Midlothian Council
Sustainable Development Framework
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Sustainable Development

- **Isn't** just about the environment.
- **Is** about recognising the interdependency and equal importance of protecting and enhancing economic, environmental and social capital.

- **Isn't** about stopping economic growth and new development.
- **Is** about developing and living within the environmental limits of our one planet, recognising that increased wealth alone cannot deliver well-being.

- **Isn't** about making hard sacrifices that others avoid.
- **Is** an opportunity for a small area like Midlothian with a valuable environment to demonstrate excellence and reap the rewards of doing so.

- **Isn't** about stopping travel and consumption at home and abroad.
- **Is** about developing and providing practical solutions to support our ways of living.

The Business Case for Contributing to Sustainable Development

Contributing to the achievement of sustainable development is an opportunity for Midlothian Council to:

- Improve efficiency and potentially realise savings.
- Improve service quality through maximising synergy and promoting co-ordinated activity amongst services in how they are delivered.
- Support local economies and support emerging markets in recyclate and renewable technologies.
- Develop stronger long term relationships with citizens and communities.
- Enhance its role as a community leader – leading the way in promoting environmental, social and economic well-being.

1: SUSTAINABILITY: A CORPORATE VALUE

1.1   Sustainability, the goal of sustainable development, is one of Midlothian Council's corporate values, expressed in its *Corporate Strategy 2010-12* as:

"We want to ensure that everything we do can be justified by its positive long-term social, economic and environmental benefit to Midlothian and so is not done merely for short-term gain." [1]

1.2   The Council is statutorily required [2] to exercise its functions in the way that it considers is most sustainable. An overlapping statutory requirement [3] is that these functions are made subject to arrangements which secure continuously improving performance: 'Best Value', and that the Council discharges its Best Value duties so as to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

1.3   The Council's 2007 *Best Value Strategy* identified its then *Sustainability Strategy* amongst the authority's arrangements for securing Best Value. Following a *Best Value Audit Improvement Plan* that strategy was superseded by a *Sustainable Development Scheme and Action Plan 2009-10* (current Corporate Priority 4b relates) [4]. The replacement framework which follows clarifies the Council's current arrangements for ensuring its functions are exercised sustainably and improve, over time, in their contribution to the achievement of sustainable development. The policy provides high level direction in this regard.

2: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2.1   At the beginning of the 21st century, consumption by developed countries and high-level consumers everywhere is imposing intolerable stresses on global life-support systems, including through climate change, biodiversity loss and interference with the nitrogen cycle. Interference with global phosphorous cycles, ocean acidification, global freshwater use and global land use change are also approaching their thresholds. In Midlothian, as in the rest of the UK, global resources are used as if there were three planet Earths rather than one.

2.2   Whilst environmental stresses tend to make the headlines as indicators of unsustainable ways, communities across the planet carry scars of equal concern. While the 15 per cent of the world's population that lives in developed countries has an average per capita income above $40,000, the 80 per cent in developing countries average less than $2,000. This situation is mirrored in the wide dispersion of human development indicators as well as per capita energy consumption. In Midlothian, the consequences of unsustainability are still found in cycles of poverty and higher than average levels of ill-health.

2.3   We arrive at this position as a result of centuries of human activity that has undervalued the interdependency of the environment, society and economy. Environmental stresses, inequalities and societal fragmentation have increased as a product of development processes that neither recognise finite environmental resources nor protect and enhance social capital.

2.4   If we aspire to improving quality of life in communities locally and globally, now and into the future, doing so as been done in the past is not an option. Pathways must be followed which simultaneously improve quality of life for all and reduce resource use and environmental impacts.

2.5   The necessary pathways are embodied within the idea of 'sustainable development'*, a concept which came to public prominence with the 1987 United Nations *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development* ('the Brundtland report') [5]. Statutory ministerial guidance [6] under *The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003* provides a definition of sustainable development which brings together that in the Brundtland report with the Act's 'Well Being' provisions:

"*development which secures a balance of social, economic and environmental well-being in the impact of activities and decisions and which seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*."

2.6   The UK Government/devolved administrations' shared framework [7] for sustainable development, *One Future – Different Paths*, contains a set of principles (Figure 1) to help guide public sector decision-makers in interpreting sustainable development. The top two principles comprise the goal of sustainable development, sometimes called 'Sustainability': a strong, healthy and just society living within environmental limits. The bottom three principles – a sustainable economy, good governance and using sound science responsibly - are intended to contribute to achieving the goal of sustainability. Along with the framework's shared priorities (summarised in Box 1), these principles are the starting point for addressing sustainable development at all levels in the UK.
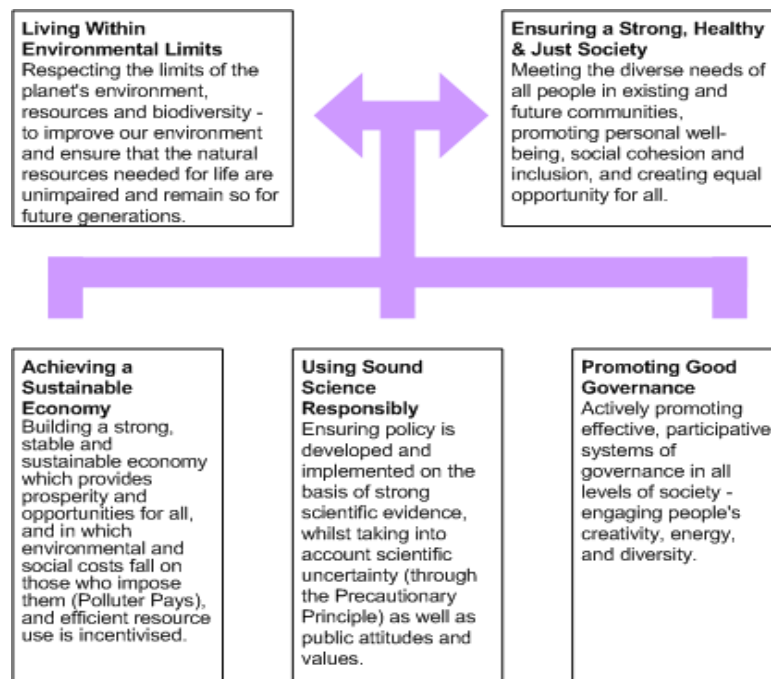

Living Within Environmental Limits
Respecting the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity - to improve our environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.

Ensuring a Strong, Healthy & Just Society
Meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity for all.

Achieving a Sustainable Economy
Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy which provides prosperity and opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs fall on those who impose them (Polluter Pays), and efficient resource use is incentivised.

Using Sound Science Responsibly
Ensuring policy is developed and implemented on the basis of strong scientific evidence, whilst taking into account scientific uncertainty (through the Precautionary Principle) as well as public attitudes and values.

Promoting Good Governance
Actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society - engaging people's creativity, energy, and diversity.

FIGURE 1 UK Guiding Principles of Sustainable Development

* Development here is not restricted to the definition under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, i.e. building work, certain other operations on land, and certain changes in the use of land and buildings.

Sustainable Consumption and Production: achieving more with less. This includes reducing the inefficient use of resources, looking at the impact of products and materials across their whole lifecycle and encouraging people to think about the social and environmental consequences of their purchasing choices.

Climate Change and Energy: securing a profound change in the way we generate and use energy, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement: protecting our natural resources, building a better understanding of environmental limits, and improving the quality of the environment.

Sustainable Communities: creating communities that embody the principles of sustainable development locally. This will involve working to give communities more power and say in the decisions that affect them; and working in partnership at the right level to get things done.

BOX 1 Summary of UK Shared Priorities for Sustainable Development

2.7   Sustainable development is not about 'trading off' one of the above principles against another one. The breaching of global environmental limits is not sustainable development, but neither are approaches which are socially divisive or economically unviable over the long term. Sometimes there is a short term cost, but with sustainable development the longer term gain will be positive and lasting.

2.8   Sustainable development is sometimes confused with 'sustainable economic growth' as referred to in the Scottish Government's national purpose:

"To focus Government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth."

'Sustainable economic growth' here is the enabling element in the purpose and represents sustainable development provided environmental limits and social progress are integrated as the primary goal.

2.9   In their corporate value/statutory sense, terms such as 'sustainable', 'sustainability', 'sustainably' and 'sustaining' should not be confused or conflated with 'keeping on doing' Council business or processes. That is a narrower use of the term for which 'maintainable' or 'repeatable' are more appropriate. 'Maintainability' is certainly necessary for sustainability in the wider sense, but it is not in itself sufficient. History suggests that it is quite possible to 'sustain' performance in the narrow sense that is not sustainable in the wider sense.

3: MAINSTREAMING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: STATUTORY DUTIES

3.1   Section 44(1)(c) of the *Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009* ("the CCSA") requires public bodies to exercise their functions:

"in a way that it considers is most sustainable."

'Functions' here are those delivering any and all things the Council does.

3.2   Section 1 of the *Local Government in Scotland Act 2003* ("the LGSA") requires local authorities to make these functions the subject of arrangements which secure 'Best Value': continuous improvement in performance, balancing quality and cost whilst having regard to efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equal opportunity requirements. 'Improvement' here covers how the things the Council does are carried out ('the means') as well as the results/outcomes ('the ends'). Measurement of improvement in the performance of these functions requires to have regard to the extent to which the outcomes of that performance have improved.

3.2   Section 1(5) of the LGSA requires these Best Value duties to be discharged:

"in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development".

In doing so, the LGSA sets contributing to the achievement of sustainable development as requirement to be discharged when considering efficiency, effectiveness, economy, equal opportunities and performance measurement.

3.3   Statutory ministerial guidance under the LGSA and to other public bodies [8] defines the required contribution as follows, adding that an organisation which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate it:

"consideration of the social, economic and environmental impacts of activities and decisions both in the shorter and the longer term [underpinning the UK guiding principles of sustainable development discussed at 1.6 above]".

This definition is consistent with the description, set out in emerging statutory guidance [9] from Scottish Ministers under the CCSA, of a public body acting sustainably in the exercise of its functions.

3.4   Guidance prepared under the LGSA, and approved by the former Best Value Task Force (BVTF), sets how and where the contribution should be demonstrated:

"1. ... commitment at both elected member and senior officer level to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and to promote an integrated approach to improving economic, social and environmental well–being.

2. ... contributing to the achievement of sustainable development is reflected in the authority's objectives and highlighted in all strategies and plans at corporate and services level.

3. ... these plans, priorities and actions are informed by the views of its communities and key local partners.

4. ...'quality of life' indicators are identified to measure performance in contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and reported to the public.

5. ... review activities take account of sustainability issues and assess the impact of policy proposals on sustainable development.

6. ... sustainable development requirements are taken into account in the procurement strategy.

7. ... there is a systematic approach to the management of resources which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development."

3.5   The audit framework and assessment matrix in Audit Scotland's BV2 *Sustainability audit framework* (Figure 2) [10] sets out detailed considerations to be taken into account in establishing whether a local authority is performing well in contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. The five elements in the first row integrate the 'theme' of sustainability with five of the BV2 corporate assessment criteria categories: vision and strategic direction, partnership working and community leadership, governance and accountability, use of resources and performance management and improvement.
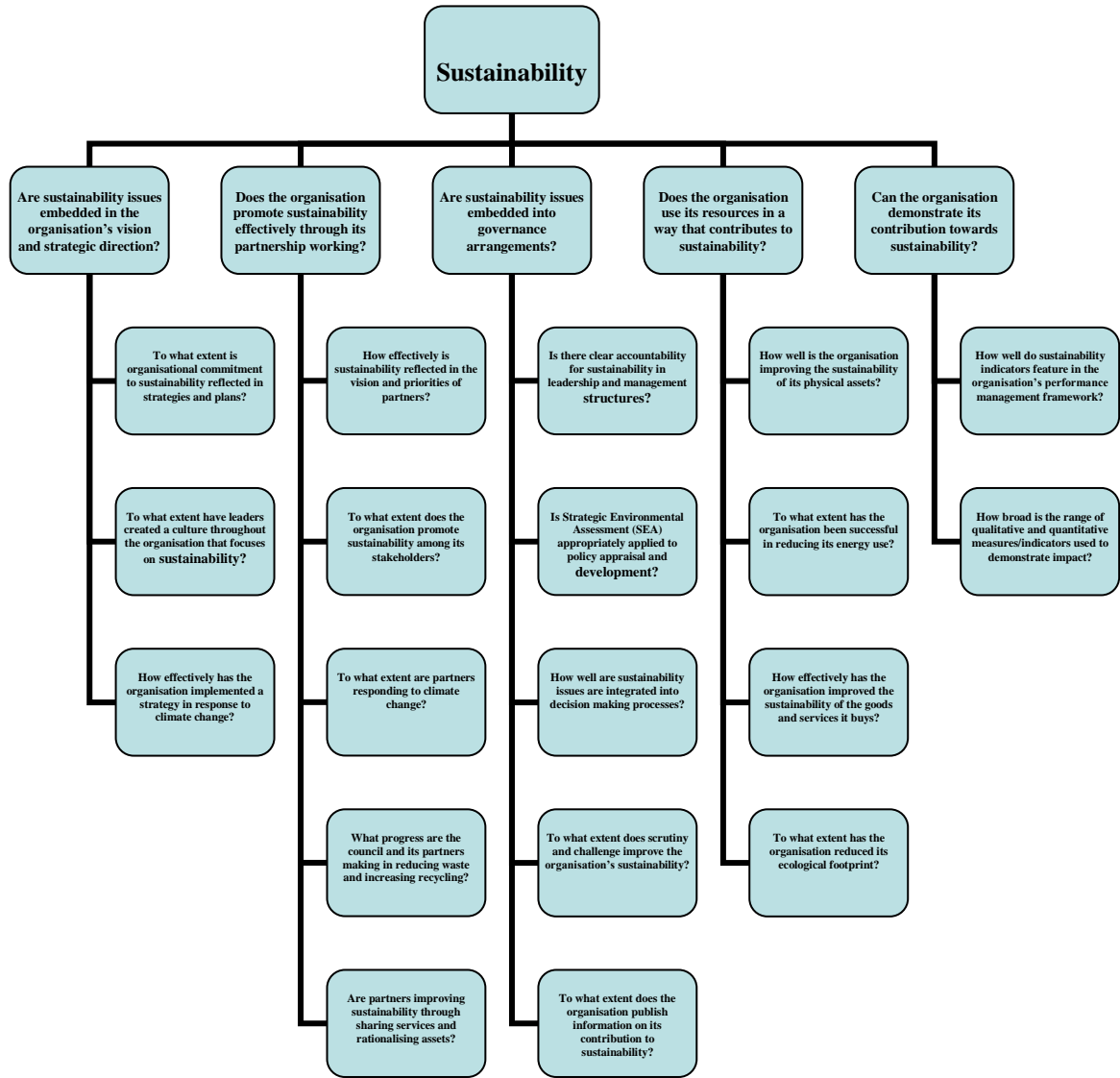
Sustainability

Are sustainability issues embedded in the organisation's vision and strategic direction?	Does the organisation promote sustainability effectively through its partnership working?	Are sustainability issues embedded into governance arrangements?	Does the organisation use its resources in a way that contributes to sustainability?	Can the organisation demonstrate its contribution towards sustainability?
To what extent is organisational commitment to sustainability reflected in strategies and plans?	How effectively is sustainability reflected in the vision and priorities of partners?	Is there clear accountability for sustainability in leadership and management structures?	How well is the organisation improving the sustainability of its physical assets?	How well do sustainability indicators feature in the organisation's performance management framework?
To what extent have leaders created a culture throughout the organisation that focuses on sustainability?	To what extent does the organisation promote sustainability among its stakeholders?	Is Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) appropriately applied to policy appraisal and development?	To what extent has the organisation been successful in reducing its energy use?	How broad is the range of qualitative and quantitative measures/indicators used to demonstrate impact?
How effectively has the organisation implemented a strategy in response to climate change?	To what extent are partners responding to climate change?	How well are sustainability issues are integrated into decision making processes?	How effectively has the organisation improved the sustainability of the goods and services it buys?	
	What progress are the council and its partners making in reducing waste and increasing recycling?	To what extent does scrutiny and challenge improve the organisation's sustainability?	To what extent has the organisation reduced its ecological footprint?	
	Are partners improving sustainability through sharing services and rationalising assets?	To what extent does the organisation publish information on its contribution to sustainability?		

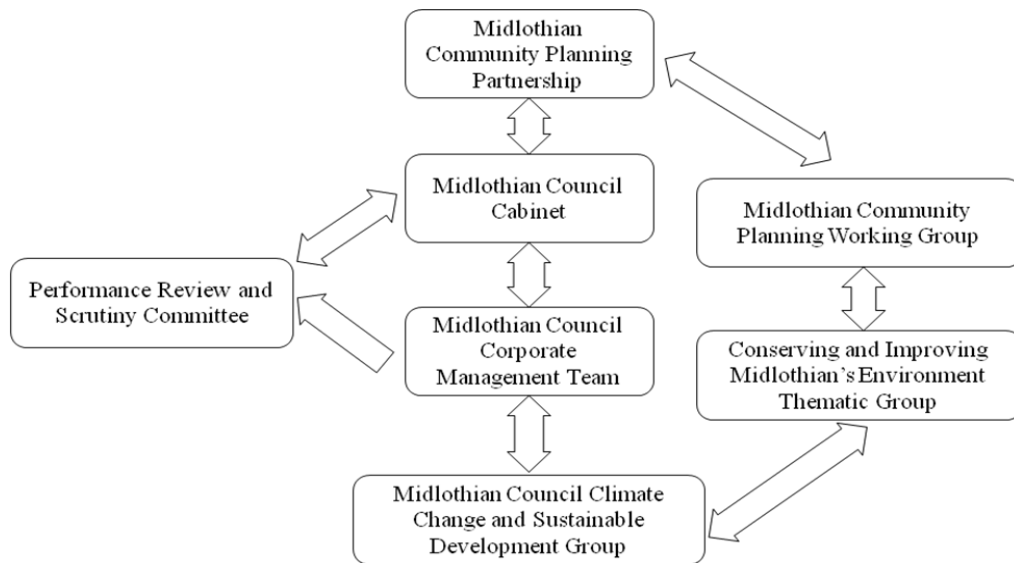**FIGURE 2 BV2 Sustainability Audit Framework**

FIGURE 3 Governance

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4: THE FRAMEWORK

4.1   The Council's principal arrangements (or 'framework') for securing its contribution to the achievement of sustainable development are listed below.

Sustainability Value – Sustainability, the goal of sustainable development, is one of Midlothian Council's corporate values, expressed in its *Corporate Strategy 2010-12* as:

> ***"We want to ensure that everything we do can be justified by its positive long-term social, economic and environmental benefit to Midlothian and so is not done merely for short-term gain."***

Corporate Priorities 2010-12 – Contributing to sustainable development, including in securing Best Value, is currently Corporate Priority 4b.

Sustainable Development Policy Statement – This provides high-level policy direction to Council improvement. It sets out the Council's common understanding of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development by applying the UK guiding principles and shared priorities to the Best Value '4 Es' - efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equal opportunity requirements. It is Appendix A to this document.

Best Value Strategy – This framework and its *Sustainable Development Policy Statement* are amongst the authority's arrangements for securing Best Value.

