

**REPORT TO:** STOCKPORT PARTNERSHIP

**REPORT OF:** POLICY UNIT, STOCKPORT COUNCIL

**SUBJECT:** Consultation on 'Stockport's Community Strategy – DRAFT'

**DATE:** 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008

---

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The document 'Stockport's Community Strategy – DRAFT' was produced following a review of research and consultation activity and two visioning workshops. The draft set out a vision, a number of challenges and outcomes for the future social, economic and environmental development of the borough, and how these would be delivered.
- 1.2 This report sets out the nature of the consultation and details the responses received throughout the ten week period in order to establish the direction in which the final strategy should be developed.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The draft strategy was subject to a ten week consultation period which commenced with its publication on 2<sup>nd</sup> June and finished on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2008. The consultation approach was deliberately broad and merely asked for comments on the strategy. The draft was available online via the Stockport Partnership's website and the Council's website, as well as being sent directly to representatives of all sectors via the Stockport Partnership Forum and made available at all libraries across the borough through a series of 'roadshows'.
- 2.2 Beyond this the draft strategy was considered by the Council's Corporate Resource Management and Governance Scrutiny Committee, each of the eight Area Committees, the key thematic partnerships, and MOVES (Members of Voluntary Executives Stockport). It was also distributed to members of the Public Participation and Involvement Group, the Community Development Focus Group, contacts of SCVS, and the Council's employee networks for LGBT, Disability, B&ME and Carers.
- 2.3 Further to this, an A5 postcard was designed to promote the Community Strategy and to invite comments about the draft. 10,000 of these postcards were distributed to retail outlets across the borough, community venues (includes Stockport Direct, health centres, Stepping Hill Hospital, community buildings, heritage buildings, fitness centres, cafes etc.) and faith groups.
- 2.4 In total, 135 representations were made by individuals, with responses also made by the Scrutiny Committee, the eight Area Committees, MOVES

and the thematic partnerships. A full list of comments made and the partnership's response to each is appended to this report.

- 2.5 This report seeks to bring all of the responses together and proposes how the Stockport Partnership will proceed in developing the final version of the sustainable Community Strategy.

### **3. Summary of responses**

#### **3.1 SECTION 1: OUR VISION (1.1 in strategy)**

##### Response

A total of 19 comments were made about this section. The Stockport Partnership Forum welcomed the positive messages but there were also comments that the visionary statement in 1.1 was too over the top, too long and too generic. Suggestions for improving it were to:

- Make it more realistic e.g. 'one of the best places in the UK' rather than 'in the world'.
- State that 'our vision is to...' and then list the three main objectives around the economy, environment and society.
- Add 'to grow older' to the statement.

##### Conclusions

An email regarding the development of the vision was sent to all Stockport Partnership Board members on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. The Board is asked to take the above comments into account when providing their individual feedback to this email. This will be reported fully to the November meeting.

#### **3.2 SECTION 2: OUR STRATEGY (2.1 – 2.5 in strategy)**

##### Response

20 comments were received about this section. Most of the comments were about the language used and the positioning of some of the sentences and paragraphs. Specific mentions are made of the need to cover skills, poverty and inequality in this section. The need to make provision for another opportunity to make final comments before the strategy is signed off was recommended to encourage 'buy-in'.

##### Conclusions

The detailed comments will be taken into account when drafting the final version. The final version will be made available on the Stockport Partnership's website for a limited period, in draft for comment, and this fact communicated to the wider Forum.

### **3.3 SECTION 3: OUR STOCKPORT - A STORY ABOUT OUR PLACE** (3.1 – 3.12 in strategy)

#### Response

Including the specific comments from residents about litter, there are over 50 responses within this section. A small number of comments requested more robust and constructive statements to be made about both older people and children and young people in the borough. More clarity was requested in the description of the economy in the borough. A small number of people asked for a definition of the 'small areas' referred to in the description of deprivation in the borough.

