
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to present to Members a proposed vision for the Council and the basis for a revised Sustainable Community Strategy.

Background

2. Members will be aware that legislation required that a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for the area of the authority be developed through the Local Strategic Partnership. In 2008 One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, the SCS for Darlington, was approved. Since that time the Council's financial position and much in the wider world has changed significantly and as a result the SCS document has become out of date. The Local Strategic Partnership has re-visited the original vision One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. The Council has also as a result of the Money Talks events and the Peer Review re-examined its outcomes and developed a set of conditions in response. As a result an updated vision document has been developed which reasserts the original overall vision One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, but contains updated objectives and new conditions to reflect the current climate. The Vision has been articulated on a single page for ease of communication. The draft conditions were presented to the Darlington Partnership and Cabinet in November and the Vision represented on a single page was presented to the Partnership and Cabinet Members in January.

Vision on a Page

3. The Vision on a page document (**attached at Appendix 1**) contains three central boxes which are applicable to all members of the partnership, these contain the overall vision One Darlington: Perfectly Placed; revised objectives - there are eight of these, developed to reflect the priorities in the current climate, with emphasis on the element of fairness which was felt to be core to the overall vision. The third central box shows the three conditions;
 - (a) Building Stronger Communities
 - (b) Every Public Pound Well Spent
 - (c) Economic Growth
4. The boxes on the outside i.e. those on the top and the bottom of the page reflect the role of the Council in delivering the vision, as Community Leaders, and the box at the bottom of the page reflects the changes that we will need to make to the organisation to enable the vision to be delivered.

5. The wider SCS document is being revisited and revised to reflect the new Vision and the detail will be developed in consultation with Scrutiny and presented to the Darlington Partnership and Members later in the year. The existing document is attached at **Appendix 2**.
6. The eight objectives referred to in paragraph 3 and set out in paragraph 12 will be articulated within the revised SCS document to indicate priorities and provide guidance for action. Members are invited to discuss the objectives that particularly relate to the responsibilities of the Place Scrutiny Committee, to contribute to this part of the document. This request is further explained in paragraphs 13 and 14 of the main report.

The Policy Framework

7. The Sustainable Community Strategy document reflects the key policy within the wider framework and within which other policies operate. The Policy Framework and the Budget must be approved in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules set out within the Constitution. The rules require that the MTFP (the budget) and all policies within the policy framework must be recommended by Cabinet to Council following consultation with Scrutiny Committees. This report is being presented to the Committee as the broad framework for the refresh. The Council has employed the author of the original strategy, Peter Roberts to prepare the updated strategy. It is intended that the updated document be presented for approval to Council in March 2014. Members views are sought on the areas of specific interest to the committee in relation to the proposed document and how these should be articulated within the document. In particular there are a number of the updated outcomes which relate to the work of the Committee and which reflect some of the areas of work already articulated within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Recommendation

8. It is recommended that Members consider the existing strategy document alongside the revised vision and provide comments and suggestions in relation to the proposed updated strategy from the perspective of the Place Scrutiny Committee.

Reasons

9. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons :-
 - (a) To ensure that the Council's vision is articulated and explained.
 - (b) To approve the vision statement and MTFP at the same time to ensure that one informs the other.

**Ada Burns
Chief Executive**

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

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| S17 Crime and Disorder | The document sets out the Council's broad vision at high level which includes objectives specifically relation to tackling crime and disorder. |
| Health and Well Being | The document sets out the Council's broad vision at high level which includes objectives specifically relation to improving Health and Wellbeing within the Borough. |
| Carbon Impact | There are no specific carbon impact implications in this report but the report does set out specific objectives in relation to sustainability. |
| Diversity | The report has no specific impacts on individuals but sets out an overall objective of fairness in relation to all that the Council does. |
| Wards Affected | All wards are affected equally. |
| Groups Affected | All groups are affected equally. |
| Budget and Policy Framework | This report seeks approval of the draft vision which will form part of the Sustainable Community Strategy which sits within the Council's policy framework. |
| Key Decision | This is not an executive decision. |
| Urgent Decision | This is not an executive decision. |
| One Darlington: Perfectly Placed | This report articulates the overall vision for the delivery of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. |
| Efficiency | There are no specific efficiencies arising from this report, however it sets out the vision alongside the Council's MTFP to ensure that the delivery of the vision is resourced. |

MAIN REPORT

Vision

10. In 2008 the Darlington Partnership agreed the overall plan for Darlington up to 2021. The vision was entitled One Darlington: Perfectly Placed and set out the vision for both the people of Darlington and the place itself. The Darlington Partnership led the preparation of the vision and the plan for turning it into reality. It is recognised that the Partnership is key to its delivery.

Objectives

11. One Darlington: Perfectly Placed articulated key outcomes on which focus needed to be directed in order to achieve the overall vision. Since 2008 when those

outcomes were developed there have been significant changes and new opportunities and challenges have emerged. The impact of the national economic situation and resulting reductions in government grant and income have come at a time of increased demand on services. The consequence has been a significant reduction in the resources available to deliver public services across the partnership. The North East has been disproportionately hit by the reductions in government grant and in addition the welfare reforms have resulted in a significant reduction in the money available to individuals across the region. The challenges we face have created the need to revisit our vision and our outcomes to ensure we continue to be focused on the right areas. Eight objectives have therefore been identified. The achievement of fairness for all is an overriding principle that informs all of the objectives within the new vision statement. The financial challenges have also demonstrated a need to focus on Economic Growth in order to counter the impact of the financial climate.

