

## Climate Change Scrutiny Task Group

Friday 16 January 2009, Trent Bridge House, Nottingham

10.45am – 1.35pm

### Notes

#### Present:

#### **Councillors:**

Anthony Blagg (lead member)	Bromsgrove
Tom Bean	Wychavon
Mary Drinkwater	Worcester City
Reg Farmer	Malvern Hills
Sean Shannon	Bromsgrove

#### **Nottinghamshire CC:**

Phil Keynes	Environmental Services Manager
Paul Eccleshare	Principal Energy Officer
Ray Dunajko	Acting Service Director for Planning Sustainability and Regeneration
Councillor Chris Baron	Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability

#### **Officers:**

Stella Wood	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
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Available Papers: an email dated 13 January 2009 detailing arrangements and the purpose of the visit.

#### **Purpose of the visit**

The scrutiny task group wished to find out about best practice demonstrated in Nottinghamshire, in particular the benefits of their:

Energy Managers

Energy partnership with Derbyshire (with funding from Defra)

Authority wide Environmental Green Champions

Public magazine in partnership with the City Council, 'Living for Tomorrow' (highlighting what local people are doing and encouraging a more sustainable lifestyle)

Transition Towns, and/or

Any other area in which Nottinghamshire makes a significant impact on tackling climate change.

During the presentation and discussion, the following main points were made.

It was explained to members that Nottinghamshire County Council had been a Beacon Authority for our sustainable energy in 2005. Working with Defra and the IDEa, had created a new resource for local government. This took the form of a CD which could be used as a tool to help organisations address the challenges of delivering sustainable energy. It enabled local authorities to develop an overview of their own performance on energy using a benchmark, and provided support, advice and examples of action to help reduce carbon emissions and use energy more efficiently. An example of another authority that used the CD was Shropshire County Council and they would be able to advise on how to use the tool.

## Structure

There were five departments in Nottinghamshire County Council which included Corporate Services, Chief Executive, Children and Young People, Adult Social Care and Health, and Communities.

The Sustainability Team sat in Communities – a large department with a team of fourteen, which included an Energy Section and the Local Agenda 21/Climate Change Section. The Energy Section had eight full time staff and covered procurement, monitoring, wood heat, invest to save, energy and planning, and advice. Other sections covered partnerships, staff travel, environmental policy and practice, climate change, awareness and behaviour change, and school support.

The core work of the Sustainability Team was:

- Nlf 188,186,185 – adaptation, reducing per capita carbon emissions, internal carbon management
- Wood heat programme (bio energy grant)
- Energy efficiency (carbon trust)
- Buying electricity, gas and wood fuel
- Sustainable energy policy
- Staff travel
- Environmental champions
- Environmental education and management in schools
- Climate change partnership
- Living for Tomorrow magazine
- Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire local authorities energy partnership

The Sustainability Team had a budget of c£100k (which did not include staff costs). Of this, a large percentage was used for the Living for Tomorrow magazine around £30k was used for various raising awareness initiatives. The remainder was used for staff travel schemes and other innovations. It was difficult to say the exact costs of the Sustainability Department as Finance came in and went out. However, fourteen staff at an average (with on-costs) of £30,000 came to about £420,000 in total.

The challenge was to deliver an efficient and effective energy and carbon management service to the authority. The Climate Change Act 2008 required an 80% cut in Co2 emissions by 2050 based on 1990 emissions baseline. The Team must ensure that Nottinghamshire County Council met its legal obligations. In the past they had been effective and innovative and had achieved a 25% reduction target mostly by an extensive programme of installing biomass wood heat boilers. How this was achieved in Nottinghamshire was discussed as follows.

The woodheat programme, as the biomass boiler project is called, piggybacks on the Council's boiler replacement programme. Additional funding has been granted through all four rounds of Government's (originally Defra now DEC) BioEnergy Capital Grant Scheme. This grant, which must be bid for, contributes to about 40% of the cost of the boiler replacement works, and negates the additional cost of installing a biomass boiler over a gas fuelled unit.

