

## **ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION PAPER – ‘SHAPING THE FUTURE OF ESSEX: CHALLENGES AND VISION’**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report seeks Members’ comments on the Essex County Council Community Strategy as part of the partner consultation. Community consultation on the Strategy will take place in September 2002.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 Essex County Council has developed their Community Strategy following a series of ‘Shaping the Future of Essex’ Seminars held during 2000, and from the views expressed at the November 2001 Local Strategic Partnership Conference. A consultation on how the issues should be presented took place in November – December 2001, in conjunction with the association of Essex Authorities, which has influenced the format of the Strategy and the issues identified.

- 2.2 The Community Strategy identifies the priorities for the next 20 years.

### **3 Shaping the Future – Challenges and Vision**

- 3.1 The document identifies nine key areas of life for the future of Essex:

1. Feeling safe
2. Being healthy
3. Being able to take up opportunities
4. Getting around
5. Being part of a neighbourhood community
6. Being served well and fairly
7. Conserving our environment
8. Having fun

- 3.2 In addition, it identifies four crucial challenges for Essex:

- a) Changing the Image of Essex: overcoming the negative image of Essex.
- b) Safeguarding the Coast of Essex: preserving the wildlife and leisure opportunities in the light of climate changes and development pressure.
- c) Promoting Active Citizenship in Essex: to increase the participation in voting, community groups and taking action on local issues.

- d) Developing Essex's Relationship with London: making the best of the opportunities and pressures of the proximity of Essex to London.

3.3 The report identifies key issues for each of the nine key areas of life, some facts and figures and a vision for each one. The vision for each area is as follows:

1) Feeling Safe

- Reducing crime levels and fear of crime especially where they are high at present.
- Reducing the risk of death and damage on Essex roads.
- An Essex where goods and services are provided to safe standards.

2) Being Healthy

- People leading fulfilling lives for longer, with relationships that increase physical and social well-being.
- People making informed choices, for example in relation to diet, exercise, alcohol, drugs and smoking.
- Healthy activities such as walking and cycling being successfully promoted in a safe environment.
- People able to rely on effective, accessible, appropriate health services.
- A community which is supportive, understanding and valuing people with mental health problems.

3) Being Able to take up Opportunities

- Essex as an international County, in which the gateways of Harwich and Stansted prosper and European businesses and cultural links flourish.
- Essex as a County of engineering and innovation in which science and technology flourish and the constantly adapting skills of Essex people are competitive in the local economy.
- Essex as a place where residents want to work and can work.

- Local authorities and the public sector providing efficient, effective, empowering public services, including varied options for study.

#### 4) Getting Around

- A road and footway network in good repair with reduced levels of congestion.
- Walking, cycling and community transport network which is affordable and operates reliably at times and to places people want, in decent vehicles accessible to all.
- A County where it is easy to change from one service to another, for example by 'through ticketing' and co-ordinated concessions.
- More use of electronic communications and siting jobs, homes and shops near one another – reducing the need to travel.

#### 5) Being Part of a Neighbourhood Community

- Promoting policies that offer choice, tackle social exclusion, and help create sustainable communities.
- People taking responsibility and working with others to get things done; community and voluntary groups being active, inclusive and effective.
- Everyone being encouraged to be involved in Public service and democratic participation.
- People having a network of supportive relationships, while the whole community protects vulnerable individuals.
- Local authorities devolving decision-taking as far as possible; parish and town councils realising their potential as focuses for active citizenship.

#### 6) Having a Sense of Place

- A County in which environmental and human diversity are valued.
- A county people feel proud of, valuing both heritage and innovation.

- A place in which sustainable new development is planned to enhance and revitalise existing towns and minimise use of greenfield sites.
- A county in which adequate and affordable housing is available, in well-served vibrant communities.

7) Being Served Well and Fairly

- Efficient, high quality and appropriate public and private services, which take account of people's views, are accessible and welcoming, and serve fairly all sections of society.
- Private and public services co-operating well to meet people's needs.
- Good access to information about services, goods and decision-making, so service providers can be better held to account.

8) Conserving our Environment

- Our heritage, natural environment and biodiversity are conserved and enhanced.
- Waste is minimised, re-used or recycled wherever possible and disposed of safely.
- Environmental damage (including pollution and water extraction) is limited through responsible consumption.
- The effects of climate change are responded to so as to conserve the quality of the environment.
- Energy sources, including renewable sources, are exploited efficiently, reducing the use of non-renewable fuels, which scientific evidence suggests increase the effects of climate change.

9) Having Fun

- A range of good leisure facilities locally available and accessible to all.
- Developing and celebrating art, including artistic skills, for all.
- Essex to be a leading sporting county, with benefits for health, social skills and community activity.

- Essex's coast, forests, country parks, historic buildings and archaeological sites to be safely accessible in a sustainable way.

#### **4 OFFICER COMMENT**

- 4.1 The Strategy is aspirational for the next 20 years, but does not have any measurable targets at this stage. An action plan to achieve measurable results will be developed once the Community Strategy and its vision has been agreed.
- 4.2 The number of key areas of life are high. Some could be merged and reviewed for example; the Vision 7 – 'Being Served Well and Fairly' underpins all of the areas of life, but may not justify a section of its own. Vision 6 – 'Having a Sense of Place' – the environmental elements could be incorporated into Vision 8, the housing element into Vision 5 and Heritage into Vision 9.
- 4.3 Vision 3 makes no mention of the Thames Gateway South Essex Regeneration Partnership.
- 4.4 The document provides for a County-wide Vision which could be used to 'lead' District Community Strategies, although the exact definition of issues and potential vision may vary to reflect local areas.
- 4.5 The document as produced is very much a 'motherhood and apple pie' statement; the key will be in how it is detailed up and effectively resourced.

#### **5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The priorities for Vision 1 – 'Feeling Safe' are consistent with the Rochford Crime & Disorder Reduction Plan.

#### **6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The priorities for Vision 8 – 'Conserving our Environment' are consistent with Rochford District Council policies.

#### **7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Production of a Community Strategy is a requirement of the Local Government Act 2000.

#### **8 RECOMMENDATION**

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

To note the County's Vision document subject to any comments from Members particularly around the following areas:

- i. Are the Visions right?
- ii. Do Members feel the Visions are realistic in the next 20 years?
- iii. What priorities do Members feel should be tackled by the County Strategic Partnership?
- iv. What should the County Strategic Partnership be looking to do to support delivery of the Vision at District level.

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**Background Papers:**

An Essex County Council Consultation Paper for the County Strategic Partnership for Community Planning – 25 April 2002 draft

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