
Meeting: Schools Forum

Date: 7 March 2011

Subject: Draft Schools Carbon Reduction Action Plan

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children Services

Summary: The draft Schools' Carbon Reduction Action Plan has been produced to ensure that carbon reduction is owned and addressed by all stakeholders across the schools' estate; in implementing both behavioural and physical changes that will result in greater energy efficiency and reduced carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions thereby minimising utility costs and mitigating against the impact of future carbon taxes.

Contact Officer: John McDermott

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

Reason for urgency
(if appropriate)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That the Schools' Forum considers the draft Schools' Carbon Reduction Action Plan as attached at Appendix A and indicates its support for the approach taken in developing the plan.**
- 2. That the Schools' Forum invites all schools to support and adopt the approaches set out in this plan.**

Background

1. The impact of a changing climate on the Council and how it delivers services is a key challenge. The Council acknowledges the importance of taking action now in order to reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and to ensure that Central Bedfordshire is well equipped to cope with inevitable climate change in years to come.

The Council's Carbon Management Plan details the commitments made in its Climate Change Strategy relating to cutting the Council's own carbon footprint and reducing energy and fuel use from the Council's estate, schools, fleet and services it provides.

2. The Plan states the business case for taking action in terms of carbon reduction, specifically explaining the huge financial costs associated with taking a 'business as usual' approach.

As noted in the Plan, currently emissions from schools make up 52% of CBC's carbon footprint and so it is clear that the schools' estate must be engaged and contribute to developing and implementing CBC's Climate Change Strategy.

3. Likewise utility costs are expected to rise considerably over the coming years and a greater proportion of school revenue will be directed away from supporting teaching and learning specifically, to these costs.

The Council will also become a compulsory participant in phase 2 of the Government's Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) scheme, having to report CO₂ emissions annually from April 2013 and start paying for allowances to cover our emissions annually from April 2014.

Strategy to reduce the School Carbon Footprint

4. In 2008 the DCSF Commissioned the Zero Carbon Taskforce to advise on how new school buildings can be zero carbon rated by 2016. In January 2010 the Taskforce identified a 5 step roadmap to achieving zero carbon in schools with the aim of helping schools to join the fight against climate change and at the same time save money. This report includes recommendations on how and when zero-carbon schools can be built, as well as advice on the potential to reduce carbon emissions in existing schools, including measures taken as part of refurbishment.
5. On this basis the School Organisation and Capital Planning Team has undertaken two projects:
 1. To create a Sustainable Design Brief setting out CBC's approach to reducing carbon in construction projects, ensuring that both new build and refurbishment projects in the schools' estate embrace energy efficiency as a core principle.
 2. To produce this Schools' Carbon Reduction Action Plan to ensure that schools which are not undergoing large scale capital building projects are still fully involved in embracing energy efficiency through the provision of advice and recommendations for the whole schools' estate.

Development of the Schools' Carbon Reduction Action Plan

6. To achieve the aim of developing a Schools' Carbon Reduction Action Plan by March 2011, the following work has been undertaken:
 - The establishment of a Schools' Asset Management Planning sub group of the Schools' Forum. This sub group consists of a cross section of school Governors, Headteachers and Business Managers from CBC's Upper, Middle and Lower schools and specialist CBC Officers.
 - Research into carbon reduction to identify potential work-streams.

- The commissioning of LowC Communities, a specialist Low Carbon consultancy, to carry out investigations on site at the 10 worst performing CBC schools in terms of carbon (identified from existing data as CBC's 'improvement portfolio'). These investigations have led to both specific plans to improve energy efficiency, reduce energy consumption and effect behavioural change at each site and a summary report of ideas that can be applied to the whole estate.

7. The group's work has followed three work-streams for inclusion within the project. These are:

- Corporate context and suggested Carbon Reduction Commitment actions for schools
- Zero Carbon Taskforce roadmap and Eco-schools Agenda
- Results of the LowC Commission

Each of the Project's work-streams has identified specific activity and this is now compiled within the draft Schools' Carbon Reduction Action Plan.

Governance

8. Following feedback from the Schools' Forum this Action Plan will be finalised by the Schools' Asset Management Planning sub group and will be submitted for adoption as the schools' contribution to the Council's Carbon Management Plan.
9. Corporate funding will need to be found to resource an energy management officer. The work programme for this resource in terms of schools will be established and overseen by the Schools' Asset Management Planning sub group and progress and performance will be reported back to Schools' Forum in March 2012.
10. The delivery of the action plan will also be reported, as part of the refresh and reporting of the Council's Carbon Management Plan.

Appendices:

Appendix A – The draft Schools' Carbon Reduction Action Plan