
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework)

Report of the meeting held on 1st April 2008

Matter for Information

10. ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

Reproduced as an Appendix to the Report of the Cabinet (Item No. 74 refers) is a report by the Head of Environmental Management to which is attached the draft Environment Strategy. The Strategy identifies and addresses the three key environmental challenges of tackling climate change, using resources efficiently and protecting and improving the environment. The Strategy will provide a platform for the District Council to pursue environmental objectives, enable it to influence others and lever in funding from outside organisations. It also will assist the Council in becoming an exemplar for sustainable development and living.

The Panel has considered the financial implications of the Strategy and has questioned the carbon cost of some activities against the carbon savings that will be achieved. Members have formed the view that the Council should endeavour to measure the value of projects in terms of the carbon emitted and saved. This will 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.

The Panel has stressed the importance of the advice provided by the Council to residents on improvements to their homes. An associated matter relates to the need for suitably trained engineers to install home improvement measures. In this respect Members have recognised the value of the Energy Saving Trust's accreditation scheme for installers.

The Panel has commented that the language of the Strategy should be more assertive by changing as many references to "encouraging" certain actions as possible. While it is recognised that many of the items described are not mandatory and that change is required at the national level before it can happen, Members are of the view that, where possible, the actions referred to should be compulsory.

Some of the measures in the Strategy designed to promote biodiversity occupy extensive areas of the District. Although Members are aware that these measures have the benefit of reducing

the impact of flooding on farm land, an observation has been made on the need to protect agricultural land.

Attention has been drawn to the importance of road transportation to the economy, which means that there is a need to balance these competing priorities. It has been suggested that technology should be used to make alternatives to fossil fuels viable in this and other respects.

The Panel has endorsed plans to launch the Strategy during Environment Week in June 2008, which include the production of a supplementary document that highlights the Strategy's key messages.

S J Criswell
Chairman