

Brighton & Hove City Council
Sustainability Team

City Sustainability Partnership

Summary of responses to a public consultation

August 2008

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1 Introduction

This report provides a summary and analysis of responses received in relation to the public consultation on the terms of reference and proposed membership for the City Sustainability Partnership (CSP). The document was out for consultation between May 1 and 31 July 2008.

The analysis is based on responses registered in terms of their support or objection to the 7 objectives of the proposed Terms of Reference and the proposed membership, concerns raised and suggestions made regarding any particular theme. It also looks at themes raised. A list of respondents is provided at the end of the document.

The document sets out the views of the respondents, not the views of the Local Authority itself.

In summary, there was broad support for the establishment of the CSP, but there was concern about the power of the proposed body to influence policy and effectively champion the sustainable development of the city.

This paper will accompany a report to the Sustainability Cabinet Committee on 8 October 2008.

2 Relationship to other decision-making & scrutiny functions

Recommendations were made that the relationship between council Leader, Sustainability Cabinet Committee and Sustainability Champion be strengthened. It would be preferable to see executive power vested in the CSP; it should at least be able to make recommendations to other bodies as necessary. Councillors on the new Partnership Board would need to be of sufficient stature to ensure that B&HCC executive and scrutiny bodies are encouraged to seek out the expertise of the CSP membership in developing policy.

It was felt that CSP must have a key role in ensuring that the local priorities identified in the Sustainability Community Strategy are fully recognised by the Council, other members of the LSP and the wider community, and are championed to ensure that they are carried forward into the emerging Local Development Framework.

3 Working Arrangements

Two of the respondents – one group and one individual – had views on the working arrangements for the CSP. It was felt that it should meet in public, with a public questions mechanism in place. This should happen 7-8 times a year or have smaller working groups meeting regularly and reporting to full CSP meetings. All non-councillor members of the CSP should be eligible to take the chair, with all members eligible to vote annually to select the chair.

Administrative support for CSP should be located by the LSP.

An alternative vision of the structure of CSP was as an independent legal entity with its own staff, funded by the statutory partners, with the option to seek further funding elsewhere if necessary.

4 The Objectives

There was broad support for the objectives balanced with several concerns and many suggestions.

Objective 1:

To lead on the revision and implementation, monitoring and review of both a Sustainability Strategy and a Climate Change Strategy for the City through the LSP.

The new Climate Change Strategy

www.2020community.org/index.cfm?request=c1178774

will sit under the revised Sustainability Strategy and is a reflection of the top priority this issue now has.

Support

Two of the respondents welcomed the revision of the Sustainability Strategy, and looked forward to local priorities from the National Sustainable Development Strategy being identified and progressed in respect of biodiversity, to the benefit of the City's environment, wildlife and residents.

Concern

One respondent felt that the CSP would not have a strong or decisive enough leadership to ensure that its recommendations become policy.

Another group felt that it would not be realistic to work on the Sustainability Strategy and Climate Change Strategy without at least considering the impact of transport on these areas.

Objecting

One group of respondents believe that this objective will need amending to reflect the latest thinking following recent developments with the Climate Change Strategy (CCS) and the new One Planet Living (OPL) plan. Clarity is required as to the role of the existing LSP climate change subgroup currently overseeing the CCS and OPL plan work, relative to the CSP.

Suggestions

One respondent believes that the new City Sustainability Partnership could play a critically important role in progressing the natural environment strand of sustainable development. They would like to see the publication of a local biodiversity action timetable, relating to actions that arose out of the original Sustainability Strategy.

Objective 2:

To direct the performance of key city stakeholders against the environmental sustainability indicators in the new National Indicator set.

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localgovindicators/indicators.htm

Concern

Two of the respondents expressed hope that the CSP will identify and develop integrated solutions to environmental issues facing the city

One of the respondents raised a concern that one National Indicator regarding the checking the health of nature reserves is not sufficient to achieve sustainable development and thus the aspirations of the new partnership.

Suggestions

One respondent would like to see transport and accessibility indicators such as NI175 included.

Objective 3:

To direct work on the Environmental Sustainability indicators in the Local Area Agreement, e.g. the proposed indicator for reducing CO2 emissions in the local authority area.

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localgovindicators/ni186.htm

Support

One respondent hopes that the Partnership will have a key role to play in preparing and implementing National Indicator 186, establishment of a Climate Change Sub Group and the preparation of a Climate Change Strategy.

Concern

One respondent raised that reducing carbon dioxide emissions to hit the targets needed will require firm direction, so the Partnership must have some "clout" to force the pace and push the Council and others to deliver the required results.

Suggestions

One respondent emphasised that is vital that the CSP's work on climate change includes adaptation as well as mitigation.

One respondent would like to see the Sustainability Partnership directing work on the transport and accessibility indicators in the Local Area Agreement. They also want the Partnership to consider the legacy targets and indicators set out in the City Council's 2006-2011 Local Transport Plan as they believe there is no other arena in which these are addressed.

Objective 4

To monitor the sustainability performance of the Sustainable Community Strategy www.2020community.org/index.cfm?request=a702 and direct changes in policies and practices of key stakeholders to improve this.

Concern

One respondent believes that the Community Strategy's vision of the protection and improvement of the city's greenspace environment has not been happening and that the Partnership will need to have a firm link with the Council to ensure that the latter will act accordingly.

Suggestions

In Objectives 2, 3 and 4, one group felt it would be helpful if the relevant indicators and targets were spelt out in full with explicit reference to indicators on ecological footprint (linked to the OPL plan) as they believe that those referred to in Objectives 2 and 3 are relatively limited in scope.

