

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held at the COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on TUESDAY 13 MARCH 2007

Present: - Councillor A Thawley - Chairman
Councillors: - E Abrahams, K Artus, C Cant, A Dean, C Dean, C Down, S Flack, M Hibbs, B Hughes, E Tealby – Watson and A Wattebot.

Also Present: - Councillor J Menell and E Sanders

Officers in attendance: - M Brean, J Mitchell, E O'Malley, M T Purkiss, J Roos

E53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J F Cheetham, E J Godwin and V Pedder.

Councillor Flack declared a personal interest on Item 8 Natural Traffic Calming in Villages as she was an Essex County Councillor.

E54 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2007

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January and 15 February were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the amendment of the word in minute E40 on 23 January "indicted" to read that "indicated".

E55 BUSINESS ARISING

Councillor A Dean, on Minute E42 General Fund Budget, informed the group that a meeting had been arranged with Essex County Council to discuss the funding of the waste programme but had been cancelled at the last minute. This had proved disappointing as it had been some time since the issue had been raised and little co-operation between the two parties had taken place. Councillor Yarwood suggested clear terms of business should be written and asked whether Alastair Bovaird could talk to Chief Executive of Essex County Council. Cllr Flack as Member of Essex County Council proposed that those concerned should attend the Full Essex County Council meeting on 2 April, as Councillor Martin was likely to attend.

E56 NATURAL TRAFFIC CALMING IN UTTLESFORD VILLAGES (BROUGHT FORWARD)

Members listened to Mrs E Sanders of Littlebury Parish Council give a short talk on the benefits of Natural Traffic Calming on Littlebury Village.

Councillor Flack commented that Highways would not consider Littlebury as a pilot village for this scheme, due to the main road running through the centre of the village. Councillor Cant explained that although Littlebury raised the issue to the attention of Members, the power to decide on which village is far too great for the Environment Committee therefore it must go to Essex County Council. Councillor Menell then questioned the power of Task Groups and Area Panels, as the task group took the scheme on as a place to resolve. Members agreed that the Senior Planning Officer Jeremy Pine would consult

with Essex County Council that a pilot should be carried out within North Area Panel.

E57 LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT

The Director of Development, John Mitchell gave a report on information items and development since the last meeting that were not on this agenda. In particular, he reported that car park machines had been ordered and there was no change to the situation at Gold Nurseries.

Councillor A Dean explained that following a recent STAAP meeting there had been announcements about road changes around the airport, which could impact additional Stansted Caravan Park. Councillor Hibbs added that there would be an exhibition on Monday looking at areas in Saffron Walden where air pollution causes problems, and it was reported that a press release had gone out that day. Councillor A Dean suggested that as more information emerged a half day workshop could take place and other area panels should be made aware. The Director of Development said he would circulate this to other Area Panels. Councillor A Dean reported that Uttlesford District Council's work on public consultation and involvement with the Stansted application had been noted by the Government as a good example for future large development applications.

E57 SCRUTINY CLIMATE CHANGE INVESTIGATION

The report asked Members to make recommendations on the final report of of the Scrutiny Climate Change Investigation Group.

Councillor Hibbs explained that the analysis had been carried out on staff and they had all been extremely helpful. The recommendations involved initial costs however in the long run would provide significant savings. Councillor Hibbs said sustainability was part of the core functions of the council and this should be part of the work of the policy and decision making committee. He added that that the Environment Committee should make this decision whilst the Scrutiny Committee would ensure it is implemented. He added that there would be an eco-footprint day Saturday 22 March to discuss with experts on eco footprints.

Councillor Cant noted that the report appeared to have significant budget implications and she did not feel confident voting on this without more details. The Energy Efficiency Surveyor replied that a fund would be established to deal with environmental change. Councillor A Dean asked why half the implications had been agreed elsewhere, as it was now hard to review the strategy as a whole. The Energy Efficiency Surveyor explained that the recommendations would be turned into a full action plan by 20 April, including costing. Councillor Thawley thanked Members of the Scrutiny Committee for moving the recommendations forward.

Members agreed to the proposal to accept the recommendations providing the action plan is costed and delivered in a way which is measurable and deliverable and subject to the amendments made at the meeting: -

RESOLVED that the Council: -

1. Adopts the objective of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases from Council operations as quickly as possible and practical, with the long-term objective of reducing them to zero.
2. Seeks to achieve the above objective by using the 'sustainable energy hierarchy'; avoiding unnecessary energy use, pursuing improved energy efficiency, installing 'low carbon' technologies, switching to lower-carbon fuels and carbon offsetting, in that order of priority.
3. Adopts the objective of reducing emissions of GHGs from the district as a whole in line with national targets.
4. [Already adopted 15-2-2007 and 25-4-2006]
5. Follows the ISO 14001/BS 8555 standard throughout the preparation and implementation of its climate change strategy, to allow for possible EMAS accreditation in the future.
6. Maintains and reinforces the role of Climate Change and Sustainability Champion, which is to be held by a member of the Scrutiny Committee (the role is currently held by Cllr Pedder). This role will primarily involve responsibility for overseeing development and implementation of the climate change strategy. This member champion will report on Council GHG emissions and progress each year to full Council.
7. [Already adopted 15-2-2007]
8. The Environment Committee develop and implement a Climate Change Policy for the Council.
9. Experiments with reducing paper use and member travel using the Scrutiny Committee. This will involve measures such as greater use of electronic data retrieval (lap-tops, data projectors) and communication (e-mail, video conferencing). The Council will then expand successful measures to all committees.
10. Includes a 'sustainability check' on all committee reports and ensures that the environmental impacts of all decisions are considered and mitigated where possible.
11. Provides training to key staff on how to complete a sustainability check in a satisfactory manner.
12. Establishes a 'green' procurement policy that minimises the environmental impact created by the goods and services the Council purchases.
13. [Already adopted 25-4-2006]
14. [Already adopted 15-2-2007]
15. Recognises that all council services need to take action to address the climate change and therefore ultimate responsibility for achieving reductions in the Council's direct greenhouse gas emissions rests with the Chief Executive.
16. Appoints someone to the role of Carbon Manager. This role will be at least 0.3 FTE (full time equivalent). This person will have responsibility for commissioning and supervising implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy improvement works in Council buildings.
17. [Already approved 15-2-2007]
18. Establishes an ongoing programme of energy efficiency improvements with 'pump priming' finance to continually increase energy efficiency in its buildings in line with the overall target set in the climate change strategy.

19. Invests in low-carbon energy technologies (e.g. solar, wind, biomass, combined heat and power) for generation of heat and electricity for its buildings.
20. [Already approved 25-4-2006]
21. Establishes a financial mechanism to recycle cost savings resulting from reduced energy use in order to make longer term investments in reducing the carbon footprint of council buildings.
22. Increases staff participation in management of energy and water through training and incentives plus regular updates on performance.
23. Joins the pan-European 'Display' campaign and labels its buildings in advance of the EU requirement, displaying an energy rating and information on planned energy management improvements in a clear, easy to understand format.
24. As part of the climate change strategy, establishes a formal target and plan of action for reducing the running costs and GHG emissions from Council housing and adapting them to predicted climate change impacts.
25. Establishes a programme of installing appropriate low carbon technologies in all council housing.
26. Raises awareness of these programmes among tenants and encourages them on how they can save energy through behaviour changes.
27. Puts additional resources into increasing the energy efficiency of the existing private housing stock and achieving the Council's 2010 HECA target, paying particular attention to listed buildings.
28. Investigates new measures (e.g. offering grant incentives) to increase the uptake of low carbon technologies in existing private housing.
29. [Already adopted 15-2-2007]
30. Investigates establishing a pool of low-emissions vehicles for essential car users
31. Reduces the emissions of council fleet vehicles, initially by use of 5% bio-diesel, but in the longer term migrates the fleet towards lower emissions vehicles and fuels.
32. [Already adopted 15-2-2007]
33. Demands increasing standards of sustainable construction from developers by introducing requirements through the LDF and SPD process relating to energy, water, building materials, waste, bio-diversity, local amenities and transportation. This will include setting a minimum star rating under the Code for Sustainable Homes that new residential development must achieve.
34. [Already adopted 25-4-2006]
35. Introduces a 'Merton Rule' for a minimum 10% of energy needed for a site to be provided by on-site renewable energy. This rule will apply to all developments larger than 1000 sqm floor area or five dwellings.
36. Requires a contribution by way of a Section 106 agreement for every tonne of projected annual CO₂e emissions resulting from a new development. The money will be put in a fund used to provide grants and incentives for people to reduce GHG emissions from existing housing in the district by investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy.
37. Reviews existing planning and conservation policies and advice to ensure visual issues and conservation values are appropriately balanced with the need to reduce GHG emissions in planning decisions.
38. Supports community initiatives that have objectives that are similar or better than the Council's climate change strategy.
39. [Already adopted 15-2-2007]

40. Encourage and support local businesses and other organisations with reducing their GHG emissions and environmental impact and with adapting to climate change.

E58 CORPORATE BIODIVERSITY SUPPLEMENT

The report recommended that the Council adopted the Corporate Policy for biodiversity, as set out in the eight themes within this report to ensure compliance with the requirements of legislation.

Councillor Hughes questioned whether fewer large gardens were going to be used for development. She went on to say that some of these Brown Field Sites destroyed habitat which lived there. The Head of Planning and Building Control replied that if a habitat was disturbed remedial action would be required. Councillor Cant said that on the issue of verges at Sarah Kenyon Nature Sciences Officer had visited Stebbing and had given very useful information on the subject. Councillor Flack asked whether planners would work more closely with highways on the issue of protected verges. Councillor Thawley asked for time limits to be placed on the recommendations, to encourage work to take place at a faster rate. The Head of Planning and Building Control replied that many of the recommendations were already in practice and would be achieved soon.

RESOLVED that the Council adopts and implements a Corporate Policy for Biodiversity, as set out in the eight Themes within this report (Appendix 1), to ensure compliance with the requirements of legislation.

E59 URBAN PLACE SUPPLEMENT

Members had considered the draft Urban Place Supplement (UPS) at the Environment Committee on 7 November 2006. Following consultation all the representations received had now been considered and changes were made to the draft UPS. The Director of Development asked Members of the Council to adopt the supplement as a planning document.

RESOLVED that the Urban Place Supplement is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

E61 AIR TRAVEL ON COUNCIL BUSINESS

At the meeting of the Stansted Airport Advisory panel on 22 January 2007, members considered the report to the Chairman's Advisory Group of SASIG. Councillor A Dean suggested that the Council take forward a policy on flying on council business. The Director of Development reported on previous flights on Council business and explained that air travel on council business was currently kept minimal and this should be sustained.

RESOLVED that the Council will continue to minimise the use of air travel and will use other forms of travel where possible.

E62 ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

Councillor Thawley reported to Members that from Easter the Council would be collecting most plastics which was a move in the right direction. He went on to thank all Members and Officers for their help and support on the Environment Committee over the past four years.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm