



meeting	ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SELECT COMMITTEE		
date	31 OCTOBER 2005		
from	Director of Environment	agenda item number	

BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY INTO THE WORK OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Purpose of Report

1. The aims of this report are:
 - (a) to provide Committee with an update of recent Government and Regional policy developments relating to sustainable development;
 - (b) to consider how sustainability principles can be embedded in the work of the County Council;
 - (c) to seek views on a revised sustainability policy for the Authority.

Introduction

2. Sustainable development has been a major policy driver at national and local level for a number of years. Government has placed an increasing emphasis on sustainability in its policy guidance to local government, particularly in areas such as community planning, land use planning, transport, waste and procurement. It has also given local authorities new “powers of well-being” designed to remove barriers to the local delivery of projects which bring economic, social and environmental benefits.
3. In Nottinghamshire the last Strategic Plan *Building a Future* adopted sustainability as one of its four cornerstones. Building on this, on 3 December 2003 Cabinet adopted a “Taking Sustainability Forward” Action Plan, which set out proposals to increase the delivery of sustainable development within the work of the Authority. One of the key recommendations in the report was to develop a sustainability scrutiny function within the Authority, and this responsibility was given to Environment Standing Select Committee. In the new administration, sustainability has been more formally embedded by expanding the remit both of the Environment Cabinet Member, and Environment Select Committee, into “Environment and Sustainability”.
4. At a national level, Government published a new UK Strategy for Sustainable Development entitled “Securing the Future” in March 2005. At a regional level, the East Midlands Regional Assembly published its Integrated Regional Strategy in January 2005. Both these strategies form a useful backdrop for the preparation

of the County Council's Strategic Plan, and the Nottinghamshire Community Strategy. They also make it an appropriate time to review and refresh the County Council's commitment and approach to sustainable development. A new local commitment would also contribute to the preparation of the Strategic Plan and Community Strategy.

National policy developments

5. In March 2005, Government published its new UK Sustainable Development Strategy – *Securing the Future*, the key points of which are summarised in Appendix 1. The strategy followed a national consultation under the banner "Taking it On" in May-July 2004, a consultation to which the County Council made a full response.
6. The key points to note from the new strategy of relevance to the County Council are as follows:
 - a wider definition of the principles of sustainable development, with good governance and the use of sound science now being at the heart of sustainability alongside economic, social and environmental wellbeing.
 - the new strategy emphasises behaviour change as a key to making a difference, both at the corporate and individual level. The role of the public sector in leading by example is stressed.
 - the concept of making sustainable development real to people at the local level lies at the heart of *Securing the Future*, under the overall banner of "sustainable communities". Community strategies, and their associated Local Area Agreements, are seen as key to delivering sustainable communities at the local level. Indeed the strategy says that community strategies should evolve into sustainable community strategies.
 - community engagement is seen as key, not just to underpin community strategies but more widely. A new campaign "Community Action 2020" to encourage communities to get involved, building on Local Agenda 21 initiatives, is to be launched later in 2005.
 - Comprehensive Performance Assessment is to recognise and reward good performance on sustainable development and community engagement.
 - tackling climate change continues to be seen as one of the highest priorities, with the new UK Climate Change Programme due to be published later in 2005.
 - a new sustainable development framework for schools is to be launched later in 2005. Included within this will be a stronger emphasis on environmental education, and a commitment that all new schools, including those built under the Building Schools for the Future programme, should be rated "very good" against energy efficiency standards

- the role of sustainable procurement is highlighted, and in particular the influence major public purchasers such as local authorities can have on the actions and products of suppliers through their procurement policies.

Regional policy developments

7. One of the areas of action highlighted in *Securing the Future* was the need to strengthen the delivery of sustainable development at the regional level. In the East Midlands, the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) was published by the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) in January 2005 as the regional sustainable development strategy. This is summarised in Appendix 2.
8. Perhaps the main role of the IRS is to integrate the activities of the three regional bodies (EMRA, East Midlands Development Agency, and Government Office for the East Midlands). The County Council emphasised this point in its recent consultation responses on the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy reviews (considered by Cabinet on 13 July 2005). However it is also important that community strategies drawn up at the local level respond to national and regional priorities for sustainable development as well as those defined locally.

Local response

9. Nottinghamshire County Council is well placed to respond to the challenge of building sustainability into its policies and actions. As mentioned in the introduction, the Authority has sought to pursue sustainable development as an objective for a number of years, and has achieved some considerable successes. Appendix 3 provides a progress update on the delivery of the Taking Sustainable Forward Action Plan from 2003. A revised Action Plan will be developed in early 2006.
10. One of the key areas where progress has been made, but where further work is still to be undertaken, is in the development of a "Carbon Management Plan". This will set out the County Council's proposals for reducing the emission of carbon dioxide, one of the main greenhouse gases causing climate change, from areas such as buildings, transport, and procurement activity. It is intended to present the Carbon Management Plan for Cabinet approval alongside the wider Taking Sustainability Forward Action Plan early next year.
11. At this stage, however, it is recommended that the Authority adopts as policy a "hallmark" statement of sustainable development principles. This would be a public statement of the Authority's commitment to sustainability, which should then provide a framework for the work not just of the Environment and Sustainability portfolio, but of the whole organisation. A draft sustainability policy is attached as Appendix 4, which would update and refresh the last sustainability policy adopted by Policy and General Purposes Committee on 24 February 1997. As such it responds not just to the national and regional policy developments referred to above, but also informs the preparation of the Nottinghamshire Community Strategy and the Council's emerging Strategic Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

12. It is RECOMMENDED that Committee:
- (a) note the contents of this report and Appendices 1-3;
 - (b) consider the draft sustainability policy for the County Council attached as Appendix 4. The views of the Committee will be incorporated before the policy is presented to Cabinet for approval on 1 December 2005.

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APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF UK SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – *SECURING THE FUTURE*

New Goal

'To enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life for future generations.'

New SD Principles (Replacing the 4 objectives of the 1999 strategy)

- Living within environmental limits
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Achieving a sustainable economy
- Promoting good governance
- Using sound science responsibly

Priority themes

- Sustainable consumption and production
- Climate change and energy
- Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement
- Sustainable Communities

Making Better Choices

The strategy emphasises behaviour change and the community leadership role of public bodies. It advocates a mixed approach for national and local government, involving:

- Enabling - providing information, facilities, training and skills
- Engaging - communication with and involvement of the community
- Exemplification - the public sector leading by example through its policies and activities
- Encouraging - through taxation, penalties and enforcement, and grant aid

Community Action 2020 – Together We Can

The strategy highlights the need to engage and involve the community. A new initiative to achieve this entitled "Community Action 2020 – Together We Can", which will build on Local Agenda 21 activity, will be launched later in 2005.

Education

- A new sustainable development framework for schools will be launched in 2005
- All new schools, including those built under the Building Schools for the Future programme, should be rated "very good" against energy efficiency standards
- Government is to launch a "Manifesto for Education Outside the Classroom"
- Delivering sustainable communities will be part of a future leadership programme for local authority middle managers.

Sustainable Consumption and Production

- Promotes use of sustainable products
- Emphasises need to stimulate sustainable production – particularly through resource efficiency (using less raw materials and energy, producing less waste)
- Identifies need to promote sustainable consumption
- The UK to be the European Union leaders in sustainable procurement by 2009
- National action plan for sustainable procurement across the public sector by 2006
- Strategy seeks greater uptake of environmental management systems
- Regional Centres of Excellence to encourage sustainable procurement and champion themes including waste, food, timber and minimum standards

Climate Change and Energy

- Launch of revised UK Climate Change Programme to take place in summer 2005 (*now delayed until late 2005*)
- New fund to support communications and awareness raising activity about climate change at a regional and local level

Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement

- New vision and approach for the protection of natural resources to be published by the end of 2005, based on a sound evidence base
- New legislation and institutional arrangements to achieve better protection of the natural and historic environment

Sustainable Communities and a Fairer World

- The term “Sustainable Communities” now has single definition within Government, to mean sustainable development at the local level
- Role of Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements in delivering sustainable communities strongly endorsed. Community Strategies to evolve into Sustainable Community Strategies
- Audit Commission to launch a revised set of local quality of life indicators in 2005

Ensuring it Happens

- A Sustainable Development action plan for all central Government departments and their agencies is to be developed by December 2005
- Sustainable Development Commission to be strengthened
- Strengthen regional delivery
- Strengthen local delivery – Corporate Performance Assessment to recognise and reward good performance on sustainable development and community engagement. Beacon themes to include aspects of sustainable development at the local level.

