

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26 FEBRUARY 2008

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

8. DEVELOPING A CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY FOR EAST HERTS

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

'D' RECOMMENDATIONS that (A) the report be noted;

(B) the preparation of a Climate Change Strategy be supported, to include both mitigation and adaptation measures;

(C) Members indicate whether they wish to see a Climate Change Strategy focussing on the Council's own Estate, the wider community and service provision; or both;

(D) the establishment of a Climate Change Task Group be supported with the following Members;

(E) the adoption of the Local Authority Carbon Management programme and Energy Efficiency Accreditation Scheme, as detailed at paragraph 7 of the report, be supported as useful frameworks to help in progressing carbon reduction in the Council's own estate and service provision; and;

(F) a further report be brought to a future meeting of this Committee exploring in more depth the detail of Climate Change Strategy and reporting on progress made.

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 This report aims to set out the key issues relating to Climate Change, the important role of local authorities in responding to Climate Change and the stages in the preparation of a Climate Change Strategy for East Herts.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Objectives

2.1 Climate Change is a major crosscutting issue. As such not only is it an important environmental issue, it also has major social and economic implications. However, this report chiefly contributes to the following Corporate Objective:-

- Protect our natural assets through recycling and other initiatives that achieve economic and environmental balance.

3.0 Background

3.1 Climate change is now at the top of the political agenda and Local Authorities have a crucial role to play in responding to the challenges posed. Tackling climate change requires that we reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases (Mitigation), adapt to the changes in climate that will occur (Adaptation) and encourage and support residents to do the same. By developing a coherent approach to mitigation and adaptation, Councils can also benefit in terms of saving energy and money; increasing overall environmental performance; and potentially benefitting the overall wider environment along with the improved well being of the local community.

3.2 What is the evidence for climate change?

There is now a strong consensus among the scientific community that the world is warming and that this is at least partly the result of human activities. The evidence that the climate is changing is accepted by the UK government and the main opposition parties.

Global temperatures rose by 0.7°C over the 20th century. 2004 was the fourth warmest year on record globally and all but one of the warmest 10 years on record has occurred since 1990. This rise in mean temperature has been accompanied by an increase in extreme weather events in some parts of the world, including periods of storms, droughts, floods and unusually hot and cold temperatures.

3.3 How the climate is likely to change this century?

Using complex computer modelling techniques scientists have been able to model past and present climate with a significant degree of accuracy, and then use those models to predict future

climate for a range of levels of emissions of Greenhouse Gases. These models are constantly under review but at present it is predicted that global mean temperature could increase by between 1.5°C and 5.9°C by 2100. (source – UK Climate Impacts Programme – 2006). Both the scale and the speed of this change is extremely significant and will have profound impacts on human societies.

The climate in the UK is also projected to change significantly by 2100, with average annual temperatures rising up to 5°C over the next 100 years. The specific changes we are likely to see can be summarised as:

- **Higher average temperatures**, leading to a greater need for cooling in offices/homes and a higher probability of extreme high temperatures, which could threaten the health of many people.
- **Wetter winters**, leading to increased flood risk
- **Drier summers**, placing great strain on water resources and wildlife and putting pressure on farmers to diversify crops
- **Rising sea levels**, leading to more coastal erosion and a greater risk of flooding

In general terms, while all areas of the UK will experience significant climate change, the greatest changes in temperature and rainfall will be in the south and east of the country, with Hertfordshire being one of the most affected counties.

3.4 Climate change and its probable causes are also now well represented within the new set of National Indicators which the Council will be required to report on year-on-year. There are 3 specific Climate Change Indicators and a number of others, which are directly linked. In addition, because Climate Change is not simply an environmental issue, but cuts across the social/economic agendas as well, many may argue that a number of the seemingly unrelated social indicators (e.g. NI21 – Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour) may be heavily influenced by a changing climate (e.g. warmer summers might increase neighbourhood noise and local crime issues).

Examples of Climate Change Related National indicators:

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| NI185 | CO2 reduction from Local Authority operations |
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| NI186 | Per capita reduction in CO2 emission in the LA area |
| NI187 | Tackling fuel poverty –people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating. |
| NI188 | Adapting to climate change. |
| NI189 | Flood and coastal erosion risk management |
| NI194 | Level of air quality – reduction in NOx and primary PM10 emissions through local authority’s estate and operations |
| NI197 | Improved local biodiversity |

4.0 The Role of Local Authorities

- 4.1 The Government has signed up to the Kyoto Protocol, the international agreement on climate change. This commits the UK to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases by 12.5% from 1990 level by 2008-12. In the longer term the Government has accepted that far more significant cuts in Greenhouse Gas emissions will be required, and the need to cut emissions by at least 60% by the middle of this century is now recognised.
- 4.2 The Government has set out a range of actions by which it intends to reduce UK emissions of Greenhouse Gases and it places the role of local authorities at the heart of its strategy. The scale of the challenge presented by climate change means that all sectors of the community will have to be involved if we are to meet the targets set. The UK Climate Change Programme recognises the crucial role that local governments can play in reducing emissions and adapting to climate change.
- 4.3 By acting together Local Authorities can have a major impact on national Greenhouse Gas emissions. In particular, action to cut energy use is likely to lead to cost savings in the longer term, whilst action to adapt to climate change may assist in helping to protect the local community against the risk of extreme weather events such as flooding.
- 4.4 In recognition of the significant part that Local Authorities can play in the mitigation/adaptation to Climate Change, the “Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change” was established. Through signing the declaration Councils show their commitment to this important issue and work with others to help cut emissions.

- 4.5 East Herts Council, as part of its Energy Policy Action Plan formally signed the Declaration in March 2007 and is now in the company of over 200 fellow signatories.
- 5.0 What Action can East Herts take to address Climate Change?
- 5.1 East Herts, along with other Local Authorities can act in three main ways to reduce the emission of Greenhouse Gasses and to help assist the community adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- 5.2 As an Estate manager – East Herts is a relatively large employer within the District and also consumer of energy and other resources. Through further improvement to the management of transport and buildings, East Herts could cut emissions and potentially reduce fuel costs. How the Council's own estate (in terms of building fabric) can be better adapted to the changing climate can also be considered.
- 5.3 As a Service Provider – For all the services that East Herts provides from Emergency Planning to Grounds Maintenance we should ensure that the impacts of climate change are properly taken into account and emissions are cut as far as possible.
- 5.4 As a Community Leader – Through the Local Strategic Partnership and the development of a Sustainable Community Strategy East Herts in working with other public and private agencies, as well as the wider community to help cut the overall emissions in the District. East Herts, through its role in the Hertfordshire Environmental Forum, is involved with direct partnership working to address Climate Change across Hertfordshire, including the newly planned Herts Climate Change Partnership (part of Herts Forward).
- 6.0 Development of a Climate Change Strategy
- 6.1 It is suggested that the Committee may wish to consider whether initially emphasis is given to the development of a community-wide strategy or to focus attention on the Council's own estate and services or a combination of the two. In addition whether such a strategy should concentrate on mitigation or adaptation or indeed take an integrated approach needs to be determined.

6.2 The advantage of developing a **Community-Wide Action Plan** is that East Herts can encourage other organisations and individual citizens to take action, maximising the impact of what we do and fulfilling the community leadership role that Government has set for Local Authorities. The advantage of focusing on the Council's **own estate and services** is that the Council will have more direct control over all the actions that are agreed and outcomes can be easier to determine.

With regard to adaptation and/or mitigation measures, there are many advantages to preparing an integrated Action Plan. By preparing a plan that addresses both adaptation and mitigation it is likely that a considerably more coherent and holistic response will be achieved.

6.3 An examination of best practice has shown that there are 5 stages to the preparation of a Climate Change Strategy, with most local authorities now opting to take a comprehensive approach, albeit probably with slightly more emphasis on their own estates and services.

- I. Getting Started
- II. Assess current and likely future situation
- III. Develop strategic approach
- IV. Prepare an action plan
- V. Implementation

East Herts is in a relatively positive position to commence work on a Strategy, given that the Council already has an Energy Action Plan and comprehensive Environmental Policy Statement, and in addition is working on the preparation of a new Sustainable Community Strategy as well as other initiatives such as the Review of Working Arrangements.

6.4 Looking at the proposed 5 stages in more depth:-

6.4.1 Getting Started:

This includes building political support for action and identifying who (both within the Authority and beyond) should be involved in assisting with the development of the Strategy. It is suggested that a Strategy Group (Task and Finish Group) of key officers from

across the Council be established to assist with the formulation and ultimate implementation of the Strategy.

6.4.2 Assessing the Current and Likely Situation:

This includes the gathering of information relating to adaptation and mitigation. Much of this data is already existing, but there will be gaps relating to specific services of the Council.

6.4.3 Developing a Strategic Approach:

This relates to drawing on the information available and the views of stakeholders to determine priority areas for action.

6.4.4 Preparing an Action Plan

This pulls together the assessment of the current situation and strategic objections into a coherent strategy and programme of action.

6.4.5 Implementing the Action Plan

This relates to launching the Strategy and Action plan, taking forward and co-ordinating actions and both internal and external communications, as well as future monitoring of achievements.

7.0 Local Authority Carbon Management Programme

7.1 As Members are aware Local Authorities are not just providers of services and leaders within the community: they are also large organisations with significant environmental impacts. In terms of Carbon emissions the Council can have a major direct impact through the management of its buildings, transport and procurement decisions and also indirectly through informing staff/stakeholders.

In recognition of the importance of reducing Local Authorities direct carbon emissions the Carbon Trust, a government agency, has developed a Local Authority Carbon Management Programme (LACM) which provides a detailed resource to assist Councils in tackling their own Greenhouse Gas emissions. The use of the LACM can be a strong tool in the development of Climate Change Strategy for the District.

- 7.2 Through the Local Authority Carbon Management programme the Carbon Trust provides technical and change management support to help Local Authorities realise carbon emissions savings. The primary focus of the work is to reduce emissions under the direct control of the Council.

Participating councils benefit from consultant support in the form of workshops, meetings and other support tailored around a five step process. This process guides local authorities through:

- A systematic analysis of their carbon footprint
- The calculation of the value at stake and the case for taking action
- The assessment of opportunities to help manage carbon emissions
- The development of structured action plans for realising carbon savings and embedding carbon management in how the council does its day-to-day business.

The programme aims to:

- Save money – through effective management and reducing energy bills
- Lead by example – through influence over business and the domestic sectors
- Raise profile – by being amongst the top performing councils
- Meeting regulation – through preparing for incoming regulation and increased legislation.

The full programme takes about 10 months to complete.

- 7.3 Officers are currently discussing whether it is feasible for East Herts to join the LACM, as in the past the scheme has only been available to larger councils or partnerships. A verbal will be given at the meeting. However, even without Carbon Trust support, it is proposed that the principles of the scheme provide a useful framework, in order to achieve a comprehensive approach to much of the work in producing a Climate Change Strategy.
- 7.4 Whilst the preparation of a detailed Carbon Footprint is part of the LACM, officers are aiming to produce a very “light touch” footprint

for the Council's estate for inclusion as part of this years "Key Lines of Enquiry" should this be required by the External Auditors.

- 7.5 As well as the LACM the Carbon Trust also operates an Energy Efficiency Accreditation scheme. This scheme assesses the direction of travel of energy efficiency in the Council over a three-year period. Work is to be undertaken in the next two months to gauge whether the current energy performance of the Council qualifies it to take part in the project.

8.0 Conclusion

The Committee is asked to consider the proposals outlined above for the preparation of a robust Climate Change Strategy and to agree the recommendations at the head of this report. It is the belief of officers that such a Strategy will considerably aid this Authority in its corporate and community leadership response to Climate Change

9.0 Consultation

No public or partner consultation is required at this stage, although stakeholder consultation will be an important element as the strategy develops.

10.0 Legal Implications

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report at this stage.

11.0 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report at this stage.

12.0 Human Resources Implications

There are no Human resources implications arising from this report.

13.0 Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management implications.

Background Papers

East Herts Environmental Policy Statement
East Herts Energy Policy Action Plan

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