

Scrutiny Committee – 11th September 2008

8. Local Strategic Partnership: South Somerset Together – Annual Review

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Tim Carroll, Leader of the Council
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Purpose of the Report

This is a report to update members on the activities of the Local Strategic Partnership for the district from the last report to Scrutiny Committee on 14th August 2007. Of key importance is the detailed outline of the process for developing the South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy ¹ to be adopted by the Council on 30th October 2008.

Action required

Members are requested to comment on the methodology used for producing the Sustainable Community Strategy not the content of the Strategy, that is the result of consultation and agreement.

Background

South Somerset Together is a non-statutory, non-executive body (an unincorporated association), with an independent Chairman, a full-time Coordinator and a membership of 29 individuals representing 18 public, private and voluntary sector organisations from across the district that meet six times a year ². New partner organisations to the LSP in 2007/08 were South Somerset Climate Change and the South Somerset Equalities Group. A main function of the LSP is to lead and influence the delivery of services and objectives as a conduit for change to improve the quality of life in South Somerset. Key to this is the development and implementation of a Sustainable Community Strategy that links with the current development of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2010-2026) and the Somerset Local Area Agreement Indicators (2008-2011).

Funding

Since 2004 the LSP has received 2nd Homes income from Somerset County Council and SSDC. SSDC is the Accountable Body for the LSP. In 2008, the County Council has changed its funding arrangement for the LSP by limiting the amount available to £43,000 (to match the 2nd Homes contribution from SSDC in 2007/8) and requiring an Investment Plan for proposals to be submitted to the Somerset Strategic Partnership Executive for approval of match funding. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the amount of income available to the LSP, since most of the SSDC allocation is used to fund the core activities of the partnership including remuneration to the Chairman and the LSP Coordinator. SSDC has committed to funding the LSP £44,500 for three years to 2010/11. An annual report of the LSP's funding for the financial year 2007-2008 is in Appendix One.

Activity of the LSP 2007/08

1. General Activity

The activity of the LSP includes:

- **Championing sustainability**

Taking a lead in championing sustainability across the district, South Somerset Together held its second Annual General Meeting in June 2008, which included a presentation by Joe Burlington, Chairman of South Somerset Climate Action and a booklet *Sustainable Somerset - Proposals for a sustainable community*³ as part of its programme. The LSP produced its first Annual Report.

In addition, the LSP is leading on the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy and has worked closely with Sustainability South West in its production.

- **Commenting or lobbying on local, regional and national issues**

The LSP responded to various consultations including the Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities: Statutory Draft Guidance for consultation to CLG in January 2008.

- **Commissioning programmes that address priorities**

A table with the details of the programmes supported by the LSP is included in Appendix Two.

- **Improving the LSP's Governance and structure**

The LSP held a workshop in March, facilitated by Rowena Harris, to identify the key areas for improvement for the partnership. An Action Plan was produced which is monitored by the Board and has led to changes such as the minutes of the meetings being signed and the opportunity for the public to speak at the start of the meeting. Further actions include a self-assessment of the partnership that includes a Partner Audit to be carried out this autumn by the LSP Coordinator to complement the work required in developing the implementation plans for the Actions in the Sustainable Community Strategy (including an Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Assessment). Further identified actions include producing a Code of Conduct for LSP partners.

The LSP has set up two new sub-groups; a Voluntary Sector Forum and a Performance Monitoring Sub-committee. The Voluntary Sector Forum is led by the South Somerset Association for Voluntary and Community Action Ltd (SSVCA). It has held three Forums (in November 2007, March and July 2008) with a growing number of voluntary and community groups attending. In addition, a smaller reference group has met to discuss key issues including the content of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Performance Monitoring Sub-group has been set up to focus on finance and offer support in decisions relating to the core activity and programmes budgets. Improvements are being made to improve the reporting mechanisms of all the LSP's sub-groups to the Board. Appendix Three.

2. Developing the South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy: Shaping South Somerset 2008-2026

The LSP does not replicate or replace the function and activities of its member partner organisations. On the contrary, the aim is to add value to what is already happening in the district either by identifying a gap and commissioning work to address this or by working in innovative ways together to address particularly "wicked" issues.

It is a statutory requirement for the district to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) that draws together the trends, issues and needs across all areas of life into one comprehensive document. The SCS is nearing completion of a two-year development process that has included extensive stakeholder consultation and the collating of a robust evidence base, which includes the issues in the many community plans (Town and Parish Plans) produced by residents. This report will allow members to examine the methodology used, the importance of the strategic priorities and actions identified, and the work that will be undertaken to take such an ambitious plan into the implementation phase which will start in March 2009.

Methodology

The timeline for the process of developing a robust SCS is outlined below:

Stage 1: July 2006; A multi-agency Visioning Day was held that provided the initial focus on sustainability and current issues facing the district, county and region;

Stage 2: Autumn 2006; Theme leads gathered local, regional and national statistics. Research was done to form the evidence base and the extracted key issues and an audit of community plans was started;

Stage 3: January 2007; The trends that may affect South Somerset in the next 20 years were mapped and the key issues that cut across themes were identified with their supporting evidence;

Stage 4: February 2007; Issues were categorised in to “social”, “economic” and “environmental” blocks, which were developed and tested with a wider reference group;

Stage 5: March 2007; Theme leads worked together to group key issues, summarised for consultation and linked to the Sustainability Appraisal evidence base for the Local Development Framework;

Stage 6: May 2007; Long-term goals were identified arising from trends and to correspond with the key issues. This incorporated data from the completed audit of all completed community plans across the district. A consultation document was compiled for testing with the wider community 4;

Stage 7: Summer 2007; Consultation of the Issues and Trends document included mailing stakeholders and an on-line questionnaire; Collating the consultation results from 64 respondents of which 4% were from Town Councils, 35% from Parish Councils, 11% from Somerset County Council, 24% from SSDC, 14% from voluntary and community sector organisations and 12% from other statutory organisations;

Stage 8: October & November 2007; Multi-agency Thematic workshops and an all-day plenary event facilitated by Sustainability South West were held to complete a gap analysis and the cross cutting issues and sustainable options and actions;

Stage 9: December 2007 to March 2008; Theme groups identified the Strategic Priorities and Actions, having analysed what partners and other organisations in the district were already doing, and the baseline data that will be used to measure progress. Sustainability South West conducted a Sustainability Assessment of the draft SCS 5;

Stage 10: April 2008; The LSP Board held a Prioritising workshop resulting in the agreement of twelve Goals, each with four Strategic Priorities (medium term objectives) and one or two linked Actions (short term critical activities);

Stage 11: May to August 2008; Consultation of the Strategic Priorities and Actions included a range of workshops to align consultation on the SCS and the SSDC Corporate Plan Refresh (workshop for SSDC Elected members, two Stakeholder Events and SSDC Senior Managers Forum workshops), mailing copies of the consultation document and questionnaire to public, private and voluntary sector organisations (including all Parish and Town Councils) and an on-line questionnaire. 124 individuals representing 53 organisations responded to this consultation;

Stage 12: September 2008; LSP will approve the final changes to the SCS and adopt the content of the document on 26th September 2008. The SCS will be considered and adopted by SSDC at a special meeting of the Council on 30th October 2008.

Once, the SCS is adopted work with partners will be carried out to develop implementation plans, that identify the lead partner and supporting partners on each Action, the baseline data, measures and milestones to ensure progress against each Action and the performance monitoring cycle to the Board through the Performance Monitoring Sub-committee. The implementation plans will complement the LAA delivery plans developed by Somerset County Council and the partner organisations' corporate plans and service plan cycles, and performance monitoring methods.

3. Addressing the issues raised by Scrutiny Committee in 2007

Members raised a number of issues and activities to be addressed by the LSP at the last Annual Review. Attached is the action plan and progress marked against each point. It should be noted that the LSP Coordinator post was vacant for four months during the last year. Appendix Four.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications in accepting this report.

Appendices:

Appendix One: Financial Report 2007-2008

Appendix Two: LSP programmes 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Appendix Three: LSP Structure Chart 2008.

Appendix Four: LSP Action Plan (against issues raised by Scrutiny Committee 2007)

Background papers:

SSDC Scrutiny Committee (14th August 2007), Agenda and Minutes Item 8;

Reference documents:

1: Draft Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2026), Full version;

2: SST Constitution (click on: www.southsomersettogether.org.uk);

3: Sustainable Somerset-Proposals for a sustainable community (2008), Joe Burlington

4: Shaping South Somerset: Consultation document for a Sustainable Community Strategy (2007);

5: Sustainability South West (April 2008), Strategic Sustainability Assessment of South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy;