



Modernising Newark and Sherwood district council's approach towards local sustainable development

Introduction

Sustainable development, and sustainable energy issues in particular, have had a strong track record of delivery within both Newark & Sherwood District Council and the local private sector.

The locality

Newark and Sherwood is the largest of seven district councils in Nottinghamshire covering 65,000 hectares. The district comprising much of the central and eastern parts of rural Nottinghamshire, with Lincolnshire adjoining the eastern boundary of the district, has strong communication links with good access to the M1, A1 and to the East Coast Mainline rail network.

The district has a population of approximately 106,000 representing 10% of the total population of Nottinghamshire, within approximately 45,500 dwellings. About one third of the population live within the Newark conurbation. 25% of the population are under 19 years old and 17% are aged over 65 years.

The district has its own distinctive character including the former borough of Newark, the small cathedral town of Southwell and approximately 90 villages and hamlets, of which nearly half have been designated as conservation areas.

The local economy is characterised by the shift from manufacturing to services. In less than twenty years, industrial employment, particularly in the mining sector, has dropped by over 50%. Whilst unemployment levels within the District are now below the national, regional and county averages certain parts of the District are eligible for economic assistance.

Aims & objectives

Newark and Sherwood district council is committed to ensuring that they deliver comprehensive, modern, effective and efficient services to the communities of the district. The council has embraced the Best Value regime and the modernising government agenda as an opportunity to develop a strategic approach to sustainable development within the council and beyond.

History

During the third year of the Best Value programme (2001-2002), the council conducted a crosscutting review of sustainable development. This review was co-ordinated by the Best Value Review Officer, with the Lead Review Officer (Policy Officer – sustainable development). The review identified clear areas for improvement within the authority and identified key recommendations, which were translated into clear actions in the action plan, the implementation of which is currently monitored through a sustainable development task group. Conducting a complex cross-cutting review generated a great deal of interest in the council's approach which enabled lessons learned to be disseminated to other authorities in both England and Northern Ireland.

Who is involved

Strong member and officer input has enabled the sustainable development task group to drive forward the sustainability agenda both internally and externally. Chaired by councillor Roger Blaney, deputy leader of the council and the portfolio holder for sustainable development and facilitated by the Policy Officer (sustainable development), the group, consisting of officer representation from each council service and member representation from each of the overview and scrutiny, planning and licensing committees, meets on a 6-week cycle and reports progress to cabinet on a quarterly basis. Representation from local external sustainability exemplars is encouraged, where necessary, to engender a learning environment.

The strategic approach

At Newark and Sherwood, continuous improvement in the way the council's services are delivered is embedded through the council's change management programme "Coupling the Carriages". This programme sets out in detail how the council intends to deliver its vision: ***"To work with the Community to make Newark and Sherwood a good place to live, work and visit"***. The vision is supported by eight ambitions, with sustainable development being one and can demonstrate a history of being embedded: ***"A Community that is sustainable ensuring that the legacy of our development and transport policies does not prejudice the quality of life for future generations"***.

In addition, through the auspices of the Newark and Sherwood local strategic partnership, the council and partners have developed a community strategy, as required by the Local Government Act 2000, which was launched following consultation in April 2003. To facilitate sustainability within the subsequent action plans, sustainable development is embedded through the consideration of the partnership's sustainable development and social inclusion checklist.

Selected sustainability highlights

- annual review of progress towards best value review on sustainable development action plan
- development of sustainability content within council's web-site
- development and adoption of sustainable development and social inclusion checklist
- development and adoption of staff travel plan
- member's training and awareness raising
- beacon status 2002/3 tackling fuel poverty



Contact: Peter Orban, Policy Officer (Sustainable Development), Newark & Sherwood District Council. Tel: 01636 655279. E-mail: peter.orban@nsdc.info. Karen Sleigh, Quality and Performance Manager, Newark & Sherwood District Council. Tel: 01636 655215. E-mail: karen.sleigh@nsdc.info

Council website: www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk