

6 October 2015

**Changes in Government policy
on renewables and an update on
'Reducing the Council's Carbon
Emissions' Scrutiny Review
Report**

**Joint report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
and Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and
Economic Development**

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the committee with an update on the progress made in relation to the recommendations contained within the 'Reducing the Council's Carbon Emissions' scrutiny review report 2013 attached at Appendix 2. In addition, the report provides detail of areas to be covered by officers in a short presentation to the committee focusing on: changes to Government Planning Policy in relation to renewables (wind turbines) and the challenges this presents to local authorities; progress made by Durham County Council (DCC) in reducing carbon emissions; key projects; challenges and opportunities and future developments.

Background

- 2 Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2012 considered that as a local authority, Durham County Council is well placed to drive and influence carbon emission reductions through the services it delivers and its regulatory and strategic functions and it has been part of the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme since 2009. It was therefore agreed that a Scrutiny Review would be undertaken by the committee focusing on reducing the Council's carbon emissions.
- 3 'Reducing the Council's Carbon Emissions' Scrutiny Review report was considered by Cabinet at the meeting on the 16th January, 2013. At that meeting Cabinet agreed the recommendations contained within the review report which included a recommendation for a six monthly update on progress against recommendations contained in the report. The last update was provided to the Committee at the meeting on the 2 October, 2014 and it is therefore considered timely for a further update to be given to members at the October meeting of the committee.

- 4 In addition, when considering Underground Coal Gasification in November 2014 a presentation was provided by Professor Jon Gluyas, Dean of Knowledge Exchange, Dong/Ikon Chair of Geoenergy Carbon Capture and Storage, Department of Earth Sciences, Durham University. Following the presentation members requested that as part of the future work programme we invite Professor Jon Gluyas to a future meeting of the committee to provide a presentation and discuss with members the development of low carbon energy.
- 5 To complement the presentation from Professor Gluyas arrangements have been made for Leo Oliver, Policy Officer, Maggie Bosanquet, Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader and Stephen Beresford, Senior Sustainability and Climate Change Officer, Regeneration and Economic Development to attend the meeting on the 6 October to deliver a presentation focusing on:
- An overview of recent planning changes in relation to renewables including:
 - Changes in Government’s Planning Policy and guidance for wind turbines.
 - Challenges presented to Local Planning Authorities.
 - Update on how the Council is reducing its carbon emissions highlighting:
 - Progress to date.
 - Key projects.
 - Challenges and opportunities.
 - Future developments.

Changes in Government Planning Policy – Renewables (wind turbines)

- 6 On 18 June, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Greg Clark) published a Written Statement representing new planning policy considerations for proposed wind turbine developments. This aims to give communities the final say on wind turbine development.
- 7 *The statement sets out that ‘when determining planning applications for wind energy development involving one or more wind turbines, local planning authorities should only grant planning permission if:*
- *the development site is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a local or neighbourhood plan; and*
 - *following consultation, it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by affected local communities have been fully addressed and therefore the proposal has their backing’.*
- 8 National Planning Practice Guidance has also been changed to reflect the new policy. The changes present a shift in approach, as it is clear that maps showing a potential wind resource and potential capacity for turbines would not comply with the policy approach, Local Planning Authorities would have to be more prescriptive and consider allocating areas for wind turbines.

Terms of Reference of the ‘Reducing the Council’s Carbon Emissions Review’

- 9 The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9th July, 2012 agreed to undertake a review

of the Council's Carbon Management Programme to assess whether the Council is on course to:

- Reduce CO₂ emissions by a minimum of 40% from the Council's 2008/09 baseline of 105,816 tonnes by 2015.
- Deliver savings in energy costs of at least 20% against business as usual predictions by 2015.
- Quantify the direct carbon emissions from the Council's activities and allocate ownership of those emissions to Service Groupings and services by 2012 to allow emissions reduction targets and carbon budgets to be included in Service Plans and monitored by 2013.
- Create a 'low carbon culture' within the Council by raising awareness, providing formalised training and gaining support from staff and senior management.

Recommendations of the Reducing the Council's Carbon Emissions Review

10 The Scrutiny review report made recommendations in respect of:-

- The importance of a corporate and co-ordinated approach in relation to reducing carbon emissions and the need for service groupings to continue to proactively engage with the Council's Carbon Management Programme Board.
- That the Council/Cabinet continues to explore opportunities for 'invest to save' that will result in significant reductions in energy consumption and carbon emissions and ultimately lead to savings and efficiencies.
- That Elected Members be provided with detailed information on any trials/schemes in relation to street lighting in their area prior to residents.
- That more Eco Champions be recruited to promote simple energy saving changes. As part of the corporate induction programme Elected Members be provided with information on the Council's Carbon Management Programme and that volunteers are sought from elected members to act as Eco Champions.
- That the use of innovative technology be looked at to reduce business travel.
- That the Committee continues to monitor the progress being made to achieve the Council's carbon reduction targets through the current quarterly performance monitoring reports and receives regular updates

by members of the Council's Sustainability, Carbon and Climate Change Team and Carbon Management Programme Board.

- That all staff and Elected Members be made aware of the Council's carbon reduction targets, the financial impact and energy use and the savings that can be made by using energy more effectively

Current position

- 11 The attached Action Plan (Appendix 2) provides information on the progress made in relation to the recommendations contained in the scrutiny review report. In addition, the presentation provided at the meeting on the 6 October will highlight changes in planning policy (wind turbines), progress made by DCC to date in reducing its carbon emissions, key DCC projects, challenges and opportunities and future developments.

Next steps

- 12 DCC will continue to explore what we can do going forward to reduce our carbon emissions and generate more renewable and low carbon energy across County Durham.

Recommendations

- 13 Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider and comment upon the presentation provided at the meeting and the progress made in relation to the recommendations contained in the scrutiny review report 'Reducing the Council's Carbon Emissions'.

Background Paper(s)

Reducing the Council's Carbon Emissions Scrutiny Review report – January, 2013.

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Update: Reducing the Council's Carbon Emissions Scrutiny Review report – 2 October, 2014.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing – None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity – An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken in respect of the Scrutiny Review recommendations.

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation – None

Procurement - None

Disability Discrimination Act – None

Legal Implications –None