

Committee: Environment

Agenda Item

Date: 5 March 2007

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**Title: Scrutiny Climate Change Investigation -
Final Report**

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Decision

Summary

The Scrutiny Climate Change Investigation Group was formed to investigate the issue of climate change in relation to the Council, review our current position and make recommendations as to how the Council should respond. The Group reviewed a wide range of reports and news articles, sought out good practice of other Councils and interviewed Council officers. The findings of this investigation are compiled in the final report and were presented to Scrutiny Committee on 7 February 2007. They recommended that the Council adopt the recommendations made in the report (with minor alterations).

Subsequently, many of the recommendations were incorporated into the Council 2011 transformation plan and adopted when this was presented at Full Council on 14 February 2007. The remaining recommendations requiring adoption are listed below.

Also, following presentation of the report to Scrutiny, there have been officer discussions regarding the recommended post of 'Senior Energy Manager' and there are some proposed amendments to this recommendation.

Recommendations

The Scrutiny Committee recommends 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. Gives the Scrutiny Committee the duty to supervise development and implementation of Climate Change Strategy, and pass developed policies onto full Council for approval. The Scrutiny Committee will also examine decisions, policies and operating practices generally to make sure they are consistent with the Council's objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
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 educates 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 similar objectives to the Council's climate change strategy.
39. [Already adopted 15-2-2007]

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

Background Papers

The content of this report is the executive summary of a more detailed report which along with its appendices is appended to this document.

Situation

The Group has found clear and compelling evidence for anthropogenic (man-made) climate change, principally due to the burning of fossil fuels, and recognises the urgent need for immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally. The world has already warmed 0.6°C since pre industrial times and the effects of this are already apparent. Some further warming is already inevitable, and we will need to adapt to climate change impacts, but action we take to reduce emissions now will affect warming in the latter half of this century and help avoid 'dangerous' climate change.

Climate change for this region means hotter, drier summers with more chance of heat-waves and drought, and wetter, milder winters with more chance of storms and flooding. Buildings will need to be built and upgraded to prevent overheating without reliance on carbon-intensive air conditioning, and infrastructure including railways, roads, water supply and drainage will need to be improved to deal with more extreme conditions.

As well as prudence in response to an identified threat, there are an increasing number of national policy drivers for local authority climate change action. The government sees local authorities playing an important role in dealing with climate change. This is consistent with Council's stated position as signatory to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. As well as avoidance of negative outcomes, the Council can improve quality of life for residents by climate change action.

Council operations produced an estimated 2,554 tonnes CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) in 2005-06. Based on the past three years, emissions are increasing at a rate of 2% per year on average. This is the Council's 'carbon footprint'. As well as the greenhouse gases (GHGs) that came directly from Council operations, there was 490 tonnes of CO₂e associated with staff commuting, 8,995 tonnes of CO₂e related to provision of heating and hot water in Council housing and 7,600 tonnes of CO₂e from waste sent to landfill via the Council waste collection service (2,200 tonnes of CO₂e was saved through recycling efforts). The district as a whole has high domestic emissions compared to the national average.

The Group has discovered many examples of good practice already occurring within the Council, and areas for improvement:

Strategic – The Council has good senior level commitment and resources for climate change action are increasing. However, an overall strategy is required, and climate change/sustainability concerns need to be 'mainstreamed' for officers and members. Developing an environmental management system that conforms to international

standards will allow the Council to be formally accredited in future and gives added transparency to the public.

Council buildings – Energy costs in 2005-06 were £195,000, but prices and therefore overall cost will increase by 70% in 2006-07. The Council has energy procurement and monitoring functions but no active energy management. The Council had 20% low-cost savings identified by the Carbon Trust in October 2005, but their recommendations have yet to be acted on. Improved management and financial structures coupled with an energy management policy are required.

Housing – The Housing Department are to be commended for their efforts to upgrade the energy efficiency of the Council housing stock. Now the Decent Homes standard has been met, a plan for reducing the emissions of these dwellings further is required. In the private sector the Council has put increased resources into its HECA responsibilities, but progress towards the target of 30% energy efficiency improvement by 2010 stands at only 8.9%. More effort is required, particularly with historic and listed properties.