The running costs of a wood fuel boiler compared to a gas boiler were 3.76p to 5p per kilowatt hour. Nottinghamshire County Council currently had 43 sites where biomass boilers were installed and this would increase to 50 sites by the end of

September 2009. Overall savings to the council in works costs came to £2.6 million and resulted in a Co2 saving of 6,500 tonnes.

Initial problems had been the lack of supply of wood fuel for the boilers. Nottinghamshire County Council had a stake in setting up a company to supply wood fuel and help stimulate demand for such fuel. There was a three-year cycle for short rotation coppice – willow. Other fuel pellets could be made from wood waste, sawdust, fencing and forestry residue from estates. The fuel from short rotation coppice tended to produce more ash than that from sawdust waste. The question of whether using sawmill off-cuts was as carbon neutral as short rotation coppice was raised.

Salix is an independent, publicly funded company that provides match funding to the public sector and businesses to allow them to invest in energy efficiency. Set up in 2004, Salix had Government funding of £20 million and was an integral part of the UK Climate Change Programme.

Nottinghamshire County had actively sought Salix funding to improve schools energy efficiency and obtained around £500,000 of Salix funding. Match funding of 50% meant that a total of £1m would be spent by September 2009, energy saving initiatives at education sites.

Salix funding took the form of a loan to schools, which were designed to be paid back as savings were made on energy costs by the schools, which have amounted to £2.6 million per year and reduced their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 21,000 tonnes per year. The Council charged schools about 15% of the total cost for administration/paperwork costs. It used that income to pay towards the cost of employing a Senior Energy Officer.

Nottinghamshire had formed a partnership with neighbouring authority Derbyshire and had jointly obtained a £400,000 Defra grant to raise awareness and understanding of the need to reduce carbon emissions, and the performance indicators that would be necessary to measure the reduction.

Each member authority (20 local authorities across Notts and Derbys) contributes £1500 towards partnership co-ordination and £1500 towards the climate change campaign, which has included a campaign vehicle.

The task group asked if Nottinghamshire had any small power plants such as the one in Worcestershire which was powered by methane from waste in Wychavon and was capable of heating up to 4,000 homes. Nottinghamshire's Acting Service Director advised that they had a proposed planning application to build a new municipal treatment waste to energy plant in the County.

The Energy Performance and Building Directive ensured that every public building above a certain size had to be graded for its energy efficiency and issued with a Display Energy Certificate (DEC). Many schools for instance fall within this category and are required by law to be graded by a qualified assessor. The County Council planned to purchase software this year to enable them to train internally staff to become qualified to carry out the energy efficiency grading on buildings. It was planned to spend the resulting income on providing other energy efficient services. Nottinghamshire had the first A - rated building (a swimming pool) in the country.

It was noted that two similar school buildings could have quite different energy gradings depending on the ethos of the Headmaster and how the culture of turning off lights and electrical equipment for example, was embedded in the school.

The task group advised that one of the eco school projects in Worcestershire had realised £30,000 of savings per annum in one secondary school by turning off I.T equipment. This highlighted the cost of cooling computer servers and how costs could soar if equipment was left on unnecessarily. This project had started as part of an eco schools project after the pupils compared their energy use to similar sized schools and realised that their bills were very much larger than others.

### **Carbon Reduction Commitment**

Carbon emissions trading was due to start in 2010/2011. The Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) meant that authorities had to start trading in carbon emissions to pay for, in effect, their ability to pollute. It was anticipated that costs would begin at around £12 per ton and then allowances would gradually reduce over time and costs increase so that it would become more cost effective for authorities to mitigate against the effects of climate change. There would be a league table of Councils showing how much carbon they produced and this could potentially be very expensive for Councils.

