

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Committee 27th March 2007

Report Title Draft European and International Strategy 2007-2013

Summary In 2000, Warwickshire County Council Cabinet agreed six Policy Statements of Intent to act as guiding principles for the Council's European and International Strategy and associated Actions Plans. The Strategy is now being reviewed and updated in light of the changing European and international agenda. The report sets out the policy context for the review, provides an overview of the new Strategy and attaches a draft Strategy at **Appendix A** for Members' observations.

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? Yes/No

Background Papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- *Details to be specified*

Other Committees

Local Member(s)
 (With brief comments, if appropriate)

Other Elected Members Councillor M Heatley – Member of the EU Committee of the Regions)
 Councillor P Barnes) for
 Councillor M Jones) information
 Councillor P Morris-Jones)

Cabinet Member
(Reports to The Cabinet, to be cleared with appropriate Cabinet Member)

Councillor C Saint – for information

Chief Executive

.....

Legal

I Marriott - agreed

Finance

.....

Other Chief Officers

.....

District Councils

.....

Health Authority

.....

Police

.....

Other Bodies/Individuals

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FINAL DECISION

YES/NO (If 'No' complete Suggested Next Steps)

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS :

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee

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To Council

.....

To Cabinet

To adopt final strategy – date to be finalised

To an O & S Committee

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To an Area Committee

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Further Consultation

.....

**Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee -
27th March 2007**

Draft European and International Strategy 2007-2013

**Report of the Strategic Director for
Environment and Economy**

Recommendation

That Committee:-

1. Considers the draft and supports it as the basis for the new Strategy.
2. Forwards its observations on the draft Strategy to Cabinet.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The current European and International Strategy entitled 'Warwickshire in Europe and the Wider World' was adopted by the Council in 2000. It has helped inform and shape our engagement in the European and International agenda but is now dated and requires revision to reflect current priorities, strategic frameworks and new emergent opportunities.
- 1.2 The new Strategy has been prepared to support the delivery of Warwickshire's Local Area Agreement and Warwickshire County Council's (WCC) Corporate Objectives. We will work in partnership with a very wide range of organisations to deliver it – both across Warwickshire and the broader spectrum. Our engagement extends beyond the sub-regional and regional level towards national influence on occasions and work with the West Midlands in Europe (Brussels) Office and European partners at the European level. Subject to resource constraints, we also have a modest agenda for engagement beyond Europe – most recently with China and Sierra Leone.
- 1.3 However, Committee should note that the new Strategy does not seek to cover the full range of European and international engagement taking place across Warwickshire. Its purpose rather is to act as a policy framework for the County Council's specific engagement.
- 1.4 The Regional Assembly has just conducted a year long Strategic Review of the Region's Relationship with Europe. This could have implications for how the Region organises future European working. A consultation draft will be in circulation by the time Members receive this report and our presentation will pick up any salient points.

- 1.5 Overall responsibility for implementation of the Strategy rests with the Regeneration Strategy and Europe Group (part of the Environment and Economy Directorate) as the corporate lead on European and International policy. The European and International Development Officer in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate has overall responsibility for implementation of Strategic Objective Four dealing with young people. Responsibility for specific actions in the annual action plan will rest with the relevant Directorate, Service or Group.

2. The Strategy

- 2.1 The draft Strategy is set out at **Appendix A** and a draft Action Plan for 2007-2008 is in **Appendix B**. A review of WCC's recent European and international activity will be presented at the meeting and an overview of our partner's engagement will be available. Once Cabinet has adopted the new Strategy, these reports will be re-edited in a form similar to the Regeneration and Competitiveness Strategy approved in March 2006.
- 2.2 The aim for the revised European and International Strategy is simple:-
'To maximise the benefit of EU membership and international engagement for Warwickshire's citizens, schools, businesses and organisations'.
- 2.3 To achieve this we have prioritised four Key Strategic Objectives:-
- (i) **Influencing Policy:- to work in partnership to influence European policy and funding programmes in the interests of Warwickshire.**
EU policy and legislation has a major impact on the work of WCC. To influence policy and EU funding programmes which accompany these requires early engagement and strong partnership working. We will build on our track record and current/proposed liaisons at sub regional, regional, national and European levels to continue to take a lead at county and sub regional levels and also within the wider arena, including Committee of the Regions.
 - (ii) **Maximising Funding:- to use EU and other relevant external funding to deliver WCC corporate objectives.**
As for most local authorities, our historical focus for European engagement has been on securing EU funding. Whilst EU enlargement has changed our funding relationship with the EU with most Structural Funds 'going east' to new Member States and other poorer regions, there will still be significant opportunities to access structural funds for the County in the new 2007-13 Regional Competitiveness and Employment programme. In addition we intend to focus more attention than in the past on transnational funding programmes and partnerships. These potentially offer new and exciting opportunities to access additional resources to develop policies, access European best practice and improve service delivery across the county. They will require different ways of working and new skills but we have already built a sound foundation for this work.

(iii) **Engagement:- to take part in European and International partnerships, projects, networks and activities of benefit to Warwickshire.**

Work with European and International partners to share experience can improve service delivery and act as cost-effective professional development and training for staff as well as elected Members. A number of new activities are already resourced (via EU funding programmes) and these will be carefully assessed. In addition, WCC is a globally aware and an outward looking organisation committed to playing its part in tackling common international problems and challenges, as recently demonstrated by our engagement in Sierra Leone. Where resources permit and the scale of engagement is appropriate, we will continue to raise our international profile.

(vi) **Young People:- to engage children and young people for life in a global society and work in a global economy.**

The European and International dimension is a named cross cutting activity in the Warwickshire Children and Young People Plan. In particular, we will work with schools and with the wider community to develop and support opportunities for the children and young people of Warwickshire to engage in learning experiences which broaden their linguistic and cultural outlook and develop their sense of global citizenship.

3. Implementation

3.1 An outline Action Plan will support the delivery of the Strategy. Actions support WCC's Corporate Objectives and are organised around the Six Key Priorities in Warwickshire's new Local Area Agreement.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The draft Strategy provides a clear rationale and framework for the County Council's engagement in the European and International arena. It sets some stretching targets but officers and Members have the skills and experience to address these. They will strive to attract extra external resources to enhance our capacity for even wider engagement in the future.

JOHN DEEGAN
Strategic Director for Environment and Economy
Shire Hall
Warwick

5th March 2007

Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 27th March 2007

Draft European and International Strategy 2007-2013

AIM

To maximise the benefits of EU membership and international engagement for Warwickshire citizens, schools, businesses and organisations.

PURPOSE

This Strategy sets out Warwickshire County Council's response to the changing European and international agenda and provides a framework for its European and international engagement and activity. It builds on and develops the "Warwickshire in Europe and the Wider World" Strategy adopted in 2000. Its purpose is to support the delivery of the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) and WCC Corporate Objectives.

The Strategy is prepared in the context of the strategies and work of other regional, sub-regional and local organisations. WCC will work in partnership with a wide range of organisations to deliver this Strategy and will work to provide leadership and influence on behalf of Warwickshire on European and international matters. However, it does not seek to cover or address the full range of European and international activity taking place in Warwickshire. Its focus and purpose rather is to act as a policy framework for WCC.

A BACKGROUND OF EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY

WCC's historical European focus, like that of most UK local authorities, has been EU funding. Since 1984, large parts of northern Warwickshire have been eligible for the Structural Funds – EU grant assistance to support economic and social restructuring. The £40 million brought into the County during this period has made a major contribution to the economic, social and environmental regeneration of Warwickshire's priority communities and the transformation of the local economy.

In addition, WCC members and officers have traditionally played a leading role in European work at regional level. WCC was pro-active in work lobbying to retain access to the 2000-2006 Objective 2 Programme (the Structural Funds) and in the establishment and development of the cross-sectoral West Midlands in Europe Brussels Office. In more recent years, WCC officers have been active in the development and delivery of the West Midlands Regional European Strategy. WCC has also been particularly successful at incorporating a European and international dimension into the work of the former Education Department (now Children, Young People and Families Directorate) and Warwickshire schools.

WCC's first European and International Strategy, "Warwickshire in Europe and the Wider World", was agreed by Cabinet in 2000. It set six policy statements of intent in recognition of WCC's increasing engagement in a wider range of both European and international activity. More recently, the Strategy has provided the framework for a number of successful 'transnational' projects and initiatives and the launch of a new project between WCC and Bo City Council in Sierra Leone. This activity has been based on technical co-operation rather than civic or twinning partnerships.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT – GLOBAL TO LOCAL

The world, Europe and Warwickshire have changed since our first Strategy was agreed in 2000. This new Strategy is prepared in the context of these new international, European, national, regional, sub-regional and local influences, challenges and opportunities.

International

- Globalisation means we now live in an interdependent, interconnected and rapidly changing world.
- The effects of decisions taken by multi-national companies, global warming, pollution, crime, terrorism, war, natural disasters and poverty cross international borders and are increasingly beyond the control of individual national governments.
- Further advances in ICT and mobile technology have opened up new opportunities for businesses and made communication easier, whilst raising public awareness and pressure for local solutions to global problems.
- More and more local authorities are working as part of international networks and partnerships to tackle common problems and challenges.
- The Local Government Association (LGA) has launched a new International Policy for UK local authorities. It covers all forms of international work, whilst keeping a firm focus on the benefits to local communities.
- A new Department for International Development (DfID) White Paper recognises an important role for local government in tackling global poverty and delivering international development programmes.
- The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) International Strategy aims to ensure a strong international dimension across the education system, the exchange of the latest ideas in education with international partners, to offer educational support programmes to developing nations and to maximise the contribution of education to the economy.

European

- Policies agreed internationally and at European level have a major impact on local authorities. Some 70% of EU policy and legislation is now implemented at local level. Local authorities need to contribute to the development of such

policies and legislation, make sure that they are workable at the local level, and to anticipate and prepare for their implementation.

- With Europe losing its competitive edge, EU heads of state and government have decided to re-focus the EU's Lisbon strategy on jobs and growth. Local authorities play a key role in the delivery of the cross-cutting Lisbon strategy.
- A commitment to sustainable development is the EU's other main policy driver. The EU sustainable development strategy (the Gothenburg agenda) sets a long term vision for society in which economic growth supports social progress and environmental performance. It too recognises an important role for local authorities.
- Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU on 1 January 2007 bringing total membership to 27 countries. This latest round of enlargement is unlikely to mark the end of the process. Negotiations have already begun with Croatia and Turkey, whilst five western Balkan states wait in the wings.
- Enlargement has shifted the focus for EU funding away from regions like the West Midlands. Nearly 82% of the new 2007-2013 Structural Funds Programme will "go east" to the new Member States and other poorer regions. The West Midlands is, however, still eligible for reduced levels of funding through a new Regional Competitiveness and Employment programme designed to replace the current Objective 2 and 3 programmes.
- Whilst the amount of Structural Funding coming to the UK has been halved, other 'transnational' programmes have seen significant increases in their budgets. These offer opportunities for WCC to develop joint projects with partners in other Member States on priorities such as skills, education, economic development, innovation and the environment.

National, Regional, Sub-regional and Local

- The 2006-2007 review of the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and the possible further development of the Birmingham, Black Country and Coventry City Region could have implications for partnership working in the region and for how funding is organised, targeted and delivered.
- The RES has a specific European and international dimension, and the West Midlands has had a dedicated European Strategy and Action Plan since 2004. The Regional Assembly has also just conducted a year long Strategic Review of the Region's Relationship with Europe.
- Local government is operating against a fast moving national agenda for change. The Government published a long-awaited White Paper on the future of local government during autumn 2006.
- WCC is currently working with partners to prepare a Local Area Agreement (LAA) between Warwickshire and central government. It covers six key areas of local service delivery.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Warwickshire County Council's new European and International Strategy 2007-2013 is based on four strategic objectives:

1. Influencing Policy : To work in partnership to influence European policies and funding programmes in the interests of Warwickshire.

EU policy and legislation has a major impact on the work of WCC. EU funding programmes can also support the delivery of WCC Corporate objectives.

We will work to influence European policies and funding programmes that impact on, or contribute to, the delivery of Corporate objectives. We will work with the EU institutions, MEPs, the Committee of the Regions, EU networks, UK Government, MPs, the national LGA, the Regional Assembly, Regional Development Agency, the West Midlands in Europe Brussels Office, CSWP, Coventry City Council and others in order to do this. Influence demands early engagement and strong partnership working.

2. Maximising Funding:-To use EU and other relevant external funding to deliver WCC Corporate objectives.

EU enlargement has changed Warwickshire's funding relationship with the EU. The new Regional Competitiveness and Employment (EU Structural Funds) programme will continue to be important to the County. The Council's officers are very active on the regional stage in helping shape the new ERDF and ESF funding programmes to ensure the County and wider sub regional organisations, businesses and residents continue to be able to benefit from the new funding.

In addition, we are re-focusing some of our efforts on transnational funding programmes and partnerships. These offer new and alternative opportunities for WCC in terms of accessing additional resources to develop policies, access European best practice and improve service delivery.

We will use EU and other external funding to deliver WCC Corporate objectives.

3. Engagement:-To take part in European and international partnerships, projects, networks and activities of benefit to Warwickshire.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment assesses the ability of local authorities to adapt and improve, whereas Best Value requires the provision of quality, cost effective services. Work with European and international partners to share experiences can stimulate innovation and improve service delivery and act as excellent, cost-effective professional development and training for staff as well as elected members. European and international engagement is also important to the work of Inward Investment and the Tourism Development Unit. Moreover, WCC is a globally aware and outward looking organisation committed to playing its part in tackling common international problems and challenges.

4. Young People:-To equip children and young people for life in a global society and work in a global economy.

The European and international dimension is a named cross-cutting activity in the Warwickshire Children and Young People's Plan.

We will work in partnership with schools, universities and the wider community to develop and support opportunities for the children and young people of Warwickshire to engage in learning experiences which broaden their linguistic and cultural outlook and develop their sense of global citizenship.

IMPLEMENTATION

Overall responsibility for implementation of the Strategy rests with the Regeneration Strategy and Europe Group (part of the Environment and Economy Directorate) as the corporate lead on European and international policy. The European and International Development Officer in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate has overall responsibility for implementation of Strategic Objective Four. Responsibility for specific actions in the annual action plan rests with the relevant Directorate, Service or Group.

To support implementation of the Strategy, the Regeneration Strategy and Europe Group will:-

- Provide leadership and influence on behalf of Warwickshire on European and international matters.
- Work in partnership at international, European, national, regional, sub-regional and local levels.
- Develop member and officer awareness and understanding of the European Union and international work.
- Provide information and advice on European and international developments and opportunities.

MONITORING

The Strategy sets four strategic objectives. An annual Action Plan will be developed to support the delivery of these objectives. The Strategy and action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and a report submitted to this Committee for consideration.

Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 27th March 2007

Draft European and International Strategy 2007-2013

INTRODUCTION

This Action Plan has been developed to support the delivery of Warwickshire County Council's European and International Strategy. It sits alongside other annual action plans such as that developed to support the Council's Regeneration & Competitiveness Strategy adopted by members in March 2006.

The Action Plan is organised around the WCC Corporate Business Plan 2006-2009 (CBP) and the six blocks of the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement (LAA). In addition, we have added a seventh – a cross-cutting theme for activity that supports the delivery of more than one block.

The Plan inevitably focuses on some Directorates and Groups more than others due to the nature of European and international priorities and opportunities. It thus reflects an EU focus on jobs and growth (the Lisbon Agenda), environmental sustainability (the Gothenburg Agenda) and Lifelong Learning.

In 2007-2008, we will:-

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE (LAA Block 5)

- Influence the new Regional Competitiveness and Employment (EU Structural Funds) programme in support of WCC's Regeneration and Competitiveness Strategy (RSE);
- Work, in particular, with sub-regional partners to secure funding through the RCE Sustainable Urban Development priority for targeted parts of the Coventry and Nuneaton Regeneration Zone (RSE);
- Influence the new European Social Fund programme in support of WCC's emerging Employment and Skills Strategy (RSE);
- Work with the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Rural Forum and the Warwickshire Hub to influence the delivery framework for the new England Rural Development programme (RSE/ RP/ RS/ BTE);
- Support the ongoing implementation of projects funded by the 2000-2006 Objective 2 programme (RSE);

- Deliver the ESF co-financed 'Sustained Employment through Learning' (SeTL) project which is providing advice & guidance, motivational courses, employability training and vocational training to economically inactive people across Warwickshire (ETW);
- Roll out Warwickshire's successful stress awareness training programme for SMEs to regional partners and deliver targeted workshops in parts of northern Warwickshire as part of the 'Adjust the Balance' EQUAL project (BTE);
- Work with regional and sub-regional partners to deliver the Grey Matters EQUAL project examining the use of flexible working practices in managing the expectations and retention of older workers as well as supporting their recruitment (SS);
- Deliver the ArtsPep EQUAL project which uses arts-based activity to promote the employability of people with learning disabilities (ASC);
- Work with the University of Warwick, RASE and partners in Germany and Sweden to deliver the Regional Innovation for a Competitive Europe (RICE) INTERREG project which is identifying good practice in -rural innovation and new market opportunities for land-based SMEs (RSE & BTE);
- Lead on regional preparations for the new European Territorial Co-operation programme and work to exploit it for the benefit of Warwickshire (RSE);
- Actively support West Midlands participation in the 'RuriPolitan' and PURPLE European networks looking at urban/ rural interdependence and tap any opportunities under the Regions of Knowledge call around Research and Rural Economies (RSE);
- Identify opportunities through the new EU Lifelong Learning programme in support of WCC's emerging Employment and Skills Strategy (RSE).
- Explore membership of Eurotowns and other EU partnerships and networks of medium sized cities and towns (RP & RSE);
- Participate in the Committee of the Regions Lisbon Monitoring Platform (RSE).

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (LAA Block 1)

- Encourage, facilitate and support the Directorate, schools and the wider community to develop and engage in the European and international dimension to Children's Services.
- Identify key themes in Children's Services which encourage international links and exchanges between teaching staff, WCC and strategic partners which lead to sharing of best practice with peers in other countries

- Work towards the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) target for all schools, by 2010, to have sustainable international links and be working towards International Schools Award status.
- Raise awareness among schools of the educational benefits and funding opportunities for international school to school links.
- Support schools in developing and embedding the European and international dimension to their school activity.
- Develop effective foreign language learning opportunities and capacity building for pupils, teachers and schools.
- Encourage and support staff in international continuing professional development through DfES programmes such as the Teachers International Professional Development, the League for Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers, International Placements for Head teachers and EU programmes.
- Develop broad and sustainable strategic (learning) partnerships between Warwickshire and other regions around the globe. In 2006 Warwickshire was awarded British Council (ESS/HSBC) funding for a 3-year programme of Area Links with Shenzhen in China. This builds on a joint Memorandum of Education Understanding between the County and Shenzhen (December 2005).
- Host international seminars and study visits in Warwickshire to showcase and share good practice.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT (LAA Block 6)

- Identify opportunities through the new Intelligent Energy for Europe programme in support of the Warwickshire Climate Change Strategy (RSE & SU).
- Promote European and international partnerships as part of work to extend the Warwickshire Eco Schools Initiative in support of the Education for Sustainable Development Strategy (SU & CPP);
- Organise events as part of International “In Town Without My Car!” Day/European Mobility Week in support of WCC’s Green Travel and School Travel Plans (SU).

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES (LAA Blocks 2 & 3)

- Build on the Award of the European Road Safety Charter to the Road Safety Unit (RSU);
- Organise events in support of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES AND OLDER PEOPLE (LAA Block 4)

- Identify opportunities through the new EU Lifelong Learning and Culture 2007 programmes.

CROSS-CUTTING THEME

- Work with CSWP and other sub-regional partners to develop the role of the Coventry and Warwickshire Sub-Regional Group (SRG) in light of the new European policy and funding arrangements (RSE).
- Develop the link between WCC and Bo Town Council in Sierra Leone (RSE with others).
- Work with European partners to deliver the Leonardo European vocational training and placement scheme for EED staff (RSE).

NOTES

RSE:- Regeneration Strategy & Europe; Environment and Economy.

RP:- Regeneration Projects; Environment and Economy.

RS:- Rural Strategy; Environment and Economy.

ETW:- Employment Training Warwickshire; Environment and Economy.

BTE:- Business, Tourism & Economy; Environment and Economy.

SS:- Strategy Support; Environment and Economy.

ASC:- Adult Social Care; Adult, Health and Community Services.

CPP:- Commissioning, Planning and Partnerships; Children, Young People and Families.

SU:- Sustainability Unit; Environment and Economy.

RSU:- Road Safety Unit, Environment and Economy.