

**REVIEW AND PETITIONS COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 5 APRIL 2006**

RP12

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Energy Efficiency Officer presented a report from the Scrutiny Climate Change Investigation subcommittee. Three specific areas had been looked at; this included the current situation, the scrutiny process and the best practice by other councils.

There was clear evidence that greenhouse gases arising from man-made sources were at least partly causing global warming and climate change. Although a degree of global warming was inevitable unless emissions of gases were cut dramatically, warming would soon reach tipping point.

By using fossil-fuel energy, everyone had the responsibility for cutting emissions, of which Local Authorities had a key leadership role to play. The councils that have sustainable energy beacons set a good example. Councillors visited Nottinghamshire County Council and Woking Borough Council and saw examples of what they had done. Woking Borough applied lateral thinking to a range of problems and had achieved massive emissions cuts from their operations and more sustainable development in their district at no cost to the tax payer. The fact that climate change and sustainability were WBCs second highest corporate policy was a key to their success.

UDC was now a signatory of the Nottingham Declaration committing to firm action on climate change.

Members discussed sustainability in other areas such as paper recycling, car traffic and Stansted Airport.

Councillor Flack suggested the promotion of bus passes for those eligible to receive them. She said a lot of elderly used their cars for short journeys as they were unaware of the availability of bus passes. She said this should be worked into the corporate plan.

Members generally felt they received too many reports in paper format and discussed how paper usage could be cut within the Council. The Planning Department and Democratic Services came under scrutiny with the high volumes of paper they currently used. It was suggested that Members and Officers take laptops to meetings to avoid using paper. The Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) informed the Committee that the Council was due to take out all printers and any work that needed to be printed would be done on double sided paper and produced centrally at one of four printers.

Another problem area this Council could make improvements on was transport sharing. Many staff came to work on their own and as a result

the car park is often overcrowded. Implementing a car share strategy would be looked at.

A further area of concern was the conservation of energy during the planning of new homes. Plans for new developments should be made with the intention of sustainability from the outset, for example taking into consideration water conservation. Members discussed the creating a guidance document covering this topic, similar to a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) but without the consultation period, to set out the Council's expected standards for developers. The guidance document may then become an SPD at a later date following the appropriate process.

Members viewed that all areas discussed were of high importance and wished for the subcommittee to make a report to Full Council outlining the discussion had at this meeting and some recommendations. From the suggested recommendations it was

RESOLVED that

1. The Council develop and adopt an overarching strategy for reducing the causes and dealing with the effects of climate change covering all of its operations, drawing on similar documents developed by other local authorities.
2. The Council develop and adopt a guide for planning applicants that clearly states the expectation of 'climate neutral' development (that is, development which minimises the causes of climate change and is designed to be well adapted to the effects), preceding development of SPDs and the Local Development Framework.
3. The council ensures that the new Thaxted Day Centre and its environs are an exemplar of 'climate neutral' development, employing sustainable building materials, low-carbon technology and significantly better than statutory standards of energy and water conservation, in line with the recommendation of the recent Community Committee.
4. The Council uses recycled paper products.

RP13

FEES AND CHARGES

The Performance Improvement Manager presented a report to update Members of the progress to date on the Fees and Charges Review. The fees and charges review had the objective to review the Council's existing charging mechanisms for discretionary services and to formulate a policy that would:

1. Introduce a more systematic process for the annual review of fees and charges.
2. Ensure sufficient consideration was given to the needs of the local community and priority groups.

3. Contribute to the Council's Best Value responsibilities.

Within the framework he suggested a further two columns be inserted. Firstly to provide a reason for the charge and secondly to identify who would be due to undertake the review.

Councillor Murphy said appendix one provided a good demonstration of the comparative data. He suggested a policy framework should be implemented. Councillor Hibbs said this would be an important policy to introduce with the introduction of the cashless office.

It was suggested that items sold at the Council Offices should be made available at Post Offices. This would increase Post Office use, thus helping business.

The Chairman said the most proactive method to get this item rolling would be for her to meet with the Performance Improvement Manager and Chief Accountant and work on a procedure and report back to the next meeting of this Committee.

RESOVLED: Members noted the report and responses provided on issues during the last review meeting.