

DRAFT

Community Strategy for the Borough of Dudley

2005 – 2020

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A VISION FOR DUDLEY BOROUGH

Through the Dudley Borough Challenge we have set out a realistic and exciting vision for all who live and work in the Dudley Borough, and for those who visit the area. Our vision spans 15 years, looking ahead to 2020.

There will be many changes and developments during this time, some of which we are aware of or can predict and others that we can't foresee at the moment. It is important that we hold a strong and clear view of what we need to achieve in order to help us respond to changes in the right way, to make the most of opportunities and address challenges that might arise.

We enjoy enormous strengths in Dudley – our heritage, the strength of distinct towns and villages, the diverse nature of our communities, the quality of our local environment and our capacity for world-leading innovation in manufacturing. The purpose of the Borough Challenge is to make the most of these strengths, to set clear priorities for what we need now and for the future.

This strategy has been developed by the Dudley Community Partnership, which includes the major public bodies, the private sector and the voluntary and community partnerships in the Borough.

As a Partnership of local agencies and groups, we understand the importance of getting day-to-day matters right. Preparing a community strategy is not an excuse for failing to tackle issues that exist now. However, we also need to be concerned with what we want to achieve together in the future.

There are real challenges ahead, and we will need to work together to tackle them. By working to a shared vision, it gives us a much better chance to work together, exchanging ideas, supporting each other and sharing resources.

Over the past 15 months we have involved around 5,000 local people in the Borough Challenge engagement process and they have given us their ideas and views for the future vision for the Borough and the local area in which they live or work. We believe this community strategy does reflect widespread public priorities and needs.

As a Partnership we are committed to focusing upon these needs, with the continued engagement of local residents and communities throughout this time. In many ways, the challenge ahead intensifies as we implement the key actions contained in this strategy. On behalf of the Partnership we look forward to moving ahead with these plans and to rise to the Dudley Borough Challenge.

Khurshid Ahmed

David Caunt

The Overall Vision: Stronger Communities

The overall vision of the Challenge is the promotion of Stronger Communities throughout the Borough.

A strong community has many qualities. It exists where all people are happy and proud to live and where there is decent housing, a clean and safe environment and is an area that is attractive, vibrant and harmonious.

People in a strong community would not be disadvantaged by where they live, their culture or social background, their age, gender or how much money they earn.

A strong community is not just about places, it is also about groups of people with common interests who could live in a number of different places throughout the borough.

People in a Strong Community:

- ☺ are healthy, with a good sense of mental well-being
- ☺ take an interest in where they live and have a sense of belonging
- ☺ know their neighbours and are tolerant of people different from themselves
- ☺ help and support one another through friendship and shared activities
- ☺ work together to take pride in their community
- ☺ look out for each other, especially for vulnerable people
- ☺ make appropriate use of the facilities in their areas, particularly the green spaces.
- ☺ have opportunities to access education and pursue learning interests
- ☺ enjoy a good standard of living and have opportunity to benefit from rewarding jobs
- ☺ provide positive role models for each other, and especially the young
- ☺ feel that they have control over their lives
- ☺ are able to affect decisions about delivery of local services
- ☺ have a good idea about what is on offer from service providers, and how to access those services
- ☺ have pride in and care for their environment

Through the Borough Challenge we propose that everything we do will be judged by this overall vision of working towards Stronger Communities.

Borough Challenge: Addressing Disadvantage

Through the Borough Challenge we will work to improve the quality of life for all. However, we recognise that some individuals and communities are at different starting points. Research demonstrates that there are neighbourhoods within the borough that experience a combination of problems which are significantly worse than those in other areas of the Borough, such as unemployment, low incomes, low educational achievement, poor skills, low quality housing and ill health. More precise details are included in appendices to this Strategy.

In recognition of this, Dudley will receive additional funding (Neighbourhood Renewal Fund) from the Government for 2006/07 and 2007/08. This money is to help partnerships improve the circumstances for people in the areas of the borough that suffer with high concentrations of problems. This Strategy will identify the priorities for these areas to enable the funding to be targeted more effectively (see appendix re neighbourhood maps and analysis). It is also important that local people are involved in helping achieve change for themselves.

Equally there are groups who experience disadvantage by virtue of vulnerability, such as age, disability, and ethnicity. **Our aim through this strategy is to close that gap, to promote greater equality for all people to make a full contribution to society.**

Borough Challenge: Acting Now – Looking Ahead

A community strategy sets out the basis for future decision making. It points the way in terms of the values and aspirations that we will work towards. By looking ahead 15 years, we are working to create better opportunities for future generations. The young people of today will be the adults of tomorrow, the ones who will have to build upon what we achieve. That is why throughout the work of the Partnership, we are determined to ensure that the involvement of children and young people is a clear priority and is considered throughout the Challenge.

Our key aim is to improve peoples' overall quality of life, not only for now but in the future – this is known as 'sustainable development'. An important part of achieving this is making sure that we have a good quality environment around us which is not damaged by economic factors overriding environmental or community ones. We have a good environment in Dudley, being close to the countryside and by having a varied urban wildlife (both plants and animals), nature reserves and open spaces, areas of green planting within our towns and streets, some good quality buildings and generally good air quality. To preserve this environment for future generations, a further aim of this Community Strategy will be to avoid problems in the future by moving towards a culture of longer-term decision making and ensuring a balanced approach to resource use.

Borough Challenge – Key Priorities

As a result of the clear direction and support from the comments of local people we have identified a series of **key priorities all of equal importance** as detailed below.

- Creating a Prosperous Borough.
- Promoting a Sense of Well Being and Good Health for Everyone.
- Celebrating our heritage and the diversity of local culture .
- Safeguarding and Improving the Environment.
- Promoting Individual and Community Learning.
- Making Dudley a Safe and Peaceful Place to live.

Progress within each of these priorities can assist creating Stronger Communities. However, none of these priorities exist or can be achieved in isolation. As the priorities are linked, so they solution to achieving them is linked. Success in one area inevitably depends on success in one or more of the others, for example.

- Good Health, in part, is linked to housing and living conditions.
- Education is similarly linked to health, but also to jobs and personal safety.

Developing an approach which works across priorities is fundamental to the challenge of delivering our overall vision.

Borough Challenge – A Vision for All

The Borough Challenge offers a vision for Dudley Borough that we can all take part in and benefit from. Each agency, community and individual person has a role to play. Through the Dudley Community Partnership, all the major partners in the Borough will focus upon what they can do to help fulfil the vision. Ultimately, the longer term success in achieving the vision depends upon the wide participation of voluntary and community sectors and the involvement of local people. As a Partnership, we want to support and encourage the community in making a direct contribution to the priorities of the Borough Challenge to make it a genuine Strategy for the whole community.

Creating a Prosperous Borough

Consultation confirmed the need for our residents to access well-paid local jobs with the opportunity to increase skills in order to take on more fulfilling careers. People feel proud to live and work in the borough and consider that agencies should positively promote the borough's many economic opportunities and strengths.

Our vision is to create competitive and prosperous communities where existing businesses thrive, new businesses are attracted to invest, and all of the borough's residents are equipped with the skills needed for the current and future jobs market.

How our vision contributes to our overall aim of stronger communities

Employment provides the means to support individual and family well-being. Residents with sufficient employment income will be more able to strike a positive balance between work and social life, with the ability to exert more control over their lives instead of circumstances controlling them. Many problems within communities can be attributed to low levels of employment and income. Income levels influence such things as diet, physical activity, social interaction, overall ability to make life choices and the stability of communities. The provision of appropriate job opportunities, through local business growth and diversification, will assist in retaining the valuable human resource which Dudley is renowned for. It is important that when planning for economic development, that the long-term impact of decisions on the environment and the community structure are considered.

Where we are now:-

- Although unemployment levels have fallen in the borough to 3.7%, close to the National Average, we know that there are some communities and some groups that still have higher than average unemployment, with one ward having over 8% unemployment.
- The number of long term (over 6 months) unemployed has fallen from 30% to 21% of the unemployed. However, Dudley has one of the highest numbers of longest unemployed in the Black Country.
- The average weekly earnings rates in Dudley are the lowest in the Black Country and one of the lowest in the Country, but in the last 12 months Dudley has had one of the fastest rises in wages in the Black Country.
- Dudley has one of the strongest investment rates in the Black Country. However over 70% of businesses in Dudley have less than 10 employees, which weakens their ability to develop human resource and business development strategies.

- The percentage of the working age population participating in learning has increased. However over one third of all employees in the Borough have no formal or recognised qualifications. This rises to 45% for those in self employment.
- The increased road congestion throughout the borough is a major concern and inhibits our ability to attract investment (comment from DUE).
- Income levels can impact upon the stability of the population as often people who raise their incomes move out of disadvantaged areas continuing a cycle of disadvantage for that community.
- The ongoing development of the Merry Hill Centre, the Waterfront complex and surrounding areas, and the proposed redevelopment of Dudley town centre and Castle Hill will provide business growth and new employment opportunities. We need to ensure that local people are equipped with the skills and have access to these employment opportunities.
- Local partnerships have developed and are delivering a range of projects that have succeeded in placing around 1000 local people in to work each year.

What's already planned:-

- Retaining the existing population of the borough and attracting people to the borough in line with the Black Country Study.
- Improve our transport and road systems to increase our attractiveness as a centre of commerce, an example being the extension of the metro link between Wednesbury and Brierley Hill.
- Ensuring that all unemployed residents are offered appropriate training and support to help them secure and retain employment in an increasingly technological jobs market.
- Creating new industrial and commercial sites by developing unused brownfield sites.
- Working with other Black Country boroughs to secure Government investment for redevelopment such as new housing.

