

Meeting of the Select Committee on Environment 9th November 2009

Report of the Chief Executive

Review of the Community Strategy

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the Select Committee on Environment with the opportunity to comment on the content of the Draft for Consultation.

Background

2. The Council's Cabinet approved Dudley's current Community Strategy in December 2005, with a public launch in March 2006. This was based on extensive engagement with the public, individuals and groups from the voluntary and community sector; public sector agencies and the private sector through a process called *Dudley Borough Challenge*. It focuses on a high level vision of creating Stronger Communities and spans 15 years, to 2020.
3. In 2008 Cabinet approved a review of *Dudley Borough Challenge*, honouring a commitment to a three yearly review cycle. We recognise a number of ways in which the refreshed strategy will be an improvement on its predecessor, including:
 - a. Explicit synergy between this and the spatial development planning framework for the Borough, recognising Dudley's element of the Black Country Core Strategy;
 - b. Building in the principle of sustainability into the strategy in order to create prosperous, thriving and inclusive communities that will stand the test of time, in terms of communities, places and economic prosperity;
 - c. Highlighting specific examples where there is evidence of inequality and disadvantage equalities;
 - d. Strengthening the link to the existing Local Area Agreement, which applies a performance focus to certain priorities;
 - e. A comprehensive performance action framework to ensure that each objective is translated into a way of measuring progress;
4. The revised Community Strategy will act as the main strategic driver for other people or issue focussed plans, such as the Children's Plan and the Economic Strategy. As a specific example, it provides the anchor and mandate for the Borough's ambitions for regeneration as implemented through New Heritage Development Ltd.

5. The Draft for Consultation is not the complete document. Apart from setting out guiding principles and values, it deliberately focuses on describing, for each Theme, strategic partnership priorities, with a set of linked objectives. The objectives have been written in such a way that refers directly to *people*, not processes. What will follow will be a framework of related actions, each with a measurable indicator and target spanning the next 3 years. Those described by the current Local Area Agreement will form part of this framework.
6. The final document will present a balance of achievement and priority, with linked appendices including delivery plan & performance framework, achievements in the first three years, and technical intelligence data.

Policy Implications

7. The Strategy takes forward the original vision of “strong communities” and the six Themes from the 2005 Strategy, which arose from community and stakeholder engagement. They are:
 - a. Jobs & Prosperity
 - b. Health & Well-being
 - c. Heritage, Culture & Leisure
 - d. Environment & Housing
 - e. Individual & Community Learning
 - f. Community Safety
8. At this stage of the review process the intention is to retain these themes, but with the addition of some tangible community objectives to give form to the overall vision. To reiterate, there will be a much stronger link between the community strategy and the spatial framework for the Borough and the Black Country Core Strategy. Having already aligned the priorities of the Council Plan to these themes, the refresh as approved later by Cabinet and Full Council will ensure their reflection in the Council Plan

What will happen next

9. The feedback received from the consultation will be moderated by the Review Group in order to produce a final draft, which will be circulated for final comment before being commended to Cabinet for approval on 9th December. Following this, Full Council will be asked to approve on 22nd February. Meanwhile, work will begin on developing the performance framework to support the Strategy, and support the process of review of the Council Plan.
10. There will be a public launch of the Strategy in March 2010, and the intention will be to describe the priorities for the next three years in simple, accessible language, together with a focus on key achievements.

Finance

11. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Both the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement to which the report refers will be used by the Council and partners to inform long term decision making.

Law

12. The Local Government Act 2000 requires that Councils have a community strategy, developed with their local partners. The Council acts as the lead partner in this respect.

Equality Impact

13. The report takes into account the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy. Addressing inequality is a guiding principle of the community strategy and seeks to ensure that by working in partnership with other local public and private agencies and the voluntary, community and faith sector, issues of relative disadvantage can be tackled. Consultation and engagement has been conducted in such a way as to maximise the possibilities for contribution from all communities.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that:-
 - Committee members consider what they expect Cabinet to have regard to as it approves the new strategy;
 - Committee members consider how the strategy might help the future determination of the scrutiny programme over the following 3 years from April 2010;

John Polychronakis

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John Polychronakis
Chief Executive

Contact Officer: Andy Wright
Telephone: 01384 814147
Email: andy.wright@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers

Appendix I: Dudley Borough Challenge Review 2009-12: Consultation Draft 2009

Appendix II: Headline Achievements by Theme