

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 14 December 2010

Subject: Sustainable Community Strategy

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Collins (Leader of the Council)

Item: 13

Recommending:

That the Sustainable Community Strategy 2010 to 2031 “Putting Epping Forest First” be approved.

Background

1. The Council is required under the Local Government Act 2000 to agree a Sustainable Community Strategy. The Strategy must set out how partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors will unite together to “improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing” of the local community.
2. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) agreed an original strategy in 2003 and in 2009 agreed that a wide ranging review should be undertaken. The aim of the review was to 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.

Production of the Strategy

3. The LSP established a Task and Finish Panel to lead work on the new strategy under the direction of the then Deputy Chief Executive of the 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 incorporated into a draft strategy which was further amended at an LSP Board away day, attended by elected members and by a drafting group of volunteers from the LSP Board. It was agreed that the strategy should prioritise issues emerging from the consultation, but focus on a much smaller number of key objectives. The draft strategy was then approved for final consultation in June with requests for feedback by 2 August 2010. The strategy was then further amended in response to issues arising 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 had been reduced from 57 to 11 and are clustered around the primary areas of:
 - (a) tackling crime and the fear of crime;
 - (b) health inequality;
 - (c) delivering sustainable communities; and
 - (d) supporting and protecting young people.
8. In view of 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 has 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, will remain tackling the public sector deficit, protecting services needed and valued by local communities. This will require vigorous effort to ensure that the District 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 of these key aims, while managing reductions in Performance Reward Grant.
13. There are no financial implications for the Council arising directly from this report. However, the priorities agreed should act as a key reference for resource allocation for all partners.
- ... 14. We have considered the attached strategy and recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.