As a Partnership, we believe that we can have most impact in achieving our long-term vision by focusing our work on the regeneration of our town centres, creation of well paid jobs for local people, and support the development of existing and new businesses, namely:-

- Developing Brierley Hill as an economic and retail centre for the Black Country, with the three main town centres of Dudley, Halesowen and Stourbridge undertaking area action plans to offer a model of urban living and working whilst promoting the built heritage.
- Creating opportunities for local people to gain well-paid employment in the Borough by equipping residents with the necessary skills and encouraging employers to invest in employee development.
- Creating an environment to enable existing and new businesses to thrive whilst championing the interests and assets of the Borough so as to encourage more business investment.

We will achieve these objectives by:-

- Increasing wage levels.
- Increasing the proportion of working-age population that is in employment.
- Reducing the percentage of the population of working age that is claiming key benefits.
- Increasing employment levels in specific disadvantaged communities compared to overall borough level and narrows the gap.
- Increasing the skill/qualification levels of the population of the borough.
- Increasing the number of new businesses starting in the borough and reducing the number of businesses that fail or leave the borough.

We recognise however, that additional work needs to be done to tackle other economic prosperity issues and these will also be addressed through improved Partnership working.

Areas of additional work:-

- Building our share of better paid employment opportunities through long term education and training programmes to equip people for increasingly high skilled positions.

- Substantially improving the quality of the local amenities and environmental conditions to provide attractive and stimulating conditions for people to live, visit and work - for example making more attractive visitors' entrance to the borough.
- Improving the quality and vibrancy of local centres by a set of programmed developments agreed by the local communities.
- Reviewing the diversity and dynamism of the business base to foster the growth of an entrepreneurial culture where members of all of our communities feel confident to invest in local business.
- Promoting the continued physical development and regeneration of land and town centres throughout the borough.
- Championing the interests of the Dudley borough, securing resources and our position regionally.

Promoting a Sense of Well Being and Good Health for Everyone

People told us they wanted Dudley to be a Borough with improved health for everyone, where fewer people smoked, more people engaged in physical activity and enjoyed better diets and there was less abuse of drugs or alcohol.

Our vision for the borough is one where people enjoy a sense of well being, and enjoy healthier and more active lifestyles.

How the vision contributes to Stronger Communities:

To achieve the overall aim, any vision for the future needs to recognise the importance of well being and good levels of health for all sections of the community. Where people suffer poor health it is important they receive the best possible care, but it is equally important to recognise the wider benefit of prevention and aim to inform people on how they may enjoy better health and live healthier lifestyles. It is equally important to recognise that a wider feeling of well being is more than just 'good health' and that mental and psychological health is equally important. Self confidence, a sense of belonging, feeling valued, feeling secure, are all essential elements of being part of a stronger community, and we need to tackle any issues that put these at risk.

Where we are now:-

- Continued dependence on tobacco remains a major health concern due to its long term contribution to disease and mortality.
- There are still people living in some areas of Dudley who suffer more from ill health than do those living elsewhere in Dudley. Whilst life expectancy has been increased by one year and now stands at 76 years for males and 81 years for females, depending on where you live, life expectancy can vary by up to 7 years.
- Obesity levels have increased locally as well as nationally as a result of poor diet and lack of exercise.
- There have been major reductions in conditions of coronary heart disease and cancer. However, as people live longer, more people are living with chronic disease conditions requiring increased support in the community and increase in demand for health and social services.
- Teenage pregnancy rate have fallen from 53 per 1000 to 50 per 1000 (Females aged 15 – 17 years) However, teenage pregnancy still remains higher than national levels and equally worrying there are rising levels of sexually transmitted infections.
- Health Service waiting times have fallen.

- Services for people with mental health problems and learning difficulties have been improved.
- All schools are accredited as 'Health Promoting Schools' (Explain).
- Major improvement in services for looked after children have taken place (Explain – the impact of this?).
- There has been a rise in the number of young people admitting to taking drugs or misusing alcohol.
- Participation in physical activity has declined over the last 5 years.

What's already planned:-

- Addressing those areas and groups of people suffering disproportionately from ill health, through better access to services and more targeted support.
- Extending the 'Health Promoting Schools' service towards level 3, to encourage healthy lifestyles among all children.
- Continuing activity to reduce levels of teenage conceptions.
- Improving support in the community for people with chronic conditions.
- Improving key primary care services, with better premises and more staff.
(*example, or statement of outcome needed*)
- Developing a network of children's centres providing nursery and healthcare.
- Minimising the risk of harm to vulnerable individuals.
- Supporting families and promote independence of adults, including older people and those with a physical disability, a mental health problem or a learning disability.
- Improving medical services are coming on stream at the new Russell's Hall Hospital together with an expansion of health and care services working in the community.

As a Partnership, we believe that we can have most impact in achieving our long-term vision by focusing our work on the three main objectives of tackling poverty, obesity and smoking, namely:-

- Tackling the connection between poverty and poor health.
- Promoting and improving access to physical activity and encouraging healthy eating so as to reduce levels of obesity.
- Minimising the effect of smoking by achieving a smoke free generation in Dudley in advance of government targets.

We will achieve these objectives by:-

- Increasing income levels of people in more disadvantaged areas of the borough.
- Reducing instances of poor health and mortality rates within disadvantaged areas and narrowing the gap.
- Achieving the national target for participation in physical activity.
- Reducing levels of obesity, as measured by Body Mass Index (BMI).
- Reducing the level of smoking.
- Reducing by half the number of under 15's who report smoking and taking other substances.

We recognise however, that additional work needs to be done to tackle other well-being and health-related issues and these will also be addressed through improved Partnership working.

Areas of additional work:-

- Working to increase the awareness of parents and young people about the long term benefits of healthy lifestyle choices.
- Reducing the levels of substance misuse, specifically alcohol, drugs and tobacco.
- Improving work around the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Supporting families, carers and dependents in terms of advice, respite, care facilities.
- Extending care services for older people.

- Understanding better the circumstances that contribute to mental health problems in order to prevent its occurrence.

Celebrating our heritage and the diversity of local culture

Through the consultation process, many people highlighted the value they attached to the heritage and culture of the borough including its many recreational activities and its contribution to the quality of life. Specifically, they identified the need for more leisure/recreational facilities that meet the needs of young people.

Our vision is to build upon the real sense of pride, respect and belonging that stems from living in the Borough, by celebrating the physical heritage and varied cultural life of its people and enjoying its many leisure opportunities.

How our vision contributes to our overall aim of stronger communities

An environment that encourages and supports a vibrant and diverse local culture for the Borough can help underpin confident, stronger communities. By celebrating the unique heritage of the Borough, the feelings of pride in local history and local people we can better appreciate peoples' differences without losing sight of our shared aspirations.

Also to include links of leisure time to stronger people and communities. Additionally, we need to recognise the need for specific provision to meet the needs of young people.

Where we are now:-

- Through the Active Dudley scheme we have awarded a grant of £290,000 to establish 3-year programme to engage young people in physical activity.
- The Me2 scheme is in place to ensure inclusive leisure facilities for disabled young people.
- Redevelopment of Redhouse Cone Museum and improved digital access to Glass Collection.
- 17 Friends of the Park groups set up and major restoration of Leasowes Park undertaken.
- Options+ Leisure Card benefits extended to carers, looked after children and disabled groups.
- Steps to Health scheme in place, aimed at improving health and access to leisure for people referred through their GP.
- 5 multi-use games areas have been established.
- Four local community groups delivered a series of celebratory activities for Black History Month.

- Lye Asian Women's Support Group host an Asian women's awards ceremony at Ghausia Mosque and Community Centre and International Women's Day in Lye is an annual multicultural event.
- Dudley Muslim Forum host a range of events to engage and network different communities to address the issues of cultural conflict and celebrate the success of people in the local Muslim community.
- Dudley Advice Centre hosted Dudley's inaugural 'Emancipation from Slavery Day', reflecting upon raising awareness of the African Holocaust in which over 100 million lives were lost.
- A variety of local history groups publish articles and information and hold regular talks and shows celebrating the history and developments of the Black Country, Dudley and its many 'villages'.

What's already planned:-

- The development of a comprehensive Borough Culture Strategy to guide future improvements.
- A £5.4million programme of improvements to local parks and living environment.
- The redevelopment of the Dudley Castle and Zoo to help preserve the history and prestige of this site.
- Planned redevelopment of all our major town centre sites to preserve the distinctive sense of local identity.
- The Interfaith Network will continue to explore differences, identify shared values and create a common future for faith communities in the Borough, including the hosting of a 'Celebrating Diversity' procession.

As a Partnership, we believe that we can have most impact in achieving our long-term vision by focusing our work on promoting and improving access to leisure and cultural activities and supporting community interaction, namely:-

- Providing access to a more diverse range of leisure and cultural activities that recognise the different needs of local people and to promote a safe and secure environment in which to enjoy watching or participating in leisure activities.
- Celebrating diversity and promoting tolerance.
- Building upon the range of sports, arts and leisure activities for young people through extra curricular school holiday activities.
- Improving the parks and open spaces of the Borough through improved design and layout to increase activity and use by all sections of the community.

We will achieve these objectives by:-

- Increasing the percentage of the population within 20 minutes travel time of different sports facility types.
- Increasing the number of people participating in leisure and cultural activities.
- Increasing the number of diverse leisure activities and facilities provided, through involvement of local people in addressing their needs.
- Increasing the percentage of residents who think that their local area has got better for: cultural facilities (for example, cinemas, museums); sport and leisure facilities; parks and open spaces, and: activities for young children and teenagers.
- Increasing the number of educational programmes and materials that address issues of race and faith to local residents, especially for children and young people.

We recognise however, that additional work needs to be done to tackle other cultural and heritage issues and these will also be addressed through improved Partnership working.

