

Report to: **Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services**

Date: **28 November 2007**

By: **Director of Policy & Communication**

Title of report: **East Sussex Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)**

Purpose of report: **To inform Scrutiny Committee of the development of the new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)**

RECOMMENDATION: That the Committee decides whether and if so, how, it wishes to comment on the draft Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) as detailed at paragraph 4.

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The introduction of a new national approach to Local Area Agreements (LAA -the action plan for our SCS) will bring with it changes to funding mechanisms as initially outlined in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07). These include the reduction in specific and ring fenced grants and their inclusion in the Revenue Support grant and the introduction of Area Based Grant. Details and their implications will not be available until the financial settlement in December 2007. The County Council's contribution to the LAA and any additional action plan for the SCS will be determined, as at present, through the Reconciling Policy and Resources (RP&R) business planning process.

2. Background

2.1 Since the Local Government Act 2000 there has been a duty on local authorities to develop a community strategy for their area to address economic, social and environmental well being. In 2003 the draft strategy was discussed at both Cabinet and County Council and subsequently the East Sussex Strategic Partnership (ESSP) published our current community strategy for East Sussex known as 'Pride of Place'. In East Sussex the LAA (now in its second year) captures our agreed priorities for joint working with partners and forms the action plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy. The County Council's contribution to the LAA is fully integrated into the Council Plan and therefore, when monitoring performance quarterly, the Scrutiny Committee has also been considering our performance on the LAA targets for which East Sussex County Council is the lead.

2.2 The new Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill places a new additional duty on local authorities to prepare the LAA in consultation with others and expects a new LAA to be in place by June 2008. The framework for the new LAA is a new set of 198 "national indicators" from which East Sussex and the Government will agree up to 35 areas for improvement plus 17 mandatory indicators relating to children, schools and families. Further details of the new performance framework will be reported to Cabinet on 20 November.

3. Proposed East Sussex Approach

3.1 The original 'Pride of Place' community strategy needs to be revised as its three years action planning cycle ends shortly. The new SCS needs to address a range of environmental and spatial issues as well as being updated to reflect other emerging local issues. An agreement has been reached across East Sussex to have a joint SCS

with Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) with Councils and other partners. It will include the District and Borough based strategies. For some districts the new SCS will be their only community strategy, for others the priorities within their existing strategies are being incorporated into the new SCS but they will retain a separate document.

3.2 A partnership project team has developed a consultation draft which will be published on 20 November for 12 weeks. It will outline a vision for East Sussex up to 2026 including significant current characteristics and priorities that need to be addressed in order to achieve the longer term vision. Before it is finally published in June 2008, it will be supported by a detailed evidence base and will demonstrate the link to other local and regional strategies. There will be two related action plans outlining the detailed targets for delivering the identified priorities. The first will be the new LAA; the second will describe additional local targets that may not be suitable for inclusion in the LAA. The County Council's contribution will, as at present, be determined through Reconciling Policy & Resources with all the LAA targets led by East Sussex County Council being included in the Council Plan.

4. Scrutiny Involvement

4.1 Ensuring we have effective Member engagement in the development of the new SCS is critical. As outlined above the integration of the LAA and the Council Plan means that Scrutiny Committees already have significant opportunity to shape and performance manage our partnership working priorities. All Members will be individually consulted on the draft SCS during the 12 week consultation period with electronic copies being sent to all Members on 20 November 2007. The draft will be on the County Council agenda on 11 December 2007. Given the timing of the Scrutiny Committee cycle and the publication date, it is unlikely that Scrutiny Committees will be able to have an informed discussion. It is suggested therefore that consideration is given at this meeting to whether, and how Committees comment on the draft. In considering the options it is important to recognise that the draft will contain strategic objectives and not detailed action planning – that will come later through Reconciling Policy & Resources. There are four options:

- a) Add consideration of the draft to the agenda for the Boards set up to consider the Reconciling Policy & Resources proposals;
- b) Hold a special meeting to consider the draft;
- c) Ask the Scrutiny Chairmen to consider the draft at their meeting and respond on behalf of all the scrutiny committees;
- d) Members review and respond individually (directly to officers and also through debate at County Council) rather than as a Committee

4.2 The final version of the SCS will go to Cabinet on 11 March 2008 and full Council on 25 March 2008. All LSPs and each of the Councils will need to endorse the final version of the SCS before publication at the end of May 2008.

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Local Members: All

Background Documents: None