

 Executive – 3 December 2008		Agenda Item No.
Title:	Sustainable Communities Act	
For further information about this report please contact	Policy and Performance	
Service Area	Organisational Development and Performance Improvement	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	Previous quarterly performance reports:, 25 March 2008, 23 July 2008, 3 rd September 2008	
Background Papers		

Contrary to the policy framework:	Yes/No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	Yes/No
Key Decision?	Yes/No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes/No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
With regard to officer approval all reports <i><u>must</u></i> be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Relevant Director	17/11/08	Chris Elliott
Chief Executive	17/11/08	Chris Elliott
CMT	13/11/08	
Section 151 Officer	13/11/08	
Legal	Email 14/11	Peter Oliver
Finance	Email 18/11	Mary Hawkins
Portfolio Holder(s)	Email 18/11	Cllr Les Caborn
Consultation Undertaken		
None		
Final Decision?		Yes/No
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals for the methodology to respond to the Sustainable Communities Act 2008

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To meet the spirit of the Act the following process is proposed:
 - 2.1.1 That the Citizens' Panel be adopted as "the Panel" under the terms of the Sustainable Communities Act.
 - 2.1.2 That a series of focus groups drawn from the Citizens' Panel (and including a focus group of young people and a focus group drawn from BME communities) take place in February/March to discuss activities to "promote the sustainability of local communities".
 - 2.1.3 That based on the outcomes of these focus groups, a set of potential proposals is drawn up and the Citizens' Panel is consulted on these before July 2009.
 - 2.1.4 That the highest priority proposals are put forward to the LGA before 31st July 2009
 - 2.1.5 That the proposals for a Community Engagement Strategy take full account of the provisions of the Act and its regulations, including the requirement to consult effectively with under-represented groups and that as a result of this Strategy the process described above is reviewed.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Sustainable Communities Act 2007 aims to promote the sustainability of local communities. It begins from the principle that local people know best what needs to be done to promote the sustainability of their area, but that sometimes they need central government to act to enable them to do so.
- 3.2 Its central purpose is to provide a channel for local people to ask central government to take action. Local Authorities are key bodies in the process. All proposals must be made by local authorities but have to be based on the views of local communities as proposed by local Panel(s). Proposals must take account of the views of under-represented groups.
- 3.3 Proposals should be made to the LGA who will prioritise the proposals and pass qualifying proposals on to the Secretary of State for consideration.

- 3.4 The Secretary of State has issued the first invitation to local authorities to make proposals. The deadline for submitting proposals is 31st July 2009.
- 3.5 The proposed response to the Sustainable Communities Act will further enhance the Council's work to develop better customer insight and has the potential to feed in to the Sustainable Community Strategy Action Plan and supporting the work of the Local Strategic Partnership.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Two alternative options have been considered and could also be pursued.
- 4.2 The first is to take no action. There is no requirement for Warwick District Council to put forward proposals under the Act. The requirements become relevant only if the Council chooses to put forward proposals. However, this option has not been recommended on the grounds that it is not consistent with the spirit of the Act which is about giving local people the opportunity to influence what happens at a national level. It also misses the potential to resolve real problems in people's lives
- 4.3 The second option is for the Council to draw up a short list of proposal without first consulting with the focus groups. In this option, the ideas would still be subjected to consultation through the Citizens' Panel. However, this option has not been recommended on the basis that the Act begins from the principle that local people know best what needs to be done to promote the sustainability of their area and that we should therefore start by consulting local people.

5 BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 There are no significant financial implications contained within the report as the proposed focus groups can be funded from within the existing consultation budget and the questions to the Citizens' Panel will be included within one of the existing planned questionnaires

6 POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 This report is consistent with the Corporate Strategy and core corporate reporting arrangements aligned to portfolios and overview and scrutiny committees.