

Environmental Indicators

SDAG, 6 September 2005 Item 4

Committee:	STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY GROUP	Agenda Item
Date:	6 September 2005	4
Title:	Environmental Indicators	
Author:	Roger Harborough, Planning Policy and Conservation Manager, 01799 510457	Item for discussion

Summary

- 1 There is an increasing body of national advice about the selection of sustainability indicators, including the timely publication in August of a report by the Audit Commission aimed at developing and recommending one consistent set of indicators for use at a local level that will embrace environmental issues, together with economic and social issues.

Recommendations

- 2 I recommend that we adopt this set as our core indicators, and focus on the extent to which it needs to be supplemented by additional local indicators.

Background Papers

- 3 I referred to the following papers in preparing this report:
 - The Egan Review: skills for sustainable communities, which can be downloaded from http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_urbanpolicy/documents/page/odpm_urbpol_028549.hcsp
 - Local quality of life indicators – supporting local communities to become sustainable (a guide to local monitoring to complement the indicators in the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy) published by the Audit Commission August 2005, which can be downloaded from
 - <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=ENGLISH^573^SUBJECT^17^REPORTS-AND-DATA^AC-REPORTS&ProdID=0D488A03-8C16-46fb-A454-7936FB5D5589>
 - Local Development Framework Monitoring: a good practice guide, which can be downloaded from
 - http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_035638.pdf

Extracts are appended to this Agenda.

Environmental Indicators

SDAG, 6 September 2005 Item 4

Impact

Communication/Consultation	As previously advised, there is a need to engage Uttlesford Futures, to secure community involvement in agreeing the Vision and to communicate it.
Community Safety	
Equalities	
Finance	Will depend on the extent to which original research has to be commissioned
Human Rights	
Legal Implications	
Ward-specific impacts	
Workforce/Workplace	Will depend on extent to which monitoring is integrated into planned workstreams

Options

- 4 There are three principal options:
- Adopt the Audit Commission Local Quality of Life Indicators set
 - As above, supplemented by other locally defined indicators
 - Develop our own indicators independently.

Pay-Offs/ Penalties

- 5 A clear attraction of using the Audit Commission set is that the Commission proposes to collect and publish information for each of the indicators annually. As they are recommended by the Commission for the following uses we would have to have sound reasons for not taking them up:
- by local authorities and LSPs to help monitoring the effectiveness of sustainable community strategies,
 - by local authorities undergoing Comprehensive Performance Assessment,
 - for monitoring local development frameworks and

Environmental Indicators

SDAG, 6 September 2005 Item 4

- for those areas piloting LAAs, joint area reviews or area profiles,.

6 Widespread adoption of the Audit Commission set by local authorities will enable comparisons between areas using consistent data. The disadvantage is that some of the indicators have no local resonance. Under the environment heading, for example, the proportion of land that is derelict is not an indicator that has come up in community engagement activity in Uttlesford. We are, however, strongly advised to use the whole set.

Risk analysis

7 The following have been assessed as the potential risks associated with this issue.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Actions
We attempt to compile a comprehensive set of indicators beyond our ability to resource	Low	High	Resist the temptation to capture everything and embrace everyone's own pet issue
We end up with a very complex body of information and key trends get lost	Low	Medium	Limit the number of locally determined indicators
Limited ownership of indicators by Members, LSP and local community	Medium	Medium	Ensure flexibility to include some additions reflecting local priorities and areas of concern is used.
We select indicators that have unforeseen implications when applied for policy development purposes	Medium	High	Indicators kept under review using feedback from policy development processes

Environmental Indicators

SDAG, 6 September 2005 Item 4

Indicators reflecting local priorities and areas of concern

- 8 About seven of the potential environmental indicators suggested by the Group are included in the Audit Commission Local Quality of Life Indicators set. An additional one is in the Egan Review Sustainable Communities Indicators set. The Local Development Framework Core Output Indicators recommended by ODPM contains other suggestions, but these would be reported in the Annual Monitoring Report required on the LDF anyway. Alternative indicators of proactive robust planning could be drawn from this set. An example could be the number of planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on either flood defence or water quality grounds.
- 9 Information about the environmental indicators suggested by the Group is presented in the attached table A.