

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL:

DRAFT SERVICE PLAN FOR NEW COMMUNITIES SERVICE 2009/10 TO 2011/12

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Portfolio Holder: Cllr David Bard

SERVICE PLAN OVERVIEW

1. Key Functions and Responsibilities

The New Communities Service takes a corporate lead on planning and delivering growth in South Cambridgeshire; on creating new, sustainable communities; on ensuring existing communities remain sustainable,; and on promoting the cultural, economic and environmental sustainability of communities across the whole district.

As such, the key tasks of the team include:

- Working to enable the development of sustainable new communities in South Cambridgeshire, in partnership with Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Horizons, Parish Councils, local communities and others
- Championing the importance of good design, effective place-making and sustainable growth within the Council: ensuring that the needs of the new community are met and supporting other services to deliver growth and to serve a growing population
- Ensuring that the growth of existing communities enhances them and brings benefits to their, and their neighbouring residents
- Determining all applications (with the exception of householder) for major sites. *This is a statutory Planning function.*
- Leading on community services across the district, enabling and providing services to existing communities in community infrastructure, sports, arts and community development, and using these services to promote sustainable communities and tackle disadvantage;
- Leading economic development activity across the district, with a focus on the importance of the economy for growth, and the need to support the development of local businesses
- Leading on sustainability across the district, supporting low carbon solutions for local communities, and promoting sustainable design for new communities
- Leading on the empowerment and engagement of communities directly affected by growth, and providing best practice advice within the authority.
- Leading on the negotiation of S.106 agreements supporting the statutory planning function of the authority.

2. Context

a) External Drivers

Slow-down in national economy is affecting rate of delivery through developers; tighter financial climate will make negotiation of appropriate packages for sites to be developed over a long period more difficult.

Creation of the Homes and Communities Agency from January 2009 may impact on access to funding and on Northstowe (through EP role)

The publication of the Sub-National review of Economic development has placed additional responsibility upon local authorities, and shifted this service into a less discretionary area. Opportunities exist for the enhancement of service delivery in this area, as the SNR moves through the legislative process.

Challenge to non-statutory services to deliver in increasingly tight financial climate, but positive opportunities for sport-related activities in run up to 2012 Olympics. This includes government funding for free swimming for target groups for 2 years; other opportunities may follow.

Political change locally or nationally could have a significant impact on the growth agenda.

There is significant media interest in growth and delivery, and the reputational impact of this could make delivery of services more difficult in future. Negative publicity can also be damaging to relationships with partners so managing communications is very important to these projects.

A District boundary review will have significant impact on the role of the team. The work around Northstowe is so significant that this would not be a threat, but would allow the team to focus on the new town; however there would be an increased need to ensure cross boundary learning is shared to avoid mistakes being repeated.

Delivery of growth is highly dependent on appropriate progress being made by our key partners. Transport is particularly key to this and any delays in delivering transport infrastructure such as the Cambridgeshire Guided Bus or the improvements to the A14 will have significant impact on this service and its ability to deliver.

The importance of Climate Change within the wider political framework has, and will continue to make this an important area of work for the Council. The council has a strong role to play in the leadership of the community.

b) Key Partners

We work in partnership with a number of organisations, including other statutory partners, businesses, and third sector organisations. Key partners include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Cambridgeshire Horizons
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Cambridge City Council
- Parish Councils
- Other local authorities
- Developers, especially the Joint Venture partners for Northstowe, and partners developing large sites at Trumpington Meadows, Cambourne, Cambridge East and Cambridge Northern Fringe
- CPL – the Delivery Vehicle for Affordable housing at Northstowe and Trumpington Meadows
- Housing Associations delivering new homes on other sites
- The 9 SCDC Village Colleges
- NHS Cambridgeshire
- Arts Council East

- Sport England
- The Football Association
- Cambs ACRE and Voluntary Sector Groups

For our major partnerships, robust partnership arrangements are in place and have been checked through the corporate review of partnerships and corporate partnerships register.

