
Meeting: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 13th December 2012
Subject: The Council's carbon reduction target and the LGA Climate Local initiative
Report of: Cllr Nigel Young, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning
Summary: The report responds to requests for further clarification at the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting of 26th July; in relation to whether the 35% carbon reduction target by 2015 was achievable and for further clarification as to what the benefits of the Council signing up to 'Climate Local' would be.

Advising Officer: Gary Alderson, Director of Sustainable Communities
Contact Officer: Stephen Mooring, Corporate Policy Adviser (Sustainability & Climate Change)
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 Carbon Management Plan (CMP) highlights how failure to take action will leave the Council vulnerable to substantial future costs, from increases in energy costs and other fines and penalties (see paragraph 4 below). The current combined energy spend for the Council and schools is in the region of £5.1 million, with £1.8 million relating to the corporate estate and street lighting, and £3.3 million relating to schools. This could rise as high as £13.2 million by 2016 if sufficient action isn't taken, based on the Value at Stake analysis carried out in the CMP.

3. The Council will be subject to the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC), which it is estimated will cost the Council approx. £377k p.a. from 2014/15 based upon the carbon emissions from the Council's corporate estate and schools. Of this £216K relates to allowances for schools carbon emissions, £74K relates to the Council's corporate estate, £70K relates to street lighting and £17K covers reporting and admin costs. The CRC scheme itself is currently going through consultation to simplify how it works, this means that it is not yet clear how emissions for schools and Academies will be handled in the future, whether the Council will be responsible for these and whether the cost off allowances will be able to be clawed back from schools. Clarification on this is expected from Government as part of the Autumn Statement in early December 2012.

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. This Act also implements the CRC Energy Efficiency scheme, which the Council will be legally required to participate in. This also has strict financial penalties for organisations who fail to participate in or maintain accurate supporting evidence with fines for non-compliance in the first phase of the scheme ranging from between £40,000 to £90,000 for late submission of information or non-compliance with the schemes requirements.

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 and impact of the CRC, along with the reputational risk of not robustly tackling this issue. 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 electricity use in the Council's buildings, excluding schools, by up to 5%, which equates to a saving of approximately £26,000 from the Corporate electricity bill. 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 to 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 well being 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, not only in the winter months as they look heat their homes, but also in the future, as there is an increased need for air conditioning in summers.
10. Measures to reduce emissions, particularly through the use of more sustainable modes of transport, such as walking and cycling would also contribute to healthier and more active lifestyles.

Community Safety:

11. In addition to the issues highlighted in the Public Health assessment of this report (above) the increased risk and frequency of extreme weather events will place more pressure on the Council and emergency services. Implementation of the Strategy will contribute to ensuring that robust adaptation measures are put in place to limit or avoid these impacts.

Sustainability:

12. The Climate Change Strategy delivers on, or links strongly to key principles of sustainable development 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. **Consider the further information provided as requested in the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee of 26th July 2012.**

Introduction

12. A report was tabled at Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 26th July 2012 to provide:
 - (a) An update of the progress made in implementing the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan, and;
 - (b) Proposals for how the Council can continue to demonstrate its commitment to tackling climate change and becoming more energy efficient, namely through signing up to the Local Government Association's Climate Local initiative.
13. The Committee requested further information with the following actions:
 - (a) That a further report be submitted to the Committee detailing the programmes that the Sustainable Communities directorate aims to progress in order to deliver a 35% reduction by 2015 and 60% reduction by 2020 in the Council's carbon footprint. The report should also detail the discussion that the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Economic Development has undertaken with the Executive Member for Children's Services as to whether an appropriate budget has been allocated for adaptation in schools in order to reduce the Council's carbon footprint."
 - (b) That the Committee receive more detail in relation to the Council's proposed actions and level of ambition prior to considering whether the Council should sign up to the LGA's Climate Local Initiative
14. This report provides the additional information requested, detailing the contribution of projects across all areas of the Council that will contribute to reaching the carbon reduction target, alongside a more detailed assessment of the possible benefits to the Council of signing up to the Climate Local initiative.