### **Data Collection – Contract Management**

Unlike Worcestershire, Nottinghamshire had 3,000 individual meter invoices which provided information for all reporting requirements on national indicator 185 which showed the energy use of individual sites and buildings. Worcestershire's energy was supplied by West Mercia Supplies and it was far more difficult to obtain information on individual sites.

Sustainability Departments had been thought of previously as a bit of a luxury that were now becoming necessary because of the statutory requirements to reduce Co2 emissions.

In relation to wood fuel boilers the task group asked if there was a downside such as having more lorries on the road compared to gas supply, or, perhaps the fuel cost more than coal? Nottinghamshire believed there was no downside, even though the cost of pellets to fuel the wood fuel boilers had risen 30% from £135 per ton.

Originally the first installation was supplied by an Austrian company and the pellets were put into the boiler via a man going up a ladder. However systems to automatically load the boilers were now in place. It was more cost effective to make fuel pellets from sawmill off cuts than to have it made into MDF.

### **Energy Procurement**

Nottinghamshire County Council bought energy (gas and electricity) at a cost of around £20m per year for its own use and for the Fire and Police Authorities and all the District Councils. They believed that a consortium could make savings by having greater purchasing power although once the consortium reached a certain size, as it had now, there was little to be gained by making it any bigger. Costs very often depended on price at the time the energy was bought. They had previously done well but more recent purchases, when energy costs were high,

had led to increased costs.

Another benefit of having wood fuel was not only that it was more efficient and carbon neutral but also, in the event of peak oil, it was good to have a variety of different sources of energy and heating. At least if there were power cuts many schools and buildings could still be heated.

The cost of wood fuel pellets did not shadow coal and gas especially if Authorities started growing their own wood fuel locally. It was noted that a power plant proposed for Tenbury Wells could be fuelled from the off-cuts from one sawmill however there were public objections to the plant.

There were examples in Nottinghamshire of carbon neutral new homes. The Hockerton Housing Project was the result of the desire of a small group of people to develop a lifestyle more in touch with the natural environment. After 2 years of building, the first occupants moved in 1998. Hockerton Housing Project was the UK's first earth sheltered ecological housing development. Tours could be arranged and there was a small resource centre.

There were examples of wind turbines in Southall, Newark and Sherwood District. New initiatives were looking at community wind turbines being set up in partnership with a provident society. They were currently looking at sites to promote land for renewable energy with the Carbon Trust. They were doing some feasibility screening of sites and hoped that some sites owned by Nottinghamshire County Council might be suitable.

## **Planning**

Nottinghamshire County Council tried to influence District Councils to have sustainable new buildings by encouraging the use of Merton style concepts. The County Council supported key partnerships in the Districts and Partnerships for renewable energy, it commented on planning applications and it disseminated the implications of PPS1.

## **Street Lamps**

In Nottinghamshire any new development used Section 106 Agreement money to have more energy efficient lighting in the vicinity and to ensure that lights were switched on and off earlier and later to save energy.

## **Transport**

Transport schemes and bus corridors were being set up in Nottinghamshire. They would like to use yellow buses across the county to reduce congestion and were considering setting up their own PLC.

## **Environmental Champions**

This project began with interested members of staff working with Global Action Plan. A charitable organisation which provided training and acted as a critical friend, although there was a cost. The volunteers worked on a number of projects, one of them was on waste and recycling, and began with using less paper and making sure that recycling was taking place and has now moved on to the recycling of plastics, cans and using Fairtrade products.

There was a volunteer on every floor that ensured waste was properly sorted and paper was not wasted. The volunteers had a calendar of events and an 'Energy Saving Week'. Nottinghamshire County Council was very appreciative of the environmental champions and the work they did.

For instance their paper survey found that 2,400 pieces of paper per employee were used per year and this had now reduced to 1,400 pieces of paper per employee per year. New linked printers were being introduced and should save needless printing. By way of a thank you the Authority laid on a day out normally every year for the environmental champions to places such as Hockerton (energy efficient buildings) and to try out locally produced food.