For example, our relationship with Horizons and others working on growth is shaped by the Horizons Board, and managed through Programme Boards for each site, which regularly review progress, risks and issues.

For new affordable housing, the delivery partner was selected through a rigorous process, in partnership with the Housing Corporation (soon to become the Homes and Communities Agency) and Cambridge City Council; a Strategic Framework is now in place to oversee the management of this project.

The District Council has always had a strong tradition of providing enabling support to key partners to ensure the delivery of services to residents. In particular, partners include Parish Councils and the Village Colleges, which directly provide play, sport, recreation, community and arts facilities and services through support, advice and funding from the Council.

Other important partnership work involves NHS Cambridgeshire where a number of quality of life and health related initiatives are delivered to more vulnerable residents

c) Strengths and Weaknesses

The new team has significant strengths in:

- highly skilled, motivated staff
- strong tradition of providing enabling support and partnership working
- new joint planning framework, committee and director
- new roles to fill identified gaps in relation to joint urban design team (now in post), community infrastructure technical/ procurement skills; S106 negotiation for smaller sites
- good and developing community engagement practice
- good relationships with most partners and communities
- developing relationships with Parish Councils
- good practice in arts, sports and community development

The Service needs further development in the following areas:

- team building
- professional development of staff
- management and leadership capacity
- promoting corporate ownership and leadership of the growth agenda to enable the Council to play a strong role as a partner in delivery of growth
- developing clear, understandable targets and systems for reporting on progress against them
- developing member engagement in the growth agenda

There are key opportunities for the Service in:

- development of the Northstowe trust
- negotiating the Northstowe and Cambourne S106 packages

- Delivery of a more co-ordinated approach to S 106 negotiations including delivery of the SPD's
- using the slowdown in the housing market to maximise affordable housing delivery
- Developing relationships with the Business sector and using the economy to promote growth and improved rural services
- Promoting carbon reduction in existing as well as new settlements
- Developing relationships with parish councils, including supporting the new Orchard park community Council
- Taking a more proactive role in ensuring the quality of new developments is ensured through the delivery phase as well as in its planning.
- taking advantage of the sporting and cultural benefits of the Olympics in the lead up to 2012
- Delivery of a new look arts service based on the current review

3. Service Objectives

The Service Objective for New Communities is:

To deliver, enable and enhance the social, health, environmental and economic well-being of new and existing communities in the district.

In pursuit of this we have sub-headings as follows:

- To deliver a sustainable new town at Northstowe
- To deliver a sustainable new community at Trumpton Meadows
- To deliver a sustainable new community at Cambridge East
- To support sustainable communities at Arbury Park and Cambourne
- To promote economic sustainability in rural communities
- To promote environmental sustainability in rural communities
- To promote healthy, active lifestyles
- To promote social inclusion through community development and arts
- To develop community engagement
- A commitment to delivering high standards of design

4. Your Customers

Our services reach a wide range of customers within the district, especially through sports, arts and community development programmes. Feedback on these services is very positive. Activities and events are monitored for success and satisfaction rates and capital grants have recently been reviewed and improved.

We also have customer who are our partners.

In developing new communities, some of the benefits of our services will be realised by customers only in many years' time. However, to ensure that we take those future customers' likely needs and aspirations into account, we have a significant programme of community engagement around the growth agenda. This has included: numerous formal and informal community and stakeholder events, presentations and meetings with identified groups eg parish councils, schools and the Joint Action Group for Northstowe, as well as the Orchard Park Action Group.