The largest number of comments was received by residents in response to the point that maintaining cleanliness of the borough's streets is a particular challenge. Other comments of note in this section regarded the effect of the economic growth and downturn in the deprived areas of the borough and the need to expand the points on culture, heritage and the greenbelt.

#### Conclusions

- The detailed comments in the appendix will be taken into account when drafting the final version.
- More information to be included in this section about both older people and children and young people.
- Sources of information recommended by Economic Development Team to be checked.
- Final strategy to contain a glossary so that any jargon or statistical terms can be explained.
- Consideration to be given to making cleanliness and litter a clear priority in the final strategy.

### **3.4 SECTION 4: THIS IS WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO**

#### Response

This section of the document received the most comments and so it is broken down into further sections. General comments received about this section related to employment in the borough, the impact of the economic downturn, town centre developments, reducing business rates as an incentive to start-ups and the importance of older people in the workforce. Suggestions for improvements included longer lists of actions rather than just case studies, better integration of cross-cutting issues (e.g. transport not reflected in economic section), and the need to be clear about the status of the strategy.

#### Conclusions

As indicated in more detail later in this paper, a stronger approach needs to be taken to how the challenges will be delivered on, rather than just setting out a case study. It is suggested that an alternative format for the strategy should be considered, rather than segregating issues into one of the social, environment or economy sections. The Board is asked to take a view regarding the life of the strategy.

### 3.5 **Build a more competitive and sustainable economy in Stockport**

#### **Challenges** (4.2 in strategy)

##### Response

In this section notable comments were sent in regarding the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector, the need to strengthen and reword the challenge that relates to older people and the need to strengthen the reference to young people and educational attainment, particularly in deprived areas. Several recommendations were also made by the Council's Regeneration, Economic Development and Tourism Team; to remove the bullet point on the retention of skilled individuals in the local economy; expand bullet points to include challenges around maintaining business satisfaction in Stockport as a location, identifying suitable employment sites, recognising and responding to the needs of business, international links and the Visitor Economy Strategy/Evening economy/cultural offer and; include information about the specific sectors that experience skills shortages.

##### Conclusions

- Additional challenge to be inserted to reflect the need to support the voluntary and community sector, as recommended by MOVES:  
*'Supporting and helping to build capacity of the Voluntary and Community Sector in increasingly complex environments. Developing the skills and capacity of the Voluntary and Community Sector plays a pivotal role in building stronger communities'*
- Challenge regarding older people to be amended to wording recommended by Margaret Brade:  
*'Recognising, maximising and retaining the skills and knowledge of older people generally in the workplace and the consumer economy and also through schemes such as silver entrepreneurs'*
- Reference to children and younger people strengthened
- Amendments to be made to reflect recommendations from Regeneration, Economic Development and Tourism Team:
  - *'Maintaining business satisfaction in Stockport as a location*
  - *Identifying suitable employment sites in response to demand*
  - *Recognising and responding to the needs of business and of potential investors*
  - *Mention international links*
  - *Mention Visitor Economy Strategy/Evening economy strategy/ cultural offer'*

#### **Text and case study** (4.3 in strategy)

##### Response

Comments in this section included some stressing that that more information is needed about how the challenges will be delivered on. Specific comments from residents focused on the Town Centre and the need for development and parking problems and costs.

##### Conclusions

The final strategy needs to refer to other strategy documents and action plans that are in place to deliver on the challenges, for example the Economic Development Strategy, Local Development Framework and Regeneration and Renewal Framework - not just highlight one project as a

case study. Reference to the Town Centre development needs to be reviewed in light of the economic downturn and the withdrawal of Lend Lease from the Bridgefield development.

### **Outcomes** (4.4 – 4.7 in strategy)

#### Response

Two of the responses questioned the format of the outcomes and in particular how they would deliver on the challenges. 16 comments (predominantly from residents) were made about the district and local centres, highlighting their importance to local people and the need to support and regenerate them. ‘Educated’, the title for one of the outcomes was questioned as the term does not encompass skills, as was the focus on FE and HE as there is no mention of schools, particularly tackling under achievement in deprived areas of the borough, and the phrase ‘local jobs for local people’.

