

REPORT TO: Cabinet
Cabinet Member Regeneration
Planning Committee

DATE: 10th February 2010

SUBJECT: North West Regional Strategy 2010: Draft Part 1
Consultation

**WARDS
AFFECTED:** All

REPORT OF: Andy Wallis – Planning and Economic Regeneration Director

**CONTACT
OFFICER:** Alan Young – Strategic Planning and Information Manager
TEL 934 3551

**EXEMPT/
CONFIDENTIAL:** No

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

This report is to inform Cabinet, Cabinet Member and Planning Committee of the consultation on the Draft Part 1 of the forthcoming Northwest Regional Strategy and to seek delegated authority from Cabinet for the Planning and Economic Regeneration Director to provide (partial) comments on behalf of Sefton and to contribute towards a joint Liverpool City Region response.

REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:

To enable the Planning and Economic Regeneration Director to provide comments on behalf of Sefton in addition to contributing to the joint Liverpool City Region Cabinet comments.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

It is recommended that:

- (i) Planning Committee, Cabinet Members and Cabinet note the key elements of the North West Regional Strategy 2010: Draft Part 1 Consultation and agree the suggested (partial) consultation response set out in the report; and
- (ii) agree that the Planning and Economic Regeneration Director be authorised to send the above, and any necessary further consultation comments, to the DCLG as part of the Council's formal response to this consultation exercise.

KEY DECISION: No

FORWARD PLAN: No

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: N/A

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

Do not respond to consultation – however, there is the possibility that the comments expressed in this report will no be addressed by other respondents.

IMPLICATIONS:

Budget/Policy Framework: None

Financial: None

<u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u>	2009 2010 £	2010/ 2011 £	2011/ 2012 £	2012/ 2013 £
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

Legal: N/A

Risk Assessment: N/A

Asset Management: N/A

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS

INTERNAL TO PLANNING AND ECONOMIC REGENERATION DEPARTMENT

CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community		✓	
2	Creating Safe Communities		✓	
3	Jobs and Prosperity		✓	
4	Improving Health and Well-Being		✓	
5	Environmental Sustainability		✓	
6	Creating Inclusive Communities		✓	
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy		✓	
8	Children and Young People		✓	

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

1. Background & Introduction

- 1.1 A new economy-focused Northwest Regional Strategy (RS2010) is currently being prepared that will replace the current Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies. The new Strategy will combine the region's planning and economic development policies into a single document. The Northwest agreed as a region to prepare an integrated regional strategy in 2008 and since then it has become a statutory requirement.
- 1.2 In developing and consulting upon the new Regional Strategy, 4NW have split the document into 3 separate parts – 'Part 1: High Level Strategic Framework', 'Part 2: Detailed Policies', and an 'Implementation Framework'. The current consultation relates to Part 1: High Level Strategic Framework, which once finalised will contain the vision and principles to guide the Strategy, as well as setting the higher-level policies and priorities. The public consultation opened on 4th January and will close on 26th February 2010.
- 1.3 Members may recall that Sefton responded to a 'Principles and Issues' consultation for RS2010 that took place during Spring 2009. The findings from this earlier consultation have now been developed to inform the preparation of the current consultation document.
- 1.4 The subsequent 'Part 2: Detailed Policies' and the Implementation Framework will be produced and consulted upon separately, and are currently forecast to be available for consultation during summer 2010 (alongside a revised Part 1). Members should note that Part 2 will contain the more detailed policies, including any regionally set targets (such as those relating to housing numbers). The policies contained within Part 2 will be set within the context of the overarching Part 1 policies. Finally, the Implementation Framework will demonstrate how and by whom it is intended the Regional Strategy will be delivered. Members will be notified at the appropriate time of Sefton's proposed response to the Part 2 / Implementation Strategy consultation.
- 1.5 In the limited time available, and given the range of specialisms covered, it has not been possible to co-ordinate a complete response to the Part 1 consultation at this time. The following is therefore a partial response that seeks to highlight the key issues and propose a series of initial responses to the consultation. This report therefore seeks delegated authority to provide additional comments on behalf of Sefton if the Planning and Economic Regeneration Director, in consultation with Cabinet Member Regeneration and Chair of Planning Committee, considers it necessary prior to the 26th February deadline.
- 1.6 Sefton's finalised response will also feed into a joint Merseyside response, which is being coordinated by The Mersey Partnership (TMP) and the Mersey Policy Unit (MPU) on behalf of the Merseyside authorities.

2. Draft Part 1 Consultation Document

'Strands' and 'outcomes'

2.1 The Strategy comprises of 4 key 'strands' which set out the priorities faced by the region. These strands are also supplemented by twelve related 'outcomes', which expand upon the strands. These are set out as follows ('strands' highlighted in bold):

- **Capitalise on the opportunities of moving to a low-carbon economy and address climate change**

1. Promoting the sustainable use of resources and minimising and adapting the impact of climate change.

- **Build on our sources of international competitive advantage and regional distinctiveness**

2. Ensuring the northwest has vibrant and attractive cities, towns and rural areas, capitalising on the region's rich cultural, heritage, sporting and university assets.
3. Increasing the levels of enterprise and trade and creating the right conditions for business growth and sustainability in the region. Capitalising on the region's strengths and assets in international trade, intellectual property, advanced manufacturing, bio-medical and digital/creative.
4. Increasing productivity, capitalising on the region's innovation, science and research assets and exploiting the Northwest's potential in the renewable and nuclear offer and worldwide opportunities from low-carbon technologies.
5. Protecting, enhancing and developing the quality of the Northwest's outstanding environmental, natural and coastal landscape assets.

- **Release the potential of our people and tackle poverty**

6. Developing communities and places, which are sustainable and safe, with less deprivation and disadvantage within the region.
7. Creating a world-class skills base, improving education, attracting and retaining talent as well as tackling gaps in basic, intermediate and graduate level skills.
8. Having a healthy population, with a reduction in health inequalities and capitalising on the economic opportunities from changing health issues.
9. Improving the range and depth of quality employment opportunities for all. Linking areas of opportunity and need, significantly reducing low employment rates and improving the supply of labour to businesses.

- **Ensure the right housing and infrastructure for sustainable growth**

10. Creating balanced housing markets across the Northwest that support economic growth, strengthen inclusion and ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, well-designed high-quality, affordable housing in mixed, sustainable communities.
11. Delivering a high-quality, reliable and efficient infrastructure, transport and digital networks which contribute to sustainable development and ensuring that the region is better connected, locally and internationally.

12. Ensuring high-quality, efficient and responsive public services.

3 Director's Comments

General Comments

- 3.1 In terms of focus and implications for Sefton, the strategy recognises the importance of the maritime sector and the Liverpool Superport including access, the potential for tidal power within the Mersey, and developing the city region offer around the visitor economy. The draft Strategy also provides welcome emphasis on regeneration in the Liverpool City Region, and the need to tackle barriers to reduce worklessness in our area.
- 3.2 The draft Strategy seeks to improve enterprise levels, investment in business incubation and growth facilities, support high value jobs in tourism and port-related development and continues to support Housing Market Renewal. Additionally, the Strategy also seeks to encourage investment in utilities infrastructure and strategic employment sites in the region.
- 3.3 In general terms, the key messages of the draft Strategy are welcomed and supported, subject to the detailed comments set out in this report.

Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy

- 3.4 Climate change, and moving to a low carbon economy, is identified as the single biggest challenge facing the region over the next 20 years. The Strategy states that the region should look to position itself to take full advantage of the opportunities from low-carbon energy and technology, and seek to reduce demand for energy and other resources. The Strategy also emphasises that it will be necessary to understand and adapt to the implications of unavoidable climate change.
- 3.5 The over-riding commitment to address climate change is an important statement of intent. However the extent to which climate change adjustment limits or over-rides other objectives is less clear. In particular, the Strategy raises (but does not answer) difficult questions on the balance between reducing consumption, demand and carbon requirements, but at the same time achieving growth.

Economic Regeneration

- 3.6 Whilst the draft Strategy supports the continuation of regeneration initiatives in Merseyside, there is some concern that regeneration should be given greater emphasis in the document. Although regeneration is listed as one of the 12 'outcomes' (above), and as one of 4 'Strategic Options' (see below), it is considered that the aim of matching need to opportunity should be embedded in 'the vision' and / or the 'strategic objectives'.
- 3.7 It is also considered that there should be greater reference to the contribution made by small/medium growth-oriented enterprises that are the backbone of the regional economy and the source of significant investment and employment. At present, the Strategy sets the threshold for support to business growth and development at a very high level, prioritising only regionally significant investment in the "internationally competitive sector".

Tourism and the role of Southport

- 3.8 A key concern regarding the document is that the role of Southport as a nationally recognised tourist destination is underplayed. Blackpool alone is singled out as a 'national' tourist destination, and it is considered that Southport should be given parity with Blackpool in this regard (it is instead referred to only as a 'regional destination'). No mention is made of Southport as 'England's Classic Resort', which is a significant omission, and reference should also be made to the 'Golf Coast' in underlining Southport's appeal. It should be noted that Southport was specifically referred to as the 'Classic Resort' in the 2006 Regional Economic Strategy, and it is considered that RS2010 should also include reference to this.
- 3.9 Another concern is that Southport's heritage appeal is not explicitly reflected in the Strategy. Whilst the 'key points' section within Appendix 2 recognises the opportunities to make more of the heritage appeal of Southport, alongside Chester, Lancaster and Carlisle, this is not reflected elsewhere in the document where only Chester, Lancaster and Carlisle are grouped together as 'heritage cities'.

The North West Coast

- 3.10 In addition, it is considered that the North West Coast as an entity in terms of brand and potential National/International/Regional Destination attractor could be more explicit. Its unique assets are capable of contributing to a valuable and varied visitor economy. The NW Coast should also be recognised as an important green infrastructure asset alongside any targeted support for more urban-based green infrastructure.

Spatial Options

- 3.11 In addition to the priorities and areas for action outlined above, the Strategy proposes four 'Spatial Options' which are designed to set out the range of choices that could be considered where there potential conflicts or spatial and distribution issues that arise. Respondents to the consultation are invited to identify which option they consider to be most appropriate for the emerging Strategy.
- 3.12 The four Spatial Options are as follows:
- Current position ("business as usual)
 - Focus on economic opportunity
 - Focus on protecting environmental resources and taking full advantage of environmental opportunities
 - Focus on regeneration and development to tackle social deprivation and inclusion.
- 3.13 We are not yet in a position to analyse the options sufficiently to make a firm judgement as to which would best for Sefton. The 'environmental limits' option is particularly difficult to assess, as we have no impact assessment on economic growth. Whilst there are merits to each option, it may be that a hybrid is required that incorporates elements of each.

Consultation Submission

- 3.14 A joint response to the Part 1 consultation is being jointly co-ordinated by TMP and MPU on behalf of the Merseyside authorities, and it is recommended that authority be delegated to the Planning and Economic Regeneration Director to agree these comments.
- 3.15 As stated above, this report constitutes a partial response to the RS2010 Part 1 consultation, and further consideration is needed to compile a final response. It is therefore recommended that authority be delegated to the Planning and Economic Regeneration Director to make additional comments to those made above in submitting a final response prior to the 26th February deadline.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Planning Committee:

- (i) note the key elements of the North West Regional Strategy 2010: Draft Part 1 Consultation and agree the suggested (partial) consultation response set out in the report; and
- (ii) agree that the Planning and Economic Regeneration Director be authorised to send the above, and any necessary further consultation comments, to the DCLG as part of the Council's formal response to this consultation exercise.