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| MEETING: | COUNCIL |
| DATE: | 5 MARCH 2010 |
| TITLE OF REPORT: | SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY (REFRESH) |
| REPORT BY: | THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL |

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards affected

County wide

Purpose

To seek approval of the revised Sustainable Community Strategy for Herefordshire.

Recommendation

THAT: the revised Sustainable Community Strategy be agreed.

Key Points Summary

- The Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy is a key long-term planning document for improving the quality of life and services in Herefordshire and forms part of the Council's Budget & Policy Framework.
- Every Local Authority is required to have a Sustainable Community Strategy which has been developed and agreed with its Local Strategic Partnership. Herefordshire Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership for Herefordshire, representing local public services, businesses, and voluntary and community sector organisations.
- The current strategy covers the period up to March 2010 and is now due to be refreshed in light of achievements to date and new challenges that Herefordshire is currently facing.
- The Herefordshire Partnership Board agreed at its meeting on 8 February 2010 to undertake a substantial review of the Strategy during the coming year so that the priorities for the County are framed around place rather than the current strategic themes. As such, it is proposed that the refreshed document will have a life of one year from April 2010.

Alternative Options

- 1 There are no alternative options; every Local Authority is required to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy agreed by its Local Strategic Partnership.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Julie Gethin, Head of Partnership Support on (01432) 260610

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 To ensure the Sustainable Community Strategy is refreshed and the priorities identified for future years are approved.

Introduction and Background

- 3 The original Community Strategy for Herefordshire was formulated and adopted four years ago. The priorities of the refreshed Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy need to be incorporated into organisational plans and activities in order to achieve Herefordshire's Vision – "Herefordshire will be a place where people, organisations and businesses working together within an outstanding natural environment will bring about sustainable prosperity and well being for all".
- 4 The Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy sets the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Herefordshire in a way that contributes to sustainable development. It sets Herefordshire in context and offers the distinctive vision and ambition of the area, backed by clear evidence and analysis (for example the State of Herefordshire Report).
- 5 The 2000 Local Government Act charged local authorities with preparing a local Community Strategy with their partners through a Local Strategic Partnership, and Herefordshire's first version was known as the Herefordshire Plan. The Community Strategy for Herefordshire was subsequently published in 2006 and in recognition of the importance of sustainability, has been renamed the Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 6 The Strategy published in 2006 highlighted a number of key local issues which led to the formulation of desired outcomes for the County. These were identified as a result of a comprehensive consultation process undertaken during 2005. The Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy has been developed from the last Community Strategy and refreshed by looking at the wealth of information gathered since 2005, detailed in background papers, and through consultation with partners and the community.

Key Considerations

- 7 Taking into account the county's key characteristics and all other sources of information a draft list of priorities for Herefordshire has emerged. These are grouped under the following six priority themes:
 - Children and Young People
 - Economic Development and Enterprise
 - Environment
 - Healthier Communities and Older People
 - Safer Communities
 - Stronger Communities
- 8 During the process of refreshing the Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy three guiding principles for partnership working emerged. These will be embedded into the way Herefordshire Partnership works to ensure a co-ordinated long term approach is taken to delivering the priorities of the six themes. The guiding principles are:
 - Everyone is Someone
 - Safeguard our Future
 - Work across Boundaries

- 9 The strategy highlights the key issues and challenges facing the place of Herefordshire and its communities and articulates the county's ambition to achieve better outcomes for people who live and work in the area. The strategy also talks about people and place, setting out the intention to improve the approach to locality working and the way this will inform and shape partnership priorities and ways of working in the future. Herefordshire Partnership, in recognition of the need to move towards a focus of place rather than thematic strategic priorities, agreed at its meeting in February 2010 that a fundamental review of the Strategy should be undertaken during 2010 with the intention of preparing a revised document for consultation later this year.
- 10 An important principle in delivering services across Herefordshire is that they should meet the needs of the local community, with people being able to access services in a flexible way, not determined by where they live. The strategy captures the context of the Government's Total Place agenda and recognises there are opportunities to improve access to services and service delivery by agreeing a common approach to localities in Herefordshire. This approach will be further developed over the coming months; ensuring that those living and working in Herefordshire have equality of access to services, brought about by increasingly delivering services on a locality basis in a way that fully benefits the local community.
- 11 Delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy over the short to medium term is articulated through the county's Local Area Agreement. The current agreement covers the period 2008-2011 and is refreshed on an annual basis. As part of this year's refresh every area has been offered the opportunity to request amendments to those targets affected by the current economic downturn. As such, Herefordshire Partnership has requested that two of its 30 targets be revised – NI 155 (number of affordable homes delivered) and NI152 (number of working age people on out of work benefits). The process of refresh will be concluded over the next month with Government Office West Midlands at which point the Leader will formally sign off the updated document.
- 12 The Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy will be delivered through many organisations, networks, sectors and groups working together as part of Herefordshire Partnership's three tier structure:
- Herefordshire Partnership Board - sets the vision for Herefordshire based on a sound understanding of the county, local issues and a responsibility to ensure delivery of efficient, high quality services.
 - Herefordshire Partnership Management Group – responsible for delivering the Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy by ensuring resources are utilised to address the identified priorities.
 - Herefordshire Partnership Policy and Delivery Groups – six groups (one for each of the six themes) who formulate and commission work to address the priorities in the Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy, based on comprehensive information of local need. They report progress on their work to the Management Group.

Community Impact

- 13 The vision and priorities of the Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy aim to improve the quality of life and service delivery in all areas of the county. Community engagement is at the heart of the work of Herefordshire Partnership in informing these priorities and driving service improvement in the locality.

Financial Implications

- 14 The priorities identified can be delivered from within existing sources of funding and allocation of Area Based Grant funding. There are also opportunities for Parish Councils to consider delivering some local activities by utilising funding available through their precept.

Legal Implications

- 15 None.

Risk Management

- 16 Delivery of the priorities within the Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy through the Herefordshire Partnership will be a key area of assessment for the Comprehensive Area Assessment and as such forms part of the corporate performance management system. The risks associated with delivery of the priorities detailed in the strategy will be managed through the individual policy and delivery groups of the Herefordshire Partnership.

Consultees

- 17 The six Policy and Delivery Groups have been consulted and wider input through their networks has been encouraged.
- 18 The draft strategy was considered at Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 February, and their views were included in Cabinet's considerations. The Committee resolved, noting that the document needed further editing and that they had made a number of detailed comments in this regard, that Cabinet be recommended to consider the following principal observations:
- The need for the Strategy to emphasise the importance of service delivery and of partners being responsive to issues of local concern and accountable for their actions.
 - The need for the Strategy to address the problem faced by parts of the community where the population was ageing, there was no affordable housing, and no house building, meaning it was difficult for young people to live in those communities.
 - The need for the Strategy to reflect more strongly the critical importance of affordable housing for local people recognising the vital role housing played in health, education, safety and family life.
 - The need for the Strategy to emphasise the importance of continuing to strive to maintain and improve educational standards.
 - That a simplified document should be prepared to reduce production costs, confining use of colour, for example, to the front cover.

Appendices

- A Final Draft Sustainable Community Strategy.

Background Papers

- The State of Herefordshire Report
- Unitary Development Plan

- The Herefordshire Quality of Life Survey