Delivering the Council's carbon reduction targets

15. The Council's Climate Change Strategy sets out the commitment to cut the Council's own carbon footprint with the target for a 35% reduction by 2015 and the aspiration to work towards an overall 60% reduction by 2020. The 60% aspiration was included to help demonstrate and facilitate the long term approach needed when considering climate change and carbon reduction.
16. The target was based upon an assessment of potential opportunities for carbon reduction across the whole Council, with estimates made as to what these could deliver in terms of carbon reduction. An additional allowance was also made to take account of stretch in order to drive performance. The target is in line with carbon reduction targets set by similar sized local authorities and represents a realistic and achievable goal.
17. The carbon footprint for 2011/12 has been measured at 30,400 tonnes of CO₂. This represents a decrease of 12.42% from 2009/10. This nominally leaves a 22.58% reduction in emissions to be achieved by 2015 in order to achieve the 35% target.

18. To review the continued suitability of the target an assessment of progress to date alongside an estimate of the expected carbon savings from future projects across the Council was carried out. This provides a 'roadmap' of projects and highlights our understanding of what can currently be expected to be delivered, and the current shortfall or stretch to achieve the 35% reduction. This process provides us with a conservative estimate of a further reduction of 17.61% from existing projects by 2015 (detailed in appendix A).
19. Projects and progress that we have been able to quantify through this process leave a stretch of 4.97% or 1,744 tonnes of CO₂ still to be accounted for and this will form the basis of future work in this area.
20. In terms of the Sustainable Communities Directorate's contribution to this target there are three main areas, these being:
 - (a) **Street lighting:** The improvements to the Central Bedfordshire area's street lighting infrastructure by Amey are estimated to contribute a 2.11% reduction.
 - (b) **Leisure Centres:** Energy efficiency improvements at the Council's Leisure Centres contributing an estimated 0.81% reduction.
 - (c) **Libraries:** Improvements as part of the refurbishment of libraries are included within the scope of measures that make up the carbon reduction programme and capital maintenance improvements. Much of the work on libraries is part of wider refurbishments as part of the modernisation programme. It is estimated these measures will contribute 0.1% reduction of the total carbon footprint or 0.28% of the target and reduce energy bills by up to £15,800 per year (based on current prices).
21. The July Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee report highlighted that schools represent a significant challenge given the number of them, budget constraints, the challenging nature of school buildings (e.g. their age and structure of buildings), and the changing face with regards to how schools are funded – particularly in relation to Academies. Currently emissions from schools make up 48% of the Council's carbon footprint.
22. It was also highlighted that good progress has been made to date in supporting schools to reduce emissions with a 20.47% reduction in CO₂ emissions being achieved by schools between 2009/10 and 2011/12.
23. Looking forward to 2015, quantified projects relating to schools contribute a further 8.16% reduction to the Council's carbon footprint or account for 40.7% of the remaining target.
24. Through the Schools Carbon Reduction Action Plan (SCRAP) mechanisms have been put in place to ensure on-going support and emphasis is placed on energy efficiency and carbon reduction measures. These include:
 - (a) **Invest-to-save fund:** This fund provides schools with the upfront capital to undertake energy efficiency projects in the form of an interest-free loan which is repaid back into the fund from the project's energy savings. Last year 6 projects were funded, saving schools a combined value of £30,000 per annum. Repayments to the fund are recycled back into the pot to fund future energy efficiency projects in schools and ensuring it is self-sustaining.

- (b) **Automated Meter Reading (AMR) equipment:** AMR are currently being rolled out across the school estate, with 68 schools signed up to the programme to date. AMR's give schools access to half hourly energy data, which can then be interpreted through monitoring software to identify energy wastage and opportunities for improvements. Other benefits include accurate billing and reduction in the risk of facing a 10% uplift on emissions from these sites in CRC.
- (c) **Energy audits, training and advice:** To date energy audits have been completed at 46 schools and identify low-cost measures that schools can implement to save energy as well as the identification of possible projects suitable for an application to the invest-to-save fund. Advice is also given on all other aspects of making the school more environmentally sustainable, including support to schools to progress through the Eco-School programme and also in the suitability to deploy micro-renewables (e.g. solar photovoltaic panels) on their site. In addition to this training on energy management and efficiency has been held for site agents, bursars and school business managers.

