

ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

Leicestershire County Council's Medium Term Corporate Strategy outlines the Council's priority objectives. The vision included in the Corporate Strategy says that 'We will listen to the views of Leicestershire people and, by working with them, ensure they enjoy the quality of life which they expect: to live in a County which is safe, healthy, attractive and prosperous.'

The Leicestershire Community Strategy includes a pledge to 'Lead the community by demonstrating and promoting environmental good practice' and this document sets out how the County Council aims to fulfil this commitment.

The County Council, with partners, has taken a number of actions to improve the quality of the Leicestershire Environment. In December 2006 the three Group Leaders signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. All Leicestershire Districts have now done the same and we are within the first region of England where all Local Authorities are now signed up to the Declaration.

Within the Authority an Energy and Water Strategy has been successfully prepared and approved. Two immediate items to come out of it have been the establishment of an Invest to Save fund for measures that improve our resource efficiency and a doubling of the size of the Energy Management Unit within the Resources Department to ensure that appropriate projects are brought forward. An application to the Carbon Trust's Local Authority Carbon Management Programme has been submitted with a view to ensuring the Authority is better informed on its own carbon footprint and in a position to prepare detailed carbon reduction targets and reduction strategies.

As a result of switching to renewable energy supplies for County Hall and Highway lighting, our carbon dioxide emissions have been reduced by 21% over the last 3 years. Further reductions are expected as a result of targeted investments through the Invest to Save Fund, through the recently launched energy and water saving campaign and through budgeted improved energy efficiency from the replacement and refurbishment programmes at schools and libraries. The anticipated savings from these initiatives are built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as part of the efficiency savings.

The County Council's own Environment Strategy has been adopted to focus action particularly on the three key areas of Energy, Waste and Procurement. A 5 member panel has also been established to consider the whole of the Environment Agenda and has produced its first report on Environmental Procurement, which was approved by Cabinet on 15th January 2008. An Environmental Risk Assessment of the County Council's operations is currently underway and this will inform the focus of this strategy and feed into the work of the Corporate Risk Management Group.

At County Hall an active Car Share scheme is in operation with preferential spaces, a newsletter, a monthly prize draw, a guaranteed get you home service and 229 people signed up to the scheme on the leicestershire website (a lift share database). Service savings by reducing staff travel have been identified. Cyclists have been encouraged by the provision improved and additional showers secure lockers and a drying room. Bus

services are promoted to staff and visitors. Startrak is installed in reception and personalised travel plans are prepared for interview candidates. It is hoped to extend this service to all staff during 2008. Then MTFFS allocates both revenue and capital funding to projects within the Change Management programme including flexible and mobile working.

A waste audit of County Hall has been undertaken and an Action Plan been prepared to reduce production of waste, ensure reuse where possible and to maximise recycling and is part of implementing the Waste Strategy. Major projects in the programme includes food waste collection and treatment, waste reduction & re-use initiatives, improving waste recycling centres and procuring waste treatment capacity. Significant revenue and capital funds over the next three years have been allocated to help deliver the programme. The programme was subject to an external gateway review in February 2007 which made a number of recommendations to strengthen delivery.

Our procurement agent ESPO has developed an innovative National Sustainable products catalogue. We aim to increase our purchase of environmentally products through ESPO to 38 percent by 2009

The current Local Area Agreement (LAA) includes a number of environmental outcomes (on biodiversity, walking and cycling, Country Park performance, energy efficiency of buildings etc), for which contributions are allocated within various departments budgets. Discussions on the new LAA linked to the preparation of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the new National Indicator Set are well advanced and are anticipated to lead to adoption of targets linked to Reducing our contribution to climate change and to be more resilient to its effects, to making everywhere in Leicestershire a safe and attractive place to live and work, and more effective and efficient service delivery. Appropriate provision is made for the new LAA and the potential Multi Area Agreement in the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2008

How the strategy was developed

The environment strategy has been developed by establishing priorities from local consultation and research, national and regional policy on environmental issues and by drawing on the expertise of senior environment officers.

The action plan was developed in consultation with key decision makers and 'grass roots' staff in all departments of the County Council to establish what is practical and achievable.

Although the Policy Statement is unlikely to be reviewed more frequently than every 5 years, as the priorities are unlikely to change in that time, the action plan will need regular updating on an annual basis.

This Environment Strategy only covers the environmental performance of the County Council's operations and estate, and essentially deals with "getting our own house in order".

Guidance on Sustainability Appraisal

Sustainability appraisal's should be undertaken on all significant policies, programmes and projects. The County Council's sustainability scheme can be found on CIS at : http://cis/chief_execs/bv_guidance_pack/resources/sustainability_appraisal_form.doc

The appraisal form is split into eight topics:

- Community and Citizenship
- Equity
- Education
- Economy
- Wildlife and Open Spaces
- Health
- Energy and Pollution
- Resources and Waste

The aim is to use the checklist (there are 42 questions in all) as a useful guide to evaluating the sustainability of a project or policy.

ENVIRONMENT POLICY 2004 -2010

Leicestershire County Council is committed to protecting and enhancing the environment of Leicestershire and to improving the quality of life for Leicestershire people both now and in the future. By minimising the impacts of our activities, Leicestershire County Council will contribute to the improvement of the global environment through local action and will deliver sustainable development by recognising the links between the environment, people and our economy.

Leicestershire County Council aims to:

- Protect and enhance the County's biodiversity and habitats
- Conserve and enhance the character, diversity and local distinctiveness of Leicestershire landscapes and towns, and provide opportunities for public access and enjoyment of green spaces.
- Support efficient use of all resources, including energy and water
- Reduce the amount of waste produced and minimise its environmental impact by following the waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse and recycle
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate the rate of climate change
- Support action to create a healthy environment, free from pollution and contamination
- Lead the community by demonstrating and promoting environmental good practice.

A key part of delivering a better quality of life for Leicestershire residents and ensuring sustainable development is the care of the County Council's own environment. In order to demonstrate our commitment to the environment, Leicestershire County Council is committed to:

- Critical examination of the impact which our policies and programmes have on the environment and timely actions to minimise these impacts
- Integration of environmental best practice in corporate and specific policies where appropriate
- Continual improvement in our environmental performance
- Measurement against comparable authorities and other benchmarks
- Compliance with the requirements of all environmental legislation as a minimum
- Raising awareness and encouraging participation among members and employees in environmental matters
- Working with partners, businesses and other organisations who demonstrate commitment to environmental improvement

- Spreading and sharing knowledge across the Council through sustainable development champions in all Departments
- Ensuring purchasing decisions are mindful of sustainability and environmental impacts
- Increasing understanding of environmental issues and ensuring everyone has access to accurate information which encourages lifestyle changes and positive action

ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

- A. To increase participation in the implementation of the Environment Strategy throughout Leicestershire County Council.
- B. To ensure staff receive the necessary support in the implementation of the Strategy.
- C. To minimise waste and increase the percentage of recycling from Leicestershire County Council sites.
- D. To achieve improved environmental performance through ensuring that staff are better informed of the environmental impact of the supply and delivery of goods, works and services.
- E. To help tackle climate change by:-
 - Increasing energy efficiency across the County Council estates.
 - Increasing the proportion of our energy demand met by renewable sources.
 - Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Achieving improved efficiency of water use by setting and achieving targets for water consumption reduction.
- F. To improve biodiversity through increasing the number of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats on Leicestershire County Council estates.
- G. To demonstrate environmental benefits for the community by promoting good environmental practice.