Objective 5

To champion the priorities locally of the national Sustainable Development Strategy: Securing the Future,

www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/index.htm namely

- * *Sustainable Consumption and Production (achieving more with less, considering the impact of products and materials across a whole life cycle)*
- * *Climate Change and Energy (the urgent need to reduce CO2 emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change)*
- * *Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement*
- * *Sustainable Communities (using engagement and partnership to reduce poverty and environmental degradation).*

One group of respondents said they found this objective acceptable. Another group believes that the Partnership should indeed champion the local priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy, and the Council must act on the goals. They believe 'natural resource protection and environmental enhancement' needs stretching targets and high priorities for action.

One group suggested that sustainable transport, and cycling in particular, can make a major contribution to all the priorities set out in Objective 5.

No concerns or objections were registered.

Objective 6

To develop good and innovative practice sharing and joint work in these areas across the community and voluntary, business and public service sectors in the city.

Support

One group of respondents found this objective 'acceptable'. Another saw this objective as a 'laudable aim'.

Concern

Resourcing was seen as an issue here. It was pointed out by two of the groups who responded that the success of this aim will be a mark of the influence of the Partnership. Hence, setting it up with the necessary resources and respect will be vital.

Objective 7

To fulfil the role of the panel of representatives of local people as set out in the Sustainable Communities Act 2007

www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070023_en_1

i.e. the body with which the city council consults and seeks agreement on proposals to government to improve the sustainability of local communities.

Concern

One group of respondents was concerned that a panel of representatives of local people would not have sufficient authority to influence policy makers. The CSP will thus become a "talking shop",

which may lead to some difficult decisions, especially on transport issues.

Objecting

One group stated its belief that the CSP is not the correct body to fulfil the role of citizens' panel envisaged by the Sustainable Communities Act (SCA). It proposed that the objective be amended so that the CSP suggests and recommends proposals to BHCC and to the citizens' panel(s) to consider putting forward to the 'Selector' and ultimately the Government.

One group of respondents felt this objective sounded weak. It believes this needs to be a 'true' partnership, not a body to be consulted on, which can often be cynically perceived as being told what is going on, rather than authentic engagement and influence in the decision-making process.

5 Areas felt to have been missed out of the Terms of Reference

Several respondents expressed concern that transport will not focus significantly in the work of the Sustainability Partnership, resulting in a significant gap in the ability to meet a range of relevant targets set out in the Local Area Agreement: climate change, healthy living, air quality, obesity, access to work and services, sustainable tourism and social exclusion.

The alternative proposals were:

- a separate Transport Partnership be set up, bringing together the relevant stakeholders;
- the 2020 Partnership's Transport sub-group be developed further, which would allow a broader discussion of the Cycle Town programme;
- the Community & Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) should lobby for another body to focus on transport issues and to find a way to feed its views into the City Council and other bodies.

One group of respondents felt it would be helpful to clarify the extent to which waste, transport and biodiversity form part of the remit of the CSP, to avoid overlap with similar bodies, and to ensure focused, prioritised work.

6 Membership

This should therefore be representative and drawn from across sectors, with statutory agency support, for example:	
Public services	City Councillors (2 Con, 1 Lab, 1 Green), NHS Trust, Universities of Sussex and Brighton, Eco-schools.
Business	Business Community Partnership, Economic Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, Ecosys
Community and voluntary sector	CVSF (3 places), Food Partnership, Wildlife Advisory Group
Agencies	Environment Agency, Natural England, National Park Authority eventually (South Downs Joint Committee in the interim)

Support

There was broad support for this membership, which was seen as representative and drawn from across sectors, with one exception. A brief statement of the rationale for the make-up would help to clarify some of the choices to the respondents.

Concern

Three of the respondents expressed concerns:

- One group of respondents would prefer to see a number of members allocated to each area with a process defined for how the members are selected.
- Another group felt that meaningful representation from all sectors depended on adequate funding to enable each of them to participate on an equal basis, and an application for funding was received.
- Two of the respondents wanted to see the link between the Council's in-house Wildlife Advisory Group (WAG) and the Partnership maintained.

Objecting

Two groups of respondents asked why Ecosys is the only business specifically named.

The rationale for separating out membership for the Food Partnership amongst CVSF members was questioned and one individual respondent held that the CVSF should not represent community groups and that the membership should be made up of community representatives, with no management committee.

One group of respondents suggested that either Natural England or National Park Authority / South Downs Joint Committee should be members (not both). (Natural England has responded that it wishes to defer its membership of the partnership.)

Suggestions

Three of the respondents proposed that either the Cycle Forum be represented on the CSP, or a separate Transport Partnership be set up.

The following suggestions for membership came from different respondents:

- a young people representative from eco-schools,;
- a representative for schools in general as well as the eco-schools to ensure that engagement is encouraged across all schools;
- the PCT instead of the BSUH NHS Trust;
- the police, so all public sector areas are covered;
- other businesses besides Ecosys;
- Environmental Protection UK;
- English Heritage;
- Housing Associations and/or private sector housing bodies.

7 List of Respondents

- Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership
- Brighton & Hove City Council's Chief Executive's Policy Unit
- Brighton & Hove City Cycle Forum
- Brighton Urban Wildlife Group

- Community & Voluntary Sector Forum, in consultation with the CVSF Environment Network & Local Strategic Partnership
- CTC local Right to Ride, Brighton & Hove
- Eco-Logically
- Environment Agency
- Environmental Protection UK
- Green Party group of Councillors for Brighton & Hove
- Natural England
- Scott, Richard