
**ONE DARLINGTON: PERFECTLY PLACED
DARLINGTON'S SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2008 - 2021**

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor John Williams, Leader
Responsible Director – Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive**

Purpose of Report

1. For members to agree One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, the new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Darlington, appended in **Appendix 1** as approved by the LSP Board.

Background

Overview

2. In July 2007 Cabinet agreed the project management arrangements to draft a new vision (the SCS) for Darlington, with a view to a final strategy being presented to Council in March 2008. Much work has been undertaken, including extensive engagement via six Enquiry Groups and 42 consultation events including Town Centre market stalls, rural focus groups, member and employee focus groups, etc. Since the draft strategy was presented to Cabinet on 11th December 2007, a further 32 consultation events to consider the draft were held. 44 formal submissions in response to the draft strategy were received from all sectors, although many more comments, questions and enquiries were received at the consultation events which included member briefings, Parish Council meetings and six Talking Together events. The Strategy has been substantially reshaped to encapsulate the feedback received, whilst retaining the framework as set out in the draft document. Particular attention has been given to explaining the priorities of One Darlington and Perfectly Placed, ensuring that these drive the actions in each theme.

Influencing the MTFP and context for other plans and strategies

3. The new vision for Darlington has influenced the Medium Term Financial Plan, the Council's Corporate Plan, departmental and service plans. It will also form the basis for the new Local Area Agreement. Although extremely challenging as a process, the development of the Strategy has remained on track, which has enabled the authority to retain a strong 'golden thread' by developing the SCS, LAA, corporate plan and departmental plans at the same time. As the high level strategy for Darlington, the SCS provides the context for other plans and strategies from partner organisations, in particular making linkages to the Local Development Framework.

The Local Area Agreement and performance indicator set

4. The Local Area Agreement will form the delivery plan for the SCS, and is made up of a prioritised set of performance indicators. The development of the SCS has been the first key milestone in producing a Local Area Agreement for Darlington. The Department for Communities and Local Government have released a set of 198 performance indicators that

the LSP and its partners are choosing from for the LAA, made up of 35 negotiated indicators and 16 statutory children and young people indicators.

Engagement and prioritisation

5. Consultation has shaped the entire process, with over 2,000 ideas for improvement received through a variety of events and the Enquiry Group process led by partners. Prioritisation events were then aimed at different groups, encouraging rich and diverse feedback through a variety of mechanisms including Darlington Assembly and the Citizens' Panel. A further period of consultation was undertaken between December 2007 and January 2008, to consider the draft strategy. A detailed portfolio of consultation responses has been produced and will be available in a technical annex, as well as including regional, sub-regional and local data, government priorities and performance information.

Information and Analysis

6. The main issues addressed in this report are:
 - (a) A new SCS, built on the foundations of the existing Community Strategy;
 - (b) Vision;
 - (c) Priorities;
 - (d) Themes;
 - (e) Developing our Local Area Agreement.

A new SCS, built on the foundations of the existing Community Strategy

7. At the start of the process for developing the new vision for Darlington, it was recognised that all of the effort, commitment and work carried out by partners and the contribution and ideas submitted from the public would be maximised if the new strategy were to build on the foundations of the existing strategy, whilst offering a new and fresh approach. The Sustainable Community Strategy is an evolution of a previously well-regarded and delivered community strategy. The process to date has led us to a strategy that has had buy-in from all parts of the community and especially partners, has fewer priorities, is SMART¹ in its approach and perhaps most importantly is very Darlington focused. From the start there has been the appetite for a new vision that was Darlington specific and therefore respects our unique heritage, whilst making the most of our potential, encouraging greater prosperity and building a genuinely sustainable, cohesive and caring borough-wide community.
8. The differences between our existing Community Strategy and the SCS are outlined in the following table:

¹ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound

	Now	New
Lifespan	5+ years	10+ years
Vision	Expressed as 4 visionary goals that are difficult to remember and not Darlington specific	A short, simple, Darlington specific statement – One Darlington: Perfectly Placed
Priorities	3 themes ranked as higher priority from a list of 8	2 priorities that will help shape decision-making: One Darlington – focusing on people Perfectly Placed – focusing on the place
Themes	8	5 clearly identified from extensive consultation
Priority Groups	Separate consideration of 3 priority groups e.g. separate NRS	Single strategy to include NRS, through the One Darlington priority to narrow the gap
Delivery	3 year rolling action plan updated annually	Short term (LAA – 3 years) Medium term (MTFP for Council’s contribution – 5 years) Long term – 10 years +

Vision

9. Darlington is both a town proud of its heritage and quality of life, and ambitious to improve. Throughout the consultation, there was a strong desire to ‘grow’ in influence, in quality; though not necessarily in numbers, but also to ensure that we build a sustainable, cohesive and caring borough-wide community. The clarity of vision that has emerged from all of the discussions that have taken place across the borough has led us to set a vision for the future, One Darlington: Perfectly Placed:
- (a) One Darlington –primarily focused on **people**;
 - (b) Perfectly Placed –primarily focused on **place**.

