

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference:** C-032-2010/11  
**Date of meeting:** 25 October 2010



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio:** Leader  
**Subject:** Agreement of the Sustainable Community Strategy  
**Responsible Officer:** John Houston (01992 564094).  
**Democratic Services Officer:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**(1) That the Cabinet:**

- (a) reviews the contents of the Draft Sustainable Community Strategy and suggests any further amendments; and**
- (b) recommends the Sustainable Community Strategy as amended to the Council for approval.**

### **Executive Summary:**

The report sets out the contents of the new Sustainable Community Strategy and seeks comments before referral to Full Council for final adoption. The draft Strategy has been produced after extensive consultation with the public and partners.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

The Council is required to statutorily make arrangements for the preparation and final of a Sustainable Community Strategy for the Epping Forest District, under the Local Government Act 2000.

### **Other Options for Action:**

The partnership considered a number of alternative priorities, with a wide range of partners including elected members, before agreeing the draft strategy, which concentrates on a smaller number of key issues where joint action could add value.

### **Report:**

#### Background

1. Epping Forest District Council is required by statute to agree a Sustainable Community Strategy, and as a key decision this must be approved by the Council. This strategy will set out how partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors will unite together to "improve the economic, social and environmental well being" of the local community.

2. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) agreed the original strategy in 2003 and in 2009 agreed that a wide ranging review should be undertaken. This would ensure that the new strategy would be intelligence led, based on the latest information about how the District and the needs of the local communities were changing, be driven by the priorities of local people and have greater focus on a small number of key priorities where the partnership could 'add value' and achieve real outcomes.

### Producing the Sustainable Community Strategy

3. The Board established a Task and Finish Panel to lead work on the new strategy under the direction of the Deputy Chief Executive of Epping Forest District Council.

4. The Panel launched two related projects to support the production of a new strategy:

(a) Data analysis - a review of the key data held by the partners about changing demography and need in the District. This resulted in the report 'Shaping the Future' and 32 ward profiles being produced; and

(b) Consultation/Establishing public priorities - over 1,000 groups and individuals responded through surveys, focus groups, and a stakeholder conference, ensuring that the new strategy would be focused on the issues important to local people and interest groups.

5. The results of these projects were fed into a draft strategy which was further amended at the LSP Board away day, attended by elected members and by a drafting group of volunteers from the LSP Board. It was agreed that strategy should prioritise issues emerging from the consultation, but focus on a much smaller number of key objectives. The draft strategy (see appendix 1) was then approved for final consultation in June with requests for feedback by 2 August 2010. The strategy has now been further amended in response to issues picked up through the consultation process.

### Contents of the new Community Strategy

6. The new strategy sets out a long term vision for the development of the area, and key values that will underpin how the partnership will work.

7. The key objectives have been reduced from 57 to 11 and are clustered around the primary areas of:

- Tackling crime and the fear of crime;
- Health inequality;
- Delivering sustainable communities; and
- Supporting and protecting young people.

8. Given the need to address the national deficit an additional priority area was identified around delivering better, more joined up and efficient working in the public sector to mitigate the impact of sustained reductions in public funding in the short and medium term.

### Conclusion

9. The draft strategy has been produced with the help and support of a wide range of partners, key groups and many individual members of the public who have given their views. Voluntary Action Epping Forest in particular provided invaluable support to the consultation stage with funding supplied by Essex County Council.

10. The new strategy provides a focused set of priority objectives that will help shape the

business plans of key partners and provide guidance for the production of the Local Development Framework. The new vision is a clear statement of the ambition of the District and a goal for all partners to work towards.

11. The major strategic priority for the District and partners in the short and medium term, however, will remain tackling the public sector deficit, protecting services needed and valued by local communities. This will require vigorous effort to ensure Epping Forest receives its fair share of external funding, grasps new opportunities to innovate in line with ideas such as the 'Big Society' and delivers new platforms for more efficient service delivery with key partners.

12. The developing work of the West Essex Partnership will be central to the ability to deliver on all these key aims, while managing reductions in Performance Reward Grant.

#### **Resource Implications:**

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report; however the priorities agreed should act as a key reference for resource allocation for all partners.

#### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

The Council is required by statute to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy.

#### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

The Strategy has a key priority to support work on this area.

#### **Consultation Undertaken:**

The production of the strategy has involved extensive consultation with partners and the public and also elected members.

#### **Background Papers:**

- Community Strategy 2002;
- Shaping the Future Report 2010; and
- Ward Profiles 2010.

#### **Impact Assessments:**

The Strategy has been designed to address issues of inequality and inclusion and these are key themes, and values underpinning objectives.