

10 March 2009

# Establishing the Principles of a Model Environmentally Sustainable Council

## INTRODUCTION

The Innovation Council was set up in to look into the work of local Councils, and to come up with innovative new ideas for them to adapt and adopt to their own individual areas.

We assembled a group of eighteen senior figures from local government, business, NGOs and environmental experts in order to discuss the underlying principles for achieving a model environmentally sustainable Council. This publication represents the output from the first workshop, and will be used for subsequent workshops in order to inform and guide the process.

The concluding underlying principles are intended to reflect the whole range of the discussion. They will provide a historical and wider contextual meaning to any future policy discussions.

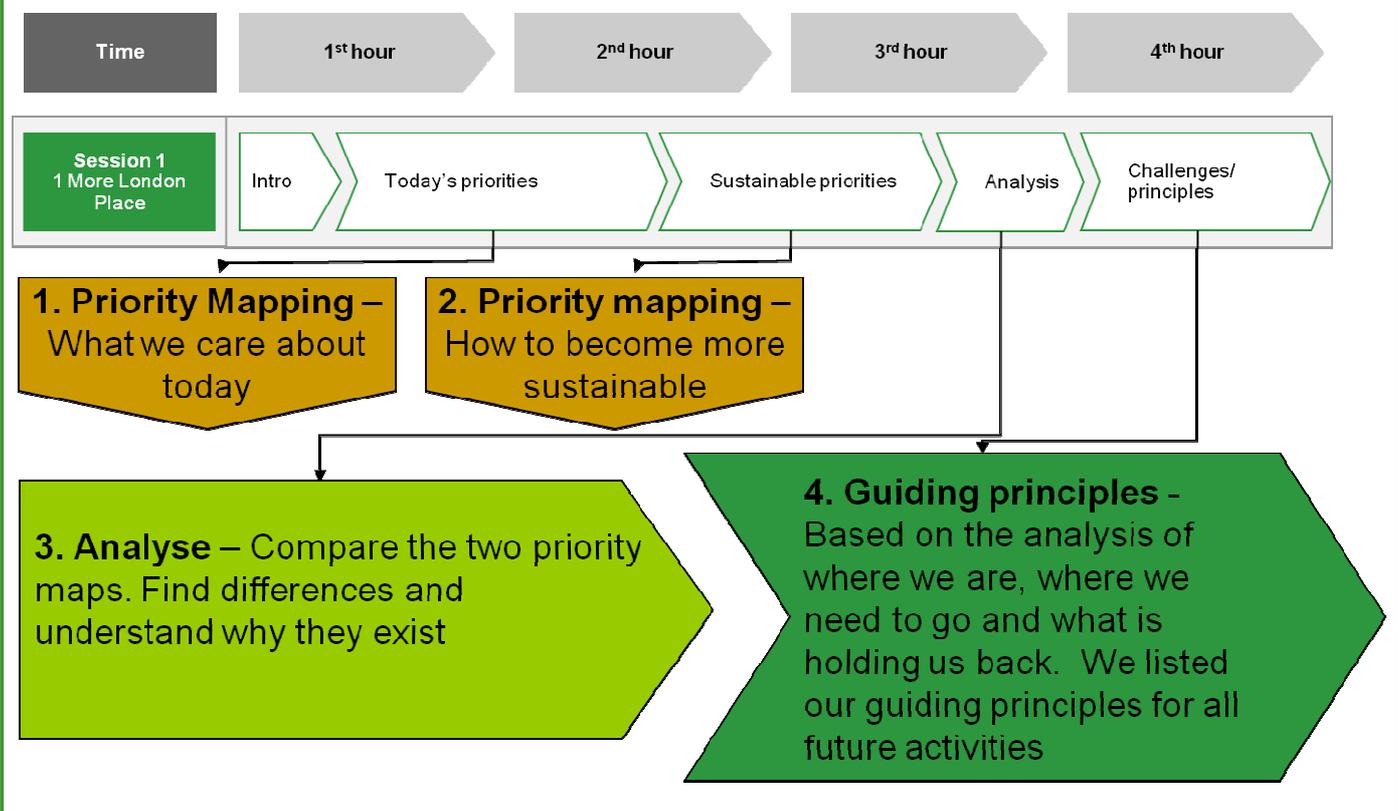
## DEFINITIONS

**Innovation**—1. A new idea made manifest. 2. 'The act of innovating' 3. Developing an idea not currently in use

**Local Government**—All UK government bodies with a geographically defined jurisdiction, operating below the regional level

**Sustainability**—1. Meeting 'the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their

**FIGURE 1: THE PROCESS**



Supported by:

10 March 2009

# Establishing the Principles of a Model Environmentally Sustainable Council

own needs'. 2. Meeting the 'triple bottom line' of economic, social and environmental concerns 3. Consideration of externalities

• form the guiding principles

Please see figure 1 for a graphical representation of this.

## THE PROCESS

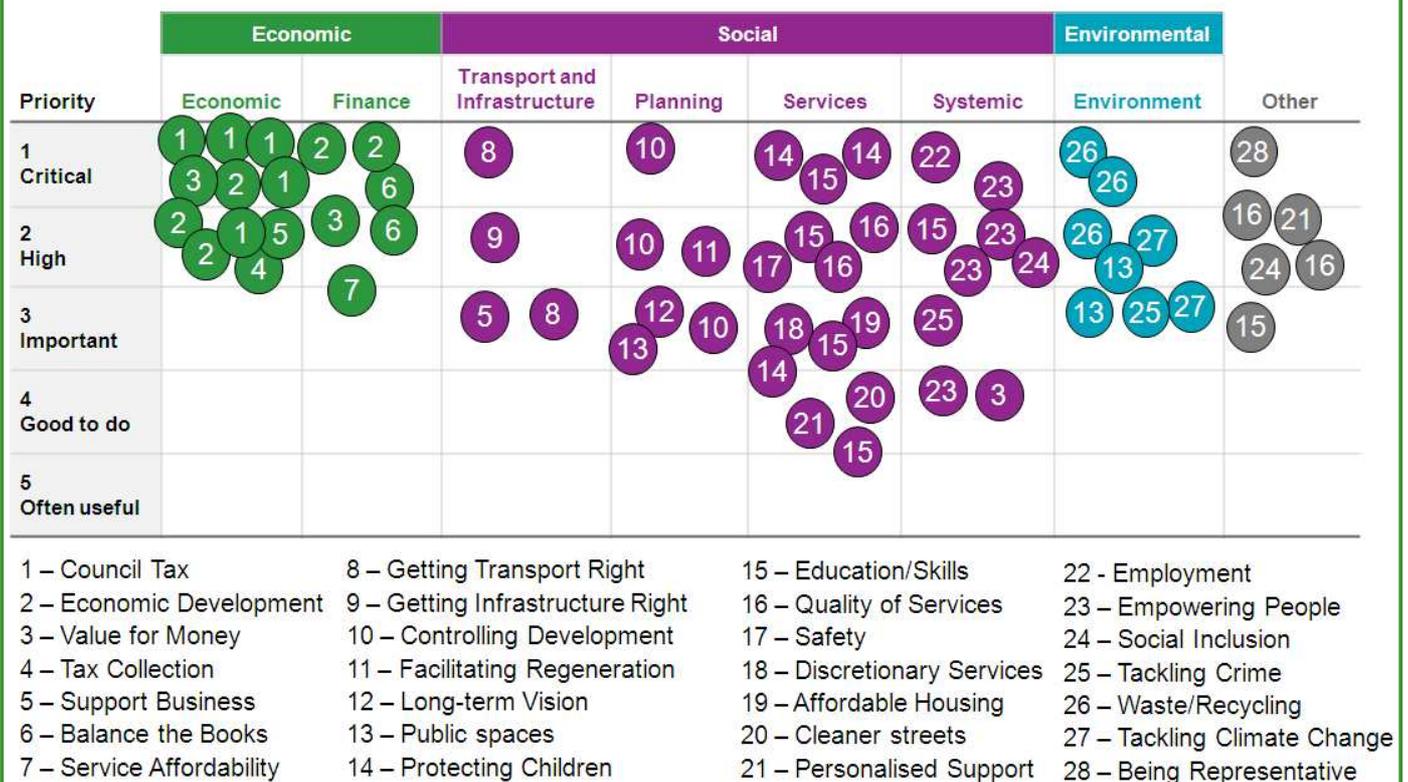
The process of the first workshop was split into four main sessions:

- looking into the current priorities of Councils today
- comparing it with what a model sustainable Councils would look like.
- analyse the two maps, and understand the differences

## CURRENT COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Each participant was asked to write down 3-5 things which Councils currently focus on, and to map where the perceived priorities lay. As shown on Figure 2, the main priority highlighted from the discussion was providing economic stability and support. Given the audience and nature of the discussion, it is interesting to note that there were only eight priorities posted in the 'environment' tab.

**FIGURE 2: CURRENT PRIORITIES**



Supported by:



