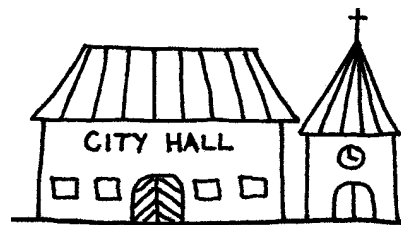
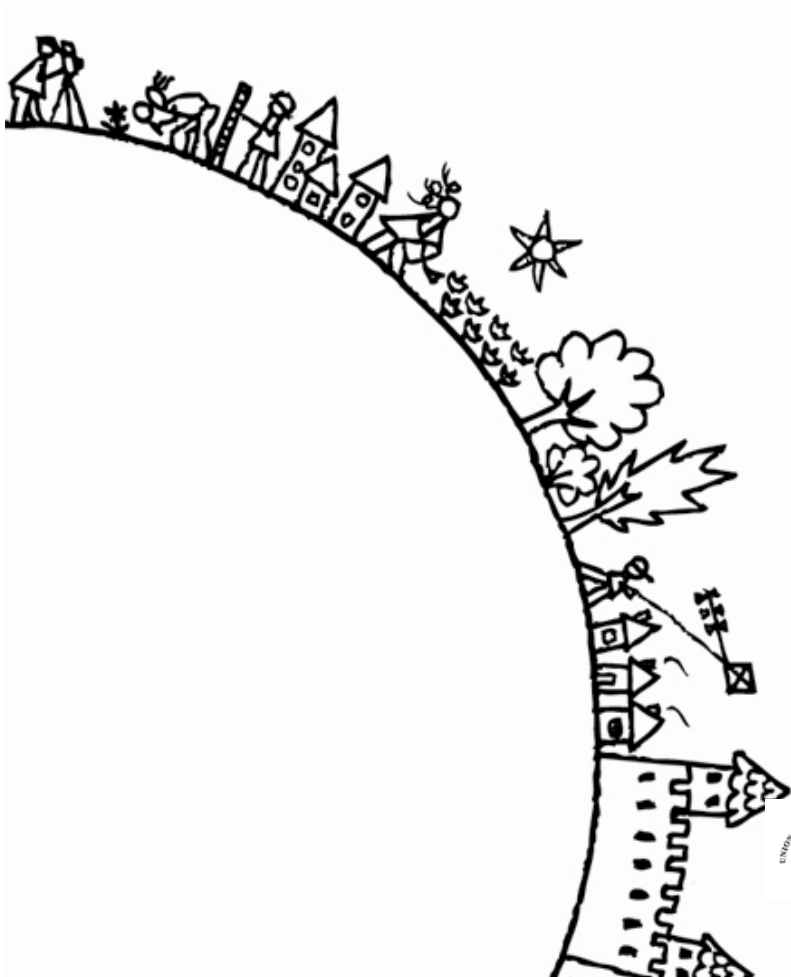




# POLITICAL COMMITMENT





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**The guidance paper on Political Commitment** is a product of the Managing Urban Europe-25 project. The project was part-funded by the European Commission, DG Environment. The project was co-ordinated by Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat and is part of the UBC Agenda 21 Action Programme 2004-2009 – Roadmap for Sustainable Baltic Cities. The project Steering Group consisted of ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability, UNEP/Grid-Arendal, Bodensee Stiftung, and the University of West of England.

The publication reflects the author's views and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Commission.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

During the third step, the strategic programme is put forward to the city council to be approved and get legitimisation. Many cities choose to also approve the action plan and the entire organisational setup for running the integrated management system.

If the integrated management system is not accepted and backed by the politicians and the top management in the city, its implementation process may actually never take place due to a high degree of disregard and resulting inaction at the implementation level. Political commitment should be seen as a driving force that stimulates the management cycle. Therefore, seek political commitment from the very beginning of the process, when the idea of the implementation of the integrated management system is in its infancy.

Involve major political groups, including the mayor, other high-level politicians, different stakeholders and the general public in preparing the strategic programme and action plan. Debate is required and it leads, finally, to the political approval of the strategic programme by the city council to gain legitimacy.





## 2. INFORMING AND INVOLVING

Preparing the ground for the approval of the strategic programme starts long before a draft is ready for review. At an early stage of the implementation process there is a need for a political agreement or endorsement to adopt an integrated management system for urban areas in the city. In order to take this decision, politicians should be informed well about resources needed, the benefits associated with an integrated management system as well as a time and work plan for implementation. It is at this stage that the initial steps leading to the approval of the strategic programme and legitimisation of the action plan are to be taken.

Ideally, once the council decision on implementation has been taken and the baseline review is done, there already is a strong political will behind the implementation work. Nevertheless, it needs to be amplified, and further involvement of decision makers, stakeholders and city inhabitants is needed in preparing the most important implementation documents, the strategic programme and action plan.

