



**Interim Sustainable Community Strategy**

**Key decision Corp/CEO/03/08**

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**Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive**

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Councillor Simon Henig, Leader of the Council/Councillor Clive Robson, Deputy Leader of the Council**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present the County Durham Interim Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) to Council and outline the next steps in finalising the SCS.

**Background**

2. Consultation on the draft document began in July and continued until 30 September. Partners were provided with weblinks to both the Word and pdf versions of the document. Presentation slides, supporting information and leaflets with a brief summary of the document and the consultation questions were made available and where requested a Partnership officer delivered a presentation and answered questions to facilitate the consultation process.
3. For members of the public, a summary and consultation questions appeared in Countywide, the County Council's magazine, with the option to access the full document via the website or to receive a copy if required.
4. Within the Council the draft was discussed at Corporate Management Team and a special Overview and Scrutiny meeting was convened to receive the views of Elected Members.

**Responding to consultation issues**

5. Many supportive comments were received and consultees in general agreed that the priorities within the document were the right ones to improve quality of life in County Durham. However a number of responses indicated that the SCS as a whole and the Vision in particular did not set out a particularly distinctive or aspirational view of the County's long-term future. Issues that were referenced, were the need to build on the County's assets such as high quality of life, heritage and culture and the natural environment. It was felt that the County's role within the region needed to be better defined and that future spatial development priorities needed to be set out, to show how these will contribute to delivery of the Strategy. A number of respondents felt that environment and sustainability should be specifically included in the Vision statement to balance the social and economic aspects. The lack of specifics in terms of targets, measures and delivery plans, especially for long term outcomes, was also a recurring theme. There were concerns that a more formal sustainability appraisal should have been carried out, but as the draft focuses on broad outcomes rather than development and delivery priorities, the current light touch approach is felt to be fit for purpose at this stage.

6. There were a number of suggestions that it would be better if the current proposed version was presented as an interim SCS, pending development of a more robust version. It should be noted that the Local Government Review transitional regulations allow until 2011 for the development of a new SCS for authorities like Durham.
7. In considering these issues at the County Durham Partnership, it was agreed to finalise and publish the current version as an interim SCS, and to signal the intent to carry out a review over the next year to strengthen the Strategy, focusing on the specific concerns highlighted above. This would enable a period of development well in advance of the production of the next Local Area Agreement and would have the following advantages:
  - Allow time for visioning/scenario planning work with partners, Area Action Partnerships and elected members, so that there is a clear, shared view in relation to aspiration and distinctiveness
  - Allow spatial priorities from the emerging Local Development Framework to inform developments and be set out within the SCS in line with best practice
  - Allow input from Local Strategic Partnerships' 'handover' community strategies and from the Area Action Partnerships emerging plans
  - Allow the strategy to reflect issues from the first Comprehensive Area Assessment of County Durham in 2009
  - Ensure that the outcomes for the new LAA can flow from the longer term priorities expressed in the SCS
  - Allow targets, measures, delivery plans and progress to be reported more fully
  - Enable a more formal level of sustainability appraisal and impact assessment to be carried out, than is feasible for the current strategy.
8. In terms of responding to these and other consultation comments in finalising the current version, a schedule of main points and how they have been addressed is set out at Appendix 2.
9. Many consultees provided wording improvements or examples of achievements or relevant initiatives to strengthen sections of the Strategy and these have been incorporated into the redraft as far as is practicable. The revised SCS is appended to this report.

### **Next Steps**

10. The SCS was endorsed by the Partnership Board on 26 January and by Cabinet on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Arrangements will now be made for the production and distribution of a fully designed version as an interim SCS which will provide the foundation on which to build the vision of the new council.

### **Recommendation**

11. Council is requested to note the above arrangements for the interim Sustainable Community Strategy and give endorsement on the basis outlined above. The process of review, refinement and consultation will begin immediately following vesting day.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Local Government Reorganisation**

#### **(Does the decision impact upon a future Unitary Council?)**

The document will stand as the Sustainable Community Strategy for the Unitary Council and its partners.

### **Finance**

The Strategy, together with the Local Area Agreement, as the delivery plan of the SCS, informs both short term and long term priority and budget setting for the Authority.

### **Staffing**

None directly from this report.

### **Equality and Diversity**

An initial Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of the Strategy's outcomes. Organisations representing different communities of interest will be consulted and invited to engage in the further development and delivery of the SCS and the LAA.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable

### **Crime and disorder**

Community Safety is one of the Strategy's themes, addressing priority issues that have been identified through analysis of a wide range of evidence.

### **Sustainability**

The SCS is seen as key to the delivery of sustainable development and sustainability is a guiding principle for the Strategy and its delivery. Sustainability appraisal has been carried out and is ongoing.

### **Human rights**

Many aspects of the Strategy support Human Rights in setting out to tackle issues such as poverty, homelessness, sub standard homes and inequities in health.

### **Localities and Rurality**

The Strategy recognises the differential needs of geographic communities, and through applying the principle of gap narrowing to the delivery of outcomes will ensure that needs are tackled fairly. Rural proofing principles will ensure that the specific characteristics of rural areas do not disadvantage those communities from achieving the same improvements in quality of life as those in urban areas.

### **Young people**

Young people's needs and aspirations have informed the development of the Strategy and are relevant within every theme. Through the principles of gap narrowing and the delivery of equal and inclusive services young people's needs will be considered and acted upon.

### **Consultation**

The development of the Strategy has been informed by a wide range consultation and engagement with communities, organisations and partnerships. Consultation on the draft document has provided further opportunities for the public and key partners to give views on the priorities selected.

### **Health**

Health is one of the Strategy's themes, addressing priority issues that have been identified through analysis of a wide range of evidence.

## Appendix 2

Issue	Response
<p><b>Links to Local Development Framework</b></p> <p>1. Concern that there is insufficient reference to the important links between the SCS and the Local Development Framework (LDF) and that the SCS is not robust enough to support the development of an appropriate Core Strategy for the new Council, given the absence of spatial information.</p>	<p>1. Strengthened references to LDF as a key delivery mechanism for the SCS and incorporated information about the County's spatial planning framework from the RSS and the draft Economic Strategy. Planning input to the Delivery and Improvement Group (DIG) should ensure there is synergy between thematic and spatial planning for delivery of the SCS and a review in 1 years time will enable better links with the LDF for the new Council.</p>
<p><b>Principles</b></p> <p>2. Need to be more clearly explained and better defined in some cases – sustainability, place shaping and gap narrowing. Also used more consistently throughout the document.</p>	<p>2 Appropriate amendments made to text, e.g. incorporating sustainable development principles, showing that gap narrowing is between Co. Durham and the rest of England, not just within Co. Durham and using the government definition of place shaping – ‘creating thriving, sustainable communities with high quality, good value services that meet people’s needs and preferences.’</p>
<p><b>How we selected our priorities</b></p> <p>3. Requests for more detail on the process of identifying the outcomes.</p> <p>4. Concern the District Community Strategies and planning documents have not informed the process.</p> <p>5. Concern that appropriate Sustainability Appraisal had not been carried out or had not been made available with the draft SCS.</p>	<p>3. Provide more information on data sources and a comment as to how more detailed information can be obtained for those interested.</p> <p>4. Clarified in describing the process.</p> <p>5. Clarified details of the ongoing sustainability appraisal process. Publication of a summary SA document with the final Strategy. Carefully consider the approach to SA when carrying out the review of the SCS.</p>
<p><b>International, European, National and Regional Context</b></p> <p>6. Focuses on economic context – needs to consider social and environmental issues also.</p> <p>7. Not clear how the context has influenced the SCS</p>	<p>6,7. Broadened contextual information and made stronger links to the Vision, goals and outcomes.</p>

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Response</b>
<p><b>Place and people</b> 8. Some gaps identified, e.g. environmental character/issues, community safety, communities of interest.</p>	8. Broadened this section.
<p><b>Economic wellbeing</b> 9. Should be more about the interrelationship with the wider market, City Regions etc.</p>	9. Amended text in line with draft Economic Strategy
<p><b>Achieve</b> 10. Need to recognise that Government plans to raise compulsory participation in learning to age 18 by 2015 will impact on this section.</p>	10. Amended text.
<p><b>Place theme</b> 11. Specific comments and suggested amendments on the wording and content especially in relation to spatial planning issues and links.</p>	11. This section redeveloped in consultation with the Environment and Sustainability Partnership and with the input of members of the LGR Interim Planning Team.
<p><b>Health and wellbeing</b> 12. Health and Wellbeing Partnership suggested a reworked version incorporating outcomes of the JSNA.</p>	12. Revised outcomes table incorporated.
<p><b>Safe theme</b> 13 County Community Safety Board and the Police Authority wish to include a new strategic priority in relation to counter terrorism</p>	13. Additional outcome incorporated.
<p><b>Enjoy theme</b> 14. Suggested additional goal of 'developing a sense of pride in our heritage and encouraging people to look forward to the future' 15. Aspirations in relation to the 2012 Olympics should be referenced.</p>	14. Additional goal and linked outcomes developed in consultation with Adult and Community Services. 15. Appropriate text included.
<p><b>Positive contribution</b> 16. Would like to see more about communities of interest and how greater integration/cohesion will be achieved.</p>	16. Issue reflected more strongly.
<p><b>Consultation process</b> 17. Concern that communities have not been engaged in developing the priorities.</p>	17. The Strategy has already been developed from a great deal of existing evidence and knowledge of community priorities drawn from District Community Strategies, public surveys and consultation exercises. Consultation focused on confirming that the Strategy accurately reflects public concerns rather than being a new bottom up development process.

<p><b>Presentation issues</b></p> <p>18. More use of graphs, maps, etc.  19. Need a version, which is accessible to the public.  20. Venn diagrams not best way to show crosscutting links.</p>	<p>18,19,20. Information more graphically presented. A separate summary version to be produced for the public. Venn diagrams replaced by list of linked issues.</p>
<p><b>Outcomes of Equality Impact Assessment</b></p> <p>21. Issues around colour contrast, readability of diagrams, use of language.   22. Suggest engaging with organisations representing communities of interest, in respect of impact assessment of emerging delivery plans.</p>	<p>21. Will address these concerns in the design of the revised strategy and make a simple summary version available.  22. Develop links between communities of interest and the DIG.</p>