

TITLE OF REPORT: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To report progress on the development of a new Sustainable Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 The report contains an update on progress of work relating to a future recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan published for November 2007.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Progress on the Sustainable Community Strategy was last reported to PARC on 31st January 2008.
- 3.2 In response to the Local Government Act 2000 a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for North Hertfordshire was established in June 2002 to develop and implement a community strategy. It is known as the North Hertfordshire Partnership.
- 3.3 LSPs bring together the public, private, voluntary and community sectors with the purpose of working together to improve quality of life and advance the environmental, social and economic well-being of an area.
- 3.4 That first Community Strategy was published in 2003 and covered a four year period. It was agreed by the North Hertfordshire Partnership – in which the District Council has a leading role. The vast majority of the actions in that strategy have been implemented.
- 3.5 Since 2003 significant changes have included the introduction of Local Area Agreements, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, current negotiations about a new Local Area Agreement and increased concerns at all levels about the impact of climate change.
- 3.6 The new place shaping agenda demands that the LSP develop a strategic vision, ambition and commitment relating to place not institutions (LGPIH Act 2007). It is about the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well-being of a community and its citizens. The current partnership vision of “Making North

Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper” sits well with the new requirements.

- 3.7 The LGPIH Act also introduces a duty to co-operate in the implementation of the SCS and Local Area Agreement. That covers public authorities such as Primary Care Trusts and the Constabulary.
- 3.8 So not only do we need a new Community Strategy but it will be different in character. For example, it will need to cover a longer period, consider environmental, social and economic sustainability and give more emphasis to agencies working together to make North Hertfordshire a better place.
- 3.9 As before, the SCS will be the overarching strategy for our district which will be reflected in future versions of our corporate plans and those of partner agencies.
- 3.10 The North Hertfordshire Partnership identified the need for an LSP governance review. On receiving the report some immediate constitutional changes were made at the partnership meeting on 10th March 2008. These included widening representation from the private / business sector; including representation from registered social landlords and the District Children’s Trust Partnership; involving the East and North Herts NHS Trust in place of the former RBBS Primary Care Trust and providing a means for the appointment of Parish and Town Council representatives.
- 3.11 The Partnership has resolved that it will be accountable, strategic, performance managed, inclusive, responsive and effective, and that its work will be prioritised, evidence-based, risk managed, financed, outcomes-driven, reported, monitored and evaluated.
- 3.12 A further paper was considered on 19th May. This outlined a Board and Executive model, where the Executive will have an implementation and monitoring role. A decision on this next stage in the governance review will be made on 14th July.

The Hertfordshire and North Hertfordshire Context

- 3.13 The Community Strategy sets out the long term vision and objectives for improving the area. It is owned by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in which this Council has a leading role.
- 3.14 The Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets should help to deliver many of the objectives in the SCS.
- 3.15 A new set of 198 national indicators was published late in 2007. They will form the core of indicators against which our area will be assessed. LAAs should include “up to 35” improvement targets selected from the list of 198. The new LAA should be signed off in June 2008.
- 3.16 The situation in two tier areas is more complex. The Local Area Agreement is negotiated with government at a county level. The County LAA should reflect the priorities of the districts. There are County and District strategies. The County SCS should reflect the strategies of all ten district partnerships as well as the County itself.

Process

- 3.17 The new strategy is evidence based and the result of extensive consultation. A summary of the evidence will be found in the profile section of the document.
- 3.18 Public consultation on the district Sustainable Community Strategy finished on 18th January.
- 3.19 The results of the consultation and a first draft of the Sustainable Community Strategy were considered by the North Hertfordshire Partnership at its meeting on Monday 10th March.
- 3.20 Since then some improvements have been made and, in particular, delivery partners asked to check the draft.
- 3.21 After some relatively minor amendments were accepted the Sustainable Community Strategy was agreed by the North Hertfordshire Partnership (LSP) at its meeting on 19th May. It was suggested that the foreword will be written by the Leader of the Council.
- 3.22 Now the Sustainable Community Strategy will come to PARC and on to Cabinet and Council.
- 3.23 A designed and illustrated version of the SCS will be available for a public launch event at a community conference in September or October 2008. It will also be available electronically.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 Consultation on the County Sustainable Community Strategy did not end until 26th March but negotiation on the 35 “improvement outcomes” for the next LAA had to start before that. A long list of indicators had to be sent, by County, to the Government Office on 23rd January. That list should have reflected districts’ priorities. The potential performance reward grant will be much less than for the current and first LAA round that ends in March 2009.

Emerging Issues for North Hertfordshire

- 4.2 Some issues can be identified from the evidence and results of the consultation.
- 4.3 From the consultation affordable housing, poor road surfaces and more recycling lead the issues that need improvement. Younger people are particularly concerned about affordable housing.
- 4.4 The three aspirations for 2021 were for a healthy population, a reduced carbon footprint and an educated population.
- 4.5 Climate change was a clear leader when people were asked to identify the big long term issues.
- 4.6 Issues highlighted by a review of evidence include:

