



Chester-le-Street
District Council

REPORT TO: Council Meeting

DATE OF MEETING: 29th June 2006

REPORT OF: Assistant Chief Executive

SUBJECT: The updated Sustainable Community Strategy
for the District of Chester-le-Street

ITEM NUMBER: 16

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Council of the updated Community Strategy for the District of Chester-le-Street which is attached as an Appendix. This document is supported by action plans to assist the delivery of the Strategy.
- 1.2 The strategy sets out a shared vision for improving the economic, social and environmental well being of the District over 2006-2016, but focuses on the short term actions required to achieve this long term vision.
- 1.3 The update to the original strategy produced in 2004 has taken place within the context of an approach agreed by the District Council and other members of the District Partnership that the update is not a full review but focuses on strengthening of the Action Plans for delivering the strategy, strengthening arrangements for performance management and taking account of requirements for it to become a Sustainable Community Strategy – see 5.3.
- 1.4 Members are recommended to:
- 1) Approve and support the strategy.
 - 2) Support the integration of strategy priorities into the corporate planning process.

2 CONSULTATION

- 2.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy has been produced through the work of Policy Groups of the District Partnership which comprise a wide

range of stakeholders including Members and Officers of the District Council as well other public sector, private sector and voluntary sector organisations and community involvement.

- 2.2 The high level priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy were informed by community consultation during the production of the initial strategy in 2004. The current update has been informed by a range of recent survey information and other data including the Residents Opinion Survey December 2005 and the Housing Needs Survey 2004 as well as data produced by the Office for National Statistics and Neighbourhood Statistics.
- 2.3 The District Partnership Steering Group – the board level membership of the District Partnership - which includes District Council Members and Officers, considered the draft strategy on 23rd May. The Sustainable Community Strategy was approved subject to a small number of amendments.

3 CORPORATE PLAN AND PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan clearly states its commitment and contribution towards delivering the vision and priorities identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy, and the process of Corporate Service planning is to explicitly address the priorities and objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 3.2 Innovation in corporate service planning and delivery such as in relation to arrangements and support for community engagement and involvement, or in relation to neighbourhood level service delivery, will support the priorities of the strategy.
- 3.3 The contribution of District Council Members and Officers to the work of the District Partnership's Policy Groups to strengthen the Partnerships capacity to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy has been significantly addressed during the past year. Further strengthening of the District Partnership through building in support from all partners will continue to be explored and led by the District Council.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

The development and delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy through the District Partnership has financial implications for the District Council and these are addressed through the councils normal budget process.

4.2 Legal

The Community Strategy has been prepared in line with the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent guidance. As Members will be aware the District Council has taken the lead in supporting the District Partnership to produce the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Leader of the Council chairs the District Partnership Steering Group.

4.3 Personnel

There are no personnel issues arising from this report.

4.4 Other Services

The Sustainable Community Strategy will require changes to the way services are delivered to communities in the District including the way Council services are delivered. These will be addressed through normal procedures of corporate service planning, budgetary processes and so on.

4.5 Diversity

The Sustainable Community Strategy includes a clear statement of its commitment to social inclusion, equalities and diversity. The strategy contains principles which partners support, and the action plan for delivery of the strategy denotes where there is a contribution towards social inclusion, equalities and diversity.

4.6 Risk

The Council takes a lead role in the development and delivery of the strategy and failure to do this in line with community priorities, or to fail to manage and report effectively on progress, is a risk. Such a failure would impact adversely on our future assessment under CPA. Members are aware of this risk and are ensuring adequate management of this risk.

4.7 Crime and Disorder

The District Council plays a key role in the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership which has identified key issues which the strategy addresses. The Sustainable Community Strategy provides an opportunity for such issues to be tackled in their broadest context.

4.8 Other implications

The strategy will be published and made available to members of the District Partnership and other key stakeholders. Communication of the content of the strategy to the wider community will be undertaken

through the production of a public document identifying key achievements to date and key priorities for the future. District News and the District Partnerships' website will also be used.

5 BACKGROUND, POSITION STATEMENT AND OPTION APPRAISAL

5.1 The first Community Strategy for the District of Chester-le-Street was published in March 2004 setting out a shared vision for the future of the District:

'The District of Chester-le-Street will be a place where people choose to live, to learn, to work and to visit. There will be inclusive, safe and healthy communities in our towns and villages built on a strong, sustainable economic base with excellent communication networks. The District Council will be a place where everyone is working together for a sustainable future. '

5.2 The District Partnership believe the vision for the District continues to be valid and robust but that the strategy needed to be improved and updated focusing on fewer and clearer priorities and 'smarter' targets. This work began in 2005 and required some development of partner involvement in Policy Groups as well as considerable amount of work by all stakeholders in Policy Groups to focus on the key issues.

5.3 The update has taken place within the context of an approach agreed by the District Partnership that the update:

- Is not a full review but reflects a strengthening of the Action Plans and of arrangements for performance management.
- Focuses on objectives that are being delivered in partnership whilst recognising those being delivered substantially by single agencies.
- Takes account of the requirement for Community Strategies to become Sustainable Community Strategies - to be to be more firmly based on evidence, to link to and inform other plans including the Local Development Framework and the Local Area Agreement.
- Strengthens the Action Plans to include baseline information to establish the current position, contains fewer objectives and 'SMARTer' targets.
- Identifies how action contributes to outcomes for local communities using Quality of Life indicators recommended by the Audit Commission and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, or other local indicators if considered more appropriate.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Members are recommended to:

- 1) Approve and support the strategy.
- 2) Support the integration of strategy priorities into the corporate planning process.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS / DOCUMENTS REFERRED

7.1 Corporate Plan 2006-2009

7.2 Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future, Consultation Paper, ODPM, 2005

7.3 Sustainable Community Strategy supporting Action Plans

Ian Forster
Assistant Chief Executive
14th June
Version 1.0