Midlothian Excellence Framework (MEF) – This framework contains 'red threads' which link criterion statements throughout to create a picture of how the service being assessed under MEF is performing with regard to specific topics such as 'Sustainability'. These threads can be used to assist teams/services/the Council in evaluating how sustainability is considered.

Business Transformation Review Guidance – emerging guidance is likely to address sustainability.

Corporate Sustainable Development Self Assessment Toolkit – is being developed for use by the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Group in self-evaluating strategic performance in contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. This approach addresses specific concerns levelled at BV2 Pathfinder Councils in relation to self-assessment around sustainability.

Service Level Sustainable Development Self Assessment Toolkit – is a form of a questionnaire being developed for divisions in self-evaluating service level performance in contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. This approach addresses specific concerns levelled at BV2 Pathfinder Councils in relation to self-assessment around sustainability.

Continuous Improvement Process - a cyclical 'plan>do>self-evaluate>review' process driving continuous improvement in the Council's contribution to the achievement of sustainable development. This approach addresses specific concerns levelled at BV2 Pathfinder Councils in relation to self-assessment around sustainability. Appendix B illustrates.

Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) – A programme of targeted improvement actions over a period of around four years, prompted by and aligned with the BVTF sustainable development guidance and BV2 *Sustainability audit framework* attributes. The Plan is owned by the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Group and refreshed annually. This approach addresses specific concerns levelled at BV2 Pathfinder Councils.

PRS Committee and Cabinet - Receive SD progress and performance reports

Corporate Management Team – Receives SD progress and performance reports and approves annual refreshes of the Sustainable Development Continuous Improvement Plan (SDCIP)

Climate Change and Sustainable Development Group – Its aim includes promotion of the Council's contribution to the achievement of sustainable development, in particular in respect of climate change. Arrangements for securing the Council's contribution to the achievement of sustainable development through Best Value are reported within the Council. Partnership working in relation to sustainable development outcomes (e.g. climate change and waste) are reported through community planning structures. Figure 3 illustrates.

Risk registers - Risks in relation to 'sustainability' at a topic level are contained within a risk register managed by the Planning and Development Unit of the Corporate Resources division and the risk register is reviewed by management each quarter.

Partnership working – sustainable development is addressed in the Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreements.

Sustainability statements in reports – Sustainability statements are included in reports to Council, Cabinet, Committees and Corporate Management Team. Guidance on compiling these statements is included within report templates.

Senior Planning Policy & Sustainability Officer- This officer co-ordinates the Council's contribution to the achievement of sustainable development and ensures that this framework is operating.

Selected Background Papers

1. Midlothian Council. *Midlothian Council Corporate Strategy 2010-12*. [online] Available at http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/816/plans_and_policies/460/midlothians_corporate_strategy [Last accessed 25 February 2011]

2. Scottish Parliament. *Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009*. [online] Available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12 [Last accessed 25 February 2011]

3. Scottish Parliament. *Local Government in Scotland Act 2003*. [online] Available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/1 [Last accessed 25 February 2011]

4. Midlothian Council. *Corporate Priorities and costs Council 23.2.10.* [online] Available at http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/816/plans_and_policies/460/midlothians_corporate_strategy [Last accessed 25 February 2011]

5. World Commission on Environment and Development. *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development.* [online] Available at http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm [Last accessed 25 February 2011]

6. Scottish Executive. *The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. Best Value Guidance.* [online] Available at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/04/19166/35250 [Last accessed 25 February 2011]

7. HM Government, et al. *One Future – Different Paths – The UK's Shared Framework for Sustainable Development*. [online] Available at http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/publications/uk-strategy/framework-for-sd.htm [Last accessed 25 February 2011]

8. Scottish Ministers. *Secondary Guidance to Accountable Officers approved by the Scottish Ministers on the duty to ensure arrangements are in place to secure best value in public services.* [Online] Available at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/07/17114639/0 [Last accessed 25 February 2011]

9. Scottish Government. *Public Bodies Climate Change Duties: Putting Them Into Practice. Guidance Required By Part 4 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009*. [online] Available at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/04093254/13 [Last accessed 25 February 2011]

