

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Northstowe Portfolio Holder Meeting 11 March 2010
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services)/ Corporate Manager
(New Communities)

NORTHSTOWE ECO-TOWN

Purpose

1. To present information on potential eco-town status for Northstowe.

Background

2. In December 2009, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) invited the Cambridgeshire authorities to submit a bid for Northstowe to be granted eco-town status. The criteria for eco-town status are laid out in an Eco-Towns Planning Policy Statement that was published in 2009 by DCLG. The Chief Executives for South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC), Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridgeshire Horizons agreed that SCDC should lead a working group to produce a report covering:
 - (a) A Gap Analysis in terms of the planning policy base – comparing the Northstowe Area Action Plan and other local policy documents to the Eco-Town PPS
 - (b) Options for mechanisms to bridge the planning policy gap with recommendations
 - (c) Gap analysis in terms of the current planning application for Northstowe and what we would expect to see in an application that was sufficient to satisfy the PPS
 - (d) Some initial thoughts as to the major areas of work that will need to be developed in Phase 2, and areas where we may need funding support.
3. On 21 January, DCLG announced a tight timescale for submission of funding proposals for additional eco-town submissions:
 - (a) 19 February – submission of bids to the £5m studies/preparatory work fund (indicative bid range £50K - £500K)
 - (b) 26 February – Bids for demonstrator projects. (indicative bid range £50K - £1.5m).
4. The Eco-Town working group included key representatives from the District and County Councils, Cambridgeshire Horizons and Government Office Eastern Region. This small group conducted the gap analysis, acquiring technical input and advice as necessary, and followed on to produce the draft submission for revenue funding for additional studies and capital funding for a demonstrator project.

Considerations

5. In response to the letter from DCLG dated 21 January, SCDC, the County Council and Horizons submitted a bid for revenue funding to carry out additional studies to enable the development of an Eco-Town bid. A copy of the letter is attached as

Appendix 1. The letter includes a summary of the gap analysis and a request for £365,000 funding.

6. The local authorities also submitted a proposal for a demonstrator project, attached as appendix 2. The primary element of the proposal is a retrofit scheme for homes at Rampton Drift. The total cost of the project is £1.5m, although we are prepared to scale down the project if a smaller sum is awarded.

Consultations

7. A representative of Government Office attended most meetings of the eco-town working group, and consulted with DCLG regarding the project options. Informal comments were received that informed the shaping of the proposals for revenue and capital funding.
8. The general results of the gap analysis and bid for revenue funding as well as options for demonstrator projects were discussed with the Northstowe Parish Forum on 10 February. The Parish Forum included county, district and parish councillors and all supported the bid for funding to do further studies on the implications and deliverability of eco-town standards. County officers consulted with relevant county members.

Recommendations

9. To note the contents of this report.

Appendix 1 Letter to DCLG dated 19 February 2010

Appendix 2 Letter to DCLG dated 26 February 2010

Appendix 3 Letter from CLG regarding eco-town proposals for additional funding.

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

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