

Winchester City Council

Comments on the Consultation Draft Corporate Strategy 2007-2012

The following comments were received on the consultation draft of the Corporate Strategy 2007-2012 during the consultation period in October/November 2006. Suggested responses are made in italics.

Comments from City Councillors	Page 1-5
Comments from organisations/partnerships	Page 5-7
Comments from City Council officers	Page 7-9

1. Comments from Winchester City Councillors

Comments Made at Cabinet , 11th October 2006

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Evans made a number of comments on the Draft, as summarised below:

- The aim for Winchester to offer “High value jobs” was possibly too elitist – “a range of jobs” was preferable;

Response: The sentence has been re-worded as follows – ‘the district offers a range of jobs, particularly high value jobs.....’

- Although “improving access to affordable housing” was included in the amended draft, she considered that the Council should also aim to improve provision of such housing;

Response: Reworded as follows – ‘Enabling, and improving access to, affordable housing’

- She regretted that the importance of cultural opportunities appeared to have diminished since the previous year’s Strategy;

Response: This has been strengthened

- She welcomed the proposed amendment to improve access to local services “for rural communities”;

- There was no prioritisation of the Council’s aims;

Response: As per previous Corporate Strategies, there is no particular order of importance. These are our aims and we would expect to meet them all.

- The document should emphasise throughout that it related to the entire Winchester District and not just the unparished Town area.

Response: This has been strengthened

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Sport suggested that the action point “Improving Sport and Leisure Opportunities” should be amended to “Improving Culture, Sport and Leisure Opportunities.”

Response: This has been altered as suggested by the Head of Cultural Services to – ‘increasing opportunities to participate in sporting and cultural activities’

During discussion, Members commented that the Corporate Strategy should focus on issues that the Council could have an impact on. In addition, as a function of the Strategy was also to guide the Council’s budget process, it must necessarily be selective in what was included.

Comments from Principal Scrutiny Committee, 16th October 2006

The Committee considered the revised draft version of the Strategy and a number of comments and suggestions were made, as set out below under the various headings of the Strategy:

Promote an Inclusive Society :

- The inclusion of ‘improving access to affordable housing’ was welcomed under this heading, as it was recognised that the local economy could be impeded by housing shortages. It was also suggested that more emphasis should be given to affordable housing provision.

Response: Reworded as follows – ‘Enabling, and improving access to, affordable housing’

- It was also noted that not all residents could actively contribute to the local economy.
- It was noted that although a large percentage of residents and workers in the District were employed in the public sector or were of pensionable age, they would still welcome economic prosperity in the District.
- It was suggested that more emphasis should be given to disability equality issues and to assisting the disadvantaged.

Response: An additional paragraph referring to the Council’s equality and diversity duties has now been added and other elements strengthened in this respect.

- There should be a greater emphasis on creating facilities for teenagers/young people.

Response: An additional sentence acknowledging the Council’s role under the Children Act 2004 has now been added. Detailed actions will be in business plans.

- Areas of relative deprivation within the District should be specified and the Council should include details of appropriate assistance (including that by partners).

Response: This has been included in the Community Strategy and there will be action planning by the Local Strategic Partnership

Economic Prosperity:

- What do we want Winchester to be like? - The encouraging of ‘high value jobs’ was appropriate, although it was recognised that other less well rewarded jobs were equally important to the local economy.

High Quality Environment:

- What do we want Winchester to be like? - It was agreed that additional wording was required to clarify that the matters listed under this heading were outcomes that the Council was seeking.

Response: No amendment considered necessary.

During discussion, it was suggested that the Strategy required alignment with all other Council strategies over an appropriate period of time. Furthermore, the document could be more aspirational (for example, along the same lines as the recently adopted 'Vision for Winchester' document)

The current draft was too broad and that more prioritisation could be helpful.

Response: This is necessarily a high level document. Business plans will detail how each Directorate will respond to the Corporate Strategy

Links to the need for partnership working should be strengthened.

Response: The link between the Community Strategy and the Corporate Strategy is already made in the opening paragraphs, and also the point that 'the Council will contribute towards these broader outcomes, either directly or in partnership'.

More emphasis should be given to the fact that the strategy affected the Winchester District, rather than just the Town.

Response: This has now been strengthened

Comments made at Environment Scrutiny Panel, 17th October 2006

The Scrutiny Panels were asked to consider this revised version of the Strategy to review the overall benefit to the public from services provided by the Council and other relevant organisations.

During debate, the Panel highlighted the following issues as concerns and suggested the following changes to the document:

- That the wording of "Improving access to affordable housing" should be strengthened

Response: Reworded as follows – 'Enabling, and improving access to, affordable housing'

- The need to emphasise sustainable/climate change actions (including methods of construction and adaptations).

Response: The current wording (Reduce our emissions of 'greenhouse' gases and assist others to do the same) is suitable for a high level document. Details of actions will be in business plans

- Need to reduce traffic congestion and speed, and to promote walking and cycling.

