

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY)
TO THE EXECUTIVE
7 DECEMBER 2007

Climate Change Strategy

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 The Executive will be aware that the production of a Climate Change Strategy and associated action plan was a Service priority for the Council this year.
- 1.2 This report introduces the Climate Change Strategy for the Council and discusses two important decision points, these being:
- The scope of the Council's approach to climate change
 - The methodology that the Council could use to deliver the Strategy
- 1.3 The Strategy is attached at appendix A of this report.
- 1.4 The contact officers for this report are Paul Staines, Deputy Director (Housing and Community Safety), telephone 01235 547621, e-mail address paul.staines@whitehorsedc.co.uk and Mark Saunders, Principal Energy Officer, telephone 01235 547603, e-mail address mark.saunders@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

2.0 Recommendations

- (a) *The Executive approve the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan attached as an appendix to this report*
- (b) *The Executive approve the adoption of a Council-wide approach to addressing the issue of climate change*
- (c) *The Executive agree, as part of its budget considerations for 2008-9, to consider the resource implications of the Action Plan*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

- 3.1 This report relates to the Council's Vision in that it supports objectives A, D, E, F and G.
- 3.2 The report proposes the adoption of a new strategy for the Council to address climate change.
- 3.3 The issues raised in this report are also relevant to the following strands of the Vale Community Strategy:
- Environment
 - Housing
 - Recreation, Culture and Leisure
 - Transport

- Community

4.0 The Climate Change Strategy

- 4.1 The Executive will be aware that recent developments in national and regional policy are placing increasing significance on climate change.
- 4.2 The Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006 (section 3) includes a duty on Councils to “have regard” to Government guidance on sustainable energy, called Energy Measures Reports when “exercising their functions”. This came into effect in August 2006.
- 4.3 In addition, the new Local Authority Performance Framework includes climate change indicators. These relate to measuring reductions in carbon emissions, both from the local authority estate and the wider local community as well as indicators on climate change adaptation. Although not mandatory, these could be included in the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement.
- 4.4 In addition, from a Council perspective, the issue of climate change is a clear manifesto commitment of the ruling group and a service priority for the Council.
- 4.5 To date, the Council has focused its climate change efforts on energy saving in the domestic sector under the obligations of the Home Energy Conservation Act 1996.
- 4.6 In May of 2007, however, the Council signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. In signing the Declaration, the Council acknowledges that it needs to address this issue in two ways, these being:
- How its own operations contribute towards carbon emissions.
 - How it can, in its capacity as community leader and place shaper, address the issue within the wider community of the Vale.
- 4.7 Officers believe that a sensible approach to this issue would be to focus on the Council’s own operations in the first instance before leading on a District-wide effort to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. As a consequence, the Climate Change Strategy, at this stage, relates only to Council operations that are either affected by climate change or contribute to it.
- 4.8 The process of developing the Strategy began in May, after the Council signed the Nottingham Declaration. The Council used the services of the Thames Valley Energy Centre to do a scoping review of what the Council could include in its Climate Change Strategy. This involved interviews with Members, senior managers and other key staff.
- 4.9 Their report made a number of service specific recommendations but also included key corporate recommendations.
- 4.10 Following its completion, the review report was presented to the Strategic Review Committee. The Committee also considered and endorsed a corporate approach to tackling climate change and made two specific resolutions, these are;
1. That the contract specification for all Council services, including those to be outsourced, be drafted so that climate change issues are given due consideration in the delivery of those services.

2. That in respect of the key corporate recommendations of the review report, a further recommendation be added, as follows:- The Council will have regard to best practice through discussions with its benchmarking partners and Beacon Councils in developing a Climate Change Strategy.

4.11 Subsequent to this resolution, officers have refined the Strategy to take account of Member's views and the findings of the scoping study.

4.12 The Strategy now focuses upon the carbon footprint of the Council's own operations and functions.

4.13 The corporate approach of the Strategy, however, means that its impact will be material and every service area will be affected in some way by the Council's efforts to reduce CO² emissions and adapt to climate change.

5.0 The Implementation of the Strategy

5.1 Having formed a view on the scope of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, it is necessary to consider its implementation and the resource implications of this.

5.2 Officers consider that the Council has a choice of two methodologies that the implementation of the Strategy could take, they are;

- Adopt an ad hoc approach built around a few key actions
- Adopt a strategic Council-wide approach

5.3 Option 1 would see the Council hone in on a few key actions designed to maximise impact.

5.4 Option 2 would require the Council to follow a much wider approach that would need to be planned and appropriately resourced.