5. Progress/Performance Overview

New Communities as a service was formed during 2008/09, and therefore does not have a full set of performance objectives for the year. Key items from the corporate plan identified to be delivered were:

Key achievements for the service during the year have included:

- Formation of the NC Service and recruitment of new Corporate Manager, with all posts in service now filled bar two, where recruitment is underway.
- Selecting a Strategic delivery Partner for the affordable housing on major sites, and agreeing a strategic management framework for this project with partners
- Delivery of 300 affordable housing units at Orchard Park
- Set up of the new Joint Urban Design team to provide expert advice recognising that good design can also deliver a range of social and environmental and economic benefits to communities
- Excellent community engagement events including innovative Northstowe fete and Farmers Market
- New Orchard Park Action group established to move forward outstanding issues at Arbury park
- Joint Fringes Development Control Committee resolved to approve 600 houses and associated community and leisure facilities at Trumpington Meadows.
- Receipt and processing of Northstowe application in efficient manner: all documents available on-line, and wide community consultation carried out. Use of new IT system to register representations, enabling all to view comments made. Detailed and timely written response back to applicant.
- Established a Cambourne pre-application advice forum
- Increase in number of arts development projects delivered by Arts Development Managers
- High levels of participation and retention levels in the Fitness 4 health Scheme
- Continued development towards establishment the Northstowe Community Trust
- Community Capital grants fully allocated
- SPD's in Open Space and Public Art Adopted (due Cabinet Nov 08)

Staff now located in the New Communities Team came from a number of other services, and have therefore been delivering against PIs identified in several other service plans for the year 2007/08.

This will continue to be the case for the Major Development (Planning) team whose performance will continue to be measured against PIs set out in the Planning and Sustainable Communities Service Plan.

6. Resources

The budget for New Communities is still being disaggregated from other budgets; a clear budget position should be available by the time this plan is finalised. Bids will accompany the plan highlighting areas of the service that are not fully funded at present.

Budget and outturn for 2007/08 and budget for 2008/09 summarised. To be added into final service plan in March with info supplied by Finance

7. Value for Money Overview

The creation of the New Communities team has been designed to enhance Value for Money by promoting more effective corporate working. Value for money may be considered to consist of two significant components; efficiency improvements and the value derived by the authority from the work carried out by the organisation.

Value is a comparative concept, and is defined in the context as: an amount of service delivered for a given price, at a given quality which is considered fair and reasonable. In assessing this, then we need to consider the impact of the work being carried out, the quality of the work being conducted and the net cost of this to the authority. The costs of the New Community team are significantly off-set by the value of external funding drawn in. Over ¼ of the staff employed are directly funded by government, providing the authority with the ability to respond to the challenges of growth.

Opportunities to use external resources to fund services have been maximised. This includes

- funding from Cambridgeshire Horizons has been negotiated, which has benefited a range of service areas, including Environmental Health and IT, as well as external communities. Revenue funding attracted to the authority in 2008/9 totalled £210,000 this included £90,000 for staff. The Council also worked with partners to bring funding into the district for projects which the Council was not leading on, which included as £500,000 direct for community projects.
- Use of SCDC grants to match funding from other sourcing, enabling community projects to proceed. For example the new community centre at Oakington, working closely with the parish council, who also part funded the project, with a total cost of £813,000 was built as a result of South Cambs securing Housing Growth Money (£600,000) and also providing a top-up grant worth £75,000, with the remainder being made up of parish, WREN and other funders. This is a prime example of the role of the new communities service, in drawing together the interested parties and accessing funding.
- SCDC grant funding used to lever in £300 000 from Sport England towards the Impington Dual Use Sports Centre
- The Service continues to attract external funding to support growth actions and priorities within South Cambs, and has in principle commitments for future Housing Growth capital of over £5million to bring forward facilities for the new communities, as well as NHS Cambridgeshire funding for the TEAM Project and the Fitness 4 Health Scheme.
- Successful use of funding obtained through s106 agreements to support community development and public art in growth areas
- bids for resources for future years include taking up the opportunity to promote free swimming in the district using DFES grant.

8. Workforce Overview

New Communities has a highly skilled workforce from a range of technical backgrounds. Some staff are long-serving. However, there have been gaps in the team due to staff moving on, and some gaps have been difficult to fill due to skills shortages: this has particularly applied to the Senior Planning Lawyer post, which was vacant for more than 6 months but has now been filled; use of interim staff was successful in plugging the gap, although clearly not a long term solution due to costs.

There have been concerns from staff about the creation of the new team, and team development needs to remain a high priority for 2008/09, if skilled staff are to be retained. Development of individuals is also a high priority, with a focus on both increasing professional skills, and on developing management and leadership capacity.

The Service has a new Corporate Manager from November 2008.

9. Equalities Overview

No Equality Impact Assessments have been completed this year.

The service seeks to address the needs of a wide range of people in the district including marginalised groups by:

- Consulting and engaging the population in planning for growth, including through events aimed at engaging young people (e.g. the design event in schools), older people and faith groups
- Delivering affordable housing for people on low incomes, people with disabilities, older people, and people with special needs
- Delivering and enabling community development activities to a range of groups to encourage their participation in their community
- Using sport and recreation programmes to encourage people to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles, and appreciate the social inclusion benefits of participation. This has included programmes targeted at women (“women try sport”) and youth programmes targeted specifically at areas where anti social behaviour is an issue.
- Specific work with Travellers to involve them in planning for potential sites at Northstowe
- Capital grant aid towards making village halls and community buildings more accessible
- Sports events and coaching for people with a disability in build up to 2012 Paralympics eg. Best 8 Event
- Working to ensure that design of new communities will meet the needs of a diverse population, including physical access, access to services, faith facilities, etc

10. Risk Overview

There are risks facing the service in the coming year which have a short- or medium-term impact on the ability of the service to deliver on priorities. However, given the long-term nature of the projects in which this team is involved, there are also very significant longer-term risks, which could be mitigated or worsened by

actions taken and leadership shown in the coming years. These are shown as B below.

A: Current, short and medium term risks:

1. Economic slow-down, and non availability of credit results in the non-delivery of new housing areas and the inability to negotiate a suitable or satisfactory S.106 agreement.
2. Lack of strategy for management of public realm at Northstowe, *leading to* poor decisions, either financially or on services. *Resulting in* inadequate services and loss of reputation. Actions: develop Community Trust to take on public realm; develop clear strategy for public realm at Northstowe with partners
3. Failure to agree corporate priorities & process for S.106 *Leading to* weakened negotiating position. *Resulting in* lack of facilities and support for residents. Actions: team to involve Cabinet appropriately in setting priorities for 106 negotiations; develop clear corporate (as opposed to Planning) strategy for each major site, focussing initially on Northstowe.
4. Unable to reach satisfactory agreement with our partners on S.106 priorities, *leading to* issues important to the Council and residents not being included. *Resulting in* lack of facilities and support for residents and poor reputation. Actions: as for 3; engage fully in partnership working; work with members to develop shared understanding of and commitment to priorities.
5. Lack of capacity in support services – Graphics, ICT, etc. *leading to inability of team to deliver*. Action: identify key support required in service plan
6. Inability to recruit and/or retain appropriately skilled staff. Action: ongoing team development; team building events for all teams; appraisals etc to design individual development plans.
7. Insufficient priority given to addressing environmental sustainability in new communities. *Leading to* developments/existing homes which do not adequately mitigate against/adapt to climate change. *Resulting in* failure to impact on climate change, with increasing consequences, and poor reputation. Action: training for planning and urban design staff in the use of techniques to build in sustainability & carbon reduction in all developments. Continued work with development industry to bring about adoption of these techniques. Appropriate use of planning conditions, obligations to secure such.
8. lack of social opportunities or support mechanisms in new development area(s) *leading to* high levels of mental distress and antisocial behaviour *resulting in* loss of reputation and high workload. Action: ensure that community development and social wellbeing is given appropriate weight in S.106 discussions (in line with the rules pertaining to S.106)
9. Insufficient priority given to addressing environmental sustainability in existing villages across the district. *Leading to* communities which do not adequately mitigate against/adapt to climate change. *Resulting in* failure to impact on climate change, with increasing consequences.