
Meeting: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 18th September 2014
Subject: Climate Change Strategy
Report of: Cllr Nigel Young, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning
Summary: The report provides an update of the progress made in implementing the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

Advising Officer: Jason Longhurst, Director of Regeneration and Business
Contact Officer: Stephen Mooring, Environmental Policy Manager
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: (All)
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

1. Taking positive and proactive steps to tackle climate change demonstrates leadership and contributes to the delivery of all the Council's priorities, particularly in relation to: Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow.

Financial:

2. The Council's annual energy bill for our corporate estate for 13/14 (including street lighting but excluding schools) was £1.8 million. The implementation of the measures in the Climate Change Strategy has contributed to reducing energy use, and therefore these costs from £2.24m in 09/10. Energy prices are however on a continued upward trend, If the lower end estimate from DECC's energy price projections of 5.3% per year is applied, then without continued action by 19/20 the Council could be facing an energy bill for its corporate estate that has increased by £0.7m. This excludes any positive impacts relating to how the Council procures energy.
3. In addition to this 15/16 will see the introduction of Energy Market Reform (EMR). This will see an additional charge to all electricity bills to fund investment in new energy generation and transmission infrastructure. It is estimated that this could add an additional 20% on to electricity bills, with this increasing to 50% from 20/21. This could see the corporate energy bill (including street lighting) increase by a further 0.5m by 20/21.

Legal:

4. The Climate Change Act places a legal duty on all public authorities to plan for the impacts of climate change, to ensure that their areas are resilient and prepared for the impacts of a changing climate.

Risk Management:

5. Central Bedfordshire will not be immune to the impacts that a changing climate will have. The Council will need to act now to adapt and to manage the risks to service delivery, local communities, local infrastructure, businesses and the natural environment. Failure to take action on this agenda will also present the Council with financial risks, primarily through the increase in fuel costs. Where risks have been identified they will be managed through Directorate and Service Risk Registers.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

6. If the Council is to achieve a reduction in its carbon footprint, staff and members will need to be involved and act. Based on best practice from other Local Authorities targeting staff with a robust green awareness campaign could reduce energy use in the Council's buildings, excluding school and street lighting, by up to 5%. The medium term accommodation plan, which includes the reduction in buildings and new ways of working (including video and tele-conferencing) will also help reduce the council's carbon footprint.

Equalities/Human Rights:

7. Public authorities have a statutory duty to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
8. The actions taken to implement the Climate Change Strategy, particularly those relating to cutting the Central Bedfordshire area's carbon footprint and preparing for the impacts of a changing climate will need be carried out in an inclusive manner. They will benefit those suffering from inequalities, for example domestic energy efficiency work being targeted at households suffering from fuel poverty and measures taken to mitigate against the impacts of a changing climate – such as extreme weather events and heat waves - protecting the elderly and other vulnerable groups.

Public Health

9. The impacts of a changing climate will result in more implications on the health and wellbeing of our communities. For example over heating can lead to excess summer deaths mainly of the elderly and vulnerable. The increase in energy costs will also have considerable impacts on our residents with more people falling into fuel poverty
10. Measures to reduce emissions, particularly through the use of more sustainable modes of transport, such as walking and cycling could also contribute to healthier and more active lifestyles.

Community Safety:

11. There are none in addition to the issues highlighted in the Public Health assessment of this report (above).

Sustainability:

12. The Climate Change Strategy delivers on, or links strongly to key principles of sustainability which are living within environmental limits, ensuring a strong, healthy and just society, and achieving a sustainable economy.

Procurement:

13. The Council's procurement decisions will have an impact on CO₂ emissions either directly, as is the case with energy, further up the supply chain, or through embodied emissions from the manufacture of goods that are procured.
14. Existing procurement policies do consider the environmental credentials of potential suppliers and efficiencies lead by procurement help ensure that unnecessary procurement does not happen (the most environmentally sound approach). There is scope to better consider the environmental/carbon impact of what is being procured.

