

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29th November 2004

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Harrington (Chair), Councillor Bambrick (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Mrs. Mead.

Conservative Group

Councillors Hood and Lemmon.

(Councillor Murphy also attended the Meeting and, with the approval of the Chair, spoke to Minute No. CYS/23.)

APOLOGY

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Martin (Conservative Group).

CYS/21. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th October 2004 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

CYS/22. **REPORTS OF MEMBERS**

(a) Visits to Sheltered Housing Schemes

The Chair advised that the report submitted to the last Meeting of the Housing and Community Services Committee on 18th November 2004 had been well received, with favourable comments made.

(b) Informal Meetings

The Chair advised that since the last Meeting of the Committee, two informal meetings had been held on 27th October and 24th November 2004.

At the Meeting on 27th October 2004, the Chair together with Councillors Hood and Mrs. Mead had met with Officers to discuss arrangements for co-ordinating the Council's response to the draft South Derbyshire Community Strategy and initial ideas for the proposed special project on recreation and leisure provision. The Council's response on the Community Strategy would be finalised at a Special Meeting of the Council on 2nd December 2004. A seminar for Members was held on 28th October 2004 and comments had been sought from all policy committees. Reports would stress the importance of the Community Strategy to the District and its potential impact on the planning and delivery of many Council services. With regard to the proposed project on leisure and recreation, Officers explained that consultants had been commissioned to carry out a survey of recreation, sport and open space in the District as required by Planning Policy Guidance Note 17. It was felt

that this would provide valuable information and a baseline assessment for the project.

At the Meeting on 24th November 2004, the Chair discussed the following issues with Officers:-

- The process for consulting Members and employees on the draft Community Strategy.
- The linkages between the draft Strategy and the Council's own Corporate Plan.
- Priorities and indicative actions.
- Delivery of the Strategy.

The Chair expressed his gratitude for the contribution made by the Chief Executive at the Meeting and for the report from the Head of Leisure and Community Development.

CYS/23. **DRAFT SOUTH DERBYSHIRE COMMUNITY STRATEGY – COUNCIL'S RESPONSE**

A copy of the draft South Derbyshire Community Strategy together with a draft report from the Chair of the Committee to be submitted to the Special Council Meeting on 2nd December 2004 were circulated to Members. The Head of Policy and Economic Regeneration advised Members of the contents of a response received earlier from the Local Plans Manager.

There was a large measure of consistency between the key aims and priorities of the Council's current Corporate Plan and themes and priorities of the draft Strategy. The Safe Communities, Vibrant Economy and Sustainable Environment themes of the draft Strategy related directly to Corporate Plan key aims, with some shared priorities and actions. There was also some overlap in other areas, with proposals for leisure being dealt with in Lifelong Learning and Culture whilst support for the National Forest was covered in the Sustainable Environment theme. The main difference was in the treatment of health and housing issues. Unlike the Corporate Plan, the draft Strategy had a specific theme relating to Healthy Communities. The inclusion of this theme was strongly supported, considering the importance of health services to local people and development of the national agenda around children and young people and the provision of support to vulnerable people. On the other hand, housing did not have a theme of its own, although issues relating to housing matters were dealt with in the Healthy Communities theme (meeting the decent homes standards and 'supporting people'), Sustainable Environment (new housing development and affordable homes) and Creating Opportunities for All (housing needs and homelessness). It was considered that this arrangement did not detract from the robustness of the draft Strategy and the six themes that had been identified were supported. Looking ahead, the Community Strategy would have a key role in shaping the plans and strategies of all partners and there were several areas where the draft Strategy should be strengthened to demonstrate commitment and leadership to local people.

The first of these areas concerned social inclusion. Although aspects of this issue were dealt with in several themes, it should be given more emphasis to focus attention on the delivery of client centred services and the provision of support to socially excluded and vulnerable people. A solution would be to

make social inclusion a priority within the cross-cutting Creating Opportunities for All theme and to place this theme at the beginning of the Strategy.

The second area requiring strengthening related to the environment. According to Government guidance, one of the functions of a Community Strategy involved contribution to the achievement of sustainable development, both locally and more widely. This required local people and organisations to work together around an agreed agenda. Actions relating to monitoring performance on environmental issues and pursuing EMAS (Environmental Management and Auditing Scheme) accreditation for partner organisations would help to strengthen this area.