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- male life expectancy at age 65 (lower than region average);
 - earnings for people working in the district (lower than county average);
 - high levels of out commuting;
 - relatively high level of local CO₂ emissions, energy consumption and waste generation;
 - rising levels of obesity;
 - earnings and capital needed to enter the local purchase or private rented housing market e.g. minimum £47,000 pa to buy a two bed terrace with a requirement for a deposit of at least 18% of the asking price;
 - six small areas of relative deprivation (out of the 79 in North Hertfordshire).
- 4.7 The emerging themes in the draft County SCS are jobs, prosperity and skills; safer and stronger communities; children and young people; an ageing population; health and wellbeing; affordable housing and quality neighbourhoods; transport and access; sustaining Hertfordshire's Unique Character and Quality of Life; and Promoting Sustainable Development.
- 4.8 As mentioned earlier analysis of our district consultation is ongoing but the broad headings and themes emerging are set out below:
- Protecting and enhancing the environment;
 - Improving the life chances of children and young people;
 - Strengthening communities and involving people;
 - Improving health and wellbeing;
 - Enriching the lives of our elders;
 - Promoting lifelong learning, training and skills development;
 - Increasing economic prosperity and employment;
 - Providing decent and affordable housing;
 - Improving travel and transport;
 - Reducing crime and the fear of crime.
- 4.9 The North Hertfordshire environment theme includes global issues such as climate change and more local concerns such as the mix of urban and rural areas. Culture – sport and the arts – are currently in wellbeing. They enhance physical and mental wellbeing.
- 4.10 When considering these themes the District Council needs to look at how they match up to our existing Strategic Objectives and the desire to create communities that are sustainable, safer, satisfied, equal, healthier and prosperous. In addition as reported elsewhere on tonight's agenda we are now starting the process of revising our Corporate Business Planning system for the 2009/10 financial year. Further papers will be produced in due course which will bring all of these strands together.
- 4.11 Tonight members are asked to note and comment on the emerging SCS issues as they stand at present.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 PARC is being consulted for its views on the Sustainable Community Strategy because of its delegated functions under the Terms of Reference for developing the policy framework and considering and implementing mechanisms for encouraging and enhancing community participation in the development of policy options.
- 5.2 The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities the power to do anything which it considers likely to improve or promote the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area, in whole or in part and for all or some of those residing or present in the area, in accordance with its Community Strategy, which was developed under section 4.
- 5.3 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 has developed the Community Strategy into a Sustainable Community Strategy which now feeds into the process of developing the County's Local Area Agreement (commonly referred to as the LAA).
- 5.4 The LGPIH Act 2007 has put the strategic role that the County plays through its partnership for development of the LAA on a statutory footing. Its partner authorities, (defined in s104 of the 2007 Act) are under a duty to develop the targets within the LAA which in turn are influenced through the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 5.5 Partner authorities are also statutory consultees on the Sustainable Community Strategy

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Actions for NHDC arising from the strategy may require funding from existing budgets or where additional investment is necessary will need inclusion in the Council's corporate business planning process. A robust Sustainable Community Strategy may enable the district to access additional funding schemes.
- 6.2 Success in a Local Area Agreement that reflects the needs of our area will bring Performance Reward Grant to our district partnership.
- 6.3 Performance with the SCS will be important in Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA) which will be based more on "place" than organisation.
- 6.4 The Sustainable Community Strategy will be reflected in the strategies and plans of partners including ourselves. While it is important to note the successful implementation of the strategy can only be by many partners and not just by the District Council there will be implications for the Council as the action plans are developed. The new SCS will need to be performance managed.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The equalities responsibilities of the Council working in partnership are reflected throughout the working documents.

- 7.2 Equalities and diversity considerations were taken into account when the LSP was established and are an important factor in the current review of LSP governance.
- 7.3 The Partnership is developing a more robust governance model and its progress will need to be evidence based and performance managed.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 The new Sustainable Community Strategy will be owned by the North Hertfordshire Partnership – the Local Strategic Partnership for the district.
- 8.2 Extensive consultation commenced with a community conference attended by 120 people on 20th September 2007. Four of the five area committees have considered the emerging sustainable community strategy in their formal meetings and/or hosted special consultation events. Hundreds of people, including the citizens' panel, have participated in an on-line or hard copy survey.
- 8.3 The consultation has included young people during the October half term play activities and participation of about 250 students from Fearnhill School in the surveys.
- 8.4 A steering group of LSP members, including the police, primary care trust and county council, have been acting as a reference group as the evidence and results of the consultation are considered.
- 8.5 The closing date for the surveys was 10 January and for other comments was the 18 January 2008.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 PARC is invited to comment on the new Sustainable Community Strategy
- 9.2 That subject to comments and suggestions regarding the Sustainable Community Strategy that Cabinet review and if appropriate approve the document at its meeting to be held on 24 June 2008.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To allow members of PARC an opportunity to comment in the final stages of the development of our new Sustainable Community Strategy.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 11.1 The *involvement of the* District Council and North Hertfordshire Partnership is essential to ensure that our district's needs and priorities are reflected in the County strategy and the new Local Area Agreement.
- 11.2 Our involvement will be based on the emerging North Hertfordshire SCS and, towards the end of the process, on the published Sustainable Community Strategy.

11.3 Thus the only option is to develop a new Sustainable Community Strategy in partnership with the district LSP.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy as agreed by the LSP on 19th May.

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

13.1 John Campbell, Chief Executive (01462 474300)

13.2 Jim Brown, Policy Manager (01462 474835)

13.3 Frances Bogie, Head of Legal and Democratic Services (01462 474460)

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Available from the Policy Manager.