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Report to: Executive
Date: 20 September 2005
Report of: Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Subject: UK Sustainable Development Strategy, March 2005

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to provide a summary of the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy, relate it to the Council and suggest ways to help deliver it.

2. Consultation

This report was written in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive; it has been presented to Management Team on 20 June and Working Executive on 6 September 2005.

3. Background

In March 2005 the Government published "Securing the Future", its overarching strategy for promoting sustainable development (SD). This builds on its previous strategy "A better Quality of Life" (1999).

It has implications for the Council's priorities and services since it provides us with a set of objectives and principles that should be applied to all policy-making and service delivery.

"[The revised sustainable development strategy] should provide a framework of principles which are applied to every area of policy in every department – a lens through which all proposals are viewed." (Securing the Future, p17)

In summary, the strategy commits to:

3.1. A new UK-wide **vision** for sustainable development, seeking to ensure that economic, social and environmental goals will be pursued simultaneously and not on a pick and mix basis. The government also recognizes that everyone from the public to the voluntary sector needs to make different choices and change behaviour in order to achieve sustainable development.

3.2. New, unifying **principles** of sustainable development. These are to be used in all policy making across the UK. Significantly, these recognise the need to operate within environmental limits. The five principles are:

- Living within environmental limits
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Achieving a sustainable economy
- Promoting good governance
- Using sound science responsibility

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3.3. Priority areas for immediate action. These are:

- **Sustainable consumption and production** - achieving more with less.
- **Climate change and energy** - confronting the greatest threat.
- **Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement** - protecting the natural resources on which we depend.
- **From local to global: building sustainable communities and a fairer world** - creating places where people want to live and work, now and in the future.

3.4. A new set of UK-wide sustainable development **indicators** to give us a better picture of areas where action is needed. A revised set of suggested local quality of life indicators will also be published this year, which will be particularly relevant to Community Strategies.

3.5. Action plans on SD for all Government departments by 2005. Departments and their executive agencies will be required to produce action plans setting out how they intend to implement the commitments in the Strategy and report progress against these. There is also an action plan relating to local authorities, which is reproduced within Appendix 1.

3.6. Sustainable Development Duties: The Strategy commits the Government to applying sustainable development duties to all new bodies and existing bodies as appropriate.

Further details are attached in Appendix 1.

4. Position Statement and Option Appraisal

4.1 Position Statement

The Council should take account of the new sustainable development strategy in a number of ways. It could do that by ensuring that:

- When reviewing the Council's corporate priorities and objectives, they fit within the overall UK wide vision/purpose and priorities for action, cross-reference them with the 'definition and components of sustainable communities' and the priority areas for action and assess our objectives with the stated principles of sustainable development.

Action: to carry out an assessment of the current Council priorities and objectives, highlighting any gaps (Sustainability Officer) and to ensure the findings are taken forward in the new corporate plan (Priorities Working Group). (Oct-Dec 05)

- The Council's policies, strategies and service delivery plans are (a) drawn up using all five principles of sustainable development and (b) actively support the achievement of outcomes in the four priority areas for action outlined in the strategy.

Action: to provide a training session on the principles of sustainable development to Corporate Support Team & Management Team (Sustainability Officer) and ask Heads of Service to assess and develop their own actions to help deliver the priority areas over the next three years (Management Team, Heads of Service). Actions relating to Climate Change could be developed in conjunction with the Council's emerging Climate Change Strategy. There may be additional actions arising from the

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assessments, which may need further support in the future. (Nov 05 – March 06)

- The Council is committed to supporting and funding important priorities and actions arising from the sustainability assessments of the corporate plan and service plans.

Action: to get commitment from Management Team to support the development of amended/new actions and potential bids for growth. (June 05 & during assessment time)

- We encourage the LSP to take full account of these priorities and the ‘definition and components of sustainable communities’, to adopt action plans for the priority areas and to integrate a number of the new local quality of life indicators when reviewing the Community Strategy. This is likely to be required by the forthcoming guidance on developing Sustainable Community Strategies.

Action: Provide an information session on these issues and the forthcoming guidance to the LSP Board at the start of the Community Strategy review. Get commitment to follow this agenda and develop a way to do it (LSP Coordinator, Assistant Chief Executive, Sustainability Officer, LSP Board) (August – Dec 05)

- The new CPA guidance informs the Corporate Plan and Service Plans

Action: Produce a briefing on the CPA guidance, highlighting the new questions in relation to sustainable development e.g. on climate change, sustainable consumption etc (Principal Corporate Development Officer, Sustainability Officer)

- Councillors are aware of the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy and its implications.

