



Report to Cabinet

Subject: Gedling Sustainable Community Strategy Review

Date: 7 February 2008

Author: Head of Strategy and Performance

1. Purpose of the Report

- To update Cabinet on progress with the review of the Gedling Sustainable Community Strategy.
- To seek Cabinet views on how best to involve members in the consultation process for the Sustainable Community Strategy.

2. Background

The Sustainable Community Strategy is the Borough's overarching strategic document. Its pre-eminence is confirmed in the Vision adopted in December 2006 which states that "the fundamental role and purpose of the Council in future will be to define and then deliver the vision of the Borough and its future as set out in the Community Strategy".

As a guiding document for the Borough, the Strategy is to be developed through and owned by the Gedling Partnership. Final responsibility for its agreement rests with the Borough Council, consistent with its community leadership role.

The current Community Strategy runs out at the end of 2008. The Partnership has therefore begun a review with the aim of publishing a new strategy by the end of 2008. Leading this review is one of the Council's Corporate Tasks for 2007/8 and 2008/09.

This report updates members on progress with the review to date.

3. Progress

3.1 – Overall approach to the review

At its meeting on 16th July 2007, the Gedling Partnership Board agreed a proposal to review the Strategy. It agreed that, in carrying out the review, the Partnership should consider a number of key issues, arising from legislative changes and other good practice. This includes links and integration with Local Development Frameworks, the local Housing Strategy and the Nottinghamshire Local Area Agreement.¹

A Strategy Review Group was established to progress the review, working to a timetable that would see the new Strategy in place by October 2008 (subsequently revised to December 2008). This timetable includes a number of key stages:

- Stage 1 – Evidence gathering
- Stage 2 – Consultation and engagement
- Stage 3 – Analysis and evaluation
- Stage 4 – Consultation on draft – actions to deliver
- Stage 5 – Amendment and adoption²

The Strategy Review Group has been meeting since September, to coordinate evidence gathering and to consider methods of consultation. Table A highlights the agencies involved in the Group.

Table A: Gedling Sustainable Community Strategy Review Group Members
Gedling Borough Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Nottinghamshire Police
Nottinghamshire County Teaching Primary Care Trust
Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire
Gedling Community and Voluntary Services

Progress has been reported to the Gedling Partnership Board.

3.2 – Issues arising from latest Government Guidance

In November, the Government issued 'Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities Statutory Guidance: Draft for Consultation', which included sections relating the future role of Local Strategic Partnerships and Sustainable Community Strategies. A copy of the guidance can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/statutoryguidance>.

¹ 'Review the Gedling Community Strategy', pages 1-2, report to Gedling Partnership Board, 160707

² 'Review the Gedling Community Strategy', pages 2-4, report to Gedling Partnership Board, 160707

This latest guidance confirms that “the Sustainable Community Strategy is the **overarching plan** for promoting and improving the well-being of the area”.³ It highlights the need for alignment of Sustainable Community Strategies with the local authority’s Local Development Framework, Housing and Homelessness Strategies, as well as regard for the Local Area Agreement for the area and relevant Regional and Sub-regional plans.⁴ This re-affirms the Partnership’s adopted approach to reviewing the Gedling Community Strategy, and the underlying issues set out in the Council’s organisational vision.

3.3 – Evidence gathering and consultation

The Partnership Executive agreed proposals for evidence gathering and consultation, developed through the Review Group, on 17th December 2007.

The adopted approach is to develop a single “State of the Borough” consultation document, on which consultation will be based using a range of techniques.

The document would: -

- Set out a spatial portrait of the Borough and the surrounding area
- Incorporate evidence gathered from a wide range of sources, covering spatial and wider related data, including that relating to community safety, health, environment, economic development and children’s’ services.
- Incorporate perception measures and softer community views gathered through recent previous consultations, ensuring that key community concerns and issues are reflected and given due weight.
- Outline the issues arising from this analysis and options to address them.

The Sustainability Community Strategy Review Group is gathering evidence against 10 key themes to feed into the document - these are: -.

- Is Gedling safe?
- Is Gedling green?
- Is Gedling healthy?
- Is Gedling prosperous?
- Is Gedling accessible?
- Is Gedling a good place to live?
- Is Gedling engaged?
- Is Gedling a physically attractive place to live?
- Is Gedling a good place to grow up?
- Demographic information

A range of existing measures are being considered against each of the themes.