RECOMMENDATION(S):**The Committee is asked to:-**

1. Review progress in relation to performance in delivering the Climate Change Strategy and comment on any specific aspects they consider to be appropriate in relation to the delivery of the Strategy 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Background

15. Central Bedfordshire Council has a key role to play in mitigating climate change, both as a community leader and through the services we provide. The Council is also a considerable consumer of energy and a direct source of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions through our activities and buildings. The Council therefore needs to lead by example, demonstrate best practice, realise the efficiency savings associated with tackling this issue, and as a result, inspire business and residents in our area to take carbon reduction measures.
16. Central Bedfordshire will not be immune to the impacts of changing climate and will need to act now to adapt and manage risks to service delivery, the public, local communities, local infrastructure, businesses and the natural environment.
17. In June 2010 the Council adopted its first Climate Change Strategy. The Strategy sets out three key aims:
 - a. Cutting the Council's own carbon footprint - Aim for a 35% reduction by 2015 and work towards an overall 60% reduction by 2020 (from the 2008/09 baseline).
 - b. Cutting Central Bedfordshire's Area emissions - Continue to work towards the last Local Area Agreement area emissions target of a 10.7% by 2011 and future targets.

- c. Preparing for the impacts of climate change - Working towards achieving level 4 (top level) of National Indicator (NI)188 which required preparation for the impacts of a changing climate by 2012/13.
18. The Climate Change Strategy Update (Appendix A) report provides a detailed overview of progress to date. It also highlights changes to national and local policy and the implications of these, future issues and next steps to be taken to move towards the realisation of the ambition shown in the Climate Change Strategy.

Headline progress

19. **The Councils own carbon footprint:** The Council's carbon footprint has decreased by 17% from last year and just under 24% from the 2009/10 baseline. Although the milder winter will have contributed to this, the on-going reductions in electricity use highlight an on-going downward trend. This CO₂ saving equates to a total reduction in energy bills across the corporate estate of just over £100K and a reduction in school energy costs in the region of £250K last year. The excellent work by Pete Hughes, the School's Energy Officer, should also be highlighted. The Council's Green House Gas (GHG) report has to be published online at: http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/140731%20Central%20Bedfordshire%20Council%20GHG%20Emissions%20reporting%2013-14_tcm6-26297.pdf#False
20. The target in the Climate Change Strategy is a 35% reduction by the end of 2015. As this falls part way through a GHG monitoring year, progress will be measured from the 2015/16 carbon footprint. This target will be challenging, however over the next 6 months a lot of work will be done with colleagues in Assets to identify potential energy efficiency projects through a programme of investment grade energy audits. These will reap dividends and allow us to far better utilise and combine the carbon reduction, capital and maintenance budgets that Assets hold to carry out necessary works which also deliver more in terms of energy efficiency.
21. In next years carbon footprint the impact of other initiatives, such as YS2 (for example reduced business mileage and energy use from Technology House no longer considered in scope), the on-going programme of engagement with schools as well as the full impact of energy efficiency measures completed over the last financial year (12/13) will be seen.
22. **The Central Bedfordshire area's Carbon Footprint:** Per capita CO₂ emissions from across the Central Bedfordshire are have fallen from 8 tonnes of CO₂ per person to 6.7 tonnes of CO₂ per person between the period 2005 and 2012. This exceeds the 10.7% target set through the Central Bedfordshire Local Area Agreement.

23. **Adapting to the impacts of the changing climate:** There is no longer any mechanism for measuring progress in relation to Climate change Adaptation (formerly covered by NI188), although the Council does have robust resilience mechanisms already in place. Issues, such as flooding are being dealt with proactively through planning policy, in this instance the adoption of supplementary planning guidance on Sustainable Drainage System, of which the Council was one of the first planning authorities to do so in the UK.

Other key issues

24. After the general election in 2010, the Coalition government removed a number of policy mechanisms, changed requirements and introduced new schemes, all of which have had a material impact on the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy. A detailed overview is given in the update report (appendix 1). These include:
- a. Removal of the Local Government Performance framework (and subsequently NI185, 186 and 188) on which the Council's Climate Change targets were based.
 - b. Ending of Local Area Agreements.
 - c. Simplification of the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) to remove Schools from scope and as a result meaning the Council itself no longer has to participate in the scheme.
25. Data relating to the Council's own carbon footprint and the Central Bedfordshire area is still collected, although the latter is subject to a three year time-lag. This means the most current data we have for the Central Bedfordshire area is for 2012.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Climate Change Strategy: progress update (July 2014)