

Strategic Leadership Team – 24 May 2007

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) – Progress Update

Purpose of the report

To inform SLT on progress made towards producing a Sustainable Community Strategy by March 2008.

Recommendations

SLT are recommended to:

1. Note the progress to date and provide guidance as necessary and in particular on how to engage Cabinet with the SCS
2. Brief management teams on the progress to date to ensure a wide understanding of the importance and purpose of the SCS

Sponsoring Director



Tim Johnson
Executive Director
21 May 2007

Context

In February this year, cabinet and council received Walsall's Community Plan 2005 – 2010 Progress Report; Towards a Sustainable Community Strategy. This document set out the route map for developing a Sustainable Community Strategy for the borough by early 2008. It also explained that the SCS will be a very different document from the current Community Plan as it will have a stronger focus on integrating land use, social, economic and environmental development of the borough with community aspirations and the need to tackle longer term and global impacts such as climate change.

The SCS will be the primary document from which all other plans and strategies take 'due regard' and will drive the new Local Area Agreement (LAA) and targets. The new LAA will need to be in place from April 2008 and the development of this document will occur alongside the development of the SCS.

In order to learn from the experiences of the last Community Plan, where there was little buy in from the council and very little notice taken of the document once it was produced, a new more inclusive approach has been taken to the development of the SCS. The approach is set out below:

- A steering group made up of members of WBSP board has been established to oversee the project and to be actively involved in making decisions on the content,

shape and style of the SCS. Tim Johnson is the council's representative on this group.

- A multi-agency project team has been established with representatives at operational level from key policy areas including the 10 WBSP strategic priorities, core strategy and the LNP team.
- A schedule of meetings over the next 12 months has been arranged and project management documentation completed including a PID and timeline.

Progress to date:

A draft framework for the SCS has been agreed:

- The SCS will comprise a suite of sister documents including; a state of the borough report setting out the external drivers and evidence base which has informed the strategic policy context of the strategy; and the LAA which will become the delivery/action plan. Tim Ferguson is now working on pulling together the state of the borough report.
- The SCS will include three dimensions; the strategic element, the spatial interpretation by LNP area (but also including locality issues) and the individual perspective e.g. what it means to someone young, older or disabled living in Walsall.
- Ten strategic themes were discussed and agreed by the WBSP board in January this year following discussions at WBSP's annual event (December 2007) and input from stage one and two of Vision 2021. The ten strategic themes include the four LAA pillars and additional cross cutting issues and are set out below:

Safer and Stronger
Health
Children and Young People
Economy
Leisure and Culture
Learning and Skills
People and Places (Liveability)
Sustainability and Climate Change
Transportation and Access
Community Cohesion/Managing Neighbourhoods

- However at the last steering group meeting, it was proposed to reduce the ten WBSP objectives to two or three more memorable priorities that local people (the Walsall Leather worker) would remember and identify with. Consideration is now being given to setting the SCS around fewer themes.
- Design work on the look and style of the SCS has commenced and is currently based on whg's 'Transforming Walsall together' publication – a landscape document with fold out pages and a pocket for area based information.
- Consultancy support has been engaged to carry out the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal of the SCS. This will be funded by WBSP and managed by Jon Lord.
- A consultation and approval schedule has been put in place including engagement with LNPs and scrutiny panels – see attached schedule.
- A briefing note on the SCS has been written and copy provided to News and Views and the next edition of Team Spirit.

- Initial meeting was held to discuss alignment of the emerging SCS with the council's 10 priorities and 8 cross-cutting issues. Further work will take place on this and a report will be brought back to SLT.

Future activity:

The following tasks/activities need to be agreed and actioned shortly:

- Engagement of Cabinet in the development of the SCS through a tailored workshop and consider inviting the Leader of the Council onto the steering group
- Circulate the SCS briefing note to all partners to raise awareness of the SCS among partner organisations
- Agree the contents of the document and authors for each section. Proposals on this were submitted to the last steering group but this needs to be considered at the next meeting.
- Organise a workshop to ensure that the priorities of the SCS align with existing and developing strategic plans such as the new Children and Young People's Plan and the emerging issues from the core strategy consultation and that the spatial dimension takes due consideration of strategic policy developments as well as LNP pledges.
- Develop PlanAccess to be a web based interactive interpretation of the SCS

Resource Implications

Financial

Funding to support the production and distribution of the SCS will be from WBSP's core funding in the 2007/08 financial year.

