

**ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY  
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel  
(Corporate and Strategic Framework) )**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 1st April 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) considered a report by the Head of Environmental Management to which was attached the District Council's Environment Strategy.
- 1.2 The Panel was acquainted with the key challenges contained in the Strategy, namely: tackling climate change, using resources effectively and protecting and improving the environment. Members were informed that the Council needed to become an exemplar for sustainable development. The Strategy would provide a platform for the District Council to pursue environmental objectives, enable it to influence others and lever in funding from outside organisations.

**2. THE PANEL'S COMMENTS**

- 2.1 In discussing the Strategy Members made a number of points for consideration. The principle one was that the Council should endeavour to measure the value of projects in terms of the carbon emitted and saved. This would enable the Council to take better informed decisions on the environmental impact of decisions and the value of the measures taken relative to their cost. They also stressed the importance of the advice provided by the Council to residents on improvements to their homes. An associated matter related to the need for suitably trained engineers to provide home improvement measures. In this respect Members have endorsed the accreditation scheme for installers operated by the Energy Saving Trust.
- 2.2 The Panel commented that the language of the Strategy could be more assertive. The Strategy contained a number of references to "encouraging" certain actions. Members were of the view that where possible the actions referred to should be compulsory. It was, however, recognised that many of the items described were not mandatory and that change was required at the national level before this could happen.
- 2.3 Other comments were made on the need to protect agricultural land. Some of the measures in the Strategy designed to promote biodiversity took up much land in the District. Members were aware that these measures would have the added benefit of reducing the impact of flooding on farm land. Finally, views were expressed on the importance of road transportation to the economy, which meant that there was a need to balance these competing priorities. The use of technology to make alternatives to fossil fuels viable in this and other respects were suggested.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 Having reviewed in detail its contents, the Panel endorsed the proposed Environment Strategy for submission to the Cabinet and requested that the comments set out above be taken into consideration. The Panel also expressed support for the recommendations contained in the report by the Head of Environmental Management.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 1st April 2008.

Environment Strategy – Report by the Head of Environmental Management.

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