12. The following objectives have been identified as key for the continued delivery of the vision:

We will reduce inequality by ensuring we have:

- (a) Children with the best start in life
- (b) A safe and caring community
- (c) More people active and involved
- (d) More people healthy and independent
- (e) More businesses and more jobs
- (f) More people caring for our environment
- (g) Enough support for people when needed
- (h) A place designed to thrive

Focus for Discussion

13. The revised SCS document will articulate each of these objectives to indicate priorities and provide guidance for action. The aim will be to ensure that each objective is pursued in ways that achieve a sustainable balance between growth and development, on the one hand, and fairness, inclusion and well-being on the other.
14. Members are invited to contribute to this part of the revised SCS document by considering, from the perspective of the Place Scrutiny Committee, what are their priorities and vision under each of the objectives, and how action under each objective can contribute to both economic growth and fairness – for example, action under ‘A place designed to thrive’ might include the provision of good quality housing for all, which is both attractive to developers/investors and allows for everybody to have a suitable place to live. The Committee may wish to concentrate on objectives c, d and g, above, which are most relevant to its remit, but this need not exclude consideration of the others.

Conditions

15. In early summer 2013 the Council set about an ambitious consultation programme to explore with the people of Darlington how we should tackle the financial crisis in which we found ourselves. The Money Talks Events allowed us to analyse in detail the obligations placed upon us by statute and law and the cost to us of delivering the services within those obligations. This process allowed us to demonstrate that even if the Council ceased providing services which were not required by law, we would be unable to achieve the reduction in spending which was necessary. During the consultation programme it was apparent that those who took part felt strongly about the other services that we provide including our cultural, sporting and recreational services including museums, libraries, sports facilities, theatres, and our parks and open spaces. People also felt that removing some of the preventative services that we were not required to provide would result in increased costs in our statutory services. The outcome of the Money Talks Events was the recognition that we needed to develop a new plan with some shorter term goals which would help to tackle the financial challenges whilst continuing to focus on our overall vision as a longer term goal. This has resulted in a vision which incorporates a statement about how the overall 'conditions' within the Borough need to change before we can be confident that we can continue to deliver our vision with the reduced resources available. The vision sets out a challenge to the people of Darlington including the public sector organisations to bring about significant change to achieve the conditions in the short term.

16. The conditions are:

(a) Strong Communities - Enabling people to live fulfilling lives with less involvement from public services

- i. People take personal responsibility
- ii. People live in communities with strong social capital and where people look out for each other
- iii. Communities come together to take ownership and responsibility for the neighbourhood they live in or care about

In essence this describes a rebalancing of what the state can offer to do for people and communities, and what people could do or organise for themselves, with leadership and support from public services. Coupled with this is a growth in the relationships and networks that make people feel that they belong, feel able to ask for, or offer help or support to others, and invest in their community. Stronger social capital means less demand on services we can no longer afford, but it also offers significant well-being benefits.

(b) Every Public Pound Spent is Well Spent - maximising value for all public expenditure

- i. Public services are planned and where sensible commissioned together.
- ii. Every pound spent is spent well on the things that make most impact.

What is needed here is a combined effort across public service organisations, within Darlington and amongst neighbours, to think together about how to spend the resources we still have (rather than what we will have cut) to maximise the impact.

For example, collaboration with the NHS or schools and colleges bring people together across organisational boundaries to re-design services and processes from the perspective of the citizen or user. Person centred public services focussed on enabling independence can ensure that people receive just enough help when they need it, for only as long as they need it. While there may not be significant cash savings here in the short term this approach can enable resources to go further and deal with changing demography.

Coupled with this is a continuing sharp focus on identifying and capturing efficiencies in the way in which we work – using evidence to guide service development, using assets and procurement effectively, re-designing processes to add value to users.

(c) Growing the Darlington economy - generate income streams, employment and opportunities

- i. We have a strong and vibrant economy.
- ii. We achieve growth in the economy.

The outcome we would look for here will be more business rates and council tax income, reduced unemployment and worklessness, and higher incomes, it will be critical within this to see economic growth benefiting everyone, and contributing to narrowing inequalities.

The Sustainable Community Strategy

17. The representation of the vision on a page shows the overall role of the Council in driving forward the vision for Darlington. It shows the overall vision itself and how the vision is described through key outcomes. It sets out the things that need to change within the Borough to enable us to deliver the vision. Finally it sets out some of the development that will need to happen within the organisation to enable us to deliver the proposed vision and conditions. Some steps are already underway such as the restructure of the Council to enable the Council to take forward the priorities set out within the vision.
18. The document has been developed in a way that enables all partners to focus on the same vision, outcomes and conditions (the three central boxes) whilst

developing a statement about their own roles and the steps they need to take within their own organisations in the boxes at the top and bottom of the page.

19. The detailed delivery of the overall vision is being developed through further exploration with members, partners and staff before a final document can be set out which fully articulates the vision. The final document will be presented to Members later in the year and further work will take place with Scrutiny Committees and partners to develop appropriate delivery mechanisms for the vision so that the Sustainable Community Strategy can be updated.