



London Borough of Sutton

The London Borough of Sutton's *Environmental Sustainability Review* considered corporate processes for promoting sustainable development, but also examined progress against several of the council's targets, including promoting the use of sustainable materials and resources and promoting healthy life styles. This was a process and selected outcomes review.

The environmental sustainability review was conducted in Year 1 (2000-1). Although it began by considering specific service areas, eg: LA21; EMAS; CEI; the ecology centre, ecology team, road safety, landscape & graphics team, and planning policy team. The team soon realised that environmental sustainability is a cross-cutting issue, delivered by all parts of the council. The review team therefore decided to consider the way environmental sustainability was integrated into the council's policy making and monitoring, and what needed to change in order to reach the next step change in performance. The starting point was the council's corporate goal of "Achieving Environmental Sustainability".

There was a 10-person review team, chaired by the Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure, and a Policy and Performance Officer from the Chief Executive's Group.

Reviewing progress against corporate targets

The starting point of the review was a report on progress against agreed targets for the council's corporate goal 3 - achieving environmental sustainability. Progress was assessed against the following Council objectives for goal 3:

- develop and implement sustainable land use and transport policies, safeguarding the natural environment.
- safeguard the environment from pollution (including air quality, land and water pollution, noise and reducing waste by promoting recycling.
- promote the use of sustainable material and resources (including energy efficiency, reduction in energy consumption, reduction in water consumption.)
- promote healthy lifestyles (including public health in its widest sense and related leisure and cultural interests).
- improve the appearance of the borough and create a more sustainable street scene.



This included reviews of the content of strategies, current practice, and progress against a large number of previously agreed targets, such as for transport - increasing the length of cycle ways and reducing road casualties, and for health – preparation of a food strategy.

Challenge

This explored with a number of internal stakeholders how the council is implementing its corporate goal 3 - achieving environmental sustainability. It asked whether the goal is defined in an achievable way, whether the council is moving towards the goal it has set itself, which areas are on a successful trajectory and which are not, and what improvements could be made to enhance performance further. This stage was managed by external consultants who reviewed key documents and interviewed 3 elected members (including the leader), 6 senior managers, and staff working in this area.

Comparison

External consultants were employed to compare Sutton with two local authorities and two private sector organisations that are approaching sustainability as a cross-cutting issue, or have a particularly innovative approach. They looked at a range of corporate processes being employed by these organisations, as well as direct action on issues such as energy, transport and waste. Other case studies of 'best-practice' projects were also recorded.

Consultation

Three methods were used: 4 resident focus groups; a questionnaire in a newsletter made available in libraries, environment related centres, and sent direct to contacts on the council's LA21 and UDP databases; a seminar for an invited audience of groups and individual members of the LA21 core group and the topic and action groups, and members and officers of the users' panels.

The consultation investigated understanding of environmental sustainability, asked how consultees ranked the 5 objectives (see above) and related targets, what other objectives they thought important, and the effectiveness of current activities. Results of previous consultations on aspects of environmental sustainability were also used.

Compete

This noted that 'the policy is inextricably linked into the political and corporate management of the council' and that the council cannot offer its corporate management to the market.' But it concluded that "there is strong evidence that Sutton is comparable with the best (in terms of achievements – comparative cost was not considered) and can still improve".



Key Recommendations

Recommendations were divided under 3 headings – improvements to the council's priorities, to environmental sustainability in council management, and to corporate strategies on environmental impacts. Areas for improvement included:

- clarify corporate goal 3 and reduce the number of objectives to focus on key outcomes
- select and monitor indicators of key outcomes
- build environmental sustainability into the community strategy
- revise the process for best value reviews to ensure they take full account of environmental sustainability
- improve sutton's analysis of the full life environmental impact of developments.
- improve officer and member training.

The improvement plan set out a number of national and local BVPIs and Audit Commission quality of life indicators that will be used to measure future improvements.

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