Areas of additional work:-

- Promoting local facilities such as the Netherton Arts Centre to increase the range of events.
- Building upon the People's Network in Public Libraries providing residents with opportunities for e-learning.
- Developing community art projects in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- The development of Dudley Concert Hall as the principal entertainment venue in the Borough to support the night time economy.
- Building upon the historic importance of glass making in the Borough, celebrating our heritage and the quality of contemporary local craft making.
- Further develop the heritage attraction potential of Wrens Nest Nature Reserve and its geological and industrial revolution features and create links with Dudley Town Centre and other local visitor attractions.

Safeguarding and Improving the Environment

It was a widespread desire of the consultation that the Borough has a local environment that everyone can be proud of. Local people enjoy a strong sense of local identity with their local natural and built environment and they would like to have safe, green, clean and attractive public areas.

Our vision is of an attractive, healthy, safe and sustainable natural and built environment that everyone who lives and works in the borough will care for and can be proud of. It is one which promotes and protects the features that are a legacy of the Borough's geological and industrial for current and future generations.

How our vision contributes to our overall aim of stronger communities

Our environment has an effect on the way that we feel about our areas and on our sense of well-being. We are more likely to feel happy and safe if the environment looks nice, is clean, if the air is not polluted and if it is peaceful. We recognise the need to look after our environment as the way we live can cause long term problems for the environment that future generations may have to resolve. Businesses and public organisations have a responsibility to consider the impact they are having on the environment. Our environment has an impact upon the economic prosperity of the area as businesses are more likely to invest if it is attractive to customers and is less congested. Preserving and enhancing our environment should be a common goal for everyone and can help bring communities together.

Where we are now:-

- Despite the improvements that have taken place in rented housing in the public sector, there remain major challenges ahead if we are to ensure that all Council properties meet the Decent Home Standard by 2010.
- There remains a serious pressure upon the road network, and levels of congestion, pollution and carbon dioxide emissions will continue to rise as does road usage. The introduction of the Metro line through the Borough is essential to an integrated public transport system to tackle this issue; however, the detailed plans for this metro are not yet in place.
- Certain areas of the Borough are subject to serious environmental problems such as litter, dumping rubbish, graffiti, and abandoned cars.
- The Borough's strong industrial heritage has resulted in large areas of land being contaminated by various means including spillages and waste disposal. The risks that such land poses to the recent occupiers and future developers and users of land needs to be addressed.

- The Borough has been making good progress with recycling, and currently recycle 17% of all household waste.
- Local energy efficiency targets have been exceeded for key public buildings, with an overall improvement of 21% across the Borough over the last 8 years.
- 100% of Dudley's Sites of Special Scientific interest, the most important in the country for wildlife and geology, are in good or recovering condition.
- A cleaner river Stour has meant signs of otters have been spotted in the Borough after a 40 year absence.

What's already planned:-

- Work with partners across the Black Country to implement the agreed outcome of the Black Country Regional study, including the promotion of urban parks across the Sub-Region.
- Investing in local public transport including bus showcase routes as well as the metro line to reduce traffic congestion, and pollution levels.
- Improving the Borough's designated nature conservation sites, making them safer and protect them from misuse
- Working with partners to reduce pollution levels in the affected areas of the Borough and improve health by traffic management measures.
- Increase household recycling levels and promote recycling across the Borough.
- Developing a "Rights of Way improvement plan", the purpose of which is to improve the Borough's walking and cycling network. e.g. cycling and walking routes between where people live and leisure uses, employment sites and bus and train stations. Its development is supported by a Local Access Forum which includes local people.
- Continue to implement the contaminated land strategy. The Council has a statutory duty to inspect the Borough for the purposes of identifying 'contaminated land' and where such land is identified, to secure its remediation by the relevant party thereby reducing risks to acceptable levels.
- Improving and enhancing parks and open spaces through the Friends of the Parks groups and delivering physical improvements, measured by the green flag quality standard.
- Working towards a 'sustainable settlement' agenda with mixed use development that reduces the need to travel and with high quality open spaces around buildings, more tree planting and links to parks etc and which respect the local distinctiveness of areas.

As a Partnership, we believe that we can have most impact in achieving our long-term vision by focusing our work in supporting people in being responsible towards the environment, improving the condition of housing and improving greenspaces throughout the borough.

- Improving the quality of local authority housing and also private housing occupied by vulnerable households, in line with the Government's 'Decent Homes Standard'. (should we include energy improvements such as efficient heating systems and better insulation levels)
- Identify and address the needs of the community for parks, green spaces and recreational facilities, and adequate access to such facilities. This will be achieved by a variety of ways including the development of a 'Green Space Strategy' and a 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan' for the Borough.
- Work to secure further improvements to the cleanliness and overall appearance of our Borough including initiatives to reduce the number of abandoned vehicles, littering and fly tipping. We will look specifically at prevention through education and widespread community engagement.

