

Environmentally Sensitive workshop

4th January 2007

Present: Belinda Fowler, AONB (Chair), Neil Pullen, Wiltshire WildlifeTrust, Jon Gillam, Swindon College, Lynn Forrester, Swindon Borough Council, Craig Jefferies, Environment Agency, Jonathan Wilshaw, Great Western Community Forest, Janet Beattie (Notetaker).

Apologies:

Cllr David Wren, Bruce Clarke, Swindon Learning Partnership

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| 1 | <p>The vision: Communities which meet the needs of a growing and changing population but which place the environment at the core. A place which earns national recognition for safeguarding and enhancing that environment for future generations.</p> |
| 2 | <p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspiring and engaging everyone in enjoying and improving their environment • Creating a network of green spaces(green infrastructure) which conserves, expands and links together areas for wildlife, strengthens landscape character, provides protection and a setting for cultural heritage sites and features, opportunities for access to the natural environment and which provides a robust framework for new developments. • Recognising the role that environment plays in creating a sense of place, promoting the well being of communities and attracting business and creating places that are safe, accessible and high quality, attractive environments for both residents and visitors • Encouraging and supporting businesses, institutions and organisations (both urban and rural) to show leadership in reducing the environmental impact of their operations and developing approaches and technologies to safeguard and enhance the Borough's environment for the future. • Ensuring sustainable use of natural resources, encouraging sustainable production, management and consumption • Minimising waste through promoting and supporting reduction, reuse and recycling and ensuring disposal of it in accordance with best practice • Minimising pollution and in particular CO2 emissions – environmental protection • Providing opportunities and supporting people to make lifestyle choices which protect the environment and quality of life. |
| 3 | <p>Delivery: Through policy development and in particular the ensuring that policy within the local development framework and its implementation through development control supports these objectives Inspire and engage all partners to plan and act now Through engaging the community for delivery on the ground Through engaging organisations, institutions and business – sector champions</p> |

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| <p>Raising awareness and promotion Through partnership development and effective use of resources Use the LAA to push it forward Attracting external investment and targeting it effectively Good practice demonstration – lead by example Invest in one of the new Development Areas and use it as a leading example of good practice Benchmark against others who are doing similar things Being aware of the legislation Ensure that we have the information/data to make informed choices Publicity – use our relationships with the media Recruit high profile champions from all sectors of the community including business</p> |
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Discussion notes:

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| <p>After introductions, it was agreed to use the agenda from the Chair.</p> |
| <p>Defining the remit: Purpose of the group reiterated, and the background to this workshop explained. Group agreed the existing Community Strategy is good, the environment section just needs building on and updating.</p> |
| <p>Title: does the theme “environmentally sensitive” cut it? Group agreed this theme is too soft – it is not aspirational enough - suggested words are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmentally sustainable – this was felt to encapsulate what needed to be said, but there were concerns that we would not be allowed to use it. • Environmentally centred • Environment at the heart/core - should environment be at the heart/core of the decision making process? • A place which values its environment – again, felt by some not to go far enough • An environmentally prosperous place |
| <p>The current vision of “A place which values its environment and safeguards it for future generations” is ok, but needs stretching to make it more inclusive.” The vision from the conference is more the delivery than a vision.</p> |
| <p>Key words and phrases that need to be reflected in the vision are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard the environment for future generations – this is inclusive; • Meeting the needs of a changing and growing population • Need to celebrate what we’ve got • Sustainability needs to be at the core of what we do • Sustainability needs to be part of the growth. • Pride in place/environment • Value placed on environment • Encourage people to live in ways which will conserve and enhance the environment • Needs to be about community as well as place • Placing the Environment at the core (of what? – of decision making, of growth, of lifestyles?) • National and regional reputation – desirability of being at the forefront of environmental protection and enhancement (let’s be aspirational). • A growing and changing community which places the environment at the core, |

which seeks to build a national reputation for safeguarding and enhancing the environment for future generations.

Priorities:

- Current priorities in the CS are relevant but need updating. For example, landscape and cultural heritage need to be included.
- Climate change is a fundamental priority – the overarching issue that will impact on everything. Much discussion ensued about whether it should be included as a priority in this section or be a cross cutting policy at the beginning of the document. General agreement that needed to be a cross cutting policy at the front of the whole document but most felt that needed to be addressed also in this section directly – at the beginning of the section but within each of the priorities. Examples of this: the need to take a landscape scale approach to biodiversity conservation to ensure ecological viable units capable of withstanding the impacts of climate change (under the green infrastructure priority), conserving water resources and mitigating against flood risk (under sustainable use of natural resources)
- The first priority on inspiring and engaging is vital and still highly relevant.
- Reference protecting, maintaining and enhancing the natural environment – although the priority should always be to protect our existing natural assets (indeed we have a legal duty to do so), we cannot expect to achieve this solely by taking a site by site approach to that protection. Climate change, significant growth/new development makes this impossible. Instead we should be striving for the creation/development of a robust green infrastructure which protects and buffers existing assets, provides opportunities for landscape scale expansion and enhancement of these habitats, strengthens landscape character, provides protection and a setting for cultural heritage, opportunities for access to the natural environment and provides a strong green framework within which change can take place.
- Transport is an important issue – but will be dealt with in another section. Do we need to include a transport priority in this section? Transport impacts can be picked up through priority upon on pollution. We need also to refer to access issues – getting people out of cars and using greener methods of travel, eg. bikes, walking, enhancing opportunities for improved access to the natural environment. Creating sustainable routes within the borough.
- We may be able to add enjoyment of the environment into the priority on inspiring and engaging people...etc.
- Important that this links to the Well Connected section.
- One of the gaps in the existing CS is a priority which focuses on providing opportunities for people to make lifestyle choices which conserve the environment and improve quality of life . This could be about encouraging people to recycle, to have an allotment, to save energy, to get out of the car and onto their bikes etc. Priority is for awareness to be raised about options/opportunities and support to be provided to facilitate those choices.
- Cleaner and greener priority – doesn't just refer to cleaning up dog mess and graffiti. (Cllr Wren had sent through advice of Safe and Clean Days – with new Enforcement Policy with Environment fines with Street Wardens – New Environment Act.)
- It is about creating an attractive town centre – somewhere where people want to come to live, work and take leisure.

- Quality of life for both residents and visitors needed
- Linking the natural environment to the built environment
- Spaces needed where communities can come together and gain a sense of community identity, have opportunities for cultural, community, sport and other activities, take part in civic events, become fit and active etc.
- Fly-tipping and graffiti are only symptoms of the bigger problem.
- Very little specific reference given so far to the rural part of the borough. Urban fringe action plan priorities needs to be brought into this, to include the needs of farming and rural communities, the multi-purpose use of the urban fringe, both for the benefit of its communities and those of the neighbouring urban areas.
- Businesses are key stakeholders and need to drive change – essential to involve businesses in environmental sustainability. This includes both rural and urban business.
- Rather than bemoaning the impact that business can have on the environment, we should be positively encouraging businesses which aim for environmental sustainability and provide support for those that do. – make Swindon a centre for green business and environment technology, each sector responding to their own challenges
- Existing priority on use of resources focuses too much on pollution. Need three separate priorities relating to pollution, carbon reduction and waste.
- Cross cutting values are key to the plan
- Links to plans – group agreed it was essential to have all ensured that the priorities link with other plans – Lynn to send spreadsheet for group to add their plans and links to.
- The group noted that the priorities were just a starting framework and the “real meat” of the document would be the actions falling out of these. There did not seem to be at this stage a mechanism for developing these more detailed actions.

Next Steps

- The work done tonight will form the basis of a document that will go out to consultation for 3 months.
- Feedback from the consultation will be pulled together and presented at the next Strategic Partnership Conference in June 2007.
- Publication of the strategy will take place around **Oct/Nov 2007**.
- The group asked if guidance and information will be going out with the consultation – a full rhetoric will be sent out with the consultation document.
- The members on this group agreed it would be good to meet again once the consultation had been completed during May.
- A further meeting will be organised before the June SSP conference. Action: Janet