Priorities

10. Priorities will guide our decision-making as we seek to deliver the One Darlington: Perfectly Placed vision. The numerous planning and financial cycles that we will undertake over the lifetime of the SCS will be shaped by the two priorities:
- (a) **One Darlington** - The One Darlington priority carries forward the vision as it relates to people and therefore has many strands, including tackling deprivation wherever it exists, narrowing the gaps in life chances across the borough and focusing on reducing inequality for the most deprived and disadvantaged. The One Darlington priority is about bringing all of these perspectives on individual and community well-being to bear on the programmes and actions developed across all the delivery themes set out in the SCS.

- (b) **Perfectly Placed** - Perfectly Placed carries forward the vision as it relates to place and, as with the One Darlington priority, it embraces several strands. The challenge under the Perfectly Placed priority is to bring about the development and improvements that Darlington needs, in order to tackle deprivation and provide opportunities for a good quality of life for everybody, whilst preserving and strengthening the scale and character and sense of place that people value so much. A key dimension to Perfectly Placed is the call to inward investment, capitalising on our strengths and our location to enhance and strengthen our position as a destination for inward investment and for high quality jobs.

Themes

11. Five themes for organising and delivering improvement actions have been identified as a result of all the consultation, discussion and prioritisation that went into the development of this plan. The themes are:
- (a) Prosperous Darlington – focused on creating a vibrant economy and prosperity for all, recognising the quality of life that makes Darlington perfectly placed;
 - (b) Aspiring Darlington – enabling people to develop and achieve their aspirations, and to maximise their potential;
 - (c) Healthy Darlington – improving health and well-being for everybody, irrespective of social, economic and environmental constraints;
 - (d) Greener Darlington – ensuring an attractive and ‘liveable’ local environment, and contributing to tackling global environmental challenges;
 - (e) Safer Darlington – creating a safer and more cohesive Darlington.
12. Each theme is structured in the same way, carrying the One Darlington and Perfectly Placed priorities forward into long-term outcomes and a series of ‘strands’ that provide a framework for future action planning. Some headline projects are outlined, although most projects and programmes will be developed through detailed action plans.

Developing our LAA

13. The LSP and partners have been engaged in developing the basket of indicators that will comprise the LAA. An initial technical list of indicators was selected via a series of filters including suitability of baseline, achievability in a 3-year period, and linkages to the emerging SCS. A series of LSP workshops has taken place, with a view to developing a basket of 35 indicators for negotiation with Government Office North East.

Outcome of Consultation

14. An extensive consultation programme has shaped every element of the final SCS. This, and the fact that the quality of contributions and debate on the SCS has been extremely high have been vital in developing a document which is explicitly Darlington focused.

Legal Implications

15. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

16. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. The Sustainable Community Strategy has been drafted in recognition of those requirements and is complementary to meeting the general duty. The Strategy has been drafted in consultation with the Safer Communities Co-ordinator and key partners, with relevant actions included as appropriate.

Council Policy Framework

17. The issues contained within this report represent a change to Council policy with the adoption of a new Sustainable Community Strategy.

Conclusion

18. Darlington's vision 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed' is a product of a comprehensive process that has captured the views and contributions from all areas of the community. As such, the document strives to reflect those community views. It is not an 'off the shelf' document. It is Darlington specific, developed in a local context, with and for the community, providing a framework that is intended to serve Darlington well for the next 10-15 years.

Recommendations

19. It is recommended that Council approve the Sustainable Community Strategy attached in **Appendix 1**.

Reasons

20. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
- (a) the document was approved by the LSP Board on the 5th March 2008 and endorsed by Cabinet on the 18th March 2008.
 - (b) to fulfil the Council's statutory duties to adopt a Sustainable Community Strategy.

Lorraine O'Donnell
Assistant Chief Executive

Background papers

Cabinet Report 10.07.07 - Developing a Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement and refreshing corporate planning

Cabinet Report 11.12.07 - A new vision for Darlington

Andy Robinson – Ext. 2014