### 2.1. DECISION MAKERS (MAYOR, MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPS)

The roads leading to getting council approval of the strategic programme are different in different European cities. Various patterns of political approval are applied in the various countries with differing administrative structures. There are no better experts than each city itself, on how to proceed with the internal, administrative labyrinths, i.e., who to contact and in which order (mayor/city council, city board/city council, specialized committees), to have a certain decision approved by the city council.

However, there is one rule of thumb which is applicable in every case, no matter what the geographical latitude and longitude: do not surprise top management with the strategic programme – involve the key decision makers from the very beginning!

One of the important actions to consolidate the political commitment behind the implementation work is to inform the mayor and/or vice mayor or equivalent about the planned content of the strategic programme and involve the key decision-makers in the city. In some countries, the mayors may not function as chairs of the city board and council (e.g., Finland). When this is the case, then there is a need to inform the chairs. It is important to involve these people already at the beginning of the process.

It is strongly recommended to organize an informal briefing with one of the responsible political leaders, mayors or deputy mayors (mayor, deputy mayor in charge of sustainable development) before other measures to create political and public support on behalf of the upcoming council decision of the strategic programme are taken. This will be useful in order to have the mayors properly informed and supportive. Moreover, mayors might also be able to provide some good advice on how to best carry on the upcoming liaison and information effort, and could also contribute to the same with their own contacts and influence.





At the same time, it is crucial to work with informing and involving the major political groups and specialized committees. This would prepare the political parties for a debate on the targets during the presentation of the strategic programme for the council approval. It is important for the coordination team and board to also identify key persons within the political parties, with whom they should maintain close contact, and inform them regularly about their activities and the process development.

Having good information channels with the political groups serves two important functions:

- Firstly, it prepares the political groups and councillors to have a meaningful debate on the contents of the strategic programme.
- It prepares the ground thereby for the approval of the strategic programme in the council. It also helps to create political support later on, during the implementation of the action plan.

## 2.2. STAKEHOLDERS

The implementation of the integrated management system can be a success, provided that it is a joint initiative accepted and realized in cooperation with relevant stakeholders (e.g., business representatives, NGOs). The majority of tasks to be realized when implementing the action plan, for example, are dependent on the stakeholder's involvement.

In parallel to work with the politicians, also spread information and involve relevant stakeholders involved to hear their views and build support for the planned objectives and activities of the strategic programme. Furthermore, distribute the draft strategic programme for information and comments among institutions, associations and Agenda 21 forums and record their respective positions and opinions.

For involving stakeholders efficiently, utilise the already existing arrangements for stakeholder involvement in the city. These may include, for example, the Local Agenda 21 forum and/or working groups, various other reference/advisory groups, and web-based consultation forums for citizens and citizen groups. If there are active NGOs and interest associations in the city, consider to brief them as well.

In doing all this, much effort should be put into the preparation of a Communication Strategy in order to first define all the stakeholders, and next they should be reached with "tailored" messages and their involvement won. For more details, please see section "Involvement and Communication".





## 2.3. PUBLIC

Once the political bodies and stakeholders are made aware of the ongoing implementation of the integrated management system and the upcoming strategic programme, address the media and seek public attention. This will help to further build political support to the process plus it will contribute to the citizen's knowledge and understanding of the process.

The process itself must appear interesting for the citizens and they must feel it is feasible and open to change. It takes time to build trust and a constructive relationship with the citizens. It is therefore important to provide organization, human resources, time and a place to support their involvement.

This is highly important, due to the fact that the strategic programme contains actions that are to be carried out by citizens for citizens, and the success of the great majority of those actions will depend on citizens' participation (e.g., improving waste separation and recycling, energy-saving, sustainable transport, etc). It is also important to communicate in the appropriate manner. By defining the strategic programme at different levels specific target groups can be reached more easily. To find out more about practicalities, please see section "Communication and Involvement".

This is also the moment for awareness-raising and capacity-building. Balance the information about the integrated management system with the clear message that it is a particular vehicle to work with, making the city more sustainable for its citizens.

## 2.4. COUNCIL APPROVAL

Building on the previous briefing of the mayor, one should by now be well-placed and trusted to provide the mayor with a briefing note or memorandum that would basically outline the proposal text that the mayor would take to the City Board.

### **Advice for the proposal text**

- It should follow a certain format and style used in the city.
- It should be submitted enough time in advance.
- It should make strong reference to the original decision to implement the integrated management system.
- Give reference to general background (Laws, programmes, strategies and charters related to sustainable development)
- Make strong reference to the main decisions taken by the city council in this field (Aalborg Charter, Aalborg Commitments, strategic vision, etc.). Sometimes it is important to highlight the complete journey towards sustainability.
- Should contain the draft strategic programme proposal and the Baseline Review report as annexes.