People

The project is reliant on staff time and commitment from both the council and other partners and so far this has been forthcoming. Colleagues have contributed to the steering and project teams and individuals will be required to write sections of the SCS and be involved in consultation activity. It was a deliberate decision not to engage consultants to produce the document this time.

Governance and Performance Issues

Risk Management

A risk register has been drawn up and risks are being managed as part of the project.

Performance Management

The development of the new LAA will run parallel to the development of the SCS. From April 2008 the LAA will consist of 18 statutory educational and early years' targets and up to 35 central/local negotiated improvement targets drawn from the national indicator set (approx 200 indicators). These improvement targets will include the existing stretch/reward targets carried forward and the new ones will be based on the SCS. These targets will be monitored by government office. The LAA will be the only place where central government will agree targets with local authorities and their partners on outcomes delivered by local government on its own or in partnership with others. The

LAA will no longer be about specific funding for specific targets as the agreed targets will be supported by all resources in the area. Discussions are now taking place with the Assistant Director for Performance Management on the implications of this new approach for the council's and WBSP's performance management arrangements.

Legal

The Local Government Act of 2000 gave local authorities the responsibility, with their partners, to draw up a Community Strategy for their area, setting out a shared long term vision. Article four of the Constitution sets out under our policy framework, the responsibility of council to approve, amongst other things, the borough's Community Strategy.

The recent Local Government White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities, strongly encourages local authorities to integrate the core strategy of the local development framework within the Sustainable Community Strategy to ensure that the key spatial planning objectives for an area are fully aligned with the priorities identified within the Sustainable Community Strategy. Walsall will work to achieve this integration through the development of the borough's Sustainable Community Strategy in alignment with local consultation on the development of the Black Country Core Strategy during this summer.

As the Sustainable Community Strategy should aim to reflect the collective vision of the Local Strategic Partnership, the council has delegated responsibility for the development of the borough's Sustainable Community Strategy to WBSP.

Consultation

The Sustainable Community Strategy will be constructed from a wealth of consultation data. The Vision 2021 exercise is developing a shared vision for the borough from conversations held with stakeholders and residents and the goal is to achieve 1000 conversations. The emerging priorities from the vision process, as they develop over the next six months, will be fed into the steering and project teams to ensure the key messages are addressed. In addition, the priorities within the strategic themes have been identified via service and policy specific consultation i.e. Change for Children locality events or State of the Environment report.

Once the draft SCS is ready in early autumn, it will be tested again via a 'large event' and discussion at the autumn meetings of the LNPs as well as through the performance and scrutiny panels.

Impact

A robust and inspiring SCS will give reality to the CIPPF which sets the SCS, within the hierarchy of business planning documents, as the primary document for the borough driving the corporate and service planning processes.

With the document having a spatial dimension the SCS will also directly influence the LNP Neighbourhood Agreements.

With the intention to make the document accessible to residents; by a focus on localities and the role of the individual, residents should be able to clearly see and understand what will be the key priorities for the borough over the next 5 to 10 years.

Author

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Proposal on Engagement with Stakeholders and Communities

Period from September to December 2007

- Post draft SCS on WBSP/Council websites
- Engagement with LNPs and Council scrutiny panels:

Month	Date	Event
September 2007	4	Pelsall LNP Pheasey LNP
	5	Blakenall LNP
	6	Childrens' Scrutiny Panel
	11	Aldridge LNP Brownhills LNP
	13	Regeneration Scrutiny Panel
	17	Palfrey LNP
	24	Willenhall LNP
	27	Health Scrutiny Panel
October 2007	1	St Mathews LNP
	4	Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel
	10	Darlaston LNP
	18	Children Scrutiny Panel
	22	Aldridge LNP Blakenall LNP
	23	Pheasey LNP
	25	Corporate Scrutiny Panel
	29	Pelsall LNP Palfrey LNP
November 2007	1	Regeneration Scrutiny Panel
	7	Willenhall LNP
	12	Brownhills LNP
	13	Darlaston LNP
	15	St Mathews LNP
	29	Health Scrutiny Panel

- Engagement with Partner governance arrangements e.g.

Police	Council
WVA	LSC
PEGs	Housing Partnership
tPCT	URC
- 'Big Event' for community – October 2007 and targeted consultation with specific community of interest groups i.e. BME groups, Disability Forum

Approval process

Period from January to March 2008

- LSP Board – January 2008
- Cabinet – 6th February 2008
- Council 25th February 2008

