

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet 10 November 2005
AUTHOR: Strategic Development Officer

CLIMATE PLAN FOR SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Purpose

1. To recommend Cabinet's formal approval of the Council's Climate Plan.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Sustainability	The Plan's adoption will make a significant contribution towards improving the overall sustainability of the district, most especially in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– The health and well-being of local communities;– The protection of the district's natural environment and biodiversity;– Efforts to establish energy and resource efficient, low carbon communities in the new-large developments scheduled for the district.
Village Life	The Plan will help improve local quality of life by reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions across the district.
Quality, Accessible Services	The preparation of an energy and resource efficient procurement policy is likely to benefit the Council financially in terms of improved cost savings and the purchase of more durable products.
Partnership	The Plan will underpin the Council's Community Strategy and convey the Council's commitment towards engaging more directly with local organisations and communities throughout South Cambridgeshire.

Background

3. The Council's signature of the Nottingham Declaration for Climate Change in February 2002 highlighted the Council's commitment to: consulting with its residents and producing its own strategy for dealing with climate change; reducing its own greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5% compared with 1990 levels in accordance with the Government's Kyoto target for emission reduction by 2012.
4. The Plan has taken close account of a series of other significant actions including: the Council's participation in the two-year European Climate Menu Programme which involved working alongside five other European local authorities; the publication of the Council's Community Strategy which identifies climate change as one of its key themes; a cross-service workshop which resulted in the mainstreaming of climate change in the Council's Service Plans for 2005/06, and; a recent presentation to Full Council (September 2005) which was immediately followed by a hour-long Q & A session for Members. The enthusiastic response and constructive comments from Members was much appreciated.

Considerations

5. The Council's Climate Plan is timely given much of the district is particularly prone to the ongoing and future impacts of climate change. Much of the district is low-lying and vulnerable to flooding. Certain areas also have clay-based soils where there is an increased risk of subsidence during prolonged hot, dry periods.
6. The East of England is already the driest part of the UK and, unless greenhouse gas emissions are reduced in accordance with the Government's 60% emissions reduction target for 2050. Predicted regional impacts by 2080 include:
 - Prolonged, hotter, drier summers marked by a potential 60% decrease in summer rainfall;
 - Warmer, wetter winters coupled with an estimated 30% increase in winter rainfall;
 - Extreme weather events, for example on the scale of Boscastle and Carlisle and the hot summer of 2003 when 30,000 people died as a result of heat-related illnesses across Western Europe.

Climate change therefore poses a series of significant, far-reaching challenges for South Cambs residents as well as its natural environment and biodiversity.

7. The onset of the new large-scale developments in South Cambridgeshire is an additional consideration. The developments are set to significantly increase the district's energy and resource use resulting in even higher greenhouse emissions already averaging 10.8 tonnes per annum for each South Cambs resident (note: this average increases to 15.3 tonnes p.a. when electricity usage is factored in). Significantly, if the district is to comply with the Government's aforementioned 60% emissions target, this average will need to be reduced to 6 tonnes p.a. per person.
8. An important means of reducing emissions is ensuring the new developments are built to high sustainability standards with regard to: their design and construction; their energy and resource efficiency including the use of renewable energy; the provision of fully integrated transport systems and access to local shops and services coupled with the adoption of sustainable lifestyles. The Climate Plan will support the Council's planning policies and inform discussions with developers and individual house builders.
9. The Plan supports the Council's various partnership working activities, most notably its Local Strategic Partnership and its Community Strategy, as well as ongoing efforts to communicate the issue of climate change to local organisations and communities.
10. The Plan marks the start of an important, ongoing process on the part of the authority. It will strengthen the Council's pivotal role as a community leader by indicating the Council is prepared to take the initiative and lead by example in terms of cutting its emissions and developing policies that will enable the district to adapt to climate change. The Plan will help underpin the Council's efforts to encourage local organisations and communities to take ownership and responsibility for their own emissions. Finally, the Plan:
 - i. Will initiate the process of measuring, managing and reducing the Council's greenhouse gas emissions;
 - ii. Contains a series of policy actions identified under the Plan's key themes namely: climate policy and cooperation; council-owned properties, installations

and infrastructure facilities; urban development and land-use planning; housing; transport; sustainable energy and; biodiversity, agriculture and the natural environment.

Options

12. To formally approve the Council's Climate Plan. This will:
 - i. Fulfil the Council's commitment to consult with its residents and publish a climate change strategy as required by the Council's signature of the Nottingham Declaration for Climate Change in February 2002;
 - ii. Ensure the Council can prepare for, and deal with, the ongoing and future impacts associated with climate change;
 - iii. Support the Council's planning policies (e.g. its emerging Local Development Framework and the various Area Action Plans for the new large-scale developments);
 - iv. Promote improved levels of energy and resource efficiency and encourage low carbon footprints for all new developments in South Cambridgeshire;
 - v. Facilitate the mainstreaming of climate change across all service areas and enable the progression of climate mitigation and climate adaptation policies;
 - vi. Underpin the Council's efforts to engage and work in partnership with local organisations and communities.

Financial Implications

13. The Climate Plan marks the start of an important mainstreaming process across each of the Council's service areas. Partnership working with various external organisations and community engagement will also be important. The plan's implementation will, necessarily, take account of and be responsive to the Council's financial circumstances over the coming period.

Legal Implications

14. Being part of the wider sustainability agenda, climate change is considered to be an important component of future CPA inspections. The Council will therefore be expected to demonstrate it has taken sufficient action in order to develop a fully integrated policy response and to uphold its community leadership role towards dealing with climate change.

Staffing Implications

15. The Strategic Development Officer will be responsible for monitoring the progress of the Climate Plan. In addition, the plan's successful implementation will require climate change to be extensively mainstreamed within the Council's Service Plans from 2006/07 onwards.

Risk Management Implications

16. Climate change is a significant medium to long-term risk factor that requires proper consideration in terms of the Council's Risk Register. Ensuring climate change is incorporated within the Council's risk management procedures will ensure the Authority has sufficient financial and organisational capacity to deal with extreme weather events.

Consultations

17. In summary, the Council's Climate Plan has been subject to extensive internal and external consultation. This included:
 - i. An online public survey, May 2003;
 - ii. The Council's participation in the European Climate Menu Programme, 2003 – 2005;
 - iii. A cross-service workshop, July 2004;
 - iv. A South Cambridgeshire Environment Group Workshop, December, 2004;
 - v. A Full Council Member feedback session, September, 2005;
 - vi. Various consultees including the Environment Agency, English Nature, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, the Countryside Agency, Go East, Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge City Council.

Conclusions/Summary

18. The Council's Climate Plan is integral to its four corporate objectives. The report summarises the Climate Plan which details actions intended to secure improved energy, resource and financial cost savings, enabling effective community engagement and partnership working and achieving improved levels of sustainability and environmental protection. The report also describes the likely impacts of climate change upon the district unless action is taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the Government's 60% target for 2050. Finally, the report highlights the importance of ensuring the Council fulfils its community leadership role by engaging and working in partnership with its local communities.

Recommendations

19. It is recommended that the Council's Climate Plan be formally approved.

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

- i. South Cambridgeshire District Council Climate Plan;
- ii. South Cambridgeshire District Council Service Plans, 2005 – 2006.

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