5.5 Officers have reflected upon these methodologies and recommend to the Executive that option 2 would be the most appropriate, this is because;

- a) Such an approach will result in a higher profile for the Council in an area of public concern, in contrast an ad hoc approach makes it difficult to position climate change as a corporate priority and demonstrate community leadership on addressing this issue.
- b) It will ensure better environmental performance across many areas of the Council such as the Green Travel Plan, planning policy and sustainable procurement.
- c) It will, in the longer term, deliver greater emissions reductions and cost savings.

5.6 Officers are also minded that the higher profile of climate change will result in, for example, it being a likely LAA target in the new Oxfordshire Community Strategy; central to achievement of our contribution to this will be the implementation of a Council-wide carbon management programme that would be difficult to implement in the option 1 approach.

5.7 Officers, therefore, recommend the Executive choose option 2.

6.0 Resource implications

- 6.1 If members are minded to accept this approach then it will be necessary to consider the resource implications.
- 6.2 For reasons discussed earlier, the actions detailed in the Strategy focus on areas where the Council has complete control over its own operation or can influence the actions of others. Most of the actions can be implemented within existing budgets. However, two actions require additional staff posts equivalent to 1.5 full time equivalent posts, this is due to both a lack of expertise and capacity. The posts are as follows.
- One full time post to manage the Council's carbon reduction programme – this would be responsible for developing and implementing a range of measures for all Council buildings and facilities including leisure centres. In addition to reducing carbon emissions, these measures would also reduce energy consumption and associated costs. Evidence suggests that carbon reduction 'invest to save' measures normally operate on a pay back period of 5 years.
 - One ½ time post to develop, implement, and subsequently check compliance with Council planning policy related to reducing CO² emissions.
- 6.3 Officers consider these two posts to be critical to the Council, both reducing its own carbon emissions and using its powers effectively to influence the actions of others. External consultancy has been considered but, the cost allied with the requirement for client officer time and expertise makes this problematic.
- 6.4 Officers consider that to not establish the posts would result in a strategy that would only tackle reducing emissions at the margins rather than across the organisation.
- 6.5 Accordingly, the Executive is asked to acknowledge the resource implications and agree to their consideration as part of the 2008-9 budget process.

7.0 Options

- 7.1 The Executive will have noted that the Council's duties towards climate change are limited, at present, to:
- Home Energy Conservation Act: to achieve a 2% reduction in CO₂ emissions annually
 - Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006: A general duty to have regard to climate change issues in the exercise of its functions.

And, at present, the Council is not required to address climate change any further.

- 7.2 The Council could therefore opt to not adopt the Strategy, instead asking officers to exercise regard to climate change issues within existing service priorities and budgets.
- 7.3 Alternatively, the Council can adopt the Strategy, appropriately resourced, as a response to the issue of climate change.
- 7.4 Officers consider the draft Strategy to be an appropriate and proportionate response to the issue of climate change that meets the Council's service commitments and would ensure that the issue, should it be enshrined as a target in the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement, is a commitment that the Council could meet.

8.0 Risk assessment

8.1 The risks to the Council of adopting the Strategy are;
Financial - the Strategy will require appropriate resourcing to be effectively implemented.

8.2 The risks to the Council of not adopting the Strategy are;

Reputational

- The Council has signed the Nottingham Declaration on climate change and has therefore made a public declaration of its commitment to the issue. The Strategy is an appropriate enunciation of this commitment.
- The issue of climate Change is an emerging priority in the evolving local government performance framework and in the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement and the Council would be wise to recognise this in its service planning.

8.3 The strategy itself is an ambitious documents that sets a high bar for the council in terms of delivery of the key actions. However the Council is also aware that it first needs to establish the ability to measure its carbon footprint before moving to reduce it.

8.4 For this reason the adoption of the strategy contains a risk that the Council may not be able to deliver to such a challenging agenda, either because it is unable to commit the required resources or because it discovers that the benchmark for carbon emission reduction it establishes in year one of the strategy is a more challenging target than first thought.

9.0 Equality and Diversity

9.1 The implementation of the Strategy will affect all staff. At this stage it is not possible to know whether some staff or groups of staff will suffer a negative impact that cannot be justified. A key aspect of the Strategy will be to ensure staff are not alienated by the actions required and are, on the contrary, supportive of Council attempts to reduce its environmental impact.

9.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment for the Climate Change Strategy has not yet been carried out. This will be done prior to implementation in April 2008.

10.0 Conclusions

10.1 This report introduces the Council's Climate Change Strategy and discusses how the Strategy might be implemented.

10.2 Officers recommend that the Council adopt a corporate approach to climate change and this report sets out the resource implications of this approach.

10.3 Officers also recommend that the Council's approach be centred upon its own activities in the first instance, and seek to build on this success by developing the Council's role as community leader for climate change issues in future years.

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