

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
(CORPORATE AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK)**

1 APRIL 2008

CABINET

3 APRIL 2008

**ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY
(Report by Head of Environmental Management)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members have previously considered the development of the Council's Environment Strategy on a number of occasions. Council at its meeting on 16 April 2008 will be invited to adopt the strategy.
- 1.2 This report outlines the final development of the environment strategy and its associated action plan reproduced at Annex A.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

- 2.1 An initial draft of the environment strategy was approved by Cabinet at their meeting on 1 February 2007. Subsequently it was reviewed in full by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) and the 'greening the business' and 'service impacts' implications of the strategy were considered by the Service Support and Service Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Panels respectively.
- 2.2 Cabinet at their meeting on 17 May 2007 reviewed the Panels' comments and agreed a version of the strategy for a broader engagement with the public and key stakeholders. Through the summer of 2007 meetings were held with Town and Parish Councils and the organisations representing environmental interests on the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership (e.g. the Environment Agency, Wildlife Trust and CPRE).
- 2.3 The development of the strategy was highlighted in District Wide and comments invited from the public. Feedback confirmed that the broad thrust of the strategy was supported by local people.
- 2.4 The engagement confirmed widespread support for a strategy addressing the three themes of –
- tackling climate change
 - using resources efficiently; and
 - protecting and improving our environment
- 2.5 Working closely with the Member Working Group consideration was then given to developing an action plan that would demonstrate in our role as a community leader, how these themes would be pursued by the Council as a major employer and property owner; and secondly, in the wider context of the district as a whole.
- 2.6 It was also recognised that the strategy document would need to be accessible to a very wide audience. A substantial volume of work already has been completed to simplify the text and work is continuing with a

creative agency to produce a document that is visually attractive. This work will be ongoing throughout the production of the document which will be formally launched during Environment Week 2nd – 8th June 2008.

- 2.7 Part of improving accessibility to the strategy will be to give it a name that reflects that vision. Again the creative agency working on the accessibility of the document has been retained to suggest a strap line that reflects the council's concern for, and commitment to, the environment.

3. DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY

- 3.1 The strategy provides the context for the council's future actions and provides the framework for long term targets based on those agreed at European, national or regional levels.
- 3.2 Delivery against those long term targets requires an action plan which sets out what is to be achieved year on year. This action plan must have regard to available resources and its achievement will also be influenced by what is happening outside of Huntingdonshire. These are variables which require the action plan to be a live document which is regularly reviewed and updated (the current version may still be incomplete and further input is welcome). For this reason the action plan will be produced as an appendix to the main body of the strategy and will be reported on annually.
- 3.3 Individual projects within the action plan will need to be promoted through the MTP process. However, to allow projects to proceed in the first year of the action plan the MTP recently approved by Council provided £200k capital in 2008 and £50k revenue in 2008/09 and the subsequent two years.
- 3.4 The attached Environment Strategy Project plan (Financial Implications) reproduced at Annex B shows the projects proposed in Year 1 (2008/09), their associated costs and indicative projects for subsequent years. Research commissioned by SEA Renue has started to develop possible scenarios for reducing carbon emissions in future years. The completion of this work will inform a review of Years 2-5 of the annexed action plan to be completed later this year and which will influence projects promoted through the MTP process.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The strategy has been developed over a twelve month period that has allowed meaningful engagement with local communities and interests. The strategy's objectives have received enthusiastic support and will provide a basis of action both by the council on its own, with its partners and with local people.
- 4.2 The action plan identifies a range of projects and the Council is able to commit to those requiring expenditure in 2008/09. Further work is required to develop more fully those in future years and this will be completed during 2008.
- 4.3 This is a key document which together with the Local Development Framework and the Sustainable Community Strategy, will provide a vision for Huntingdonshire its residents and businesses. Work is continuing to ensure that all local interest can identify with that vision and easily access

the content of the strategy. The pre-publication draft will be available at the meeting on 16 April 2008 when Council adopt the strategy.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 It is recommended that –

- The Cabinet recommends the Environment Strategy to Council for approval and adoption
- The Cabinet authorises the Director of Environmental Services after consultation with the Executive Member for Planning/Environment to agree minor textural changes and the final document format
- The Cabinet approves the content and costs of the year one Project Plan

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