

# **South Derbyshire Local Strategic Partnership**

## **Report to the Board**

**Date of meeting: 12 December 2007**

**Agenda Item: 12**

### **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

#### Issue

The Government has produced guidance on the development of Sustainable Community Strategies within its consultation document "Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities Statutory Guidance".

#### Details

Although the current South Derbyshire Community Plan runs until 2010 work will need to begin shortly to develop a new strategy in line with the Government's guidance (attached as annexe no.1).

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Board: -

1. Notes the Government guidance on Sustainable Community Strategies.
2. A report is brought to a future meeting identifying a project plan for the completion of a future strategy.

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## Sustainable Community Strategies

3.1 The purpose of a Sustainable Community Strategy is to set the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental well-being of a local area – typically 10-20 years – in a way that contributes to sustainable development in the UK. It tells the ‘story of the place’ – the distinctive vision and ambition of the area, backed by clear evidence and analysis. The Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*<sup>1</sup> set out that the Sustainable Community Strategy must provide ‘a vehicle for considering and deciding how to address difficult and cross cutting issues such as the economic direction of an area, cohesion, social exclusion and climate change’.

3.2 Sustainable Community Strategies should contain the following elements:

- The **long-term vision based firmly on local needs**. This will be underpinned by a shared evidence base informed by community aspirations.
- **Key priorities for the local area**, based upon this vision which may realistically be achieved in the medium term – these will inform the strategy’s delivery agreement – the LAA.

3.3 Where appropriate and agreed by partners, the relevant Sustainable Community Strategy can incorporate the local authority’s Homelessness and Housing Strategies.

3.4 By virtue of section 1(a) of the Local Government Act 2000, the duty to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy applies to the following authorities in England:

- County councils;
- District councils (this includes shire district councils, metropolitan district councils and other unitary district councils). Although district councils may choose to prepare their strategy together with the county council i.e. not to prepare a separate strategy (see section 3.23);
- London borough councils;
- The Common Council of the City of London in respect of its functions as a local authority;
- The Council of the Isles of Scilly.

3.5 Section 4(3) of the 2000 Act, as amended by section 114 of the Act, distinguishes between responsible authorities (those required to prepare an LAA)

<sup>1</sup>

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and other authorities (districts in two-tier areas). It requires responsible local authorities, when preparing or modifying their Sustainable Community Strategies to consult and seek the participation of each partner authority and such other persons (i.e. organisations and people) as they consider appropriate whereas districts are simply under a duty to consult and seek the participation of such organisations and people as they consider appropriate.

3.6 Local authorities will need to consider how they consult with representatives of local people (including residents and workers), parish councils, local businesses and third sector<sup>2</sup> on their Sustainable Community Strategies given the principles enshrined in the new duty to involve (see section 2).

3.7 Once prepared, the Sustainable Community Strategy must be agreed at full council in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations 2000/2853.

### What do we mean by a Sustainable Community Strategy?

3.8 The statutory duty as to the preparation of a Sustainable Community Strategy provides that it is a strategy that should contribute to sustainable development in the United Kingdom. The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations' (Sustainable Development Strategy 2005).

3.9 For a local priority or policy to be sustainable, it should respect five principles:

- living within environmental limits,
- a strong, healthy and just society,
- achieving a sustainable economy,
- promoting good governance, and<sup>3</sup>
- using sound science responsibly.

3.10 The shift to *Sustainable* Community Strategies emphasises, to a greater extent than previously, that sustainability should be at the heart of decisions taken on the content of the strategy. Sustainable Community Strategy's economic, social and environmental priorities should therefore demonstrate how they support each other in an integrated way. The strategy should also address the area's longer-term needs and those issues which affect the area that can only be addressed by looking across-boundaries. Local authorities should continue to have regard to the Government's

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<sup>2</sup> Principles of third sector representation on LSPs can be found at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/principlesofrepresentation](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/principlesofrepresentation)

<sup>3</sup> UK Sustainable Development Strategy 2005

sustainable development strategy.<sup>4</sup>

## How do Sustainable Community Strategies relate to other plans?

3.11 In any given local authority area, the Sustainable Community Strategy is the **overarching plan** for promoting and improving the well-being of the area. The Local Government White Paper emphasised the need for Sustainable Community Strategies and other local and (sub) regional plans to take account of each other, as they are prepared. The following paragraphs set this out in more detail.

### Local Area Agreements

3.12 Responsible authorities are required by section 106(2)(c)(i) of the Act to have regard to their Sustainable Community Strategy when preparing their LAA. The Local Government White Paper envisaged the LAA as being the delivery agreement for the Sustainable Community Strategy.

### Local Development Frameworks

3.13 Local planning authorities are required by Section 19(2)(f) & (g) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to have regard to Sustainable Community Strategies covering the area ( i.e. in two tier areas, both county and district strategies) when preparing their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). Local authorities should as far as possible align the Core Strategy of the LDF with the unitary, district or district-county (if merged) Sustainable Community Strategy.

3.14 In more closely aligning the core strategy of the LDF with the Sustainable Community Strategy, local authorities and their partners should help to ensure that their strategy is genuinely sustainable. In some cases Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) may be required for Sustainable Community Strategies.<sup>5</sup> Where this is the case it should be intergrated into a wider Sustainability Appraisal process incorporating consideration of social and economic effects in addition to matters outlined in the SEA directive. This is already required for certain LDF documents and where SA is undertaken for both documents there may be further opportunity for closer alignment between the SCS and LDF, including the sharing of baseline information evidence gathering activities, assessment and reporting. Furthermore, planners have a duty to 'exercise their functions with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development'.

