

Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Looking After the Environment



19 June 2006

Review of Sustainable Environment Policy

Report of Sustainability Scrutiny Working Group

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 that 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 a number of areas. Since that time, there have been a number of (usually six monthly) reviews to check progress on implementation of the recommendations.

Current Position

3. The latest review meeting took place on 13 March 2006, when Members received a presentation from the Acting Director of Environment Services about energy management issues; considered progress against the sustainable environment policy; and had a discussion with Service Officer Champions. The main details contained in the Director's presentation are set out below.

Energy Management

4. The Acting Director of Environment Services provided information about the world background to climate change, against which the County Council's position could be considered. The Council had signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and had produced (with its partners) a County Durham Climate Change Action Plan, a Sustainable Energy Action Plan and Carbon Management Plan. The Sustainable Environment Policy set out a number of principles which would contribute to the achievement of the foregoing plans.

Current Practice

5. In terms of the current position, the Acting Director provided the following information:
 - **Buildings** – The County Council owns/operates over 500 buildings, which emit over 45,000 tonnes of CO₂ per annum. Energy costs for these

buildings are £3m per annum and rising. This will have significant future budgetary implications for the Council.

- **Street Lighting** – There are nearly 79,000 street lights and nearly 8,000 illuminated street signs in the County. These emit 14,000 tonnes of CO2 annually. Energy costs are £1.5 m and rising. It is anticipated that in 2006/7 an extra £1m will be need to cover increased energy costs.
- **Transport** – There are some 11 million miles of County Council business travel each year costing £3.5m annually and emitting 14,000 tonnes of CO2. In addition, there is 45 million miles home to work travel by County Council employees.

Issues

6. The Acting Director raised the following issues:

- There are currently no mandatory CO2 targets set by national government for local government
- The County Council's energy capital investment budget has fallen in real terms every year since 1998 – this needs to be sustained or increased.
- Energy improvements are given a low priority in County Council spending priorities – there is a need for energy efficiency to be considered as a corporate priority
- There has been little planning for the impact of increased energy costs – potential increases of up to 100% need to be factored into any future assumptions of costs
- All new DCC buildings should be designed and built on whole life cost principles and achieve at least a 'B' energy rating after one year of operation
- The feasibility of area-wide dimming schemes should be investigated for street lighting to reduce energy costs
- Reduced overall budget allocations for car mileage in 2007/8 should be considered together with greater emphasis on DCC Travel Plan measures (such as the Pool Car Scheme).

Sustainable Environment Policy

7. In relation to the Sustainable Environment Policy, good progress was being made in most areas, but the following key issues were highlighted:

- Need to tackle energy issues and consider invest to save initiatives
- Reform of business travel arrangements
- Continued waste management improvements
- Continuing efforts needed to tackle paper consumption

Sustainability Initiatives in Individual Service Areas

8. Members considered the attached report, which detailed progress on sustainability issues in individual Service areas and heard from Sustainability Champions about the work underway.

Recommendation

9. There continues to be progress in implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group. However, the question of rising energy costs has highlighted the need for a greater focus by the Council on energy efficiency and consideration of initiatives that might contribute to reduced energy usage. This issue was previously considered by the Scrutiny Budget Working Group as part of its deliberations on the medium term financial plan and was reported in the consultation response approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2006 for consideration by Cabinet.
10. That the above progress and issues be noted.

Contact:	Tom Bolton	Tel:	0191 383 3149
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Date of Meeting: 13 March 2006

Chairman: Councillor T Carroll

Members Present: Councillors Armstrong, Barker, Carr, Coates, Ebbatson, Gray, Myers, Nugent, Pendlebury and Trippett.

Michael Jones.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Simmons and Southwell.

Sustainable Environment Policy Progress August 2005 to March 2006

DCC Services and Environment Champions have made a significant amount of progress since the Overview and Scrutiny Sustainability Group last met in August 2005. Examples include:

Environment/Culture & Leisure/ Social Care & Health

- DCC paper and cardboard recycling collection pilot scheme (68 DCC sites participating) now up and running. To date the scheme has diverted around 16 000 kg of paper and cardboard from landfill.

Culture & Leisure

- Commitment to include sustainability features into:
 - Proposed new visitor centre at Killhope
 - Proposed Durham Sky Bowl (solar panels, rainwater harvesting)

Corporate Services (Procurement and Transport)

- Adopting regional and national best practice to encourage more local and organic produce in DCC food contracts
- Developing detailed DCC Pool Car proposal
- Implementing Print Strategy to rationalise the use of printing equipment

Corporate Services (Estates)

- Commitment to achieving nationally recognised environmental standard BREEAM Schools 'Very Good' rating for proposed new Durham Johnston School. (Workshop on Sustainability included as part of the formal feasibility study process)
- Commitment to achieving BREEAM Offices 'Good' rating for new SC&H Offices at Greencroft near Anfield Plain

Corporate Services (County Hall Members and Public Services Team)

- Established mobile phone recycling facility for staff (staff entrance)

Service Direct

- Ran trial of 'Rotoflector' - new rotating reflector for traffic cones (could help save on battery powered lamps)
- Working with Sustainability Team to promote Fairtrade products in staff canteen during Fairtrade Fortnight (6th - 17th March 2006)

Chief Executive's Office

- Included section on the Sustainable Environment Policy in the new corporate operational plan guidance to DCC Services
- Established CEO sustainable environment 'green team' to identify measures to improve environmental performance of the CEO
- Sustainability will be the theme of the next edition of 'Countywide' due out in June 2006

Environment

- Appointed Environmental Management System Professional Officer to start work on achieving internationally recognised ISO14001 Environmental Management System standard for the whole DCC Environment Service
- Completed distribution of 'energy performance certificates' to all DCC properties

- Organising County Hall Staff 'Travel Awareness' event to be held in Durham Room on April 27th 2006
- Providing formal sustainability, ecology, landscape and transport advice to Durham Johnston Feasibility Study project team
- Worked with Treasurers to agree new DCC staff public transport season ticket purchase scheme (to be launched April 27th 2006)

Education

- Education offices at Spennymoor, Peterlee and Stanley taking part in the new DCC paper and cardboard recycling scheme
- Organised 'Leading for the Future' regional Education for Sustainable Development event held in November 2005 (included representative from DfES)

Treasurers

- Support for new DCC staff public transport season ticket purchase scheme