In Nottinghamshire 39% of all waste was recycled. The seven District Councils however did not have unified collection schemes.

Nottinghamshire had 18 recycling centres, more than other similar Authorities. It was felt that some recycling centres were too close to the border and attracted too much waste from residents not in Nottinghamshire. It was planned to review the number of sites needed. Signed vans and trailers had been banned from using the household waste sites. They also planned new incinerators for south Nottinghamshire.

1.2 million tons of waste went to landfill and incinerators had helped reduced this by 750,000 tons last year.

Members in Nottinghamshire were very well looked after they had their own members corridor, they had shared PA's and had smart board offices so there were no paper agendas, it was looked at on a PC on screen. It was estimated that this had saved £60,000 per annum. Most members had a PC and a Blackberry with e-mail facilities and telephone.

### **Transition Towns**

Nottinghamshire did not pro-actively encourage the transition town movement although it was believed that there was transition town activity in Nottingham City. The County Council however was happy to act in a signposting capacity and supported the work and aims of the transition town movement. There were a number of active groups that had similar aims and might just come under a different name. For example, the District Councils had food initiative groups that worked with Ground Works.

These groups began a project called Notts Nosh - a guide to where fresh locally produced food and drink can be bought in Nottinghamshire. The initial costs were about £2,000 and it became very popular in local stores eventually being taken over by 'Experience Notts'. This organisation promoted tourism and Nottinghamshire as a destination for visitors and they took on the Notts Nosh initiative to link into the local food. It promoted buying local food, it had an index and full details of local food businesses and suppliers, indicating which products were organic. It let people know when and where farmers markets were held. It had information about vegetable box schemes, local bakeries as well as details about the various farm shops.

### **Raising Awareness**

"Everybody's talking about climate change" campaign was a large public attitude

and behaviour change campaign. Initially it was funded by DEFRA by around £400k targeting households with high CO2 emissions to reduce these. The touring campaign vehicle was used as well as online and one to one pledges. To date they have received 10,000 pledges.

As part of the campaign three free workshops had been run about the different national indicators and the implications for all the Local Authorities. These have been held throughout 2008. The benefit of this Local Authorities energy partnership that was with Derbyshire were that they had:

- an effective information network
- free early warning information and workshop events
- they were able to draw in significant external support and guidance
- best practice could be freely shared between them
- joint projects and consultation responses could be carried out
- successful joint funding bids could be made.

## **Magazine**

Nottinghamshire's local sustainability magazine was called 'Living for Tomorrow'. The aims of this were to:

- raise awareness about sustainability issues and options
- inspire and promote positive behavioural changes in individuals and organisations
- make health, sustainable lifestyles both appealing and achievable.

The magazine had three publications per year and a distribution of about 14,000 with 4,000 direct mail recipients. The cost of each publication was between £10 and £12,000. It was published jointly by the Nottinghamshire Agenda 21 Forum and the Nottingham Health and Environment Partnership. It received financial support from the County Council and from Nottingham City Council.

The magazine had a broad appeal to school children, professionals, pensioners as well as committed enthusiasts. The magazine provided local examples of sustainable living with a local focus. There would be articles on immediate opportunities to get involved in a small achievable kind of way. It had a professional design, was colourful and stylish, it emotionally engaged the readers and therefore made it more conducive to action.

Also the name 'Living for Tomorrow' turned sustainable development into a down to earth concept accessible to all. It was delivered locally by cycle courier and following complaints about plastic wrapping, a label was simply stuck to the outside cover of the magazine. It was also printed by a company with ISO14001 on 75% recycled paper. It had a very good response from its readership.

The Lead member thanked Phil Keynes for accommodating the scrutiny task group organising what had been a very informative and useful discussion.

The meeting ended at 1.35pm