3.15 The Government intends to remove the independent examination of the Local Development Framework's Statement of Community Involvement, partly so as to allow for more co-ordinated consultation, for example with that for Sustainable

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/>

<sup>5</sup> Guidance on whether community strategies should be subject to Strategic Environment Assessment can be found on p46 of A Practical guide to SEA – Directive (European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment – see also <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/practicalguide>)

Community Strategy.

### **Integrating housing and homelessness strategies**

3.16 The Housing Green Paper *Homes for the Future : More Affordable, More Sustainable*<sup>6</sup> emphasised the importance of the strategic role in delivering new market and affordable housing, making best use of existing stock, and responding to the wider needs of all residents across all housing tenures.

3.17 As part of this, local authorities are expected to refresh their Housing Strategies and they have a statutory requirement to revise their Homelessness Strategies at least every five years.<sup>7</sup> Refreshed housing strategies should:

- Fully reflect the wider vision of authorities and their partners;
- have a clear and evidenced approach;
- provide a strong focus on how partners will deliver their commitments, including on the infrastructure needed to support housing growth;
- include information about the outcome of their various assessments and their plans of action for addressing the needs identified

3.18 The Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* also set out that local authorities are expected to incorporate these strategies within their Sustainable Community Strategy where possible.

### **Regional and sub-regional plans**

3.19 The Review of Sub-national Economic Development and Regeneration<sup>8</sup> outlined proposals to integrate the Regional Economic Strategy and Regional Spatial Strategy into a single integrated Regional Strategy which would be prepared by Regional Development Agencies. This will require legislation and until such time as that is in place, it is sensible for local areas to have regard to existing regional plans when revising their Sustainable Community Strategy. This arrangement would not apply in London.

### **Local and neighbourhood plans**

3.21 Many Town and Parish Councils, and other groups in rural areas have developed Parish Plans<sup>9</sup> with their communities and local partners, which are similar in scope to Sustainable Community Strategies. In other areas Neighbourhood Action Plans<sup>10</sup> fulfil a similar function. These can be valuable for informing the development of Sustainable Community Strategies or acting as local delivery plans for the LAA.

### **Other statutory plans**

3.22 Following the rationalisation of local authority plan requirements as a result of

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homesforfuture>

<sup>7</sup> Section 1, Homelessness Act 2002

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending\\_review/spend\\_csr07/reviews/subnational\\_econ\\_review.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_csr07/reviews/subnational_econ_review.cfm)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/communities/parish-planning.htm>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.renewal.net/toolkits/LSPDeliveryToolkit/> Details of Neighbourhood Action Plans can be found as part of the LSP toolkit

commitments in the 2001 Local Government White Paper, there are significantly fewer plans that local authorities are required to prepare. The remaining **statutory** plans and policies that local authorities and LSPs will need to consider are illustrated in figure two below:

*Fig 2: Summary of relationship between Sustainable Community Strategy and the remaining statutory local and regional plans*

## How do Sustainable Community Strategies work in multi-tier areas?

3.23 The requirement to prepare Sustainable Community Strategies applies to both district and county councils. Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits an authority to discharge any functions jointly with another. Most district partnerships have prepared their own community strategy; others have prepared joint strategies with other district areas; some have contributed to overarching county-wide strategies and not prepared their own. Some county partnerships have not prepared their own strategy but have contributed to district strategies.

3.24 With the advent of Local Area Agreements, we would expect at a minimum there to be an agreed county-wide set of priorities. This would sensibly be set out in a county-wide Sustainable Community Strategy.

3.25 Each county and district council, having consulted its LSP, must decide for itself which models they wish to adopt, but authorities should consider priorities in existing local Sustainable Community Strategies and other plans when undertaking the next iteration of their strategy. In particular county tier partnerships, in negotiation with their district counterparts, must be able to demonstrate how they have taken account of individual district characteristics and objectives when setting priorities in the county tier's strategy. This will be particularly important as it will be possible to set both district and sub-district-level targets in LAAs

## Reviewing or refreshing Sustainable Community Strategies

3.26 Sustainable Community Strategies will need to be reviewed and refreshed over time. It is possible for Sustainable Community Strategies to be revised in stages, so if only one or two themes need revisiting, these chapters can be drawn up while the remainder of the strategy stays in place. However as it is the strategy that underpins the LAA, we would expect at a minimum that, prior to each annual review of the LAA covering their area, LSPs to review the evidence and the priorities contained within their Sustainable Community Strategy so as to ensure that the priorities still accurately reflect the needs of the locality.

## The duty to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

3.27 Section 116 of the Act introduces a new requirement for PCTs and responsible

local authorities to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of the health and social care needs of their local community.

3.28 This assessment will be the means by which they will describe the future health and social care needs of local populations. The assessment should cover those issues where the responsibilities of PCTs and local authorities overlap or where one organisation in carrying out its functions impacts to a significant extent on the other organisation's functions. A commencement order will be laid to ensure that the duty on local authorities and PCTs to prepare a JSNA will commence on 1 April 2008.

3.29 The JSNA will need to consider the needs of the population living within the boundaries of the upper tier local authority or unitary council. In two-tier local authority areas, upper tier local authorities will need to consult with those district councils within their geographical area. In order to provide a firm link between the results of the JSNA and the Sustainable Community Strategy of each local authority, PCTs within a local authority's geographical boundary should feed into a single assessment.

3.30 It is expected that the JSNA will be carried out jointly by the Director of Public Health, the Director of Adult Social Services and the Director of Children's Services.

3.31 The JSNA should be taken into account by the upper-tier local authority in its preparation of the Sustainable Community Strategy. As the overarching strategy for the area, the issues identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy will then inform the priorities and targets in the LAA.

## Sustainable Community Strategies

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