

“LOCAL VISION” – PREPARING COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1.1 Does this chapter describe the purpose and context of Community Planning clearly and comprehensively? If not, where do you think further guidance might be needed?

Yes. It reflects the considerable experience of Community Planning built up over recent years. It is agreed the two areas of Sustainable Development and the Welsh language are those where further guidance would be appropriate. It's not clear what is gained by separating Climate Change from Sustainable Development - the former should be seen as a key aspect of the latter.

1.2 What are your views on how often Community Strategies should be reviewed or updated?

Agreed they should be reviewed (not starting from scratch) after each Council election, with annual updates of action plans.

1.3 How important is Community Planning across boundaries? Can or should anything be done to encourage this?

Community Planning should be an intrinsic part of how the LSB works, and since the LSB operates at the Unitary Authority level, that is where its prime focus should lie. However, there are instances where working with neighbouring Councils will be important. LSBs will want to explore this, and the Connecting SE Wales Forum will also play a role in this regard.

2.1 Is the place of the Community Strategy in the wider policy framework clear enough? Are there any national or local areas of uncertainty that need to be clarified?

The reduction in the number of statutory plans is what makes it possible for the Community Strategy to be the key strategic document – the past difficulty has been to make it accommodate the plethora of objectives contained in a number of disparate documents. How other local plans fit into the picture should be the business of the LSB.

2.2 How readily can Community Strategies be integrated with other strategies and plans, whether statutory or not? What, if any, are the obstacles to this?

See 2.1 above

2.3 How readily can Community Strategies reflect regional and national issues and planning frameworks? Again, what, if any, are the obstacles to this?

That remains to be seen. Certainly, it will be easier if national issues are expressed in a few key documents. We will shortly be embarking on the next round of Community Strategies, and this will demonstrate how well it works.

3.1 Are the role and purpose of Local Service Boards and Local Service Agreements sufficiently clear at this development stage?

This should be addressed in due course as part of the review of the pilot LSBs.

3.2 Do you think LSBs/LSAs as described will adequately improve (a) local partnership working and (b) long-term well being and quality of life? If not, what improvements or alternatives would you like to see?

Let's see how it goes. Lessons will be learnt along the way.

4.1 How readily can Community Strategy objectives be measured and reported? Are there any obstacles to this?

In essence this involves translating outcomes into performance indicators. Figure 4.1 sets it out accurately. Each LSB will determine the most appropriate indicators, but this is clearly an area where mutual learning will occur between the various LSBs.

4.2 How should Local Service Boards account for the progress they have made in a way that adds value to individual organisations' accountability mechanisms?

LSBs should develop their own performance management arrangements, but these should be pretty simple. Each constituent organisation will continue with its own arrangements (using what are by now sophisticated systems) and feed the key information to inform the LSB's needs.

4.3 What, if anything, do local partners and national organisations (including WAG) need to do to strengthen performance management and performance measurement by partnerships?

On no account should WAG get involved in micro management. A small number of key outcomes and indicators should be agreed and monitored, and each LSB allowed to get on with it.

5.1 How effectively can partnerships engage with all community and citizen interests in the Community Planning process? What obstacles are there to this, and what might be done about them?

In the Vale, various methods such as the Citizens Panel, Youth Forum, State of Area Debates etc have all been used as part of the Community Planning process. Community engagement has been a strength of Community Planning generally hitherto, and LSBs will be keen to explore new ways of doing it.

5.2 Does this chapter adequately describe other organisations' role in, and contributions to, Community Planning?

Yes, it does so comprehensively.

5.2a Are there other ways in which those contributions could be maximised? – and/or

5.2b Are there limits to how far other organisations can or should become involved? Does the guidance raise unrealistic expectations in this area?

The chapter is pitched at the right level. LSBs have a responsibility to include as wide a circle of stakeholders as possible; equally, not all will contribute to the same extent and in the same way.

APPENDIX B

A1 Do you believe that the proposed duty to co-operate would enhance Community Planning? If so:

A1a Do you agree with its focus on delivering outcomes rather than prescribing processes?

A1b Do you think the list of bodies to which the duty would apply is appropriate? Do you think any should be added (or deleted)?

A duty to co-operate might help where there is current unwillingness to engage, but it's not obvious that such a duty would instil a real commitment. At any rate, it hasn't been a problem in the Vale.