



Surrey 2020

All local authorities in the UK are required to produce Community Plans, with different authorities adopting different strategies to accomplish this task. Surrey County Council decided to use scenario planning to create a vision for Surrey, looking towards the year 2020, as the basis of its Community Planning process. It decided to work through the Surrey Strategic Partnership (SSP), because it embraces all the local government authorities, statutory and community public service agencies and voluntary groups, thus providing an inclusive mechanism to link the diverse Surrey communities.

The first step: setting goals

The SSP appointed SAMI Consulting in 2004 to help and advise on the appropriate approach to scenario building. There were a number of objectives to meet in launching the "Surrey in 2020" project. One of the most important was to stimulate debate and discussion within organisations and among citizens about the challenges facing Surrey in the future to help them identify realistic options available to tackle these challenges. This would encourage a shared sense of direction for the public service organisations within Surrey and so build a consensus for action.

SAMI's role: laying the foundation

A team was set up consisting of three people from SAMI and three from the SSP. Together they consulted over 800 stakeholders using interviews, focus groups and major events. This information was then analysed and evaluated to identify six key themes that brought together the issues that would influence Surrey's future: economic development; travel, access and mobility; housing and associated infrastructure; changing lifestyles; communities, culture and identity; and the future of public service delivery and democracy.

Expert workshops (involving almost 200 specialists) were set up for each theme to test and explore the issues. This resulted in the identification of three key drivers that will have most impact on the issues over the next twenty years and that the partnership has most influence over. These were firstly, culture; second, public and organisational response to change; and third, leadership by and co-operation between public services, business and the voluntary sector.

These drivers formed the basis for constructing four scenarios (possible pictures of Surrey in 2020) based on different possible decisions or outcomes of the three key drivers. For ease of communication they were entitled:

- ***Forward thinking***
- ***Independent***
- ***Playing safe***
- ***Parallel lives***



The scenarios represent distinctly different visions of what Surrey could look like in 2020, with implications for citizens, business and public services. Much care was taken to make sure the scenarios were credible and consistent - and that they were named and described as dispassionately as possible. This was important in order to avoid the temptation for people to react initially to the scenarios with a simple like/dislike, or to assume that everyone shared the same aspirations or revulsions.

Using the scenarios to develop strategy

The scenarios - in the form of the CD-ROM which included characters to personalize them - were used to engage a large number of "ordinary citizens". One surprising result was that they felt that politicians should take more risks in order to foster **Forward Thinking**. They also largely endorsed the need for public transport and environmental concerns, as well as affordable housing.

Following this and extensive feedback with the SSP members, the team created a Vision for Surrey under the six headings (housing, transport etc). This vision statement has been used to brainstorm with the SSP "what are the big ideas that would move this forward?" Of the 11 ideas generated, some were about sharing delivery points for services, while others looked at radical ways of tackling the affordable housing issue. The SSP further suggested creating an overall strap line and focus for action in terms of "healthy Surrey" - spas, sporting facilities, businesses to provide health monitoring and share with public, and so on.

One early result was that by linking the vision statement to productivity targets for departments in the policy and productivity review it became clear that some of the benchmark parameters coming out of the vision statement had no owner. This led to defining new partnerships.

The outcome

The project was considered a great success. Dr Michael Edley, Community Planning Manager at Surrey County Council and Project Manager on the Surrey 2020 project identified four main benefits from the project: -

- It provided a framework for the partnerships to define detailed plans and identify where plans were needed and/or a new partnership needed to be – e.g. housing
- The three scenario drivers led to structured thinking about the 11 big ideas
- Using the scenarios CD-ROM enabled them to engage the public who proved much more mature than believed by the politicians
- Finally, the partner organisations were able to use the source interviews to give them new insights into their customers.

According to Dr Edley, "We have found the use of scenario planning to create a vision for Surrey to have been a fully absorbing and engaging project, both for the SSP as well as for the citizens of Surrey. We are already using the wealth of material we have generated in many other ways and have found the Surrey in 2020 scenarios a useful touchstone for testing the organisation's own policies and strategies for the future."