

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan towards a Climate Change Strategy for the city.

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan towards a Climate Change Strategy for the city to the executive for agreement. The strategy relates specifically to council actions in this area; a strategy for the council rather than the whole city. Also to seek agreement to the adoption of the Environmental Policy as a basis for the council's Environmental Management System (EMS).

Background

2. The council is currently developing a reputation in the region and beyond, for forward thinking and action in the arena of sustainability and climate change. This is due to:
 - Demonstration projects – York EcoDepot,
 - Policy development - Supplementary Planning Guidance and policy on Sustainable Design and Construction; corporate procurement strategy
 - Indicators to monitor our progress - we are one of the leading councils in the adoption and use of Ecological Footprinting and using the policy profiling tool REAP (Resource Energy Analysis Programme),
 - The Local Area Agreement - is viewed by the Government office as one of the best in the region for the way it has embedded sustainability.
3. In June 2007 the leaders of the political parties in York requested that the council prepare a Climate Change Strategy. Prior to that the two Sustainability Officers of the council had been preparing a Sustainability Strategy which incorporated proposals for developing a Climate Change Strategy.
4. The Strategy & Action Plan attached as Annex A is the above mentioned strategy. It is not a Climate Change Strategy but provides the policy context, methodology and timescale by which one will be produced.

5. The draft Environmental Policy was agreed by Executive in 2004. This has now been redrafted following staff consultation and was presented to corporate management team in February this year. The Environment Policy sits below the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and forms the foundations for the council's Environmental Management System (EMS). The proposed Environmental Policy is attached in Annex B.

Consultation

6. The details of the Sustainability Strategy mentioned above were presented to Corporate Management Team in February and March of this year with a view for the first draft to be presented to Executive in April. The report was delayed and has now been informed by the above request by the political parties. A scoping report for the full strategy incorporating proposals for a Climate Change Strategy was presented to the Party Leaders meeting on 22 June 2007. Since then the draft has returned to Corporate Management Team (CMT) in June where it was suggested its emphasis was on Environmental sustainability and that the councils communication team should be consulted on its layout and presentation.
7. Consultation has taken place with staff from across the council on the Environmental Policy. All Directorate Management teams have seen the policy via email to cascade to staff and through presentations at their meetings. Comments have been received back and the policy amended accordingly.

Options

8. There are two options at this stage:
 - A. to do nothing and continue council sustainability activity in an adhoc, manner utilising opportunities as they arise, or
 - B. provide a strategic coordinated approach to council work on sustainability and the development of a Climate Change Strategy.

Analysis

9. Option A.
This approach has been the one take over the last 4 years due to the staff resources available. The identification and use of opportunities as they arise to demonstrate sustainability principles has been beneficial. It has however, meant that progress has not been made on the council's Environmental Management System (EMS) as the embedding of sustainability principles into every day council activities needs dedicated staff resources, continuity of these resources and careful planning. Due to limited staff available this has not been possible.
10. Option B.
There is support for the vision of a more sustainable York and the examples in paragraph 2 demonstrate the council is moving in the right

direction: however there is currently a lack of coordination. The staff resources in sustainability doubled in January 2007 (now two officers) this has meant progress on the council's EMS and the use of the Ecological Footprint and REAP. It has also meant the council was in the position to take advantage of the help offered by the Carbon Trust to develop a Carbon Management Programme for the council. It is becoming increasingly clear that as activities and expectations increase the council now needs a coordinated strategy for realising the vision in a prioritised way; to consolidate achievements, identify gaps and provide a clear view of where to go next. Therefore, the target is for the council to show leadership; maintaining and developing the increasing high profile importance and urgency assigned by government and society to sustainability and climate change.

11. The awareness and understanding of the issues around sustainability have also changed over the last 4 years, particularly in relation to climate change. The Stern Review (2006) identified the economic impact of climate change as 1% Global Gross Domestic Product. Stern further identifies the 'Business as usual' scenario reducing the wellbeing of people by up to 20%. There is an overwhelming body of scientific evidence highlighting the serious and urgent nature of climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, published in February 2007, confirms that atmospheric concentrations of the major greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have all increased significantly since pre-industrialised times because of human activities. It shows conclusively that the debate over the science of climate has moved on from whether or not it is happening to what action we need to take.
12. In order for sustainability issues, climate change and resource depletion to be tackled effectively actions need to be embedded into everything the council does.
13. It is proposed that this strategy concentrates on environmental sustainability (sustainable development and sustainability means the balance of social, economic and environmental issues). However it was recognized by CMT during consultation that a Sustainability Strategy is one of a much wider nature and more appropriate to be incorporated into a Council/Corporate Strategy. The attached Strategy and Action Plan therefore concentrates on the area where there have been gaps in action, that is in reducing the council's environmental impact and climate change.
14. The Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan towards a Climate Change Strategy for the city is split into two areas of action;
 - I) those that the council has direct control over such as how it delivers its services, the energy it uses and what it buys, and;
 - II) the areas in which the council has a leadership and influencing role such a planning policy and the Local Strategic Partnership.

14. The purpose of the Strategy and Action Plan is not to duplicate work but to identify how activities in the council contribute to the sustainability agenda. It is intended to identify and fill the gaps in council action relating to reducing its own environmental impact. A very important part of this action is the production of a Climate Change Strategy for the city. This document does not provide this but it does provide the policy context in which it can take place, the methodology to produce it and time scales. It identifies that a Climate Change Strategy needs to be prepared for the whole of the city and not just the council and that this should take place through partnership via the Local Strategic partnership. Ultimately it is intended that the attached strategy enables wider action to take place in a coordinated fashion to ensure the effective delivery of limited resources to the maximum effect.

Corporate Priorities

15. The proposed Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan meets the following corporate and partnership objectives:
- 'Without Walls' - the Community Strategy which provides the sustainable framework for York ;
 - The Corporate Strategy of CYC and supporting Corporate Priorities 1 – 3,6,7,9,11-13.
 - Executive sign up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change
 - Executive agreement to implement an Environmental Management System
 - The recent refresh of the council's Corporate Strategy suggests the inclusion of a Direction Statement of 'We will seek to place environmental sustainability at the heart of everything we do.'
 - This also includes the suggestion for the inclusion of an Improvement Priority of; '(We will) reduce the environmental impact of council activities and encourage, empower and promote others to do the same.'

Implications

- 16.
- **Financial** – There are no financial implications
 - **Human Resources (HR)** – The Strategy will be produced using existing staff resources.
 - **Equalities** – There are no equalities implications.
 - **Legal** – There are no legal implications.
 - **Crime and Disorder** – There are no crime and disorder implications.

- **Information Technology (IT)** – There are no IT implications.
- **Property** – There are no property implications.
- **Other** – None.

Risk Management

17. There are no identified risks associated with this recommendation.

Recommendations

18. Members are asked to consider:

- 1) Option B and to agree the Environmental Sustainability and Action Plan towards a Climate Change Strategy for the city.

Reason: To provide a basis for future action in environmental sustainability for the council.

- 2) Approving the Environmental Policy attached in Annex B

Reason: To provide a basis for council activities and its EMS.

Contact Details

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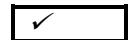
Report Approved



Date 30/8/07

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected: All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: Report to and minutes of Executive 20th April 2004 – Draft Environmental Policy and update on preliminary review of the Environmental Management System.

Annexes:

- Environmental Sustainability and Action Plan towards a Climate Change Strategy for the city.
- City of York Council Environmental Policy.