

TO: ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10th March 2005

SUBJECT: ACTION 21 PAST AND FUTURE

FROM: ACTION 21

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To report back on the service level agreement with Warwick District Council due to come to an end on March 31st 2005.
- 1.2. To inform the committee of the proposed way forward for Action 21's work in relation to Warwick District Council

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, nearly 200 world leaders signed up to Sustainable Development, because they recognised that our lifestyles are environmentally unsustainable, and socially unfair.

World leaders recognised that we are consuming resources which are essential to our living existence, faster than natural systems can replace them. Agenda 21, the action plan mooted at the Earth Summit, put the onus on governments (and through them, local councils) to engage with local communities and work with them for a more sustainable future. Action 21 is the organisation which has evolved locally, supported from the beginning by the District Council, to address these critical concerns.

- 2.2 In 1996, Action 21 was created in response to the Rio Earth Summit as a network of volunteers affiliated to Warwick District Council with the aim to deliver sustainability objectives at community level. In 2001 Action 21 was incorporated as a limited company with 10 volunteer directors, and at that point A21 began a new relationship with Warwick District Council, working to deliver an SLA with the support of a full time seconded officer.

- 2.3 The headings Action 21 is required to deliver under for the SLA are as follows:
 - To promote good practice amongst householders, businesses and other organisations within the District
 - To undertake practical projects which contribute to sustainable development
 - To raise awareness within Warwick District of sustainable development issues.
 - To expand membership of Action 21 and make every effort to ensure the membership is representative of the Community of Warwick District and is active
 - To participate in relevant consultations including the Community Plan and Planning Policy
 - To achieve the above, to work in partnership with others including the District Council

The SLA also required Action 21 to work on the following [in summary]

- Scrutinise WDC's performance on sustainable development as a critical friend.
- Make a strong and positive contribution to sustainable development within the Community Plan through the LSP, and deliver real progress on aspects of the Community Plan
- Expand membership of Action 21 so that Action 21 has a minimum of 100 individual members and 40 organisation members.

- Source additional funding to match the council's annual grant of £7900 to Action 21
- Agree a number of Quality of Life indicators which Action 21 will be responsible for monitoring on and reporting on.

2.1 Over the last few months Action 21 Directors and WDC managers have been negotiating a way forward now that the current SLA is coming to an end.

3 WHAT THE SLA HAS ACHIEVED

This report seeks to give a flavour of what Action 21 has achieved under each of the headings of the SLA. This should give a qualitative and to some extent quantitative overview of the achievements of the last three year's partnership working.

Essentially much of Action 21's work has been aimed at the general public, with certain events and promotions aimed at specific sectors, for example primary schools and businesses.

3.1 Promoting good practice among businesses

Action 21 has recently organised a conference event entitled 'Sustainability and Excellence by Design'. Aimed at construction, and housing professionals, this was attended by approximately 40 businesses including housing associations, construction firms and architects. The aim of the event was to demonstrate how to build a robust business case for making characteristic residential developments sustainable, using a local housing development as an example.

Action 21 sponsored the Mid-warwickshire Green Business Award, and recognition of good practice has been incorporated into projects such as the Buy Recycled Directory, where the local business to stock the widest range of recycled products is given free advertising as an award.

We have also run joint promotions with local companies such as InkXpress in Warwick who's core business is based on the re-use of inkjet printer cartridges.

3.2 Practical projects which contribute to sustainable development

The major practical projects which Action 21 has undertaken have been '2002/3/4 and Beyond' our annual education event, plus the very successful Allotments Link Project. These have been almost entirely funded from outside the District Council.

The **Education Day** provided an opportunity for 1500 children per year from 45 schools across Warwickshire [including 11 schools from this District] to attend an educational day out. The workshops they took part in encouraged children to form opinions on issues at the cutting edge of the environmental debate. They are encouraged to consider how these issues are relevant locally how the choices they make will have an impact on our quality of life now and in the future. The event has taken place every year of the SLA.

The **Allotments Link Project** has been running since December 2003. The aims are to raise the profile of allotments to the public in Warwick District, to increase the number of allotments in use and to support existing plot holders. Food transport accounts for up to 40 per cent of all UK road freight and as such is a significant contributor to global climate change, localised air pollution and traffic congestion. It is a fact that poor households have a worse diet which is less varied and contains less healthy foods such as fruit and vegetables. Allotments provide access to cheap healthy, local food and thus help address these issues at their core.

The project has encompassed 7 training courses on various cultivation techniques. It has publicised allotments through 6 positive news stories in the local press plus articles in the newsletters of the CVS, the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, and Leamington Spa Town Council. The project has supported 22 allotments societies to establish an Allotments Federation for Warwick District which meets quarterly and has produced a biannual newsletter for allotments societies which provides important support and networking benefits. The project has facilitated a number of open days and healthy eating events to make a link between local allotment sites and healthy eating. The project has worked in partnership with Sure Start, local schools, community centres and the PCT.

Practical Recycling Action 21 has also mobilized local volunteers to undertake practical recycling at leamington peace festival. In 2004 volunteers recycled 0.5 tonnes of recyclable materials which would otherwise have been sent to landfill.