10. Audit Scotland. *Best Value Toolkit: Sustainability.* [online] Available at http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/work/toolkits [Last accessed 25 February 2011]

APPENDIX A

Midlothian

MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY STATEMENT

In discharging its Best Value duties[1] (relating to continuous improvement in performance), Midlothian Council shall:

In balancing quality and cost[2], have regard to the following aspects[3] of effectiveness, efficiency, economy and equal opportunity requirements:

Effectiveness

Leading or contributing, directly or indirectly, and sooner or later, to sustainable development outcomes for Midlothian, in doing so:

- reconciling long-term needs with those of the present, protecting and improving the quality of life of current generations without compromising the quality of life of future generations;

- attuning to the global context and respecting environmental limits;

- integrating and balancing the different aspects of well-being – environmental, economic and social. Although any particular service area may be primarily focussed on a particular aspect, performance is sensitive to its impacts on other aspects of the whole picture. Contributing to the achievement of sustainable development:

  a. opens up opportunities for, and actively promotes and supports, synergies amongst the different aspects of well-being; and
  b. avoids harmful 'collateral' impacts in which apparent improvements in one aspect of well-being compromise positive outcomes in another.

Contributing to the four priority areas in the UK's shared framework for sustainable development[4]:

- Sustainable Consumption and Production;

- Climate Change and Energy;

- Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement;

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- Sustainable Communities.

Sustainable Communities, for the purposes of this policy, is defined as follows[5]:

a. Active, Inclusive and Safe – Fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities;
b. Well Run – with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership;
c. Well Connected – with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services;
d. Well Served – with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all;
e. Environmentally Sensitive – providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment;
f. Thriving – with a flourishing, diverse and innovative local economy;
g. Well Designed and Built – featuring quality built and natural environment; and
h. Fair for Everyone – including those in other communities, now and in the future.

Efficiency and Economy

Seeking high order efficiency and economy by:

- considering efficiency in terms of whole-life costs and long term outcomes;

- attending to whole-system costs, in terms of both opportunity costs and collateral impacts;

- defining resources broadly and using them sparingly – building and drawing on community resources, seeking synergies, and favouring renewable and self-sustaining sources.

Equal Opportunities Requirements

Recognising and encompassing diversity and valuing equity, seeking balance between competing needs and interests, recognising, welcoming, and respecting difference, resolving conflict and achieving consensus where it is possible but accommodating difference where it is not, thereby ensuring that legitimacy is widely accepted and respected, even by those who do not benefit directly from it.

Seek to do so through processes and systems for accountability, planning, management and delivery that:

- fully engage with communities and other stakeholders, thereby ensuring that it remains attuned to changing needs and aspirations;

- engage and systematically collaborate with strategic partners (including through Midlothian Community Planning Partnership) to take existing opportunities and generate new ones; and

- draw on available and appropriate sources of evidence, information and research, thereby ensuring that it remains attuned to changes in the wider environment, including both threats and fresh opportunities as they arise.

1. *Local Government in Scotland Act 2003*, s1.
2. *Ibid.,* s1(3).
3. *Ibid.,* s1(4).
4. *One future – different paths. The UK's shared framework for sustainable development.*
5. *2005 Bristol Accord*

APPENDIX B   Continuous Improvement Process

PLAN

Rolling four-year **Sustainability Action Plan (SAP)** agreed by **Corporate Management Team** in March or earlier

REPORT

SD progress and performance (including strengths) reported in April **to Performance Review Committee, Cabinet** and public

REVIEW

Progress reviewed in August based on evidence from self-evaluation stage. Targeted improvement actions for a refreshed **SAP** recommended to **Corporate Management Team** for comment

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GROUP (CCSDG)

DO

Implement year's actions from **SAP**

SELF-EVALUATE

CCSDG evaluates performance in respect of **SAP** in August and April; and in respect of SD performance generally in August only, using **'Community and Corporate'** and **'Service Level' SD Toolkits**

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