

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Looking After the Environment held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 18 September 2006** at **10.00 a.m.**

COUNCILLOR TENNANT in the Chair

Members:

Councillors Douthwaite, Gray, Holroyd, Ord and Stelling

Co-opted:

D Easton and D M Jones

Other Members:

Councillors Chaplow, Myers and Pendlebury

Apologies were received from Councillor Young

A1 Minutes

With exception of an amendment showing Councillor Tennant as Chairman of the meeting, the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2006 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A3 Items from Co-opted Members

There were no items from Co-opted Members.

A4 Energy Use and Climate Change

The Sub Committee received a presentation from Rod Lugg, Head of Service Environment about energy use and climate change.

It was explained that co2 levels in the atmosphere are now 379 parts per million (ppm) and rising. It is thought that 400 ppm is the tipping point beyond which dangerous climate change is likely to occur. At present the UK Government is not on track to meet a commitment to reduce UK co2 emissions by 20%. The Government has made a commitment to include energy use and climate change as part of the CPA inspections.

As part of its policy commitments the County Council has adopted the following:

- County Durham Climate Change Action Plan
- Sustainable Energy Action Plan
- Carbon Management Plan
- Sustainable Environment Plan
- Signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change

The County Council's 500 buildings produce 45,000 tonnes of co2 per annum. The energy and water costs are currently £5.5m per annum and are predicted to rise to £8m based on the same level of consumption.

The County Council's street lights and illuminated street signs produce 14,000 tonnes of co2 per annum with energy costs standing at £1.5m per annum. This will rise by an additional £1m.

County Council business travel produces 14,000 tonnes of co2 per annum and costs currently £3.5m per annum. In addition it is estimated that 45 million miles are travelled every year in home to work travel.

Progress in reducing energy consumption has been modest. The Government have not yet introduced mandatory co2 targets for Local Government. Energy management capital investment has fallen in real terms since 1998 and does not match up with the County Council's public commitment.

As part of the way forward it was suggested that Energy Efficiency should be established as a formal Corporate Priority in order to raise its priority level in the Asset Management Plan. This will require the capital budget for sustainable energy management to be reinstated and increased. It was also suggested that the appointment of a Carbon Reduction Officer would help deliver commitments made in the DCC Carbon Management Plan.

All new DCC buildings should achieve at least a 'B' rating after one year of operation and should be designed and built on whole life cost principles. In addition the energy budget for new buildings should be based on the 'B' rating with the budget devolved to building managers.

To reduce the impact of County Council business travel and travel to work mileage it was suggested that the overall budget allocation for car mileage should be reduced and the saving reinvested in County Council Travel Plan measures such as a pool car scheme. Consideration also needs to be given to introducing a workplace charging scheme at County Hall.

The feasibility of appropriate area wide dimming schemes should be investigated for street lighting.

In summary, it was stated that immediate action is required at all levels of government because the rate of climate change is speeding up and energy costs are increasing rapidly.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

A5 Limekiln Gill: Update

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Heritage Coast Officer giving an update on progress in implementing outstanding recommendations of the Access to the Durham Coast Scrutiny Working Group (for copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that further progress on Limekiln Gill was dependent on the success of an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding with the decision expected in March 2007.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

A6 Performance Update for 1st Quarter of 2006/07 and Review of Medium Term Priorities

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy providing an update on performance for the 1st quarter of 2006/07 for the corporate priorities and the Best Value Performance Indicators relevant to the corporate aim of Looking After the Environment (for copy see file of Minutes). In addition the Sub Committee were requested to give their views on the Council's medium term improvement priorities.

In relation to the land-filling of household waste, it was explained that it had been indicated that there has been a reduction of 35,000 tonnes being sent to landfill. The County Council will have allowances to trade or bank next year and the year after. After that the Council will require additional treatment facilities. By 2020 the County Council will only be allowed to landfill 55,000 tonnes per annum.

In relation to the recycling of plastics, discussions are ongoing with Premier Waste about the introduction of collection facilities. Some of the District Councils are considering changing the method of collecting recyclables.

It was explained that the contract with Premier Waste currently runs until 31 January 2008. The contract will continue to run until such time as a new contract has been secured. The County Council will need to give 2 years notice to end the current contract.

Resolved:

1. That the information contained in the report be noted and that subsequent quarterly performance reports be received.
2. That there be no change in the existing medium term improvement priorities in relation to Quality of the Environment , but consideration should also be given to reduced carbon emissions by the Council.