The inclusion of a priority relating to improving communication and consultation with the Creating Opportunities for All theme was particularly welcomed. However, there was a need to ensure that this was translated into action and that partners communicated on a regular basis and co-ordinated their programmes of consultation with local people. There was a particular need for the South Derbyshire LSP to develop a Communications Strategy in order that people were aware of the work of the Partnership.

The importance of partnership working to the successful delivery of the Strategy could not be emphasised too highly. The Council had found, through experience, that partnership working often resulted in better policies, additional resources, increased management capacity and new ways of delivering services. Accordingly, it was pleasing to note that ‘working collectively and collaboratively to achieve more than we can on our own’ was one of the principles that underpinned the Strategy. In the current Corporate Plan, the Council had acknowledged the need for the LSP to operate effectively and on a sustainable basis and would be seeking to address this issue with partners in the development of arrangements for delivering the Strategy. When the draft Strategy had been finalised, there would be a need to formulate an Action Plan as quickly as possible which should specify timescales, delivery agencies and resources together with outcomes that would be clearly evident to local people.

Members considered the six broad themes of the Strategy and made the following specific comments:-

Theme 1: Safe Communities

- ❑ There should be a reference to local Crime Reduction Groups in the section on ‘Background Information’.
- ❑ The third bullet point on ‘The Future’ should mention the prevention of alcohol as well as substance misuse.
- ❑ Tackling the fear of crime should also be a priority (in ‘Getting There’).
- ❑ In terms of actions, establishing a Neighbourhood Warden Scheme; providing more dedicated youth facilities and activities; organising more activities during the school holidays; and, introducing on the spot fines for anti-social behaviour are priorities for the Council.

- ❑ The action relating to raising awareness of the roles and responsibilities played by agencies in tackling anti-social behaviour has little value and should be deleted.

Theme 2: Healthy Communities

- ❑ Improving access to GPs, dentists and pharmacists is a priority for the Council in terms of actions.
- ❑ A further action relating to the restriction of smoking in public places should be included.

Theme 3: A Vibrant Economy

- ❑ Developing tourism should also be a priority (in ‘Getting There).
- ❑ There may be some scope for rationalising/linking the large number of actions under this Theme.
- ❑ Consulting businesses to determine their needs; developing the skills and potential of the local workforce; doing more to secure external funding for regeneration; and, promoting South Derbyshire as a visitor destination are priorities for the Council.
- ❑ The action relating to encouraging local businesses to use the internet to purchase goods should be clarified/strengthened to refer to the promotion of local purchasing.
- ❑ There should be a further action relating to the Council and its partners acting in a ‘broker’ type role to assist businesses to meet their employment needs.

Theme 4: A Sustainable Environment

- ❑ The reference to ‘improving the environment by working together’ is strongly supported.
- ❑ Establishing an Environmental Forum for South Derbyshire is a priority for the Council in terms of actions.
- ❑ The overlap with actions in the Community Safety theme relating to litter, fly tipping and graffiti should be addressed.

Theme 5: Lifelong Learning and Culture

- ❑ Maximising the use of existing accommodation to increase education and training opportunities is a priority. This action should be strengthened to ensure that accommodation is accessible and available for a wide range of community uses (including meeting places).

Theme 6: Creating Opportunities for All

- ❑ In the section on Background information, the bullet point relating to travellers and access to services needs to be clarified; also in this section, the reference to ‘in South Derbyshire’ in the final bullet point

should be deleted as some ex-offenders may wish to return to their own communities.

- ❑ Tackling Social Inclusion should be added to the priorities in 'Getting There' and listed first to underline its importance.
- ❑ Improving access to services for rural communities is a priority for the Council in terms of actions.
- ❑ A further priority action would be to ensure equality of service provision across the district.

RESOLVED:-

That a report be submitted to the Special Council Meeting on 2nd December 2004 to reflect the above comments and the Chair of the Committee be authorised to approve any final minor amendments necessary.

CYS/24. **WORK PROGRAMME**

Following the completion of the project on the response to the Community Strategy, it was considered that the Work Programme now needed to be discussed in detail. In particular, the scope of the proposed project on Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, which had been the subject of initial discussions in the informal meeting held on 27th October 2004, required further consideration.

RESOLVED:-

That an informal meeting be arranged to discuss the Work Programme on a convenient date during the week commencing 13th December 2004.

CYS/25. **REPORTS TO POLICY COMMITTEES**

It was noted that there were no outstanding reports on this matter. The period for reporting back had now been reduced to three months and further consideration would be given to this matter in due course.

K. HARRINGTON

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 5.20 p.m.