Consultation techniques proposed for deployment include: -

³ ‘Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities Statutory Guidance: Draft for Consultation’, page 30

⁴ ‘Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities Statutory Guidance: Draft for Consultation’, pages 31-34

- Publication of the formal “State of the Borough” consultation document. This would be printed for formal circulation, as well as being made available electronically, and would be accompanied by a questionnaire-style reply proforma.
- Making presentations to key stakeholder groups, including parish councils, elected members, residents associations, business groups, Youth Assembly, Race Awareness Forum, Local Area Forums and other Gedling Partnership sub-groups. The purpose of these will be to set out findings of the evidence, outline issues and options and seek views on them, either at the meeting or more formally in writing.
- Roadshow displays around the Borough, including at libraries, shopping centres and children’s centres, which will be staffed at busy times.

Responses would be sought in various formats. There is also potential here to use the consultation process as a platform for more sustainable community engagement in future, to aid the development of a future Community Engagement Strategy and neighbourhoods agenda.

It had also been intended (and agreed in principle by the Executive on 17th December), to bring together the Community Strategy consultation with that for both the ‘Issues and Options’ element of the Local Development Framework’s Core Strategy and with the initial ‘Housing Strategy’ consultation.⁵ This would have been in line with the guidance from Government previously cited - however, issues raised in the recent draft Regional Spatial Strategy mean that Issues and Options consultation is now likely to be delayed. Housing Strategy consultation will however still be incorporated and issues arising from the Community Strategy consultations will feed into Issues and Options exercise, ensuring that the two processes remain closely aligned. The State of the Borough consultation will in effect form a scooping exercise for the more specific Issues and Options consultation.

Partner agencies have agreed to support Gedling BC employees with the consultation process, including staffing displays when required, delivering presentations to stakeholder groups, proposing stakeholder group meetings to present at and other forms of engagement. The community welcomed Board members’ leadership during the last Community Strategy Review in 2005, when they presented to groups on the draft priorities of the Partnership.

Gedling Borough Council has recently purchased the ‘Limehouse’ consultation tool. Though specifically designed for spatial planning consultation, this software tool would also provide a useful Audit trail for feedback on the written elements of the Community Strategy consultation. As a result the Executive has agreed to its use for this part of the Review.

⁵ Gedling Partnership Executive Minutes, 1712007

3.4 Timetable

Table B below gives an indication of the current timetable partners are working to as part of this evidence gathering and consultation process.

Table B: Evidence Gathering and Consultation Timetable	
January 2008	Complete Evidence Gathering Explore possible venues for roadshow displays
February 2008	First draft of 'State of the Borough' report, to include area based profiles Contact stakeholder groups to set dates for Gedling Partnership presentations Prepare consultation materials – presentation, Gedling Contacts Magazine article, questionnaires, roadshow displays
March- April 2008	State of the Borough Consultation document completed State of the Borough Consultation to take place

3.5 – Member engagement

The Council is strongly represented on the Partnership Executive and Board, which ensures strong member engagement in the decision-making process.

Consideration does need to be given to how members can be more widely involved, particularly at the consultation stage, so as to put forward their own views on the consultation document and to support communities with their engagement with the process.

After discussion with the Partnership Chair, Cllr Wendy Golland, it is suggested that a presentation to members is included as part of the consultation programme, to be timetabled early in the process. This would allow members to be informed of the process, of the State of the Borough consultation document and its key findings and also to be ready to answer any questions from constituents relating to the review. This would probably be a special meeting, to which all members would be invited, to take place in early April.

Further reports will be presented to Cabinet as the review progresses.

4. Resource Implications

Resources to carry out the review and publish the strategy are available from within existing approved budgets, supplemented by support in cash and kind for partner agencies.

Once completed, the Sustainable Community Strategy will be a key influence in steering future resource allocation in the Borough amongst all partner agencies.

5. Recommendation

Members are **recommended** to: -

- Note the approach to and progress with the Sustainable Community Strategy review
- Endorse the proposed approach to member engagement in the State of the Borough consultation process set out in section 3.5 above.