#### Conclusions

- Further work is necessary to turn the current aspirational outcomes into more measurable objectives that set a clear delivery framework for the challenges listed
- The Board to consider highlighting in the final strategy the importance of the suburban centres and request that the commitment to their maintenance, regeneration and development is translated into the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework
- The outcome ‘Educated’ to be revisited.

## **3.6 Create more socially inclusive, sustainable communities in Stockport**

### **Challenges** (4.8 in strategy)

#### Response

Comments about this section included the suggestion to add challenges about working with the new Local Involvement Network (LINKs) to improve health and social care and making a commitment to work together to keep people out of hospital and invest in co-ordinated services. Two comments were submitted from the Stockport Partnership Forum and MOVES about the need to include reference to the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in developing socially inclusive communities. Specific wording changes were submitted from the Safer Stockport Partnership. Planning Policy pointed out the lack of reference to the social implications of the Town Centre development. Strategic Housing recommended the included reference to the contribution of housing to social inclusion.

#### Conclusions

- Include reference to LINKs
- Strengthen references to the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Amend wording as per recommendation from Safer Stockport Partnership:  
*‘Reduce the most serious violent and acquisitive crime with improvements to perceptions of crime and anti social behaviour’*
- Amend wording as per recommendation from Strategic Housing:

*'To ensure that all sections of the community have access to housing that is well maintained, and where renting, well managed'*

- Consider how to achieve a more integrated approach across the strategy to those issues that impact on all sections.

### **Text and case study (4.9 in strategy)**

#### Response

There were seven comments made about this section. Two comments were about the nature of the case study and stated that more information is needed about the broader NHS modernization plans. One comment called for more information to be added about the new neighbourhood priority areas and about play, young people and youth space in order to support future funding bids. One comment requested mention of community engagement and involvement in addressing inequalities. One comment requested mention of housing in the list of examples in 4.9. Two Area Committees responded to express support for existing GP services.

#### Conclusions

- The Board may wish to include more comprehensive references to strategies that deliver on the challenges, rather than highlight one project as a case study.
- Further reference to be made to the neighbourhood priority areas, play, young people and community engagement and involvement.
- Add reference to housing.

### **Outcomes (4.10 – 4.17 in strategy)**

#### Response

35 comments were made about this section. 21 of these comments were from residents and were concerned with community safety, supporting this as a priority within the strategy. These comments have been forwarded to the Safer Stockport Partnership. Two comments were concerned with how the outcomes would deliver on the challenges, in particular how the partnership would tackle inequalities. Four comments concerned the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in delivering on these challenges. Two comments requested more clarity on the approach to community cohesion. The Stockport Partnership Forum made a clear representation about changing the terminology of the 'cohesive' outcome and being clear about the approach to inequalities, recommending aiming to increase standards overall and to raise them still further at the lowest end rather than talking out 'narrowing the gap'. Three comments were made about the wording in the reference to mental health. A clear recommendation was received from the Safer Stockport Partnership about changing the outcome 'Safe'. One comment was submitted from Strategic Housing requesting an additional outcome about housing.

#### Conclusions

- Further work is necessary to turn the current aspirational outcomes into more measurable objectives that set a clear delivery framework for the challenges listed
- Make community safety a clear priority in the final strategy

- Strengthen the references to the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Explain better what is meant by cohesive or community cohesion
- Make a clear statement about Stockport's approach to inequalities.
- Amend the reference to mental health as per the recommendation from the Health and Wellbeing Partnership:  
*Comments regarding mental health should be amended to read 'Amongst other key priorities we will have developed approaches which aim to promote positive well-being'.*
- Amend the outcome 'Safe' as per the recommendation from the Safer Stockport Partnership:  
*'We will refocus our work to concentrate on the most serious violence and the most serious acquisitive crime with improvements to our systems to manage our most prolific offenders. We will also continue to roll out our Safer Neighbourhoods agenda to engage more effectively with our communities and deliver better reassurance and improve perceptions'.*
- Consider the inclusion of an additional outcome about housing.  
*'Happy in our homes  
This means that we will give residents access to the advice and choice they require to find a home that will meet their needs. Their homes provide an affordable environment in which they feel comfortable, welcome, safe and healthy, and where appropriate, supported'.*