Resource has been provided via the school's capital programme to fund these projects; this includes a dedicated staff resource. The main risk to the continued delivery and positive progress relates to the loss of resource and as long as this is maintained good progress should continue to be made.

- 25. It is proposed that the longer term 'aspirational target' of working towards a 60% reduction from baseline by 2020 will be reviewed in 2015 and replaced with a shorter term target for the five year period 2015 to 2020. This would be based on a similar quantification and project mapping exercise to be carried out at that time. At this point the Council could also consider the setting of a further long term vision to work towards 2025.
- 26. Cllr Young and Cllr Versallion met on 12th November to discuss resources for schools. The good progress to date was highlighted alongside the future plans detailed in the School's Energy Programme. It was recognised that the Council provided sufficient support to schools to reduce energy use; this includes the range of measures detailed in paragraph 24. It was also noted that alongside increasing energy costs, CRC is significant driver for schools to tackle energy efficiency and that further work needs to be done to better understand the contribution that the programmes of work detailed in this report will have on mitigating costs, particularly relating to CRC.

Climate Local

- 27. In June 2012 the LGA launched the 'Climate Local' initiative to drive, inspire and support Local Authority action on a changing climate. This is ultimately an improved and rebranded Nottingham Declaration. It now places further requirements on signatories in order to drive forward delivery of tangible actions to mitigate CO₂ emissions and prepare the Local Authority area for the impacts of the changing climate.
- 28. At the 26th July 2012 meeting, Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee requested further detail in relation to Climate Local, specifically what this would help the Council to deliver that it wouldn't be delivering anyway and an overview of what the benefits are of the Council becoming a signatory.
- 29. The benefits of the Council signing up to Climate Local would include:

- (a) Acknowledgement of the Council's work in this area via a nationally recognised mechanism for demonstrating commitment, ambition and achievements in relation to the implementation of the Council's Climate change strategy.
 - (b) Provide a platform to revise and set/define new ambition in relation to the targets and aims in the climate change strategy that have expired or been superseded. For instance there is no Central Bedfordshire area wide target for CO₂ emissions since the Local Area Agreement (LAA) ended in 2011. Likewise the Council's ambition with regards to climate change adaptation is unclear since the national indicator set, including NI188: Planning to adapt to climate change, was revoked in 2010.
 - (c) Enable the Council to access further resources and expertise via the LGA's 'Knowledge Hub' and dedicated resources for Climate Local signatories.
30. Whilst arguably the Council could meet these needs without becoming signatories to Climate Local, the initiative does however provide a structured platform, and arguably a catalyst, from which to take these actions forward and highlight the good progress to date (and in the future) nationally.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Quantification of projects that contribute to the Council's carbon reduction target

Background papers and their location: (open to public inspection)

Climate Change Strategy paper discussed at Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 26th July 2012

Minutes for Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 26th July 2012

All documents relating to this available at:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/modgov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=648&MId=4120&Ver=4>

Central Bedfordshire Council's Climate Change Strategy – June 2010

Central Bedfordshire Council's Carbon Management Plan (CMP) – November 2010

Central Bedfordshire Climate Change Adaptation Evidence Base – April 2012-06-26

All above documents are available at:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/environment/natural-environment/climate-change-sustainability.aspx>

Central Bedfordshire School's Carbon Reduction Action Plan

This document is held electronically or in hard copy at Technology House, Bedford.

Quantification of projects that contribute to the Council's carbon reduction target

The chart below gives an overview of the quantification of known projects and their estimated contribution to Central Bedfordshire Council's target to reduce its carbon footprint by 35% by 2015