Indicators

- Fewer overall but new ‘well-being’ indicator and focus on health inequalities.

APPENDIX 2

SUMMARY OF EAST MIDLANDS INTEGRATED REGIONAL STRATEGY

The Region's Vision

The East Midlands will be recognised as a region with a high quality of life and sustainable communities that thrives because of its vibrant economy, rich cultural and environmental diversity and the way it creatively addresses social inequalities, manages its resources, and contributes to a safer, more inclusive society.

Five agreed priorities for the region

- 1 **Reduce inequalities in the region** by combating discrimination and improving equality of access to economic opportunities, education, health and decent homes
- 2 **Conserve and enhance the natural environment** by tackling the biodiversity deficit and enhancing the environmental infrastructure
- 3 **Create sustainable and healthy communities throughout the region** by
 - empowering and engaging communities
 - ensuring sustainable design and construction
 - improving access to services and opportunities, including affordable housing and cultural activities
 - reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour
 - developing social capital
- 4 **Improve economic performance and competitiveness** by
 - encouraging enterprise and innovation
 - improving the performance of existing businesses
 - ensuring the ongoing development of learning and skills
 - ensuring the efficient use of the region's infrastructure, including ICT
 - creating high-quality employment opportunities
- 5 **Use natural resources more efficiently and reduce the impacts of climate change** by
 - reducing energy consumption including fossil fuel through travel
 - increasing the amount of energy generated from renewable sources
 - reducing the amount of waste generated

APPENDIX 3

PROGRESS UPDATE ON TAKING SUSTAINABILITY FORWARD ACTION PLAN

A. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE		
Action	Target date	Progress
1. Improving our environmental performance		
To have identified Environmental Champions in all Departments by March 2004 To introduce a programme of waste reduction and recycling in County Hall by September 2004	March 2004 September 2004	Environmental champions scheme launched in September 04, and operating successfully with significant savings in office waste. Longer term action plan under development.
"Building Better Communities" initiative launched	June 2004.	Launched in July 2004. First year programme successfully completed, year 2 under way
Performance and scope of MACC2 targets to be reviewed.	September 2004	MACC2 is now discontinued. However new CO2 reduction targets to be established in Carbon Management Plan, due to be considered by Cabinet in Autumn 2005
Carbon trust scheme joined Carbon management programme agreed by Cabinet	March 2004 June 2004	NCC successful in securing £500k over 2 years for further investment in buildings. Delivery plan being drawn up. Carbon Management Plan to be considered by Cabinet Autumn 2005
Review Environmental management system (EMS) pilots in Environment Department Decision on future roll-out programme considered	March 2004 September 2004.	EMS pilots evaluated. Decision on further roll-out awaiting further assessment of cost implications
Strategy for working with schools agreed	July 2004	Scope of engagement with schools agreed. New Schools Environmental Co-ordinator recently appointed

2. Improving our sustainability performance		
Identified Sustainability Champions in all Departments	March 2004	Complete – Sustainability Champions now appointed from within all Departmental Management Teams
3-year corporate training programme in sustainability developed	March 2004	Programme agreed with Corporate Training, first 2 years training delivered
Scope for introducing sustainability into NIP themes agreed	April 2004.	Main focus is on procurement. New corporate procurement strategy has incorporated sustainability dimension. 2 year project to develop procurement practice approved in principle by Regional Centre of Excellence.
Pilot projects for using the Building a Future checklist undertaken in all Departments	April 2004	Launch event of checklist took place in September 2004. Use since then has been limited. Now awaiting new Sustainability Policy and Strategic Plan to progress further.
Agree a sustainability standard Assess the County Council's performance against this standard	June 2004 December 2004	Draft standard still not finalised – awaiting results of national work by Forum for the Future.
Guidance on use of wellbeing powers to be covered in corporate training events	March 2005	New national guidance on wellbeing powers – still needs to be explored for NCC

B. COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP		
Action	Target date	Progress
1. Promoting environmental protection		
Environmental awareness campaign programme in place	March 04	Lots of activity currently being undertaken, but new initiative to co-ordinate awareness raising activity internally and with external partners being developed
2. Promoting sustainability		
Community Climate Change Strategy for Nottinghamshire developed and adopted	December 2004	Draft Strategy published for consultation by Nottinghamshire Agenda 21, following research into likely impacts in Nottinghamshire. NCC provided consultation comments and supported document in principle
Agree the relationship between the Nottinghamshire Community Strategy Partnership and the Nottinghamshire Local Agenda 21 Forum	April 2004	Link between the NA21 Forum and Nottinghamshire Partnership still to be finalised
Appropriate sustainability training and support to Local Strategic Partnerships to be identified	March 2005	Support to LSPs maintained. Some sustainability training undertaken.
Quality of Life indicators contained in the Framework Community Strategy for Nottinghamshire agreed, and baseline established.	September 2004	New approach to baseline data gathering being developed across County, particularly in the context of the new Community Strategy
Sustainability appraisal of major development projects for which the County Council is the determining authority	April 2004	Current approach to dealing with major applications assesses main sustainability issues that are within the scope of land use planning to control.
Sustainable Developer Guide published	April 2004.	Sustainable Developer Guide published – currently shortlisted for RTPI award

APPENDIX 4 – PROPOSED SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL’S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Corporate performance

Nottinghamshire County Council is committed to delivering services which provide environmental, social and economic benefits to people in the County. In the design and delivery of services, we will seek at all times to work in ways which integrate these objectives together, so that

- benefits in all three areas are maximised
- progress in one area is not achieved at the expense of another

Moreover we will seek to ensure that benefits to people in Nottinghamshire are not achieved at an unacceptable cost to:

- the global environment (in particular as a result of climate change)
- social conditions elsewhere in the world
- reserves of finite natural resources (in particular fossil fuels, aggregates and minerals, and land for landfill) as a result of disproportionate consumption.

Community leadership

The Authority also recognises the role it has in providing community leadership – using our policies, procurement activity and influence to encourage others to adopt similar principles. This will include our work:

- with our partners in the joint delivery of services
- with suppliers of goods and services to the County Council, through our procurement activity
- through our role as regulator and policy maker
- with other organisations and businesses with whom the Authority has contact
- with our own staff
- with the wider community

Principles

In pursuing environmental, social and economic well-being, the County Council will also seek to work by the following principles:

- participation - people should be able to participate in decisions that affect them
- equality - resources should be used to provide for the needs of the whole community
- futurity - our actions should not have an adverse impact on future generations
- best value - in considering options and making decisions, we will consider not just financial costs and benefits, but also social and environmental factors, both long and short term, to achieve best overall value

- the precautionary principle - where the impacts of actions are uncertain but the risk of negative impacts are significant, we will take a precautionary approach which minimises irreversible damage to the environment

Responsibility and accountability

Although responsibility for sustainability policy has been vested with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability, responsibility for the delivery against this policy rests with the full Council and all of its employees. As such sustainability will be seen as one of the Authority's core values, and a cornerstone of its activities. The Council will seek to build sustainability wherever possible into its plans, policies, decisions and actions.

The Authority will seek continuous improvement in the delivery of sustainability, in part through the development and delivery of a Sustainability Action Plan which will be updated on an annual basis. We will monitor our progress in delivering both the Action Plan and the wider policy, and report this progress publicly at least on an annual basis. In addition the Environment and Scrutiny Standing Select Committee will provide a formal mechanism for scrutinising our performance.