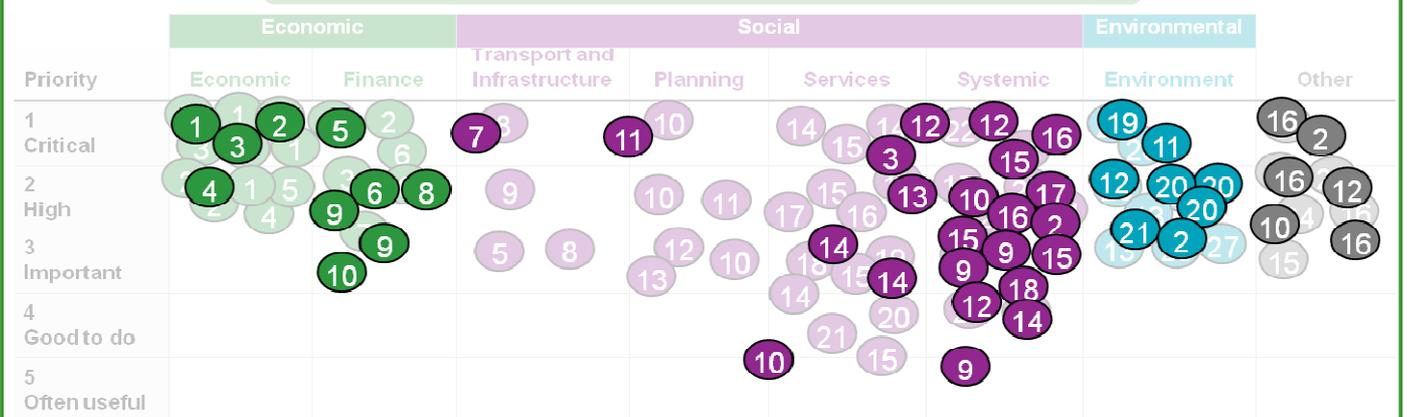
10 March 2009

# Establishing the Principles of a Model Environmentally Sustainable Council

### FIGURE 3: SUSTAINABLE PRIORITIES



### FIGURE 4: COMPARING PRIORITIES



Supported by:



10 March 2009

## Establishing the Principles of a Model Environmentally Sustainable Council

### SUSTAINABLE COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Following the first session's broad discussion, a series of priorities were discussed and mapped on another priority chart. The results are shown in figure 3 (previous page). We have illustrated the shift of priorities from session 1 to 2 on figure 4. It is again interesting to note that environment figures low on the priorities, and there is a significant shift from economic to more systematic changes. This partially reflects the need for a radical culture shift within local government, allowing freedom to innovate, and the corresponding financial culture which assists it. In summary, the key findings are:

- The focus has to be on systemic change—how things are done, who does them and how they are motivated
- Economic focus must shift to a long term view that factors in the environment
- Environmental issues should not be considered in isolation
- There is more consensus about where we need to go than would be expected

### PRINCIPLES

Following on from an in-depth discussion about the challenges to achieving a model sustainable Council, the following principles were discussed and agreed:

1. Keep it simple, real and relevant
2. Offer opportunities to everyone to improve environmental performance and actively challenge them to do so
3. Dare to be different
4. Do what we say and say what we do
5. Report against environmental goals in all that we do
6. Balance short term concerns with long-term vision
7. Recognise value and opportunity beyond the obvious
8. Seek out meaningful partnerships

In more detail, these are:

#### 1. Keep it simple, real and relevant

- If we can't understand it—we can't do it
- If we can't explain it—we can't get people behind us
- If we can't feel the benefit—we're not going to support it
- If it doesn't resonate with what we care about—we are not going to believe in it

Therefore

- We seek simplicity
- We communicate openly
- We respond to our residents, and not respond to central judgement

#### 2. Offer opportunities to everyone to improve environmental performance and actively challenge them to do so

- If we allow people freedom—they will create improvements
- If we restrict actions—we reduce participation and innovation
- If we listen more, we get more ideas

Therefore

- We seek to provide incentives for people
- We will seek out opinions, ideas and improvement opportunities
- We will challenge people and organisations to do more
- We support those who lead or champion an idea

#### 3. Dare to be different

- We are not afraid to try something new and we understand that failure is sometimes a price worth paying
- We see innovation as investment.
- We are not afraid to re-visit old ideas

#### 4. Do what we say and say what we do

Supported by:

10 March 2009

## Establishing the Principles of a Model Environmentally Sustainable Council

- If we're honest and open about our aims, objectives and timescales—we are more accountable and more likely to be supported by our residents
- Informed people are more likely to challenge us and create new ideas

Therefore

- We put two-way communications at the heart of all these activities
- We set and report against realistic goals

### 5. Report against environmental goals in all that we do

- If we isolate the environment as a single issue—it will never be the top priority

Therefore

- We measure against environmental goals across all of our work

### 6. Balance short term concerns with long-term vision

- If we focus only on the short term—we will never be able to deliver significant environmental improvement
- If we ignore today's concerns—we lose support of our residents

Therefore

- We know exactly where we are going but it is not always a straight line which will take us there
- We should make rapid progress when conditions will allow
- We work across political boundaries to agree long term goals

### 7. We recognise value and opportunity beyond the obvious

- If we look at things in new ways—we will see new opportunities

Therefore

- We will drive new behaviours by changing old perceptions
- We will look for value in unusual places
- We understand that, 'where there's muck, there's brass'

### 8. We seek out meaningful partnerships

- If we do it on our own—we are limited by resources and experience
- If we partner badly - we gain no benefit

Therefore

- We actively seek new partnerships
- Partnerships offer real benefit to both parties
- Partner's views are fundamental to our decision making process
- Partners share in our success

## NEXT STAGE

The next session will be an evidence and ideas generation stage, during which we will receive ideas and evidence from a wide range of people. If you would like to be involved with this, please contact Tom Shakespeare at Localis on 0207 3402660 or email [tom@localis.org.uk](mailto:tom@localis.org.uk)

We will also be hosting three other discussions around the same topic. As an output of these discussions, we are looking to come up with a handful of policies for local government to adopt and adapt. Progress and lessons learnt from these pilots will be spread to other Councils. We will publish a full document with all of our findings later in the year.

Supported by: