
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY REFRESH

Councillor Bill Dixon, Leader and all Cabinet Members

Ada Burns, Chief Executive

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to present to Members a proposed Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and Performance Management Framework (PMF).

Background

2. Members will be aware that legislation under the Local Government Act 2000 required that a SCS for the area of the authority be developed through the Local Strategic Partnership. Whilst that is no longer a requirement Darlington Partnership has continued to set out an overall vision for the Borough. In addition legislation introduced in the Health and Social Care Act 2012 requires that a Health and Wellbeing Strategy must be in place for the area. 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financial position and much in the wider world has changed significantly and as a result the SCS document has become out of date.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 revised document appended to this report enables us to fulfil this statutory requirement.
3. 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 Place, but contains updated outcomes and new conditions to reflect the current climate. The vision has been articulated on a single page for ease of communication.
4. The vision on a page was formally agreed at a meeting of the Council in February and formed the basis for the revision of the SCS. The vision on a page details the overall vision One Darlington: Perfectly Placed; the eight revised which emphasise the element of fairness which was felt to be core to the overall vision. The third box shows the three conditions;
 - (a) Building Stronger Communities
 - (b) Every Public Pound Well Spent
 - (c) Economic Growth

The Policy Framework

5. The SCS document reflects the key policy within the wider framework and within which other policies and strategies 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.
6. Since the approval of the vision, work has focussed on the revision of the SCS document and performance management framework through a programme of engagement with Members, Officers and partners. The revised document is attached at **Appendix 1** for Members approval and referral on to Council.

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the revised SCS document and performance management framework and recommend it to Council.

Reasons

8. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) To ensure that the Council's vision is articulated and explained.
 - (b) To provide a revised framework in which other policies will operate.

Ada Burns
Chief Executive

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

S Raine : Extension 6091

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 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 against which delivery is planned and resourced.

MAIN REPORT

Vision

9. 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

10. 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 key outcomes. In particular it has been identified that the need to achieve Fairness for all is central to all of the outcomes and has been made an overriding objective 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.
11. The following outcomes have been identified and previously agreed 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 health 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

Conditions

12. As reported in February, 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 the 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.

13. The conditions are:

- (a) Strong Communities - Enabling people to live fulfilling lives with less involvement from public services
- (b) Every Public Pound Spent is Well Spent - maximising value for all public expenditure
- (a) Growing the Darlington economy - generate income streams, employment and opportunities

The Sustainable Community Strategy

14. 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. The document has been developed in a way that enables all partners to focus on the same vision, outcomes and conditions 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.

15. Since approval of the vision on a page in February work has been focussed on the production of a revised SCS document and performance management framework which will manage its success. Central to this has been work with Members, Officers and partners to ensure that the document captures and clearly articulates the vision for Darlington over the coming years.
16. The revised document, whilst reconfirming the vision of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed has been developed within the existing environment of a number of recently published key strategic documents, such as the Economic Strategy, Housing Strategy etc. Therefore significant engagement with stakeholders has already taken place and has been used in the revision of the SCS.
17. Specific work with scrutiny committees has taken place over recent months and has included workshop based discussions at each of the five committees with a follow up discussion at subsequent committees. The focus of the workshops was on ensuring that the document contained a clear articulation of the outcomes from a Darlington perspective.
18. At the same time discussion also focussed on development of the performance management framework and again how this needs to provide a clear articulation of the outcomes but also allows for the management of delivery against the outcomes in a 'real time' manner.
19. In addition to the detailed input to the outcomes and performance measures which has been incorporated in to the revised SCS document, feedback from scrutiny committees has been that whilst the SCS needs to be an aspirational document, it also needs to be realistic in terms of what can be delivered. In addition clarity around where accountability for delivery lies is essential and how this will be addressed is detailed below in paragraph 22. Furthermore it was recognised that success of the strategy and delivery of the outcomes is dependent upon all partners working much more closely together with better co-ordination of public budgets. Members also recognised that the approach needed through the building stronger communities condition is a significant shift from where we are now as an organisation and that there is great variation across the Borough with regard to the current levels of community involvement.
20. With regards to the Darlington Partnership and as referenced in paragraph three, the Partnership has been engaged in revising One Darlington: Perfectly Placed since July 2013 and the 'conditions' were the main focus of the Board meeting in September. At the Board meeting in November the Partnership helped to articulate what achieving the conditions would look like and agreed the priorities which are included in the revised strategy. The vision on a page was presented to the Board in January and approved for recommendation to the Council. Council approved the vision on a page in at its February meeting.
21. A Partnership performance and planning workshop was held in March 2014, the leads for the Partnership's key areas of work considered how the newly established priorities could be taken forward and agreed a strategic role for the Partnership's Executive Group in driving them forward.

22. Further consultation has been undertaken with the leads and key partners to ensure that:
- (a) The suite of delivery strategies (Economic, Children and Young People's Plan, Community Safety Strategy etc) address the strategic priorities.
 - (b) The revised strategy reflects the ambition for each key area of work and appropriate indicators are included for performance management.