Response: Wording included as follows – ‘Improve access to town and village centres’

- Change to High Quality Environment: “Local distinctiveness is protected and the public realm is well designed, built *and maintained.*”

Response: This amendment has been made.

- That references to “Winchester” as the District should be made clearer for the public to understand.

Response: This has been strengthened

Comments Made at Local Economy Scrutiny Panel, 18th October 2006

The Director of Development commented that it might not be appropriate for the Strategy to specifically highlight “high value” jobs as workers were required in all levels of the employment market.

Response: The sentence has been re-worded as follows – ‘the district offers a range of jobs, particularly high value jobs.....’

Councillor Stallard sought views on her suggestion that the wording “important historic buildings” should be amended to “important historic environment” to reflect the wider context. In addition, the wording of “built heritage” should be changed.

Response: This has been amended as suggested.

Councillor Stallard also suggested that the word “cultural” be added to the phrase “improving sport and leisure opportunities” under the “promote health and well-being” section. This was agreed by the Panel.

Response: This has been amended

Comments Made by Social Issues Scrutiny Panel, 23rd October 2006

During debate, the Panel highlighted the following issues as concerns and suggested the following changes to the document:

- To amend the wording of “the District offers high value jobs” to “the District provides a range of jobs”

Response: The sentence has been re-worded as follows – ‘the district offers a range of jobs, particularly high value jobs.....’

- To add: “Ensure an adequate housing supply to support the local economy, including affordable housing.”

Response: Affordable housing addressed under ‘Inclusive Society’

- To delete “centre” from “Improve air quality in Winchester town centre.”

Response: Air quality is not a demonstrable problem elsewhere

Comments Made by Resources Scrutiny Panel, 25th October 2006

The following points were raised for consideration by Cabinet in preparing the next draft of the Corporate Strategy:

- references in the previous Strategy which had been deleted from this version should be reinstated as follows:
“increasing the skills of the workforce, setting challenging targets for performance management, and being creative and innovative”

Response: The first 2 points are now adequately covered within the amended Modern Council section. We do not necessarily always want to be creative and innovative. It is often costly and creates unnecessary risks.

- as well as identifying the Council's priorities, the Strategy should also identify areas which were not priorities.

Response: No amendment felt to be necessary. The Strategy is about what we intend to do

- joint working with other authorities should be specifically mentioned.

Response: This is covered by 'Ensure that we are efficient and offer value for money to local taxpayers'. Details will be in business plans

2. Comments Made by Organisations and Partnerships

Comments made by members of the Board of the Winchester District Strategic Partnership, 21st September 2006

Dennis Garrett (High Quality Environment thematic rep) stressed that green issues need to be considered in the budget and that the City Council should specifically address any impact which a growing local economy would have on the natural environment.

Margaret Newbigin (Housing thematic rep) that it is important to see the linkages between things. For example, increased housing has to be accompanied by appropriate infrastructure, and other considerations such as the impact on biodiversity.

Diana Wooldridge (Inclusive Society thematic rep) commented that specific reference should be made to the needs of both older people, and to those of children and young people.

Response: An additional sentence acknowledging the Council's role under the Children Act 2004 has now been added. Detailed actions will be in business plans. Older people are covered by the words '..all sections of the community'.

She also commented on the importance of transport and access issues in rural areas, and the role of the County Council. Cllr Beckett acknowledged that other agencies' input was required to tackle many issues and that the Corporate Strategy is also about the way the Council will support others in their efforts.

Mike Simpson, Chairman of the Winchester District Children and Young People Partnership

A) Under the heading 'Economic Prosperity' the 5th bullet point should read 'Support tourism businesses ...' NOT 'Support for tourism businesses ...' (just a grammatical point).

Response: This has been changed

B) I suggest that there should be some clear 'Outcomes'!!!

Response: The document is clear on the desired outcomes throughout. It is a high level strategic document. Further detail will be contained in the Corporate Business Plan, and divisional business plans.

C) No mention of young people - or any other specific group of people (but young people feel very EXCLUDED from what the Council does) -

Also - one of the key issues in Winchester District is that young people are disenfranchised by the fact that the Council has an average age of 50+ I suspect ... and young people over 18yrs can't afford to live here ... and there is little in the way of youth facilities in Winchester thereby leading to the drink culture becoming more and more dominant.

Therefore, the Council should work in partnership with other agencies (both statutory and voluntary sector) to:

1. engage with young people;
2. enable them to have a voice and real influence in their communities;
3. encourage and support them to make healthy choices;
4. support the creation of facilities for young people which provide alternatives to the prevailing 'binge-drinking' culture, particularly in Winchester City Centre;
5. encourage local young people to stay in Winchester through enabling access to affordable housing;
5. empower young people to fulfill their full potential as individuals and as citizens of Winchester District.

Response: An additional sentence acknowledging the Council's role under the Children Act 2004 has now been added. Detailed actions will be in business plans.

D) There is nothing about open government - e.g. in values section at the end. Transparency, scrutiny, dealing with complaints, quality assurance, etc

Response: Values section amended to include – 'Adopts the highest standards of integrity, openness and honesty in all that we do'

Bridget Phelps (Chair of the Mid Hampshire Primary Care Trust)

There is something we would find very valuable to be incorporated in the document and this relates to the agreements the LSP has already reached around health inequalities. To tackle these we rely heavily on the various members of the partnership making their distinctive contributions. From the City Council's point of view this is linked to the determinants of health that are used in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (educational attainment; skills and training; income; employment; living

environment (indoors and outdoors); barriers to housing (including overcrowding); crime and disorder). These were set out in the Social Inclusion section of the last Community Plan.

We are already working together to co-ordinate efforts for those wards that have the highest levels of deprivation, in particular All Saints and St Lukes, and the contribution of community development in addressing these issues is a key building block for change.

It would be enormously helpful if this issue could be reflected in some way in the Corporate Strategy so that the contributions being made could be explicit rather than implicit. I very much hope that it can be included in the revised version of the Community Strategy as one of the key cross-cutting themes that we are working on together as this seemed to be our agreement at the July 2006 LSP (Board) meeting.

Response: This has been drawn out in the revised version of the Community Strategy. Most of the IMD categories are covered in the Corporate Strategy.

3. Comments Made by Officers of Winchester City Council

Head of Cultural Services

Economic Prosperity:

There is a concern about a district that only offers high value jobs and am not clear whether this mean 'high value': is this simply 'well paid'? Surely it is more realistic to look for *a variety of job opportunities that offer flexible and satisfying employment?* Every sector will have low as well as high paid jobs: is the strategy saying that there should be no cleaners in the district, for example, or that all cleaners should be paid £10 an hour? Industry would come to a standstill without them... One of the features of the tourism sector (although I know it has a reputation for offering low paid work) is that it offers very flexible work opportunities for students, working parents etc, plus on-the-job training and good development prospects. There's a chunk about this in the tourism strategy.

Response: This is also suggested in comments from others. The sentence has been re-worded as follows – 'the district offers a range of jobs, particularly high value jobs.....'

I also think that the issue of skills shortages is less pressing than the issue of lack of appropriate and affordable housing – this is certainly true for tourism businesses like hotels who need to accommodate staff locally (due to working patterns etc). One of the Wessex Hotel's big advantages as an employer is that it owns staff housing in Winchester.

Sentence added in Inclusive Society section as follows – 'Enabling, and improving access to, affordable housing'

High Quality Environment:

We are obviously pleased to see mention, both in the italic 'vision' section and the bulleted action points, of 'important historic buildings' and 'built heritage' being conserved. However, the district's character is really not made up of a series of old buildings so much as whole street scenes, vistas, conservation areas, ancient monuments and the phenomenal archaeology beneath which we have taken so much care to protect over many years. It would be much more in keeping with

current 'government speak' and also much more appropriate for what I think is the intention of these references, to talk about the 'historic environment' rather than 'buildings' or 'built environment'. Bearing in mind that you have just appointed a Champion for the Historic Environment, it would also create some level of consistency of our own terminology and commitments...

Response: Amended as suggested

While I'm at it, could we say 'preserved and enhanced' rather than 'conserved' in the manner of jam? This again is in accord with the legal definition of our statutory responsibilities (to preserve and enhance the character of... listed buildings/conservation areas etc)?

Response: Amended as suggested

Strong and Safe Communities:

We understand that there has been some debate over whether or not to include the word 'culture' in the bullet point about 'improving sport and leisure opportunities'. Leisure does NOT by any means include 'culture' in today's world – rather the other way round if anything. Culture, according to the DCMS definition, actually includes 'sport'. I'm not clear why 'culture' is not used in this bullet point, unless there is a feeling that it's a bit of an un-user-friendly word. However, as was made clear at last night's scrutiny panel, we do a huge amount of work through the arts (dance, drama, music) and museums work in particular to contribute to the MENTAL as well as physical health and well-being of local people. We provide learning opportunities for all ages, physical activity (dance workshops, Meon Valley walking and cycling trail), healthy eating (Watercress Tour, promotion of farmers' markets) etc etc through our 'cultural' remit and I think this is not in any way acknowledged through the rather bland use of the word 'leisure'. Winnall Rock School, by way of an additional example, has probably done more to promote social cohesion and tackle crime than any number of formal community initiatives. We don't celebrate this achievement enough. How about replacing the bullet on 'improving sport and leisure opportunities' with: * increasing opportunities to participate in sporting and cultural activities

Response: Amended as suggested

An Efficient and Effective Organisation:

The italic vision 'adopts sustainable, employee-focused working practices' seems wrong to me. We should surely be trying to adopt 'sustainable, customer-focused working practices' and not employee-focused. I would agree that we need to provide a workplace which cares for its staff with modern and flexible working arrangements, but that shouldn't be put before the customer.

There's nothing in the following bullets about developing staff to meet changing customer needs and expectations and/or to fulfill their own potential, or about consulting with/working with staff to ensure we really do become an employer of choice. At a time of major organizational change, it would be good to see some formal recognition of this.

Response: This section has been redrafted and now takes account of these points