Transport – The Housing and Building Surveying sections are adopting innovative systems for fleet management and remote working that promise to reduce emissions, and these should be spread through the Council if successful. The Council car allowance and lease scheme can be improved to give staff more incentives to reduce GHG emissions. A staff travel plan exists but implementation has stalled completely. The Council fleet can use 5% bio-diesel with no modifications.

Spatial planning – The Council has pioneered innovative planning conditions with regard to energy efficiency. The drafting of the Local Development Framework presents an excellent opportunity to introduce a comprehensive set of sustainability requirements for new developments. Planning is sometimes an impediment to climate change action, such as development of renewable energy, and the Council must take care to balance visual and conservation concerns with the need to reduce GHG emissions.

Community – There are many examples of effective community engagement by the Council on sustainability issues and this should continue. However the Council has not yet engaged with the business community on sustainability and climate change.

Overall, the Group is concerned that GHG emissions are increasing from Council operations but is confident that with sufficient focus and effort they may be brought under control and reduced, as they can nationally and internationally. The Group sees a comprehensive climate strategy with appropriate management structures and resources as outlined in this report as the best way forward for the Council. By embarking on this process the Council may position itself as a local and national leader on climate change, a position that it is already moving towards, and realise a wide range of local benefits for the community.

Recommendations already adopted:

4. Creates a climate change strategy describing how it will achieve its objectives in relation to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change impacts. The strategy will have annual and five-year emissions reduction targets for the Council and a separate target for the district as a whole. The strategy will include a programme of measures describing how it will achieve its targets, and will be refreshed periodically and indefinitely. The strategy will be established in consultation with the public and key stakeholder groups, such as Uttlesford LA21. (This recommendation has already been approved in part).

7. Forms a climate change strategy group consisting of officers and members that is responsible for development and implementation of the Council's climate change strategy. The group will consist of key staff, a senior manager and one or more Councillors, including the Climate Change and Sustainability Member Champion.
13. Uses recycled paper products wherever possible.
14. Establishes an energy management policy in accordance with best practice standards. This will also include a water efficiency policy.
17. Creates an energy management subgroup of the climate change strategy group; consisting of the holder of the Senior Energy Manager (Carbon Manager) role, relevant facilities management staff, the Energy Manager and Energy Efficiency Surveyor, an accountant and a representative of the stewards. This group will work together to achieve energy and emissions savings in council buildings.
20. Ensures that the new day centre being built at Vicarage Mead is an exemplar of sustainable, low-carbon construction.
29. Ensures the car lease and loan scheme provides incentives for people to choose low emissions vehicles, links reimbursement to emissions rate, not engine size and creates incentives within the system for staff to car-share for business travel.
32. Renews efforts to implement the staff travel plan including the recommendations already approved by Resources Committee on 18-11-2004.
34. Supports this by providing developers with guidance, advice and information on how they may achieve these requirements.
39. Runs a continuous programme of community engagement to raise awareness of climate change and sustainability issues and encourage them to reduce their environmental impact.

Original recommendations made by Scrutiny, amended above:

15. Gives the ultimate responsibility for energy management and achieving reductions in greenhouse gas emission arising directly from Council operations to the Director of Finance or equivalent.
16. Creates and appoints someone to a 0.3 FTE (full time equivalent) senior level post of Senior Energy Manager. This person will have responsibility for commissioning and supervising energy efficiency and renewable energy improvement work. This person will report to the Director of Finance or equivalent and will have the delegated responsibility for achieving energy and emissions savings in council buildings.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Not enough resources to implement in the longer term.	Difficult to predict, depends on Council circumstances in future.	Medium Recommendations not carried out or delayed, targets fallen short of, expectations of	Time-scale to implement measures not specified - rate of implementation adjusted as appropriate at the time. Targets

<p>District emissions continue to rise to to factors outside influence</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>the public not met. Medium District target not met</p>	<p>non-binding. Acknowledge in strategy that district emissions target is aspirational and relies in part on central government actions</p>
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