### **3.7 Improve the quality of Stockport's environment for current and future generations**

#### **Challenges (4.18 in strategy)**

##### Response

Six comments were made with regard to this section. One requested clarification about the competing demands on the greenbelt, two requested expanding on the transport infrastructure point. One comment suggested acknowledging the role that schools and colleges play in terms of the environment. Two comments regarded micro-generation and Marple Area Committee expressed a preference towards the centralisation of energy generation rather than micro-generation.

##### Conclusions

- Point on greenbelt to be clarified in final strategy
- Approach to micro-generation to be clarified by Environment Partnership through work on Climate Change Strategy.

#### **Text and case study (4.19 – 4.20 in strategy)**

##### Response

Over 60 comments were made in response to this section which included reference to recycling and the case study on SEMMMS. Over 50 of these were from residents and stressed the need for better public transport, better cycle routes, parking, the MAELR route and the need for better facilities for recycling plastics and cardboard. Comments about transport have been forwarded to the Council's Transport Team.

## Conclusions

- Congestion, public transport, parking and recycling are clear public priorities and should be reflected in the final strategy.

### **Outcomes** (4.21 – 4.28 in strategy)

#### Response

Again, two comments about this section expressed concern that the outcomes were not measurable. A further two comments expressed the view that the outcome 'Connected' was not realistic. Five comments noted the need for more affordable housing, although not at the expense of the green belt. One comment called for clarity about what is meant by a sustainable built environment. The highest number of comments (38) were specifically regarding the outcome 'A sustainable natural environment' which states that Stockport will have more high density development including in limited areas of the green belt. Three of the Council's Area Committees (Bramhall, Victoria and Cheadle) requested that the Stockport Partnership delete any reference to developments in limited areas of the green belt. Three Area Committees (Werneth, Stepping Hill and Marple) responded that the reference was ambiguous and required further clarification. Most of the other comments about this outcome were from residents disagreeing with the outcome and raising other localized environmental issues. The Stockport Partnership Forum recommended rewording this outcome to clarify the approach and the feedback from Planning Policy suggested that it is misleading and potentially contrary to national planning policy. An alternative is suggested by Planning Policy.

#### Conclusions

- Further work is necessary to turn the current aspirational outcomes into more measurable objectives that set a clear delivery framework for the challenges listed
- Reference to the green belt in the outcome 'A sustainable natural environment' to be amended as per the recommendation from Planning Policy.

*'This means that in the future we are likely to have more high density development which will make the best use possible of available developable land whilst continuing to maintain the 'green infrastructure' that makes our borough special.'*

## **3.8 SECTION 5: THIS IS HOW WE ARE GOING TO DO IT - HOW IT WILL BE DELIVERED**

#### Response

There were 29 comments about this section. There is a general sense from these comments that the section needs to be more accessible in terms of the language it uses and the level of detail it provides. The comments highlighted the need to be clear about how the strategy is reviewed and evaluated, and that there needs to be more information about delivery – for example naming the strategies that will deliver the outcomes. Planning Policy responded that there needs to be more mention of the Local Development Framework throughout the document, not just in this section. One comment recommended a 'Plain English' check of the document and three people commented that the partnership diagram was

unclear. Six comments were made about the lack of reference in the diagram to the Older People's Partnership 'All Our Tomorrows'.

#### Conclusions

- Review section to ensure that it is clear, and that it provides enough information about the delivery mechanisms
- Improve the partnership diagram to reflect all the key strategic partnerships that sit within the family of the Stockport Partnership.

### **3.9 SECTION 6: YOUR PLACE - HOW YOU CAN HELP DELIVER THE VISION**

#### Response

17 comments were made about this section. They included suggestions to make references to LINKs and the Regeneration and Renewal Framework, and about how the partnership could use this opportunity to begin developing a 'culture of community' in Stockport i.e. the way we live, the way we travel, how we spend our free time etc... Most of the rest of the comments were from residents making specific comments to volunteering.