### 3. WHAT IS NEXT?

The output of this step is the approval of the strategic programme by the city council. It is also recommended that the action plan and the organisational set-up are approved by the city council. When the strategic programme is approved, the decision should be announced to the public and other stakeholders. It should also be made available on the Internet. Furthermore, it should be announced in the local media and in the local authority's newsletter, if possible.

Once the strategic programme/action plan/organisational set-up is/are approved by the council, the next step can be initiated: namely, the implementation.





## 4. CHECKLIST

### Objective

Procedures to check and correct activities are a crucial part of every management system – also within the Integrated Management System.

One of the minimum requirements is the yearly Internal Audit conducted by the coordinator or coordination team and an Internal Auditor. This Internal Auditor needs to be independent from the coordination team and should be a person from another strategic department, a (neighbouring) municipality or an external consultant or verifier. Of overall importance is that the auditor or auditing team has a solid foundation in the ‘expert knowledge’ necessary to conduct integrated management and sustainability aspects.

The internal audit emphasises:

- determining whether the direct and indirect environmental/ sustainability/climate change issues and their evaluation are up to date
- determining whether the Strategic Programme is up to date
- comparing present status and realisation/implementation of the Action Plan(s)
- comparing present status and progress towards resp. achievement of environmental /sustainability / mitigation and adaptation targets
- checking whether the laws and regulations of relevance to environment /sustainable development and climate change have been updated and are being followed through
- checking the management system functions (organisation, documentation, internal and external communication, monitoring and reporting)
- checking update, adherence to and implementation of the training plan for employees

The following checklist emphasises on the first Internal Audit and includes also questions related to the implementation of the integrated management system, not relevant after the realisation of the first cycle





	Aspects which should be fulfilled	Status
1	<p>Information to all relevant stakeholders about the ongoing processes in the city and the development of the Strategic Programme</p> <p><i>Note! To spread information and involve the different Stakeholders you may use the already existing arrangements such as Agenda 21 forum and/or working groups, web-based consultation fora for citizens.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending</p> <p>Additional information:</p>
2	<p>Information to the major political groups about the development of the Strategic Programme</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending</p> <p>Additional information:</p>
3	<p>Public information on the development of the Strategic Programme</p> <p><i>Note! The informing of the media can be done in different ways. See Guidance paper on Approving the Strategic Programme.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending</p> <p>Additional information:</p>
4	<p>Presentation of the Strategic Programme presented to the City Board (or if not applicable, to the respective administrative body)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending</p> <p>Additional information:</p>
5	<p>Presentation of the draft of the Strategic Programme to the different Committees, prior to the City Council (if applicable)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending</p> <p>Additional information:</p>
6	<p>Presentation of the final draft of the Strategic Programme to the City Council</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending</p> <p>Additional information:</p>





7	Debate in the City Council and/or Committees	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending Additional information:
8	Council decides on Strategic Programme with a formal Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending Additional information:
9	After presentation to the Council, the Strategic Programme is being discussed for some weeks	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending Additional information:
10	Strategic Programme is presented to the public (part of formal procedure)	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending Additional information:
11	Strategic Programme is discussed in the public	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending Additional information:
12	Results from public discussion are fed into the Strategic Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending Additional information:
13	An Action Plan is developed after ratification of Strategic Programme.	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending Additional information:





14	Contributions through measures of local stakeholders and municipal companies are included or called for.	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending Additional information:
15	Targets of Strategic Programme/Action Plan are considered in political and administrative decisions	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending Additional information:
16	Presentation of the final draft of the Action Plan to the City Council	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> pending Additional information:





## INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: POLITICAL COMMITMENT

**Overall evaluation:**

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

**Recommendations for improvement:**





SOURCES:

"The *ecoBUDGET* Guide - Methods and procedures of an environmental management system for local authorities", ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability, Växjö, Sweden, 2004





## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1 : EXAMPLE OF STRUCTURE OF A DRAFT RESOLUTION FOR COUNCIL DECISION





## Annex 1: Example of structure of a draft resolution for council decision

### 1. Draft resolution for the council

**Draft resolution:** Ratification of the strategic programme, commissioning the local administration to: implement the strategic programme, provide mandatory reporting to the council or its specialist committees (e.g. environmental) throughout the year.

**Reasoning:** Reference to other relevant resolutions (e.g. Local Agenda 21 or sustainable urban development concept), explanations of the strategic programme, explanations of other procedures influenced by the strategic programme and financial effects of the implementation of the strategic programme

### 2. Object of the resolution: The strategic programme (+action plan)

Priorities, indicators, short and long term targets, timeframes, (measures)

### 3. Enclosure: Explanatory report for the council

- Definition of indicators,
- reasoning/derivation of the long-term targets,
- measures and events which influence the strategic programme
- development trends
- Regulatory framework at both local and national levels.