We will achieve these objectives by:-

- Decreasing the proportion of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus.
- Increasing the volume of household waste collected and the proportion recycled.
- Increasing the number of affordable dwellings completed as a percentage of all new housing completions.
- Increasing household accommodation with central heating.
- Decreasing the percentage of residents who think that people sleeping rough on the streets or in other public places is a very big or fairly big problem in their local area. (??? – no baseline – is this appropriate)
- Decreasing the percentage of all housing that is unfit.
- Decreasing the number of abandoned vehicles.
- Decreasing the instances of fly tipping and increasing the rate of removal.
- Improving people's satisfaction with the local environment.

We recognise however, that additional work needs to be done to tackle environmental issues and these will also be addressed through improved Partnership working.

Areas of additional work to include: Local nature reserves, Biodiversity, Pollution, Transport / accessibility, Domestic recycling

- Contributing to the objectives and targets of the UK and Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plans (to reverse the trend of loss of some of our familiar wildlife) and the proposed Black Country Geodiversity Action Plan.
- Increasing our area of local nature reserves to meet and exceed national targets.
- Ensuring that all new buildings are built to higher standards; including environmentally friendly standards (energy efficient, use of recycled materials where appropriate, reduced maintenance etc.) – buildings to be proud of.
- An integrated transport system that promotes public transport, walking and cycling and develop initiatives such as car sharing schemes to help to relieve congestion, reduce carbon dioxide emissions and pollution and improve people's health.
- Encouraging local people, school and local communities to take pride in and responsibility for its local environment by raising awareness of environmental issues and working proactively with volunteer groups e.g. through initiatives like 'Friends of the Parks Groups'.
- Ensuring that new housing meets the need of the population e.g. affordable housing, housing key workers etc.
- Build 100% of new homes on previously developed land thereby safeguarding Green field sites and helping to address dereliction. Such sites can be important wildlife habitats, so it is important to retain space for biodiversity.

Promoting Individual and Community Learning

Consultation has clearly shown that the community want Dudley to be a Borough with opportunities for learning open to everyone, and one where recognition is given equally to academic and vocational attainment. People want to see help given to raise children's aspirations whilst also providing opportunity to meet such aspirations.

Our vision is of a Borough where everyone, irrespective of background, or personal circumstance, has the opportunity to realise their full potential, and one where our young people in particular, aspire to realise their full potential and are supported in doing so.

How our vision contributes to our overall aim of stronger communities

Learning at the heart of personal development provides the key to unlock the potential of everyone, irrespective of age, gender or background. It helps develop the skills and knowledge needed for the world of tomorrow, ensuring continued economic prosperity and improvement in the overall quality of life for communities. People in a strong community take an active role, not just in their own development, but in the development of others, particularly the young and provide positive role models for each other. Awareness of and respect for others' culture, beliefs and values helps tie communities together, with people learning from each others' differences. People don't simply need to accept things as they are, but should aspire to making things better for themselves and others.

Where we are now:-

- The percentage of the working age population who are qualified to NVQ 3 or equivalent had increased to 16%, compared to the average of 15%. However, over one third of all residents in the Borough have no formal or recognised qualifications.
- Any information re aspirations?
- Any info re community engagement in regeneration?
- Significant improvement in the overall learning achievement of school pupils and young people has been achieved. Dudley now compares favourably with national levels of educational achievement.
- We have started to make progress in closing the achievement gap among some pupils, for example, improving the achievement of boys and improving the qualifications gained by Muslim children, which has historically been much lower than the average for all children.

- In primary schools, results at key stage 2 (7-11 year olds) have risen considerably and our schools received national recognition for the levels of improvement with children achieving: English 77% (England – 78%), Mathematics 72% (England – 74%), and Science 86% (England – 86%).
- In our secondary schools, the percentage of pupils attaining 5 A*-C GCSE grades has increased to 51% in 2004, getting closer to the England average of 54%.
- Nine secondary schools and seven primary schools inspected were on the **Ofsted** 'Particularly Successful Schools' list for 2004. These schools were acknowledged for two successful consecutive inspection reports.
- The number of students attending colleges in the Borough has increased by 34% in the last three years.
- The percentage of the working age population participating in learning has increased to 51%, which is the highest level for the Black Country (based on 2001 Census).

What's already planned:-

- Ensure equality of opportunity through widening participation, reducing barriers to learning and inclusive delivery of services, specifically focussing on ensuring greater equality in educational achievement between different ethnic and social groups.
- Work in partnership with voluntary and community organisations, learning providers, employers and other service providers to support a coordinated approach to Adult and Community Learning.
- Improve basic skills for adults.
- Continuing to develop computer technology (ICT) resources and learning materials within community based facilities in order to enable wider participation in learning.
- Reduce exclusion rates and improve both attendance and behaviour at school.
- Improve the educational achievements of looked after children and other vulnerable groups.
- Build closer links between schools and communities to provide a greater range of services in and around schools.
- Improve employer responsiveness and link skills training and employment opportunities to train local for local jobs.

As a Partnership, we believe that we can have most impact in achieving our long-term vision by focusing our work on our ability to work in partnership with learning providers, employers and the community at large, to ensure the training of today links in fully with the needs of tomorrow, namely;

- Improving the participation and achievement of young people in learning and raising their aspirations.
- Ensuring that learning provision is of the highest quality and is relevant to both the current and future needs of employers, learners and potential learners.
- To support communities so that they are properly equipped to make a contribution to regeneration in their own areas.

We will achieve these objectives by:-

- Increasing the number of young people participating in learning.
- Increasing the number of young people gaining recognised qualifications.
- Increasing the number of young people going on to further learning or employment upon leaving school.
- Increasing the number of local people who have the skills and qualifications to gain local employment.
- Increasing the number of people involved in decision making within their own areas.
- Making more regeneration information available at a community level.

We recognise however, that additional work needs to be done to tackle other learning issues and these will also be addressed through improved Partnership working.

Areas of additional work:-

- Develop excellence in early years education and ensure primary schools provide the best possible start for children and families.
- Ensure active engagement with parents and whole communities to help them support children's learning and development.
- Give young people a say in issues that affect them, and actively listening to their views.

- Promote family and community learning, where everyone in the household or the wider community helps to learn from one another, whilst also enjoying the benefits of learning for themselves.
- Develop a whole range of learning opportunities for people from all backgrounds, from informal learning to centres of excellence for further education.
- Support and encourage companies to invest in workforce development.
- Better promote the Boroughs cultural and social heritage, recognising the contribution made by all sections of the community towards the creation and maintenance of stronger, more cohesive communities.

Making Dudley a Safe and Peaceful Place to live

Local people have told us that feeling safe is a very important issue for them. It's not just concern about criminal activity such as burglary or violence, but it is also connected to issues such as anti-social behaviour, damage, graffiti, noise nuisance and fly-tipping, all of which contribute to the fear of crime.

Our overall vision for the Borough is one where people are and feel safer and enjoy a greater sense of freedom from crime in their daily lives.

How our vision contributes to our overall aim of stronger communities

A safe and peaceful borough is central to our aim of stronger communities, and in order to achieve that we need to remove the fears and barriers that prevent local people taking active part in everyday life. Fear born of ignorance or based on mistrust prevents community engagement and increases a sense of isolation, for individuals and communities. Where individuals and communities relate well to each other and feel safe and secure in their environment, there is a heightened sense of togetherness, community pride and freedom to engage, whether at work or at home.

Where we are now:-

- There has been a sustained reduction in the level of reported crime and Dudley Borough has reaffirmed its position as one of the safest communities within the West Midlands.
- There has been a huge drop in volume crimes such as burglary (down by 25% 1999-2004) and vehicle theft (down by 30% over that period).
- Initiatives developed by local agencies working in partnership has helped reduce repeat offending, and target areas of concern to prevent opportunities for crime occurring.
- There has been a reduction in the number of young people who continue to be engaged in crime following involvement with the Youth Offending Service.
- Since 1999, robbery increased significantly to its peak in 2001 and has subsequently returned to roughly the same level as in 1999. This crime appears to be a strong indicator for other acquisitive crime.
- The only other crime type that has not shown significant fall in the last five years is violence, which has remained at roughly the same level.
- Local concern over anti-social behaviour is high; this has been confirmed in repeated consultation with local people.

- Issues of respect, tolerance and citizenship have become issues of real significance to the people of Dudley and the fear of crime has remained largely unchanged.
- Although the fear of crime is high amongst many older people, most of the victims are actually young people – and such victims outnumber those young people who are offenders.

What's already planned:-

- Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of our services by the joint tasking of agencies' resources, based on up to date information and intelligence.
- Communicating our successes to the communities through all available means, placing the incidence of crime in perspective, and thereby reducing our residents' fear of becoming victims of crime.
- Co-ordinate agencies efforts in dealing with our most prolific offenders, particularly those involved in crime in order to fund their use of illegal drugs.
- Expand and improve provision for drug treatment services.
- Increasing numbers of Police Community Support Officers working in the Borough.
- More CCTV coverage in town centre locations.
- Redevelopment of town centres including plans to help reduce crime by better design of developments.
- Targeted work to provide locks and bolts to vulnerable people to help deter burglary.
- Improving outreach services and drug intervention programmes to help address substance misusers.
- Agencies working together to respond to all racially motivated incidents in the Borough.
- Extend the Reserve watch reporting scheme across the Borough
- Increasing environmental security by measures such as secure by design, street lighting and boundary treatment in specific areas of crime.
- Co-ordinate agency and departmental efforts in combating anti-social behaviour by agreeing to an overarching Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy.

As a Partnership, we believe that we can have most impact in achieving our long-term vision by focusing our work on tackling the causes of crime, offending behaviour, and reducing the fear of crime, namely:-

- Reducing anti-social behaviour such as graffiti, offensive behaviour and noise nuisance, to reduce the fear of crime.
- Sustaining our focus upon reducing serious crime.
- Identify, and take preventative action that can reduce the risk of crime.
- Reducing the impact of crime on children and young people and tackling the fear of crime associated with children and young people.

We will achieve these objectives by:-

- Increasing the percentage of residents surveyed who said they feel 'fairly safe' or 'very safe' outside during the day and after dark.
- Reducing the levels of serious crime including domestic burglaries, violent offences, theft of a vehicle and sexual offences per 1,000 population.
- Reducing the percentage of residents who think that anti-social behaviour is a very big or fairly big problem in their local area.
- Reducing the number of children and young people who are victims of crime.
- Reducing the number of people who perceive young people to be the cause of crime and anti social behaviour.

We recognise however, that additional work needs to be done to tackle other community safety issues and these will also be addressed through improved Partnership working.

Areas of additional work:-

- Reducing the use of illegal drugs and under-age drinking.
- Challenging disrespectful behaviour towards everyone, young and old.
- Creating a greater understanding of citizenship and individual responsibility.
- Promoting greater racial harmony and tolerance.
- Improving facilities for young people to provide them with positive activities in society.

- Involving local communities in making neighbourhoods safer.
- Reducing the variation in the likelihood of experiencing crime across the Borough.
- Improving access points for complaining, reporting and seeking advice.
- Improving the local environment, such as reducing fly-tipping, graffiti, litter and abandoned vehicles.

Taking up the Challenge

The overall aims of this Community Strategy are challenging – deliberately so. We recognise that some things will take more time to achieve than others. Through the Dudley Community Partnership, we will regularly review how well we are performing to achieving the priorities of the Strategy. As a Partnership that brings together the local community, public and private bodies, we will ensure that we all work together, and that as a Borough, we get the best possible value from the resources we have.

As a Partnership we are committed to:-

- Providing positive leadership, both within and outside of the Borough.
- Promoting and ensuring effective community engagement in the Strategy throughout its life – so that local people have a strong voice in determining the future choices we face.
- Review and evaluate how well we are achieving our overall vision and the priorities within it.
- Being open and accountable in our actions and objectively judging the progress we make.

Delivering the Vision: Focusing Upon and Reviewing Our Priorities

For each of the key priorities, the Partnership is committed to:-

- Ensuring that comprehensive Action Plans exist for each priority theme. Also ensuring that within each theme, there is specific action to target issues of geographical disadvantage, where they exist, to allow us to narrow the gap in provision between the most disadvantaged areas of the borough and the rest.
- Reviewing each of these Action Plans during 2006/07, to ensure that they each consider the cross cutting issues raised through the Challenges, particularly the issues of:-
 - Ensuring greater equality of opportunity and outcomes
 - Encouraging greater community interaction, tolerance and fairness
 - Ensuring community engagement in service delivery and planning
 - Ensuring the long term sustainability of environmental and social resources is considered at all stages.
- Reviewing the overall achievements towards our vision and priorities at least every three years. We recognise that in the space of 15 years, there will be factors outside of our control that will need to be taken account of in terms of our

delivery. We will need to both anticipate and respond to changes in circumstance as appropriate as well as responding to any change in community expectation.

- National developments such as Local Area Agreements will bring new requirements on the Partnership. More locally, the outcome of the Black Country Regional Study will have profound implications for the future of Dudley Borough. We believe that the process we have engaged upon makes us well placed to respond positively to the challenges faced.
- Preparing a Community Engagement programme (by March 2006) to support the overall work of the Partnership and the progress of the Borough Challenge specifically
- The Partnership has identified the key existing performance indicators and targets for each of the priorities these and are included in Appendix 1. During 2006/07 we will review these to ensure that we are looking at the things that really matter to people in the Borough.

Delivering the Vision: Excellent Public Services

As part of the wide programme of improvements outlined within this Strategy, the Partnership regards the continued reform and improvement of public services as essential to achieving our vision. We need to ensure we provide high quality services which are responsive to the needs of the individual and the diverse nature of our community. Improvements in public services themselves can help some of our objectives and we believe all our public services should adhere to a set of common, simple core values, namely to:-

- Be genuinely local in terms of focus.
- Listen to local people.
- Respond to what local people say.
- Be accountable for performance.
- Provide excellent value for money.

To deliver the Borough Challenge all public, private and voluntary bodies within the Partnership will:-

- Work towards a common goal of ensuring that fairness in the design and delivery of services is fully achieved, for example through:-
 - Ensuring the rights of local people with disabilities to accessible services and employment opportunities is consistently upheld across all service providers.
 - Responding to the changing structure of our population in the design and provision of services, for example the growth in the proportion of older people

- Promote the availability of multi-agency services, for example through:-
 - Developing wider partnership arrangements, such as Children's Trusts to bring different organisations together in new, innovative working arrangements, which improve value for money and develop better services.
 - Extending the principle of integrated customer access centres to provide a service enquiry response for a multitude of different public bodies.
 - Developing greater choice and flexibility in accessing public services, for example through electronic access.
- Enable more service users to become fully engaged in shaping the delivery and design of services, for example through:-
 - Establishing active neighbourhood partnerships in each area of the Borough that seek them.
 - Supporting the development of the Voluntary and Community Sector to build the capacity of local people to become involved in the planning of services.