Action: Distribute briefing note and offer related training (Sustainability Officer with Democratic Services) (July 05 / Dec 05)

- The Local Development Framework takes account of the strategy and priority areas for action.

Action: Ensure that the draft policies actively seek to help achieve sustainable development and that the sustainability appraisal encompasses these aspects (Principal Planning Officer (Policy), Sustainability Officer).

4.2 Option 1:

To embrace the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy and accept that we not only need to take account of it but actively support the achievement of it. Assessing what we do by applying the principles of sustainable development will add value to our services. It will help to ensure that all of our services work towards achieving sustainable communities and not only provide one particular aspect of it but help in providing other aspects. The above points and actions would provide a start in doing this.

Additional outcomes for our community could be, for example:

- Ensuring that residents can live a healthy lifestyle that minimises negative environmental impacts and enhances positive impacts (e.g. by creating opportunities for walking/cycling or for engagement in environmental activities; access to healthy

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local food; access to environmentally friendly products and services; easy recycling etc)

- Ensuring that the homes getting built in the District are fit for the future, e.g. energy efficient, not wholly dependant on the limited resources of oil and gas, well designed, taking into account the changing weather such as hotter days and stronger storms etc
- Ensure that Council and business activities in the District strengthen the local economy and minimise environmental damage and resource use.

4.3 Option 2:

To note that the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy is published, but not to develop specific actions to support its implementation.

5. Implications

5.1. Financial

There are no immediate additional financial implications; existing budgets should be able to absorb any costs this year. However, it is likely that the assessment of the Council's priorities, service plans etc will result in amended or additional actions, which will need to be funded.

5.2. Legal

There are no legal implications.

5.3. Policy

The strategy states that "the principles [of sustainable development] will form the basis of policy in the UK" and will therefore have policy implications in all areas.

5.4. Risk

A risk assessment has been carried out.

5.5. Communications

The summary of the strategy should be communicated to all Heads of Service and Senior Managers through the Corporate Support Team. In addition, members should also be briefed through the circulation of a briefing note.

The Council should also inform and educate the public of what this means for them and why the Council is engaging in promoting sustainable development. This will be addressed when carrying out the gap analysis assessment of the corporate plan and service plans.

5.6. Corporate Implications

5.6.1 Corporate Plan and Priorities

The strategy feed into the Council's Corporate Plan and priorities and it is therefore suggested to address this when reviewing the plan and priorities.

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5.6.2 Service Plan

The strategy should feed into the Council's Service Plans and it is therefore suggested to address this when reviewing them.

5.6.3 Performance Management and Scrutiny

Scrutiny Management Board and all Scrutiny Committees will be offered a briefing session. The new set of sustainable development indicators will also feed into the performance management framework for the Council and may influence outcome measures for the Council in the future.

5.6.4 Sustainability

The new UK strategy will help to achieve our own aim of promoting sustainable development.

5.6.5 Human Resource Implications

At this point, the suggested actions can be carried out by existing staff and budgets. However, there might be staff implications in the future to carry out revised priorities.

5.6.6 Procurement

One of the priority areas outlined in the strategy is 'Sustainable Consumption and Production'. The Council's Sustainable Procurement Strategy/Code of Conduct already encompasses this but it is suggested that this be treated as a priority.

6. Conclusion

The new UK Sustainable Development Strategy makes it clear that sustainable development is at the heart of all policy and decision making. It provides a vision of a sustainable society, principles that everyone should embrace and priority areas for action. Local authorities play a major role in ensuring that not only their communities but the UK develops in a sustainable way. District of Easington Council should embrace this new strategy fully and incorporate the necessary actions into the Corporate Plan, policies, strategies and service plans as well as taking a proactive role amongst its partners.

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7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council take a proactive role in ensuring the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy is implemented and adopts the actions outlined in this report, in particular in section 4.1.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Summary – Securing the Future, the UK Sustainable Development Strategy
- Appendix 2 Definition of sustainable communities, ODPM

References

Securing the Future – delivering UK sustainable development strategy. HM Government (DEFRA). March 2005