

Information/Discussion Paper

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

23 November 2011

Climate Change Member Working Group

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Committee members of the work of the climate change member working group and to put forward suggestions for future work for the working group.

2. Membership

Councillor Paul Wheeldon
Councillor Ian Bickerton
Councillor Helena McCloskey
Councillor Penny Hall

Jane Griffiths, Director Commissioning
Gill Morris, Climate Change & Sustainability Officer

Other officers attend the working group as required

3. Terms of reference

- 3.1 Terms of reference agreed by the working group are as follows

- Receive notes from the Officer Carbon Reduction Group to assist in:
 - Scrutinising proposed projects which have carbon reduction outcomes
 - Prioritising new projects which have carbon reduction outcomes
 - Reviewing the progress of projects which have carbon reduction outcomes
 - Reviewing the effectiveness of completed carbon reduction projects
- Review funding and investment plans and sponsor invest-to-save schemes
- Identify new projects which have carbon reduction outcomes
- Champion carbon reduction with elected members and staff
- Work with established groups such as the low carbon partnership to influence other organisations and learn from their experiences
- Gain an understanding of the effects that climate change could have on the operations of the council
- Submit reports (at times to be agreed) to Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the progress being made to tackle climate change
- Make recommendations to the Committee and the Officer Carbon Reduction Group

4. Summary of activity

The current financial climate and the process of restructuring the Council has

impacted on carbon reduction projects; however, the working group has continued to support officers to make progress where possible.

4.1 Electricity contract

The council's energy contracts were due for renewal in October and members of the working group were central in ensuring that the option of purchasing true green energy was included in the scope for bidding for the electricity contract. The Chair of the Working Group proposed a motion to Council in June recommending that purchasing zero carbon electricity from a green energy provider be a major consideration when choosing the new supplier. This was carried unanimously by Council.

The award of the contract has since been postponed until January 2012; indications from the market and the brokers were such that a more competitive bidding process will be achievable at this later date, but the parameters of the tender will remain the same.

4.2 Replacement of the Mayor's car

The current lease on the car was due to expire in September and has since been extended to the end of December. Working group members have taken a strong position on this issue and have asked officers to consider a whole range of options from a car of standard specification through to a hybrid, an electric car and the option of not having a car at all. In addition, they have asked officers to ensure that a comparison of fuel costs over the period of the lease is made against the cost of running an electric car and not to limit comparison to capital cost only. Members have taken the view that any decision must be a positive one for the environment. Officers are currently looking at the options.

4.3 Public charging points for electric cars

The working group is of the view that the council should take a lead on this if possible and they have asked the Climate Change & Sustainability Officer to undertake some research on the cost of purchasing and installing at least one charging point. A recommendation may be brought back to a future Environment O&S Committee.

4.4 Renewable energy

The working group has been keen to see progress on installing renewable energy schemes (photovoltaics (PV) to generate electricity) on council buildings, but it remains a difficult area. The working group supported the council signing up to a County Council PV Procurement Framework contract, which has been put out to tender on the basis of PV installation without any capital investment, the recipient of the panels benefiting from the free electricity and potentially also receiving a small percentage of the Feed-in Tariff. That contract has not yet been awarded. The working group is of the view that, in order to benefit financially from the feed-in-tariff, the council should install a PV system as soon as possible.

4.5 Other carbon reduction initiatives

The working group has been receiving regular reports on the progress of other carbon initiatives:

- Voltage optimisation – reduces voltage of electricity supply into buildings – piloted at Leisure@ (swimming pool side) and due to be installed at the Depot, Town Hall and the remaining areas of Leisure@ by the end of November.
- Fleet fuel monitoring and saving trial – equipment installed in two refuse vehicles to measure fuel efficiency and drivers given training on driving techniques. This trial is ongoing.
- Lighting replacement scheme in Regent Arcade Car Park – to replace existing lighting with low energy LED alternatives. A range of LED lighting options are currently being tested prior to a business case being developed and tendering undertaken. Installing LED lighting will deliver considerable savings on energy use and will require less frequent maintenance, both important factors once the car park is open 24 hours a day. Current indications suggest a payback on investment of approximately two years.

4.6 Climate change and commissioning

The council restructure has led to a change in senior officer representation on the working group. Jane Griffiths, Director Commissioning, has replaced Rob Bell, who has been heading up the implementation of the Local Authority Company.

The working group recognises the importance of ensuring that the council's objectives of reducing carbon emissions and adapting to climate change are accounted for throughout the commissioning process and this direct link into the commissioning division will enable working group members to monitor how these issues are being taken forward. It should be noted that emissions from council activities must be counted even if delivered through alternative arrangements.

5. PROGRESS ON REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS

New guidelines for reporting on emissions were issued to local authorities earlier in the year by the Department for Energy & Climate Change (DECC). DECC has asked all local authorities to follow company reporting guidance issued by DEFRA '*Guidance on how to measure and report your greenhouse gas emissions*'. This new method of reporting means that figures cannot be compared with those previously published because of changes to the way in which figures are calculated.

The working group has received reports for financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11; both reports use 2005/6 as the baseline year against which to measure progress. These reports are available on the council's website if committee members wish to view the figures in more detail. In summary, comparing 2010/11 with the baseline year, the council has reduced greenhouse gas emissions from its own energy use by 10.3% and from the fleet by 3.7%.

The council has a carbon emissions reduction target of 30% from 2005/6 levels by 2015, which reflects national targets to reduce carbon emissions, and clearly there is still a significant amount of work to do. However, the working group's view is that these figures are encouraging, especially given the expansion of the waste & recycling service during this period and the increasing reliance on IT equipment. A number of strands of activity could, when/if delivered, make a significant contribution to this reduction target:

- Extension of voltage optimisation project
- Fuel monitoring and saving trial

- Lighting replacement at Regent Arcade car park
- Replacement of cremators
- Replacing PCs with data terminals (reduces energy consumption of individual units by up to 90%)
- Installation of PV on council buildings
- Smarter travel plan (which will also deliver community benefits)
- Downsizing to a smaller, more efficient building

The working group will continue to explore these options with officers and will ask officers to look at the proposals on an invest-to-save basis, which can then be built into the budget process.

6. AREAS FOR FUTURE WORK

The working group will continue to review and support existing areas of work as outlined above, but members have identified some additional areas that they would like to receive more information on at future meetings.

6.1 Climate change and biodiversity

Current commissioning reviews have identified that further work is needed on the future of Cheltenham's parks, gardens and open spaces and climate change is integral to this. The working group will be discussing with the Parks Development Manager how biodiversity is being affected by climate change and, linked to this, will look at ways in which they can support the Green Space Strategy review.

6.2 Air pollution and Smarter Travel Plan

Pollution levels in the town have increased to the extent that the whole of Cheltenham has been declared an Air Quality Management Area. The council now has 18 months to deliver an action plan which must address the exceeded pollution levels and recommend agreed solutions to the problem. There are clear linkages to be made between improving air quality across the town and the Smarter Travel Plan, which is being developed by the Integrated Transport team, and the working group will investigate with officers how members can support this process.

6.3 Commissioning

The working group will review the SLA for the Local Authority Company and will also receive a report on how the commissioning reviews have taken account of climate change, which will be reported back to a future Committee meeting.

6.4 Climate change and council operations

The working group will receive an impact assessment report of climate change on the operations of the council.

7. Next Steps

7.1 The working group requests Committee approval to:

- Continue to explore options with officers for invest-to-save projects, including potential investment in PV, and to approach Cabinet directly with any formal

recommendations

- Pursue the areas for future work outlined above

7.2 The Committee may also wish to direct the working group to look at areas of concern to the Committee, which have not been highlighted in this report.

Background Papers

Contact Officer	Gill Morris, climate change & sustainability officer, 01242 264229, gill.morris@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Councillor Roger Whyborn
Scrutiny Function	Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee