

B. ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY 2011-2021

Introduction

1. This report concerns the revised Environment Strategy 2011-2021 which sets out the Council's environmental priorities and objectives.

Background

2. The Environment Strategy is identified in the Constitution as forming part of the Authority's Policy Framework and, therefore, is a matter which requires the approval of the full Council.
3. The current Environment Strategy and Action Plan was approved by the Cabinet in February 2010 and runs until 2020. It sets out the actions the County Council needs to take to ensure good internal practices and that it can continue to deliver improving environmental performance. As such, it is largely internally focused. The necessary external focus is provided by the Sustainable Community Strategy produced by Leicestershire Together.
4. The reasons that a review of the Environment Strategy is needed now are to:
 - a. Provide community leadership and to show that the Council has "its own house in order".
 - b. Support the outcomes of the Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy.
 - c. Improve the Council's resource efficiency and deliver cost savings wherever possible, particularly in the light of the revised Carbon Reduction Commitment – Energy Efficiency Scheme.
 - d. Reflect the wishes of staff – in 2010 only 70% agreed with the statement "I believe that the Council is doing enough to reduce its impact on the environment".
 - e. Fulfil the Council's commitment as a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change.
 - f. Respond to the Government's agenda for local authorities to improve their environmental performance and comply with environmental legislation.
 - g. Ensure that the Strategy meets the requirements of ISO14001 to allow business units to apply for accreditation under the Environmental Management System Standard.

Proposal

5. The Environment Strategy has been amended to bring it up to date with current circumstances and a copy is attached as Appendix B to this report. The main issues and changes proposed are set out below.
6. **Scope of the Strategy.** Previous Environment Strategies have excluded the main environmental impacts of the Council's statutory services; for example, the level of waste performance and success of transportation services. This only gave a partial view of the Council's performance and, therefore, it is now proposed that these impacts should be included. The Strategy has been amended accordingly. This change will also allow the Authority, or parts thereof, to apply for certification under an Environmental Management System such as ISO14001.
7. **Aim.** The main aim of the previous Strategy was to ensure that Leicestershire would be one of the best performing County Councils in England on environmental issues by the end of 2012. Officers have attempted to establish an approach that would allow the Council's performance to be measured using the Strategy's main objectives. This approach has two fundamental problems, firstly because defining measurable targets for some of the objectives is very difficult; and secondly, the loss of the National Indicator set means there will be few enduring comparative measures to assess against other authorities' performance which would allow the Council to indicate that the cachet 'one of the best' is deserved. However, an assessment of performance has been undertaken (reported to the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel on 20th June 2011) which establishes that the current environmental performance already allows the Council to claim it is one of the best performing on environmental issues. The main aim has, therefore, been adjusted to read "Leicestershire County Council will continue to be one of the best performing County Council on the Environment". For the future, in order to demonstrate continuing performance at this level, it is recommended that the Authority commits itself to work with the Local Government Group (and others) to help develop an indicator set (based on existing data collection) that would allow for continuing comparative performance assessment.
8. **Renewable Energy Generation.** There is an outstanding need to establish a target for Renewable Energy generated on County Council sites, which the Cabinet asked to be incorporated in the next review. The Government has established a national target of 15% of consumption to be generated by renewable sources by 2020 and it has been suggested that the County Council should aim to match that. However, while national performance includes off shore wind generation the County figures

obviously cannot. The County Council has argued strongly that its initial focus should be on energy efficiency rather than renewable generation. It is therefore proposed that a target of 10% is more appropriate for these particular circumstances. This target may be refined in future as the work on the Leicestershire Renewable Energy Strategy is brought forward.

9. **Accredited Environmental Management System Standard (ISO14001).** The Authority has previously agreed to work towards ensuring the Authority meets Environmental Management System standards while not necessarily committing the whole Authority to actually apply for accreditation. It is now clear that accreditation is desirable from the point of view of commercial service providers and it is proposed that the Authority should undertake the necessary work to ensure that, by December 2011, the County Council would be in a position to support an application on behalf of one or more of its commercial units. This does not imply that the whole Authority would need to apply. A number of amendments have therefore been made to the policy statement and objectives to ensure the requirements of the Standard are met.
10. **The Action Plan** element of the Strategy has been removed from the proposed document and replaced by Section 6 which summarises the implementation monitoring that takes place through the work stream programmes. This reflects that the key actions for delivery of the Environment Strategy takes place through a range of related Programme Boards.
11. **The Staff code of conduct** on the environment (7 Ways to Go Green) is now written into the Strategy.
12. **Targets** have been reviewed and amended and annual targets now included for this and next year.

Resource Implications

13. Achievement of the key target of a 30% reduction in carbon emissions between 2008-09 and 2013-14 will require resources for which there is a robust invest to save case as detailed in the Carbon Programme (this will be reported separately to a future Cabinet meeting). Delivery of the rest of the Strategy can be achieved within existing resources.

Consideration by Cabinet and Scrutiny

14. The Scrutiny Commission considered this matter at its meeting on 7 September 2011 and an extract from the minutes of that meeting is set out in Appendix C to this report.

15. The Cabinet considered the matter at its meeting on 13 September and agreed to recommend the County Council to approve the revised Strategy. It also agreed to commit the Council to work with the Local Government Group to help to develop an indicator which would allow for comparative performance assessment of its commitment to continue to be one of the best performing County Councils on environmental issues.

(Motion to be moved:-

That the Environment Strategy 2011-2021, as referred to in Section B of the report of the Cabinet, be approved.)