

## Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Looking After the Environment



15 December 2003

### Review of Sustainable Environment Policy

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## Report of Sustainability Scrutiny Working Group

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### Purpose of Report

1. To review the progress made in implementing the recommendations made by the Sustainability Working Group.

### Background

2. The Council's Sustainable Environment Policy sets out the principles which the Council will apply in the way it operates. The Sustainability Working Group report in December 2002, made a number of recommendations about improvements to this policy in relation to the following areas: -

- Policy to be amended
- Appointment of Champions
- Policy to be a mainstream issue
- Training programme for Members
- Training programme for staff
- Good practice guidelines
- Sustainability Checklist
- Audit of Waste Arisings from County Hall
- Audit of Waste Arisings from other County Council buildings
- Profile of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment directive
- Energy Audits
- Investment in Energy Efficiency Measures
- Procurement
- Monitoring
- Young People

### Current position

3. A review meeting took place on 1 October 2003 and Members received progress reports from the Sustainability Champions of each

Department and staff of the Environment and Technical Services Department as detailed below: -

**Policy to be amended** - The Sustainable Environment Policy has been updated.

**Appointment of Champions** – Each Department has now appointed a Champion to assist in driving this issue forward. Member Champions have already been appointed.

**Policy to be a mainstream issue** – The Sustainability Champions from Departments gave details of how their department was responding to the recommendations.

- Economic Development Planning Department - the sustainability checklist is considered when examining projects. The construction of Netpark was highlighted where sustainability principles were built into the project.
- Service Direct - details of the actions included recycling of construction waste, topsoil and motor oils which had resulted in savings on the Aggregate Tax and Landfill Tax. Monitoring had been put in place to ensure compliance with the policy.
- Cultural Services highlighted the following areas:-
  - The Clayport Library had recently received an environment award.
  - The specification for all new vehicles had been raised to ensure that only the most fuel efficient are purchased. The Book Bus had been converted to using LPG.
  - A target has been set to reduce the amount of paper consumed by the Department's mainstream activities by 2% for 2003/4. All paper, cardboard and books are recycled.
  - All staff have been provided with an electronic copy of the policy and checklist.
  - A roadshow on recycling and waste minimisation has visited six libraries.
  - Fuel cards were being introduced to enable the provision of accurate management and monitoring information.

**Training (Members and Staff)** – A training programme for all Members and staff is currently being developed. The Sustainability Champions will participate on the first training course before the programme is rolled out to the rest of the Authority.

**Good practice guidelines** – The good practice guidelines are now available on the intranet. Posters are to be produced for display in prominent locations in offices.

**Sustainability Checklist** – A pocket sized draft checklist was circulated. Copies are to be provided to all Sustainability Champions.

**Audit of Waste Arisings** – A paper collection system is now fully in operation and should increase the level of paper recycling. A new scheme is being initiated to separately collect plastics and cardboard. There is a need to ensure that general rubbish/food waste is collected separately to ensure that clean recyclable materials are not contaminated. Discussions need to be opened with Premier Waste over the collection of recyclable materials from other County Council buildings.

**Waste Electrical and Electronic Directive** – The WEEE Directive requires all electrical/electronic equipment to be recycled. Arrangements have been made with a local company to collect redundant/obsolete IT equipment. They disassemble it and re-use the components. When new or replacement IT equipment is purchased flat screens are specified as they are more energy efficient as well as having less packaging. New software is being installed on the County Council's network which will allow e-Government staff to remotely access computers outside of County Hall. This will reduce travelling and fuel usage. Consideration needs to be given to the cost implications of disposing of all redundant electrical/electronic equipment.

**Energy Audits/Energy Efficiency** – 'Green' electricity has been purchased for use at County Hall and Police headquarters. The County Council has over 600 buildings many of which fall into the poor category in terms of energy efficiency. At the present rate of investment it will take 35 years to reach the current standards of energy efficiency. Efforts need to be made to raise the level of staff awareness about energy use at work.

**Procurement** – The Corporate Procurement Unit have introduced sustainability provisions in contracting arrangements.

**Monitoring** – Initial findings from the key indicators show that levels of consumption are still rising. This is an on going issue which needs to be kept under constant review. Issues such as rising car mileage need to be carefully examined. The Working Group recognised that when the indicators are published, it may be that the position is not yet improving. Members were of the view however, that this would assist in encouraging the County Council to work towards future improvement.

**Young People** – There is a need to increase the level of consultation and involvement of young people on sustainability issues. In terms of Education the Working Group were informed of the following activities:-

- The opening of a centre at Esh Winning. This is a regional partnership project and will enable training to be provided on sustainable development to head teachers and advisers from around the region.
- The Waste Wise project.
- The school grounds biodiversity project.
- Department for Education and Skills - Sustainable Development Action Plan for Education and Skills
- Support for eco schools

### **Recommendation**

4. Considerable progress is now in evidence in this area. The Working Group agreed that a further review of progress should be undertaken in six months time.

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**Date of Meeting** 1 October 2003

**Chairman** Councillor T Carroll

**Members Present** Councillors Armstrong, Douthwaite, Firby and Hogan