

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Climate Change Working Group 11th June 2009
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CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

Introduction and Purpose

1. At the end of each municipal year, the Climate Change Working Group is able to present a summary of its activities over the past twelve months to Full Council in the form of an annual report. This is a chance for the Group to put across the immediacy, the challenges and the opportunities we face as a district authority in delivering against our operational and community leadership responsibilities in both mitigation against, and adaptation to, climate change.
2. The purpose of this report is to present a draft outline and copy for the 2008/09 report for members review, consideration and input prior to presenting a final draft to the next meeting of Full Council.
3. Members are requested to review the following outline, structure and draft content with a view to agreeing a clear format and key messages that the Report should look to be putting across and emphasising – drawn from experience over the last 12 months and a forward look into the next 12 months. The Report could be ‘pitched’ in several ways and members are particularly asked to reflect on the most appropriate approach.

Outline/contents

4. The following is a possible ‘contents’ for the 2009/09 Annual Report:
Section 1: Chairman’s foreword/overview
Section 2: What is the Climate Change Working Group?
Section 3: Context and introduction
Section 4: Principle activities report
Section 5: Looking forward
5. It is important that the Report is made as relevant and readable as possible if it is to make any impact beyond just being a précis of the year’s meeting minutes. To this end the ‘pitch’ is important. At one end of the spectrum it can be a simple catalogue of activity and, at the other end, it can be a strong awareness-raising tool aimed at significantly boosting the profile of the climate change agenda for all Council members.
6. In the current context, moving towards the latter would seem more appropriate:
 - 2008/09 has seen dramatic changes in the language and acceptability of climate change responses in national policy (as Gordon Brown said in June last year on creating a low carbon economy: “*the fact is that a low carbon society will not emerge from thinking of business as usual*”);
 - 2009/10 will, with the crucial UN climate change talks in Copenhagen in December, and the publishing of the latest set of scenarios for 21st-century UK climate change (UKCIP08) by the UK Climate Impacts Programme in the autumn

to name but two, be seen by many as marking the eleventh hour watershed in terms of major action to tackle climate change mitigation and adaptation.

7. To attract wider interest and debate it is recommended that the Report is made as visual as possible – mixing relevant and illustrative graphics and images with the text.

Draft issues/content:

8. **Section 1 – Chairman’s Foreword/Overview**

- to be drafted by the Chairman

9. **Section 2: What is the Climate Change Working Group?**

- Formal structure of Working Group
- Terms of Reference
- Membership 2008/09

10. **Section 3: Context and introduction**

- i.) 2008/09 may be looked back upon as the year that the UK Government turned a landmark corner in tackling the challenge of climate change. In November 2008 the Climate Change Act became the first legally binding long-range national carbon-reduction target: mandating an 80% reduction by 2050 and 26-32% by 2020 (from a 1990 baseline).
- ii.) One can only hope that this necessarily demanding example is taken forward into the UN Copenhagen Conference in December this year where an updated global response must be hammered out.
- iii.) The national UK targets have been reflected downwards through the regions, counties and districts. The East of England Development Agency have, for example set a target of reducing CO₂ emissions by 60% by 2031. Cambridgeshire Together have adopted local performance framework indicator NI 186 on per capita CO₂ emissions and NI 188 on adaptation measures as Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets. The former target initially being an 11% reduction by 2010/11.
- iv.) The key to these targets having any meaning is the urgency with which we must act. The science suggests that, in order to have a real chance of staying below the critical 2°C global warming threshold, global CO₂ emissions must peak by 2015 and then reduce year-on-year by at least 4%. This challenge is here today, not sometime in the future - 2009/10 must put us on the road to achieving these targets.
- v.) South Cambridgeshire has one of the highest per capita CO₂ emission figures in the region at 10.2 tonnes/annum (2006 DEFRA figure for NI 186) – and this has crept up by 0.1 tonnes since 2005. For a small semi-rural village-based district this may at first seem surprising. South Cambridgeshire, however, brings together an affluent commuter-based population, weak public transport, an outstandingly congested trunk road and the strong presence of business and research parks benefiting from the ‘Cambridge effect’. This means the district scores highly in all three assessment sectors: domestic, transport and commercial. The target set via the LAA is for a reduction in South Cambridgeshire of approximately 1 tonne by 2010/11.
- vi.) To help with this there has been, and still is, a great deal of new and emerging policy coming out of Central Government – the Carbon Reduction Commitment, Carbon Emissions Reduction Target, Feed-in Tariffs, Heat Incentives, definitions

of zero-carbon, Home Energy Saving Strategy and the Renewable Energy Strategy to name some of those of particular interest to local authorities. We do still, however, seem to be some distance from a coherent structure that will ensure that these targets will be achieved.

- vii.) From the South Cambridgeshire perspective, the Climate Change Working Group has been keen to develop a coherent response in terms of what the Council is realistically able to deliver in terms of mitigation and adaptation. With the urgency former receiving the majority of attention over the past twelve months as the urgency to reduce carbon emissions becomes increasingly critical.
- viii.) There are three essential drivers behind a comprehensive mitigation response:
 - regulation – enforcing change through direct policy and legislation
 - technology – providing new physical tools to deliver change
 - behaviour – promoting change through variations in day-to-day living
- ix.) As a second-tier local authority, SCDC is limited as to what it can achieve in terms of regulation (the planning system and, to a lesser degree, waste collection are the two main channels) and technology (essentially only promoting, testing and increasing public awareness and visibility of sustainable energy technologies).
- x.) It is through enabling and facilitating behaviour change that SCDC has the greatest opportunity and room for manoeuvre in bringing about substantial carbon savings. It should also be noted that behaviour change is often considered as the vital pre-cursor to major transformations in regulation (creating political confidence) and technology availability (creating demand).
- xi.) Actions to realise behaviour change can additionally be usefully sub-divided into awareness-raising (passing information), engagement (making information part of decision-making) and delivery (achieving carbon reductions).
- xii.) As well as developing and pushing forward specific issues through regular meetings, members of the Working Group have:
 - a.) been keen to do what they can to develop closer working with other partners through the South Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership and countywide Cambridgeshire Together.
 - b.) represented the Council at a range of workshops, seminars and conferences throughout the year.

