



## Briefing four:

# Systems for integrating sustainable development into the community strategy

The briefing “Joined-up Working and Policy Integration” has looked at the issue of policy integration. Policy integration aims to ensure that the objectives of the strategy are consistent with sustainable development objectives (and are also internally consistent). The next step is to use these objectives as the basis for a sustainable development performance management system.

Planning for sustainable development

The process of producing a community strategy is really little different from developing a strategy of any kind (except that the necessity for working in partnership and with community involvement is much more explicit). The lessons for integrating sustainable development are also similar. The key lesson is that unless we plan for sustainable development it will never happen. To quote A Better Quality of Life<sup>1</sup>:

*“To make sustainable development a reality  
it must be built into policies and decisions.”*

This briefing examines performance management systems which can be used to plan for sustainability.

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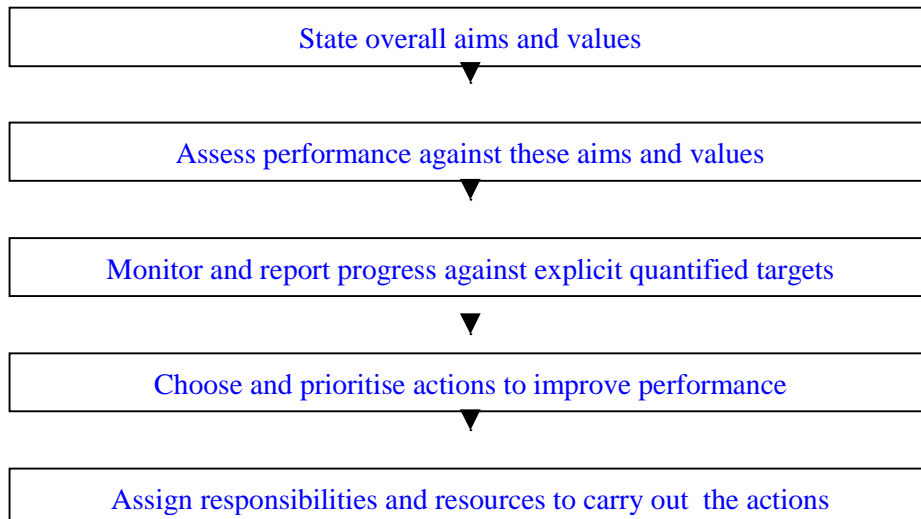
<sup>1</sup> A better quality of life. A strategy for sustainable development for the UK, DETR, 1999

## Performance management systems

There are a likely to be a number of systems already in place in a local authority. Examples<sup>2</sup> include:

- **Business Excellence Model:** a framework for assessing and then continuously improving the performance of an organisation across the whole spectrum of its activities
- **Investors in People:** a national standard for investment in training and development
- **Charter Mark:** the government's award scheme that concentrates on the quality of services received by the customer
- **ISO9000:** an international standard quality management system, which aims to ensure that organisations meet their customers needs and expectations
- there may also be a formal environmental management system such as **ISO14001**, the international standard or **EMAS**, its European equivalent.

### Generic performance management system



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<sup>2</sup> Taken from *A guide to quality schemes for the public sector* published by the Service First Unit, the Cabinet Office, January 1999.

Sustainable development performance management: This same approach can be used to manage progress towards sustainable development objectives. Some examples of formal and less formal approaches are shown in the table. These approaches can all be used within the community strategy process.

#### **EMAS/ISO14001**

- Formal environmental management systems (EMSs)
- Require review of environmental impacts of services and a formal programme to manage significant impacts
- Can be extended to include social and economic impacts
- Most frequently used in managing service and production activities in local government and business

#### **Sustainability appraisal**

- Process of evaluating social, economic and environmental impact of a plan or programme
- Uses a *policy impact matrix* to check individual policies or proposals against a range of sustainability criteria which are linked with overall objectives
- Includes commentary on each impact with any recommended changes
- Iterative process; should be repeated at appropriate stages in plan/programme development
- Most frequently used in assessing land use plans and is required for all local development documents by the planning and compulsory purchase bill
- [Government guidance on the new European Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment \(SEA\) also covers sustainability appraisal](#)

#### **Sustainability checklist**

- Simplified version of policy impact matrix
- Checks policies or proposals against a range of sustainability criteria, linked with overall objectives
- Usually no comments on individual impacts
- Most frequently used in Best Value service reviews or appraisal of committee reports (where it is often called environmental or sustainability implications clauses)

#### **Sustainable development indicators**

- Set of measures to test progress towards sustainable development eg % of household waste recycled
- Should include targets or desired directions of change
- Frequently developed as part of Local Agenda 21 process
- National menus of indicators have been produced; most recent is the Audit Commission's Quality of Life Indicators
- Can and should be integrated with local authorities corporate targets and performance indicators

How can these methods be used to integrate sustainability into the community planning process?

Objectives	Ensure objectives are consistent with sustainability objectives.
Partnership and community involvement	Gain commitment to sustainability principles and involve community in identifying objectives.
Vision	Set out a long-term vision consistent with sustainability principles
Strategy and Implementation	Establish system to ensure strategy achieves sustainability objectives.
Monitoring and review	Ensure that monitoring indicators are consistent with sustainability objectives.

Similar issues arise when integrating sustainability into Best Value.

Finding integrated solutions

Sustainability performance is different from other performance management though, because aims to reach social, economic and environmental goals, which can in practice be in conflict with each other. The briefing “Systems for integrating sustainable development into the community strategy” gives background on approaches to integrating sustainability goals.

For further information on EMAS, ISO 14001, SIGMA, Sustainability Appraisals, use of sustainability checklists and indicators, see the links in the briefing “Putting sustainable development into practice” in the ‘Sustainable development defined’ resources area.

**Example from practice:** [Kirklees Partnership](#) The interim partnership has agreed to apply a sustainability appraisal to the development of the strategy.

**Example from Practice:** [Darlington Sustainability Integration Matrix](#)  
Darlington Borough Council has developed a simple sustainability impacts matrix to help the Community Strategy Steering Group better consider the impacts of the community strategy. It intends to conduct a similar exercise with the LSP.