

**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE - 5 NOVEMBER
2008**

PORTFOLIO: ENVIRONMENT

REPORT FROM HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 Formal adoption of the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy (copy of Strategy document to follow).
- 1.2 That approval of the resultant action plan is delegated to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment.

2 FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE No: 17/08

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Climate change is recognised as being one of the most serious threats that we will face this century. Temperatures are expected to continue to rise for approximately 40 years, as will sea levels well in to the next century. The consequences of these rises are likely to see the UK experience milder and wetter winters; hotter and drier summers; more frequent extreme weather events; and drier soil.
- 3.2 Each of these issues will affect the way we live, work and play within the district and beyond. It is, therefore, vitally important that the Council, its residents and the businesses that operate within the district pursue the complementary actions of adaptation and mitigation from this point on. This will be best achieved by the Council setting a good example and taking the lead for all sections of the community to follow.
- 3.3 The agenda for change will be driven by the new Government Department of Energy and Climate Change, established on 3 October 2008, which will tackle the twin challenges of energy security and climate change. This is reinforced by a suite of new National Performance Indicators to address carbon reduction and adaption to climate change, together with a new performance assessment framework, the successor to Comprehensive Performance Assessment - Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).
- 3.4 The latest consultation on CAA states that it will provide a clearer focus on the quality of life for local people and one of the specific challenges identified is that of tackling climate change. Furthermore the 'Use of Resources' section has been broadened to include the management of non financial areas such as natural resources.

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- 3.5 In the Council's position of responsibility, and through the requirements placed upon the Authority, we must aim to: minimise the potential risks to people, the environment, property and businesses; minimise the contribution of our operations to global warming; as well as realise the potential opportunities that may arise from the changing climatic conditions where they do not worsen the situation.
- 3.6 Following consideration of these issues last year, the Review Committee recommended the adoption of challenging carbon reduction targets together with various other measures. The Corporate Plan 2008 – 2013, which was formally adopted in June, includes targets to reduce carbon dioxide resulting from both the Council's own activities and those of others elsewhere in the district. The Plan also includes a commitment for the Council to adapt to climate change.
- 3.7 The adoption of a climate change strategy and resulting action plan enables the Council to effectively co-ordinate these activities and maximise the impact of proposed actions.
- 3.8 Some examples of the benefits that can arise from the adoption of a climate change strategy can include a more efficient use of resources in service provision; lower fuel bills, helping to tackle fuel poverty; increased resilience to the effects of climate change; improved transport system and local air quality; clearer performance management; and improved access to funding.
- 3.9 The Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy before the Executive takes a look at all of the current and future influencing factors over the Council's performance. It then discusses the major topic areas in which the Council can work to improve its own performance as an organisation as well as across the district.
- 3.10 The topic areas such as Energy, Water, Development Control, Waste, Business and Emergency Planning highlight the many overlapping elements, showing the complexity of the situation and the need for the Council to have a co-ordinated approach to addressing climate change locally.
- 3.11 This strategy is intended to cover the period 2008-2013, at which time it can be reviewed and revised as necessary. It is proposed that an action plan – our 'ClimateCO₂de' - is written that has short, medium and long-term targets, but is reviewed on an annual basis for performance management purposes and allows the introduction of new approaches.
- 3.12 This report recommends that the action plan is approved by the Executive Portfolio Holder for the Environment. It is proposed that the initial plan will be approved within the next eight weeks.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 To remain as present and not adopt a climate change strategy would perpetuate the uncoordinated approach to implementing adaptation and mitigation measures.

5 OTHER SALIENT INFORMATION

- 5.1 The Council includes a number of references to sustainability and environmental improvement within its existing strategies and is bound to achieving certain standards in respect of specific national indicators and the Local Area Agreement.

6 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Risks to the Council would be a failure to fulfil certain national and regional targets, particularly with regard to the Local Area Agreement, Thames Gateway South East and Comprehensive Area Assessment. The subsequent impact might result in the Authority being subject to inspection or potentially damage our reputation.
- 6.2 Failure to adequately protect residents and businesses from the worst effects of climate change.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Adopting the strategy will help mitigate the effects of climate change and help maintain biodiversity within the district.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The 2005 Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change clearly illustrated the financial benefits of the UK acting early and decisively to mitigate the effects of climate change, whilst also acknowledging that adaptation measures are crucial in reducing the economy's vulnerability to the effects of climate change.
- 8.2 There are staffing and other resource implications that may follow from the Action Plan. However, these need to be considered as part of the budget process against other Council priorities.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: _____

Head of Environmental Services

Background Papers:-

None

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