

**CABINET – 6 NOVEMBER 2001 DRAFT MEDIUM TERM
CORPORATE STRATEGY SUMMARY OF
CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

Introduction/ Working Together to Deliver Quality Services

There is a strong tone of support for both the preparation of the Strategy and the opportunity to comment upon it. Some responses use terms such as 'informative and inspiring' and 'valuable'. The majority of responses also give general support to the content of the strategy while making specific comments asking for amendments or additions.

Some respondents ask for a more explicit vision to be set out in the document. A few comment that the Strategy lacks vision or ambition and one thought it should have a ten year time frame.

Others request specific objectives and targets to be included and one response asks for regular tests of effectiveness.

Some comment on the need for action plans and resource statements to back up the Strategy.

There is some concern about the use of unexplained abbreviations and vague language but other respondents thought the Strategy 'clear concise and genuinely accessible'.

One respondent thought the Strategy pre-empted the community strategy and another that the strategy was unclear about how the County Council would lead the preparation of a community strategy. Another respondent suggested that the Strategy should have a 'more balanced view' by including a reference to the significant community leadership role of District Councils and in defining the respective roles of County and District Councils in establishing local Strategic partnerships.

A number of respondents comments on the actions set out in the introduction to achieve the aim of providing services to ensure that 'Leicestershire people enjoy life in a safe, prosperous, healthy and attractive County':

Two respondents comment on the need to ensure that the principle of consultation is established and that technology is used to make consultation more efficient;

One respondent comments that the stated support for the workforce was welcome while two others were concerned about the County Council's commitment in this area or the effect of Job Evaluation;

Another suggested that economic well being and regeneration should be added to the list of 'difficult issues' requiring a 'combined and co-ordinated approach'.

A few respondents thought there should be more reference to equal opportunities, equality of opportunity, social exclusion and the needs of ethnic minority groups.

Two respondents thought there should be reference to Leicester City Council with one suggesting closer working arrangements.

The need for the role of FABLE, the Records Office and the voluntary sector (through a COMPACT) to be recognised was also raised. Separate respondents also asked for reference to be made to the Standards Committee and Best Value. Another commented that the need to improve electoral turnout should be an objective.

There was a general welcome and support for the commitment to partnership working. A number of agencies indicated their willingness to match this commitment. District Councils noted the interdependence of County and District Council services and supported a more co-ordinated approach to service delivery and more efficient arrangements in specific areas such as consultation arrangements, and one suggested that the Memorandum of Understanding between the County and District Councils should be reviewed.

One respondent noted that not all partnerships were listed and suggested that a strategy was needed to ensure, redefine or subsume other partnerships. There was also a request to add the Biodiversity Partnership to the list.

One respondent (not emda) asked for the Regional Development Agency to be recognised as a key partner. Another suggested a list of the agencies the County Council works with should be added to Strategy as an appendix.

Achieving Excellence in Education and Learning

Number of suggestions that references to life-long learning should be strengthened (including role of schools and colleges, libraries and museums and access for adults).

Number of suggestions that the Strategy should contain commitments to development of youth and community education services.

Suggestions that the Strategy should contain commitments to improve school facilities, reduce the number of mobile classrooms and improve access for people with disabilities.

Specific suggestions are made on:

- Monitoring class sizes
- Comparing performance at Key Stage 3/4 with performance at Key Stages 1/2
- Performance of individual schools
- Total delegation of budgets to schools (ie the County Council is not needed)
- Including a reference to the Prince's Trust
- Including a commitment on funding for pre-school education

Meeting Health and Care Needs

Comments that the use of the expression 'independent sector' to cover both the private and voluntary sector is not helpful and underplays differences between the sectors. Suggestions that greater reference should be made about the value of the voluntary sector and community groups here and elsewhere in the Strategy.

Comments that the Strategy should contain a stronger reference to tackling health inequalities and access to health services.

Support for the pledge to lobby the Government to provide free personal as well as nursing care for people in residential and nursing homes.

Comments that references to working with the independent sector to improve home care services are premature.

Specific comments on:

- Promoting the benefits of learning and leisure as part of a prevention and rehabilitation strategy
- Preventing abuse of elderly people in institutions and the home environment
- Need for dedicated and effective school nursing services
- Concern that reference to reviewing residential services for older people without giving a timetable will cause anxiety
- Concern about the process of making appointments to health bodies
- Request for clear commitment to work with Primary Care Trusts
- Support for proposal to seek proper recognition of the role of elected members in new relationships with the National Health Service.

Improving Our Transport System

A total of 27 responses were received upon this section of the strategy. In general the comments reflected what had been stated in the strategy aim for Transport and largely sought to expand on the strategy aims for improving our transport system.

A number of respondents commented on explaining the roles and working relationships further between the County Council and other transport providers/partners (Bus, Rail and District Councils and Highways Agency), and existing Transport Partnerships.

There was a common theme that more emphasis should be made on encouraging alternative forms of transport including walking, cycling, railways and car sharing.

Specific comments were made on:

- Greater Co-ordination and integration between each of the transport service providers, forms of transport and infrastructure.
- Providing adequate levels of Infrastructure investment, revenue and budget allocations for Highways and Public Transport and at a level to allow industry to be efficient.
- The County Council's contribution to and links with regional objectives and studies that directly affect the County Highway Network.
- Finalising the draft walking and cycling strategy.
- Ensuring Bus service reliability and quality.
- Request for improved access to bus services for all, including disabled people, to employment and services.
- Request for clarification on County Council's views on the Local Transport Plan proposals for large scale 'Park & Ride' sites in the urban fringe communities such as Braunstone, specifically around Junction 21 of the M1, and at the Quorn and Bishop Meadows Estate roundabouts outside Loughborough.
- Service provision for public transport between rural and urban areas and making rural recreational facilities more accessible.
- Staggering working/school hours to reduce traffic volumes at peak times.
- Ensuring that a network of hourly bus services can be provided with acceptable journey times to a range of destinations.
- Whether 'affordable' public transport should also include subsidised transport as the cost of public transport was the biggest disincentive to potential users.
- Need to take a balanced view of road charging before ruling out its use and recognising the revenue benefits that may be realised from this.
- Greater priority being given to environmental issues such as congestion and pollution and wildlife habitats.
- Recognising road safety as a particular issue in rural areas and bullet point 2 (improve road safety) should include additional text of "without detrimental affect on the emergency services response when dealing with other life threatening situations.
- Recognising the road safety benefits that are available under powers in the Local Transport Act 2000 to designate quiet lanes and home zones where appropriate.
- Promoting specific projects that have improved different forms of transport arrangements to demonstrate what the County has achieved. Community Transport and new railway were specifically mentioned.
- Comments were made on promoting the benefits of rail travel and a sustainable rail network including the Ivanhoe Line.

Caring for our Environment

In total there were 21 responses to this section of the Strategy generally supporting the County Council's commitment to maintaining and improving the county's environment. The proposal to work in partnership with other organisations to achieve these aims was also welcomed although a reference was made to the need to strengthen the activity and membership of some existing partnerships.

A number of gaps were identified covering the following issues:

- explicit reference to the targets of the Biodiversity Action Plan; and partnership working to implement them
- a statement on the prevention of climate change;
- the role of woodlands in education, improving health and minerals after use;
- a commitment to improving the urban environment;
- a commitment to improving and enhancing the historic environment;
- a commitment to continue support for the National Forest; and
- a commitment to make the best use of the county's valuable mineral resources; and
- the potential beneficial after use of mineral and waste disposal sites.

With specific regard to the four commitments:

- it was suggested that the role of "green wedges" should be strengthened in the Structure Plan and that a strategy for brownfield land should be developed;
- the Strategy should have a stronger commitment to ensuring that the impact of policies and programmes are both monitored and evaluated. This commitment should be broadened to include the Waste Local Plan, the Minerals Local Plan and other key policy documents;
- support was expressed for the consolidation of the SHIRE Grants Scheme although further details on its future scope and implementation would be welcomed; and
- the need for a greater commitment to making the countryside more fully accessible including the potential for increasing the number of rights of way were identified. Some concerns were also expressed that the commitment on Rights of Way is not as robust as the national target which requires that 90% of paths to be legally defined and properly maintained. One respondent suggests moving this bullet point to the chapter on supporting culture and leisure.

