



**SCRUTINY COMMISSION 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2001**

**COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIPS AND HINCKLEY  
AND BOSWORTH DRAFT COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**Purpose**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the view the Commission on the Hinckley and Bosworth Community Strategy prior to its endorsement by the County Council. The Strategy is attached at Appendix A to this report for members only – copies are available on request from Mr M. I. Seedat (Tel 0116 –265 – 6037).

**Timetable for Decisions**

2. Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council is seeking, as soon as possible, endorsement of the Hinckley and Bosworth Community Strategy by members of the Partnership responsible for its preparation. Community strategies are part of the formal plan framework and must therefore be considered by County Council. The earliest opportunity for the County Council to endorse the Strategy is at its 28<sup>th</sup> November 2001 meeting. In order for the Strategy is to be submitted to that meeting, the following timetable has been agreed:-

Cabinet	6 <sup>th</sup> November 2001
Scrutiny Commission	14 <sup>th</sup> November 2001
Cabinet	20 <sup>th</sup> November 2001
County Council	28 <sup>th</sup> November 2001.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

3. The Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to prepare community strategies. Although the Government has not yet set a formal timetable for their completion, there is an increasing expectation in Government guidance on statutory service delivery plans and funding regimes that community strategies should be in place. The duty to prepare a community strategy does not mean that every local authority must prepare a separate community strategy. They could be prepared jointly with other authorities. Discussion at Leader level between the

District Councils and the County Council have assumed that community strategies will exist at the level of each District Council and countywide. The Leader's Statement to the Council in September 2000 set out a draft timetable for the preparation of a countywide community strategy. The County Council has also indicated that it will support the preparation of district level community strategies and will contribute at executive member level to local strategic partnerships to guide the preparation of these. To date, Mr Ould has been appointed to the Hinckley and Bosworth Partnership body (ACTIV8) and Mrs Pendleton to the North West Leicestershire Partnership body.

4. Once approved by the County Council, the Hinckley and Bosworth Community Strategy will form part of the County Council's policy framework. Any potential conflict with existing County Council service policy will need to be addressed through County Council's constitutional process.

### **Background**

5. Following a lengthy public consultation process the Partnership, through a series of 'task groups', produced a draft community strategy as a basis for public consultation. Consultation took place during July and August 2001. Comments at officer level have been made on the Strategy through the partnership process. The Strategy itself has not been considered through the formal County Council decision-making process.
6. The Hinckley and Bosworth community planning activity predates by some time the introduction of the statutory duty under the Local Government Act 2000 and discussions at County and District Leader level about the development of community strategies. There has been criticism from the Partnership of the lack of County Council involvement in the process. In part this stems from concern about the lack of involvement at full Partnership meetings, a situation rectified by the attendance of Mr Ould at the most recent Partnership meetings. The Leader's Statement to the Council in September indicated the concern of the County Council on the effects on County Council member and officer resources of contributing to topic and sub-district working groups.

### **Consultation Outcomes**

7. Appendix B contains some detailed comments on the consultation draft from County Council officers. Amendments to the Strategy to accommodate these comments have been agreed by the Partnership. Appendix C contains a summary of other proposed amendments to the Strategy. These were also all agreed by the Partnership.
8. The Hinckley and Bosworth Strategy does not contain a chapter on economic well-being, which is acknowledged in the document. Nor does it contain a chapter on education and learning. These gaps point

to the need to develop the countywide approach so that it can be linked with district-wide strategies.

9. The Leader's Statement to the Council in September set out initial thinking, which had been discussed with Leaders of District Councils, on the process and timetable for the preparation of a community strategy for the County.
10. The Statement indicated that it is intended to make an early start on drafting a strategy for consultation. The draft would be based on public requirements as identified from responses to general and service specific consultation that has already taken place by the County Council, district councils and others. This will allow key areas of concern for the Leicestershire public to be identified and proposals to address them considered. The Strategy should probably be a fairly slim document that identifies key priorities rather than seeking to replicate existing service strategies.
11. A substantial consultation exercise would be required on a draft strategy to validate the public views already identified and to seek views on the proposals put forward for service improvements. It is proposed that a draft is prepared and discussed with partner bodies by early in the New Year, allowing the consultation to take place over the summer of 2002 with a view to having a final strategy in place by early 2003.
12. The Leader's Statement also indicated initial thinking on the setting up of a local strategic partnership to oversee the process. Arrangements have been agreed with District Council Leaders to establish a joint officer group, to which other partners will be invited to take forward the establishment of a local strategic partnership and a corporate strategy for the County. Leaders also agreed to continue to meet from time to time to ensure political ownership of the process and outcomes.

### **Resource Implications**

13. The resource implications in terms of member and officer time of increased partnership working, including community planning, are considerable although difficult to quantify. It may be a long time before the hoped for benefits of such activity in the form of better quality, more effective services are realised.
14. Government guidance on the preparation of community strategies acknowledges that decisions on the use of resources will remain the preserve of individual partners. However, it is expected that the community strategy will be "central to an authority's planning and resource decisions, ensuring that local priorities and concerns are genuinely reflected in the allocation of resources."
15. Chief Officers were asked to consider the potential commitments arising from the action points identified in the Hinckley and Bosworth Strategy. Where commitments do not accord with existing County Council policy,

amendments to the Strategy have been put forward to the Partnership. If potential actions arising from the Strategy conflict with existing County Council policy these will need to be addressed through the County Council's constitutional process.

### **Decision of the Cabinet**

16. The Cabinet at its meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> November referred the matter to the Scrutiny Commission for comments and asked that the Commission be advised of its preliminary recommendations to the County Council set out below:-

'That the County Council be recommended to:-

- (i) note that the community strategy for Hinckley and Bosworth is at present incomplete and that the ACTIV8 Partnership has acknowledged that additions need to be made to the strategy in due course;
- (ii) note that changes to the strategy suggested by officers of the County Council have been accepted by the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and the ACTIV8 Partnership;
- (iii) note that the strategy may need to be amended in due course to reflect the development of an agreed countywide community strategy;
- (iv) note that potential commitments arising from the development of detailed actions in the strategy will need to be considered in the context of the development of the County Council's medium term corporate strategy and the development of a countywide community strategy;
- (v) in the light of the above, and as a partner in the ACTIV8 process, support the Hinckley and Bosworth Community Strategy in its current form; and
- (vi) note the suggested timetable and approach to the development of a countywide community strategy.'

### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

17. The development of a community strategy will enable issues of social inclusion to be addressed in a comprehensive way. The arrangements for preparation of a community strategy will need to pay particular attention to hard to reach groups. In preparing community strategies local authorities will need to comply with the new statutory duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to eliminate racial discrimination and promote race equality.

**Background Papers**

None.

**Circulation under the Sensitive Issues Procedure**

18. This report has not been circulated under the sensitive issues procedure. The draft Strategy has been circulated to local members by the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council as part of the consultation process.

**Officer to Contact.**

Andy Robinson ☎ 265 7017