11. **Section 4: Principle activities report**

The listing below is a summary of the work carried out by the Working Group for 2008/09. It has been broken down under the 'drivers of change' headings of regulation, technology and behaviour.

12. ***Supporting regulatory measures***

- i.) Working through the planning system to secure optimal carbon savings in the South Cambridgeshire growth areas.
- ii.) Considering and responding to Government policy consultation documents: i.) UK Renewable Energy Strategy, ii.) A Definition of Zero Carbon, and iii.) Home Energy Saving Strategy.

- iii.) Taking a reference and scrutiny role for the reporting and performance improvement of the three climate change national indicators NI185, NI186 and NI188.

Promoting and assessing sustainable energy technology solutions

- iv.) Developing and considering the best use of renewable energy resources in South Cambridgeshire.
- v.) Visiting and reporting on the Kingspan/Potton Lighthouse at the Building Research Establishment in Watford.
- vi.) Reporting on the retro-fitting of air-source heat pump technology to replace oil-fired heating in a council-owned property in Elsworth.

Enabling and facilitating behaviour change

- vii.) Making the case and securing funding to develop and establish the South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership.
- viii.) Developing an approach to climate change accountability in project and policy work.
- ix.) Bringing forward and evaluating the commissioning brief for a survey and analysis of carbon emissions from the South Cambridgeshire business and commercial sector.
- x.) Reviewing and supporting a joint project with the City Council that will offer practical support for carbon reduction to local businesses and organisations.
- xi.) Establishing working links with organisations such as the Energy Saving Trust, the East of England Development Agency, Cambridgeshire Together, Renewables East and Cambridge Carbon Footprint for the benefit of Council operations and the residents of South Cambridgeshire.
- xii.) Acting as the reference group for the Energy Saving Trust's One-to-One support programme with the Council.

13 Section 5: Looking forward

14. It is inevitable that the gravity, immediacy and impact of the climate change agenda can only increase year on year into the foreseeable future. All comprehensively informed and considered commentators (drawing on essentially incontrovertible scientific evidence) continually remind and exhort government, commerce and the public at large that it is the steps taken today (and over the next 5 years) that will define our ability to manage and contain human-induced enhanced global warming.
15. Cold economic estimates state that the cost of action today will be an almost inconsequential fraction of the cost of remedial action should we continue with 'business as usual' – if such reactive remedial action is possible at all.
16. The pressure upon the Working Group, and Council as a community leader, to focus its resources, support and attention upon those local area measures which can make a real difference, whilst lobbying for what it sees as necessary change from central and regional government, is quite intense.
17. The Working Group's increasing experience and continuity is a real strength here – as it has shown in the way it has brought forward and developed the practical and

innovational thinking behind the South Cambs Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership.

18. The coming year will present more opportunities for engagement and delivery, such as:
- the introduction of a ‘feed in tariff’ for small and domestic scale renewable electricity generation;
 - the possible introduction of a similar ‘renewable heat incentive’;
 - development of Carbon Emissions Reduction Target obligations upon energy suppliers;
 - finalisation of the definition of zero carbon for new development;
 - the continued rolling out of carbon pricing mechanisms, e.g. the Carbon Reduction Commitment;
 - the continued growth of grassroots community action around climate change and the ‘transition’ movement.
19. All of the above, and others, will need to be taken account of, and where possible integrated with, what the Council can realistically achieve through facilitation, enablement and direct delivery.
20. Primary areas of Council activity where the Working Group may wish to play a development, shaping, reference or monitoring role over the next twelve months are as follows:
- South Cambs Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership
 - Drafting of a new SCDC Climate Change Action Plan (including the EST One-to-One Support Programme)
 - Drafting of new Sustainable Design and Construction guidance within the revised Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
 - The district’s growth area agenda
 - Large scale renewable energy installations
 - Development of the Council’s climate change adaptation responses (in line with NI 188)
 - Understanding and facilitating carbon reduction in the districts business and commercial sector
 - The introduction of carbon reduction measures across the Council’s own operation and service delivery (in response to NI 185)

Implications

21. Financial	None arising
Legal	None arising
Staffing	Strategic Sustainability Officer
Risk Management	Potential for missed opportunity to raise awareness and profile of the Council’s past, present and future responses to the increasingly pressing climate change agenda.
Equal Opportunities	None arising

Consultations

22. None

23. **Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities**

Have a Climate Change Action Plan in place by 2010

Positive – the work of the Climate Change Action Group will be crucial to the successful delivery and monitoring of the new Climate Change Action Plan.

Recommendation

24. There is no specific recommendation attached to this report. Members are however requested to review the outline, structure and draft content, as presented above, with a view to agreeing a clear format and key messages that the Report should look to be putting across and emphasising – drawn from experience over the last 12 months and a forward look into the next 12 months. The Report could be 'pitched' in several ways and members are particularly asked to reflect on the most appropriate approach.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- All Climate Change Working Group Agendas and Minutes 2008-09
- Climate Change Working Group Annual Report 2007-08

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