Supporting Culture and Leisure

Number of comments about the references to the Leicestershire Museums and Arts Service (LMARS) and suggestions that references to the services it provides should be emphasised with a firmer commitment to maintain and develop the services.

Number of comments that role of sport in supporting culture and leisure (and other objectives) should be given greater prominence.

Specific comments on:

- Contribution of culture and leisure to 'regeneration objectives' should be referred to:
- Pleased that library services are in line for improvement
- Support for the development of arts services in partnership with others
- Need to articulate relationship between County and Leicester City Arts services
- Recognition of contribution of arts services to other objectives in the strategy, in including health and care needs, excellence in education and learning and economic well-being;
- Support for the development of arts in market towns (and specific comment against this)
- Facilities other than Bosworth are worthy of mention eg Snibston
- Positive role of the Records Office to culture and leisure services
- Suggest addition of specific reference to creation of additional local nature reserves
- Support for the aim of the Strategy to improve the range and quality of cultural and leisure activities
- Positive role of schools and colleges as providers of sport and leisure facilities
- Support for the development of a cultural strategy

Promoting Economic Well-Being

General support from a number of respondents including the NFU, district councils and regional bodies for this section of the Strategy including wish/willingness to work with the County Council and other organisations to deliver the priorities.

A number of responses particularly welcome the recognition given in the Strategy to the role of tourism, and the links with cultural and leisure activities and 'green tourism'.

Comment that the Strategy pays insufficient attention to the sustainable communities' agenda, community based approaches to pockets of regeneration need and the development of an integrated approach to community regeneration, economic inclusion and physical regeneration

Suggestion that the reference to maintaining the unemployment rate below the regional average is 'bland' and that there is no reference to areas with higher unemployment, particularly those suffering from the decline of the engineering, hosiery and knitwear industries.

Individual comments include:

- the desirability of developing dialogue on strategic highway planning and development control;
- concern that the potential contribution of the voluntary sector has not been acknowledged sufficiently in the initial proposals for the development of a strategic sub-regional partnership

Making Communities Safer

Comments that reference could be included to the County Council's role in emergency planning and publicity for plans to deal with emergencies.

A number of comments that this section should be strengthened with specific targets set. Suggestions that reference should be made to supporting the Leicestershire Partnership for Safer Communities and local crime and disorder partnerships, and the role and responsibilities of County Council services. Suggestion that the County Council should support wide-ranging activities to reduce crime and the fear of crime, including external funding opportunities. Suggestion that reference should be made to the crime and disorder strategy and Best Value review, and strategies for planning and licensing matters.

Concern about references to the role of the elected members on the Leicestershire Police Authority and that the Strategy is attempting to dictate policing strategy.

Comments that references to 'increased and responsive police presence' is not linked to crime statistics or effective and efficient policing. Comments from others support this section of the Strategy.

Comment about the potential role of schools and colleges in co-ordinating strategies for young offenders.

Suggestion that reference should be made to the role of County Council members on the Combined Fire Authority and partnership working with the Fire Service.

Managing Waste Effectively

Comments that the Leicestershire Waste Minimisation initiative should be mentioned specifically.

Support expressed for intention to replace Loughborough and Sileby civic amenity sites.
Suggestions that timetables for doing so should be set and comments about location facilities and replacement sites.

Requests for greater range of recycling facilities and kerbside collections, and for specific targets for recycling to be set.

Request for relaxation of tipping licence requirements to reduce illegal tipping.

Concerns about whether alternatives to landfill will be affordable.

Suggestion that reference should be made to the need for sensitivity in the location of waste management facilities.

Delivering the Priorities

Support from a number of district councils for the development of a Public Service Agreement and a request for greater clarification of their role in a PSA and the content of a PSA.

Local development agencies seek a commitment to increased investment in voluntary sector and CVSs.

Whilst the limitations on resources are acknowledged by some, others suggest that this should not be seen as a constraint. Support for approaches to seek increased funding (Government spending levels and external funding) but suggest this should be used for service improvement not to reduce Council Tax levels.