

# Evaluation of the Devon Strategic Partnership 2004 Community Strategy for Devon

## Summary

The Community Strategy for Devon was published by the Devon Strategic Partnership in July 2004. The evaluation looks at the outcomes of the strategy, the process of its production and draws out learning points for the Sustainable Community Strategy to be produced in 2007. The full report together with the spreadsheets of information will shortly be able to be viewed on [www.devonsp.org.uk](http://www.devonsp.org.uk) in the Other Documents section, but the findings can be summarised as follows:

### **The process of developing the Community Strategy**

- The process was 3 stage – a large MORI poll of residents, statistical analysis and the development of the Community Strategy.
- Two documents were produced – both are available to view on [www.devonsp.org.uk](http://www.devonsp.org.uk) :
  - Focus on Devon provided an informed critical analysis of the challenges facing Devon, based on expert knowledge, statistical evidence and the findings of the MORI poll.
  - A Community Strategy for Devon took each challenge developed in Focus on Devon, and identified the actions that were necessary to address it, either by the Devon Strategic Partnership itself or other organisations. It also identified some indicators to monitor progress.
- Both documents were launched following endorsement by a large conference held in July 2004

### **Progress on actions in the strategy that the Devon Strategic Partnership itself would promote which would add value**

- Some action has taken place on most of the tasks the Devon Strategic Partnership set itself to do. Of 117 actions, there were 105 (90%) responses of “Yes” or a qualified “Yes” to the question “is this happening?”, and only 4 (3%) “No”s.
- A brief description of activity for each action can be viewed on the website as above. The descriptions show that many challenges are being partly addressed, leaving scope to continue work where still relevant.
- In addition respondents were also asked whether the action was still relevant; responses came mainly from the housing, economy and children and young people sections and 35 “Yes” responses were given, and 4 “No”.

### **Progress on principal actions in the strategy to be taken by organisations and partnerships other than the Devon Strategic Partnership in response to the challenges 2004-7**

- Of 272 actions, there were 164 (60%) responses of “Yes” to the question “is this happening?”, Plus 3 responses of “No” and 2 “Superceded”
- A brief description of activity for each action can be viewed on the website as above. This activity cannot be considered completely comprehensive, as clearly so many organisations work in Devon in a multitude of areas, so it is not possible to capture everything– this task attempts to identify the major activity.

- In addition respondents were also asked whether the action was still relevant; responses came mainly from the housing, environment, social inclusion and healthy and caring sections and 54 “Yes” responses were given, and 6 “No”s; 6 responses that the activity was a statutory duty; and 2 others.

### **Progress measured against performance indicators as detailed in the Community Strategy**

- Of the 84 indicators able to be monitored for this study, 61% were showing improvement. Examples of significant improvement included take up of broadband, no. of 16-19 yr olds in structured learning, % of social service assessments carried out within 4 weeks and % of the population able to access ICT facilities within 3 miles of their home.
- 11% were not showing any significant change
- 17% were showing a regression. Areas of regression were diverse, and included indicators about care leavers, water consumption, conditions of SSSIs, number of weekday trains to London, training and employment, Neighbourhood Watch and road casualties.
- Not all indicators were able to be monitored, either because no baseline figure had been included or because the data was not collectable at this time.

**Reports produced following Community Strategy challenges.** The task groups commissioned by the Devon Strategic Partnership have produced the following reports:

- Welfare Benefits Implementation Group – October 2002
- Domestic Violence report – October 2002
- MORI poll findings re Quality of Life in Devon
- Renewable Energy and Energy Reduction report and draft Strategy and Action Plan - 2003
- Devon Rural Strategy Report –July 2003
- ‘Devon Rural Network’ Foundation paper – Sept 2003
- Voluntary Sector Infrastructure report – March 2003
- Effective Transport Links report – Nov 2003
- Focus on Devon – June 2004
- Community Strategy for Devon – July 2004

### **Other outputs**

- Formation of Devon Rural Network
- Formation of Common Ground
- Formation of ESSG (Equality Strategy and Scrutiny Group) – papers relating to Older people’s issues and LGBT issues
- Formation of Domestic Violence task group
- Website [www.devonsp.org.uk](http://www.devonsp.org.uk) went live in 2002, revamped in 2006
- Newsletters produced in Summer 2002, Winter 02/03, Summer 2003, Autumn 2003 and July 2004 (‘conference special’)
- INput emagazine published monthly from December 2005. Email distribution and lodged on website

### **Conclusions and learning points:**

- Alongside the monitoring of the actions in the strategy was a request that those responding highlight which issues were still ‘live’ or any modified or new issues that we needed to consider in the next strategy. It was notable how many of the issues are considered still current, although many have evolved following action. It is a tribute to the quality of the current strategy that it

continues to have resonance over time. (In particular, many people referred to the dedication of Eddie Farwell in pulling the document together as a factor in its success.)

- Similarly, the amount of activity that has taken place that supports the strategy is very impressive and demonstrates the relevance of the actions proposed. However, two points should be made in relation to this:
  - The amount of activity that has taken place is not well known, and further consideration should be given to communicating what has happened.
  - Much of the activity has taken place because it coincides with the aims and strategies of various organisations. Many respondents were not very familiar with the actions in the DSP strategy, and the DSP appears incidental to much of the work. The exceptions to this are the excellent work of task groups set up in support of the Devon Strategic Partnership, such as Common Ground.
- The Community Strategy showed a very logical 'linear' path between identification of the challenges and actions to overcome those challenges, providing a clear audit trail and justification. Since then, changes in Govt thinking, and resultant changes to partner working means that the next strategy will find it difficult to be as linear, as themes become cross cutting and have to be interwoven to demonstrate such concepts as economic, social and environmental sustainability. Both methods have benefits, but for the Devon Strategic Partnership the method is likely to change.
- The performance indicators in the strategy have been of less success as it was not possible to monitor many of them for various reasons. Since the introduction of the Local Area Agreement in 2005, Govt focus is firmly on performance management. The amount of action taken to support the current strategy demonstrated how well it fulfilled its aim. Any future strategy is likely to have to follow more rigorous project management and performance monitoring regimes.

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