3.3 Raising awareness of sustainable development issues

Previous reports to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee have given details of the large range of activities Action 21 does to raise awareness of sustainability. These include our quarterly newsletter and the Action 21 website, our widely disseminated publication 'How to Recycle and Buy Recycled in Warwick District' and the Recycling Road Show. Public events are a large part of what we do. Under the SLA Action 21 has delivered 3 successful 'pumpkin days' (promoting fresh, healthy, locally grown food) and three successful 'car free days' (promoting the health and environmental benefits of greener travel). All of these have been organised to actively involve people from different sections of the community.

Throughout the SLA Action 21 has had a regular presence at community events where we have promoted the lifestyle benefits of living sustainably. These have included the annual Mela festival, the Peace Festival, the Kenilworth Seroptimists' Environment Day, events at the Healthy Living Centre, the Sydni Centre, and Bath Place. We have also attended International Women's Day and events for Young people.

3.4 Membership of Action 21

Action 21's Target membership levels in the SLA were 100 individual members and 40 organisation members. At the end of the SLA Action 21 has 260 individual members and 56 organisation members. We have therefore met our target. Over the course of the SLA approximately 30% of the membership have actively given their time to Action 21 as volunteers.

3.5 Participation in the Community Plan and Planning Policy.

Action 21 has taken an active role in the development of the community plan through the LSP since the start of the process. Action 21 is now responsible for supporting the Environment theme group of the LSP and is a named partner for a number of the key actions in the Community Plan.

Action 21 took part in the Local Plan consultation by inputting a sustainability perspective. Action 21 has also provided assistance to the planning department taking an active role in the sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan, as required by new European legislation.

3.6 Working in Partnership

Action 21 has and continues to work in partnership with a wide range of organisations from the voluntary sector, the public sector and the private sector. Partnership working is essential to the delivery of all of our projects and we achieve immense added value through delivering work in partnership.

3.7 External Funding

The total amount of external funding which Action 21 has levered in over the course of the SLA is approximately £61, 447. The SLA required us to obtain £23,100.

We have therefore exceeded what the SLA required of us by 260%.

3.8 Indicators

Throughout the three years Action 21 has:

- Drawn in approximately 2000 hours of volunteer time.
- Educated 1853 primary children from Warwick District through the annual education event and the recycling road show.
- Organised and run 7 public events on sustainability issues
- Promoted sustainability at 17 additional local community events
- Increased number of allotments in use by 34
- Produced and distributed 4000 copies of 'How to Recycle and Buy Recycled in Warwick District'
- Engaged 21 companies in the sustainable construction agenda through a conference event.
- Increased our membership by 426%

3.9 Corporate Priorities

The work of Action 21 helps to deliver the following corporate priorities:

- **“We want Warwick District to be safe, healthy, fair and prosperous now and in the future”**

Action 21's mission statement focuses on conserving resources for future generations. It is important for the District Council to be seen to be working in partnership with a high-profile, community-based organisation like Action 21 which has the future of our planet at the core of its work.

This work feeds into the Corporate Strategy Core Value below

- **The core value: “SUSTAINABLE – To minimise the adverse impact of our actions”**
- **Corporate Objective: “Improve our service to provide a cleaner, greener environment**
‘To Conserve and Recycle and to encourage others to conserve and recycle resources’
- **Corporate Objective: To Promote a Safer and Healthier Community**
‘To promote healthier lifestyles’

4.0 Future working with Warwick District Council

From the beginning of financial year 2005 – 06 Action 21 will continue working with Warwick District Council under a different arrangement.

Action 21 will be responsible for delivering particular areas of work relating to sustainability, as agreed with certain council departments.

The sustainability Officer's post will no longer be provided by Warwick District Council and will be made redundant. Instead, Jenny (or whoever occupies the post) will be employed directly through Action 21 Ltd. Action 21 will therefore deliver work directly for Warwick District Council as a private contractor.

The sum allocated for work delivered by Action 21 in financial year 2005 – 06 is £20,000.

The work required will be the following:

- Waste reduction project and recycling promotions in liaison with Jackie Webb, Waste Services - 462 hours
- Support for the Local Strategic Partnership environment group in liaison with John Archer, Planning - 84 Hours
- Health promotion events and activities in liaison with Rob Chapleo, Environmental Health – 252 hours
- Corporate Sustainability Tasks in liaison with Craig Anderson, Strategic Director, Environment – 132 hours.

This will enable Warwick District Council to use the services of Action 21 to deliver corporate priorities in a more targeted and specific way.

The framework for this agreement will be an SLA and a draft copy of this is provided as an appendix to this report.

5 Outcomes required

That the committee notes the achievements of the Partnership SLA with Warwick District Council.

That the committee notes the new way of working with Action 21 which will take effect from financial year 2005 – 06.

For further information about this report please contact:

Action 21 Sustainability Officer: Jenny Sansom

Tel: 01926 456067 (Direct Line)

e-mail: jenny@action21.co.uk