research will better support the research and information requirements of the LAA and other similar initiatives. Both the LSI Advisory Group and the Community Information Initiative Steering Group agreed in principle to the proposed merger. It was also agreed that a sub-group would be

created to look at membership, terms of reference, a new name, reporting mechanisms and administrative support arrangements.

Proposal for Moving Forward

18. In order to move towards a LIS for the period beyond March 2007, a number of key issues and tasks will need to be addressed. These include:
 - Further work around the questions raised in table one
 - Agreement about the scope of the LIS
 - Decision about merger of LSI and LSORA
 - Management arrangements and accountability
 - Relationships with funding partners and partnerships
 - Resource requirements
 - Branding and marketing
 - The development of a business plan.
 - Preparation of funding applications.
19. Given that the current funding arrangements for both LSI and LSORA end in March 2007, it is important that we start to plan for the next financial year now.
20. The LSORA Management Group recommends that a sub-group is created to consider the issues identified in paragraph 18 in more detail. The Group should bring back a firm proposal and business plan for a LIS to the next LSORA Board meeting. It would be useful if the sub-group could be led by a member of the LSORA Board with additional representation from the Board. Board members are invited to volunteer to participate in this sub-group. The other members of the sub-group should include representatives from the LSORA Management Group and the LSI Advisory Group. Consideration should be given to involving emda and GOEM in these discussions. The sub-group might want to consider hosting a half-day workshop to encourage wider participation in the debate.
21. In the interim, the LSORA Management Group recommends that a "holding page" is created for both LSI and LSORA users to visit. Users can then access either LSI or LSORA depending on their needs. This should eliminate confusion and duplication in the short term, broaden the user base and start to reduce costs. This arrangement then has the flexibility to evolve into a LIS from March 2007.

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