

Review Committee – 6 November 2007

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **6 November 2007** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs S A Harper

Cllr T Livings

Cllr Mrs C A Weston

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs L M Cox, Mrs H L A Glynn and J R F Mason.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	-	Chief Executive
R Evans	-	Head of Environmental Services
D Timson	-	Property Maintenance & Highways Manager
S Blake	-	Environmental Protection Manager
P Gowers	-	Overview & Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

370 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

371 IMPLICATIONS OF GLOBAL WARMING AGENDA ON ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL AND THE ROLE THE DISTRICT COUNCIL AND ITS COMMUNITIES MIGHT PLAY

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Donnachadh McCarthy on how he promoted green ideas whilst a Councillor in London.

Mr McCarthy introduced himself to the Committee and outlined what he had achieved, both in his personal and professional life, in terms of carbon emission reduction.

He outlined briefly some of the current issues around global warming and referred to the Stern Report and Kyoto Agreement.

Mr McCarthy believed that the local authority's role in environmental issues was vital, both in terms of effecting change through national government and by influencing the behaviour and consumption of the local community. The actions of the individual in this respect were also important.

He outlined the measures that an individual Council could take towards reducing the carbon footprint of its community, whilst at the same time maintaining a healthy economy, and the health and vibrancy of the

community. He referred specifically to the measures that could be considered by Rochford District Council and stressed the importance of the Council adopting a strategic plan towards reducing carbon emissions. The following suggestions were made:-

- As a matter of priority, the Council must focus on carbon emissions generated by its own activities. It was vital that the Council led by example and raised awareness of environmental issues with all residents and businesses in the District. The Council's own carbon footprint must be examined and targets set both in respect of the Council as an organisation and individual employees. Carbon footprint headline figures could be included in the Chief Executive's report to the Executive Board and an environmental audit held each year, which would enable the public to hold the Council to account.
- Although both Woking and Merton had been considered as useful Councils to visit, the speaker suggested Woking Borough Council as an excellent example of how local government could reduce its own carbon footprint: Woking had achieved a considerable reduction in carbon emissions in the past few years.
- The production of electricity could be de-centralised. Electricity production reportedly wasted up to 70% of the electricity generated between the power station and the end user. Woking Borough Council used local 'de-centralised' energy companies, which not only reduced the Council's carbon footprint, but also involved the local community in the process. Such issues could be implemented through the Planning process.
- Transport was a major contributor to carbon emission levels due to the massive increase in the use of private cars in the last 50 years, coupled with a reduction in the use of public transport and the amount of people using bicycles. A radical overhaul of the Council's cycling strategy could be considered, including the creation of makeshift lanes by dividing footpaths into two wherever possible.
- A further measure relating to transport was the possible recycling of waste vegetable oil, which is the most carbon-friendly of fuels, into a bio-fuel that could be used to run the Council's core fleet of vehicles.
- The Council could adopt a Biomas strategy, for which it was ideally situated because of its semi-rural location. Although the Council was already involved in coppicing and selling the wood and wood arisings, the existing system could be developed and turned into a serious part of the Council's carbon management strategy.
- A scheme could be initiated whereby funding would be provided to train volunteers as community co-ordinators (as done in Dulwich). These co-ordinators would eco-audit each household in the District and advise on steps that could be taken to reduce carbon emissions. These would often

be simple measures, including ensuring the householder had knowledge of how the controls for heating and hot water in the house operated and checking that there was adequate insulation. Within a household, energy savings could be made using the 40:40:20 split between lifestyle, basic efficiencies and the use of renewables respectively.

- The Council could work with businesses to reduce packaging and improve recycling.
- As a local planning authority the opportunity existed for the Council to require that all new buildings were zero carbon. However, in respect of the existing stock, the Council could assist in the smooth processing of planning applications for installation of solar panels.
- The Council needed to be proactive in addressing Home Energy Efficiency Schemes, leveraging in external funding to subsidise solar panels and other energy efficiency measures.
- The community could be encouraged to eat meat once a week only, as the production of livestock accounted worldwide for 18% of greenhouse emissions.
- The Council could encourage Farmers' Markets.
- The encouragement of the wide use of composting was important as food in landfill sites produced methane gas which, over the period of a decade, was 100 times more powerful than CO₂, and which would continue to leak from landfill sites for many years. In addition, there existed opportunities to capture methane from landfill and convert it to green energy.

It was confirmed that the Council could become involved in CRed Essex, which was a non-profit organisation committed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions. One option was the implementation of a badge system to reward residents and businesses that achieved certain levels of carbon savings. The Council currently sponsored the 'green award' for the Southend Evening Echo.

In response to questions, the following information was advanced:-

- Any successes achieved by the Council in reducing the carbon emissions in the District could be measured. A carbon calculator could be accessed via the Web and regional data was published by some Councils.
- Schemes could be promoted to assist residents on low incomes in reducing carbon emissions.
- Wind turbines attached to domestic buildings were ineffective as the technology was unsuitable for urban areas with low wind levels. However, large commercial turbines in windy areas were often extremely productive.

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- The Council could give grants for wood burners and give residents access to community wood stores.
- Measures concerning carbon emission levels could be incorporated within the terms of the contracts the Council had with the contractors running its leisure centres and other outsourced activities.
- Car parking charges could be set on a sliding scale according to the engine size and carbon emissions of individual cars, based on the information displayed on the road tax disc.
- It was important that the 'environment' became a moral and ethical issue in the community and that residents were made aware of the adverse effects of carbon emissions on the lives of people worldwide. It was not until residents perceived the issue of carbon emissions as 'fashionable' that the Council would be given an effective mandate to make changes. A competition could be held to find the resident with the lowest carbon footprint in the District.
- The CRed website provided an opportunity for individuals to calculate their personal carbon footprint.
- Partnerships between the Council and community groups were vital as this would facilitate the education of the community in environmental issues.

The meeting closed at 9.16 pm.

Chairman

Date

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