

GREENHOUSE PROJECT UPDATE
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 12th October 2011, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) considered the report by the Head of Environmental Management updating the Panel on the Council's Green House Project, and the three possible options for taking it forward. This report summarises the Panel's discussions.

2. THE PANEL'S DISCUSSIONS

- 2.1 The Panel has been advised that the scheme is an exemplar project and helps local residents to reduce their fuel bills by demonstrating how typical homes can be sustainably refurbished in order to improve their energy efficiency. In addition to the number of visitors it has received, it has been the subject of positive coverage in the national press.
- 2.2 Members have expressed their support for the project. They have commented that, through first-hand personal experience, they have found it provides a very good service that helps residents. However, they recognise the need for at least one of the properties to be rented out in order to establish their real fuel and other energy usage and associated financial savings.
- 2.3 At the same time, the Panel recognizes the need to continue to have one of the properties available to demonstrate the benefits of the measures that have been introduced to residents, academic institutions and commercial enterprises. Moreover, it provides an opportunity to promote the local economy through instruction in residential environmental technology and encouraging the construction sector.
- 2.4 National and Government bodies have had considerable interest in the project. It should help the Council to be at the forefront of the new Government 'Green Deal'. This enables consumers to pay for energy efficiency measures through their energy bills.
- 2.4 Following discussion on the costs and benefits of energy saving measures and the wider opportunities for both sponsorship and other income generation opportunities, the Panel has recommended that the Cabinet should pursue Option 2 referred to in the report with the St Ives Green House being retained until March 2014, and the St Neots property being offered for rental.
- 2.5 Members have also expressed the view that the Council should make more efforts to promote the Green House project and that it should make more widely known the details of accredited installers of home energy efficiency measures.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is requested to take into consideration the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) as set out above when considering this item.

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