

ANGUS COUNCIL**PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE****28 JANUARY 1999
9 FEBRUARY 1999****SUBJECT: PROPOSALS FOR UK 'HEADLINE' INDICATORS OF
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT****REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT**

Abstract: This report outlines the Government's consultation paper on a set of 'headline' indicators of sustainable development.

1 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree the comments made in this report and agree to its submission to the Scottish Office as the Council's response to the consultation paper on a set of 'headline' indicators of sustainable development "Sustainability Counts".

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Government have issued a consultation paper "Sustainability Counts" which lays out proposals for a set of 'headline' indicators on sustainable development. This is aimed at providing a set of landmarks or milestones by which to measure progress. This follows on from the "Opportunities for Change" consultation paper on a revised UK Strategy for Sustainable Development which was reported to the Planning and Transport Policy and Policy and Resources Committees in June 1998, report 637/98 refers. Various related Government's publications have contributed to the move towards sustainability including the Draft Guidance on the Road Traffic Reduction Act and "Travel Choices for Scotland" White Paper which have previously been reported to Committee - reports 436/98 and 878/98 refer.
- 2.2 A copy of the consultation paper is available for reference in the Members' Lounge, The Cross, Forfar and responses are requested by 29 January 1999. In order to meet the timescale a copy of this report has been forwarded to the Scottish Office as the provisional view of Angus Council subject to consideration and agreement of the Committees.

3 MAIN POINTS FROM THE CONSULTATION PAPER

- 3.1 The proposals contained within the consultation paper are aimed at developing a set of indicators of sustainable development which will become widely understood and as commonly accepted and used as key economic indicators such as the 'rate of inflation' currently are.
- 3.2 A set of what are termed 'headline' indicators have been produced under the four broad objectives on which the Government bases its vision of sustainable development, namely:-

- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment;
 - social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
 - effective protection of the environment;
 - prudent use of natural resources.
- 3.3 In all a "menu" of 13 "headline" indicators have been proposed (see Appendix 1) and the Government stresses that it is important to recognise the interactions between them and the need to view them as a package and not in isolation.
- 3.4 These "headline" indicators will be supplemented by a more detailed set, possibly an extra 150, to support the various policy areas. The full set will be published within the revised Sustainable Development Strategy which is due to be published early in 1999.
- 3.5 To be successful an indicator should be: scientifically sound; technically robust; easily understood; sensitive to the change it is intended to represent; measurable and capable of being updated regularly. This can be a tall order particularly when trying to use existing data which can have different geographic coverage, differing timescales for change and variable timetables for updating of information for the proposed indicators. The proposed timetable for releasing information for each indicator is shown in Appendix 2. It can be seen from this that information will therefore be released on a rolling basis. Not all the proposed "headline" indicators have the same geographic spread but the ultimate aim is to extend coverage to the whole of the UK.
- #### 4 RESPONSE
- 4.1 There are pros and cons to each of the proposed indicators particularly when considered on a local basis where indicators more appropriate to local conditions or issues could be chosen. However, the total picture provided by the package would, over time, give a UK wide indication of whether progress is being made towards sustainable development.
- 4.2 The Council will have a contribution to make in progressing work which will influence the local input to most if not all the proposed "headline" indicators. This will all form part of the Council's commitment to Local Agenda 21. Local significance is more likely to be seen in the more detailed set of indicators which will support the different policy areas. It is to be hoped therefore that local authorities will be afforded the opportunity to comment on these prior to their inclusion in the revised Sustainable Development Strategy.
- 4.3 Whilst recognising the need for indicators of sustainable development the Council is conscious that indicator work is being undertaken in various other fields, for example, the development of Performance Indicators under the Best Value agenda. Angus Council would wish to be assured therefore that the developing and monitoring of indicators will not put undue pressure on Council resources. Assurances are also sought that the indicator work in the various fields should compliment each other; should not duplicate each other and, where possible, should consider using existing indicators.

- 4.4 It is recognised that work is required to harmonise the data inputs for the indicators. It is suggested therefore that where required the Government be encouraged to extend their coverage to the whole of the UK and that to facilitate this move the necessary resources should be made available.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Law & Administration and Director of Finance have been consulted and all Departments have been consulted via their representatives on the Environmental Strategy/Local Agenda 21 Working Group.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 It is suggested that the proposed headline indicators will help to identify at the UK level progress towards sustainable development and should therefore be welcomed. However the Government should be encouraged to move expeditiously towards harmonisation of the indicators particularly to ensure UK wide coverage of input data.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/PC/IAL
18 January 1999

Alex Anderson
Director of Planning and Transport

Proposed headline indicators of sustainable development

Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment – *so that everyone can share in high living standards and greater job opportunities, and to generate the income and wealth needed to pay for essential infrastructure and future investment.*

Economic growth	Total output of the economy (gross domestic product)
Social investment	Investment in public assets (transport, hospitals, schools, etc)
Employment	People of working age who are in work

Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone – *ensuring that better health, a good education and decent housing, are available to everyone in our society, no matter who they are and where they live*

Health	Expected years of healthy life
Education and training	Qualifications at age 19
Housing quality	Homes judged unfit to live in

Effective protection of the environment – *limiting the emissions of greenhouse gases which are causing the global climate to change, ensuring that people's health does not suffer from poor air quality or other pollution, and protecting wildlife and the countryside*

Climate change	Emissions of greenhouse gases
Air pollution	Days of air pollution
Transport	Road traffic
Water quality	Rivers of good or fair quality
Wildlife	Populations of wild birds
Land use	New homes built on previously developed land

Prudent use of natural resources – *ensuring that we use resources efficiently and minimise waste*

Waste	Waste and waste disposal
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APPENDIX 2

Expected release dates of the headline indicators of sustainable development

Issue	Indicator	Expected frequency of release	Expected month/season of release
Economic growth	Total output of the economy (gross domestic product)	annual	July
Social investment	Investment in public assets (transport, hospitals, schools, etc)	annual	September
Employment	People of working age who are in work	annual	July
Health	Expected years of healthy life	annual	
Education and training	Qualifications at age 19	annual	July
Housing quality	Homes judged unfit to live in	every 5 years	
Climate change	Emissions of greenhouse gases	annual	April
Air pollution	Days of air pollution	annual	May
Transport	Road traffic	annual	September
Water quality	Rivers of good or fair quality	annual	September
Wildlife	Populations of wild birds	annual	October
Land use	New homes built on previously developed land	annual	August
Waste	Waste and waste disposal	every 3 years	Autumn