#### Conclusions

- Review section in line with suggestions.

### **4.0 Suggested gaps**

4.1 A number of suggestions were made about issues that are missing from the draft Community Strategy. These are:

- The ongoing review and evaluation of the strategy
- Delivery of the outcomes
- More about what is unique about Stockport M.B.C Transport / TIF
- Local Development Framework
- Delivering a low carbon economy
- Addressing cross-cutting issues – social, environment and economic section approach too segregated
- Too little about Children and Young People (from Children's Trust and residents comments)
- Culture and sport
- Business start-ups
- Positive focus on older people
- The role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in delivering the strategy
- Polarisation and health not fully addressed
- Role of partners
- Changes to the economy
- Educational achievement
- Disability
- The condition of roads and pavement (resident's comments)

4.2 Other comments received are listed in the table and mostly regarded the consultation process, layout, images and grammar.

## **5.0 Feedback from the PPI Group**

5.1 The partnership's 'Public Participation and Involvement' group reviewed the consultation responses and made the following recommendations in line with the Charter on Public Participation and Involvement:

- The feedback mechanisms for the consultation exercise need to be clear and followed up so that people are aware how their participation has helped
- The final strategy document needs to state an ongoing commitment to consultation in order to refresh the document
- The final strategy needs a plain English check – LINKs or the All Our Tomorrows Shadow Board could carry this out.

5.2 It is proposed that:

1. The table with responses and comments to be made available along with this report on the Stockport Partnership's website.
2. The final strategy to contain a commitment to ongoing consultation in order to refresh the document
3. LINKs / the AOT Shadow Board are approached to carry out the plain English check.

## **6.0 The way forward**

6.1 The Stockport Partnership has carried out a substantial consultation on the draft Community Strategy. It is likely that there will be some additional comments to feed in to this consultation process. During the process the need to carry out some additional consultation with children and young people was identified, and this will be taking place in October. The Stockport Partnership Forum is usually the mechanism for ensuring the participation of those representing vulnerable or hard to hear groups and, following an analysis of attendance at the Forum, an additional effort has been made to reach out to those groups that did not attend and offer an additional opportunity to comment on the strategy. Any results obtained will be fed in to the development of the final strategy.

6.2 During this time the Council's Policy Unit has also been undertaking a number of other pieces of work to arrive at a robust and credible sustainable Community Strategy. These are:

- Completion of the work on the vision
- Updating the assessment of ongoing consultation activity and mapping this against the draft Community Strategy
- Comparison of the evidence base for the strategy with the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework to enable integration
- Sustainability Appraisal (see the Stockport Partnership Forum report)
- Preparation for the development of a performance framework for the strategy, in anticipation of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) commencing in April 2009
- Review of the anticipated impacts of the economic downturn or 'credit crunch' and how they are going to be addressed in the strategy.

- 6.4 A considerable amount of work therefore still needs to be undertaken to complete the strategy. In addition to those points listed above, the Board is required to provide clarity about the 'vision' for the strategy via the process identified in 3.1, ensuring that there is an agreed shared vision to guide the work of partner bodies of the Stockport Partnership.
- 6.5 Completion of this work is anticipated over the Autumn and it is expected that a final draft of the strategy will be brought to the Board in either November 2008 or January 2009, dependent on progress on work outlined above. Once agreed by the Board and ratified by partners, the final strategy must be agreed at a Council Meeting in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations 2000/2853. Subject to no further delay this is due to take place on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 The Stockport Partnership Board is asked to:
1. Note the responses to the consultation
  2. Agree that in drafting the final strategy the results of the consultation and conclusions throughout this report are taken into account
  3. Note the work that still needs to be undertaken and the timescales for the completion of the strategy.

For further information please contact Stephanie Roffe, Corporate Policy Officer, Tel: 0161 474 3012 or email [stephanie.roffe@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:stephanie.roffe@stockport.gov.uk)