



Environment and Transport Select Committee
24 April 2014

Surrey Energy and Sustainability Partnership

Purpose of the report:

The report is to inform the committee of the re-establishment of the members' group of the Surrey Energy and Sustainability Partnership and outline the work of the partnership. The committee is asked to consider its representation within the partnership.

Introduction:

1. The Surrey Energy and Sustainability Partnership is a partnership of all 11 borough and district councils, Surrey Police and the County Council. It was originally established in 2008 as the Surrey Climate Change Partnership and has evolved since then to focus on the multiple benefits of energy efficiency.
2. The partnership consists of an officers' group which has met regularly since 2008, to plan and progress initiatives and up until 2011 the strategic direction of the partnership was set by a members' board (similar to the Surrey Waste Partnership governance). The members' group is now being re-established, with its first meeting in March 2014.
3. Mike Goodman, Associate Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, will represent the County Council, in line with allocated Cabinet responsibilities. Previously, the county council has also involved a representative from the Environment and Transport Select Committee. The committee is invited to consider whether it wishes to maintain this position as the members' group is re-established.

Value to Surrey and the council's priorities

4. The Energy and Sustainability Partnership's aim is to ensure that Surrey's energy demand and supply becomes more efficient and sustainable and that the local economy benefits from these activities.

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5. By moving to a more efficient, low carbon and sustainable energy system, Surrey's communities and public services will be less exposed to higher and volatile energy prices in the future and residents will live in healthier and warmer homes, at an affordable cost and with lower carbon emissions.
 6. The partnership has focused on domestic energy efficiency in the private (rented and owner occupier) sector¹. This is an area of statutory responsibility for Boroughs, under the Home Energy Conservation Act and is a priority for the County Council in relation to supporting vulnerable people, particularly older people, to live healthily and independently.
 7. Furthermore the County Council's Public Health function has an interest in the wider determinants of health (such as housing conditions and air quality) and has links to Clinical Commissioning Groups and the Environment Service has an interest in sustainable development, including reducing carbon emissions, low carbon economic development and sustainable infrastructure.

Activities and outcomes of the partnership

8. A county-wide partnership for ongoing energy efficiency advice and the delivery of specific projects was agreed with Action Surrey in April 2013, building on Action Surrey's activity in some boroughs since 2009. Action Surrey are part of Thamesway Sustainable Communities which is a company wholly owned by Woking Borough Council.
9. Action Surrey work with a network of energy companies and energy efficiency installers and provides free impartial advice to Surrey residents, including vulnerable people living in energy inefficient homes to make energy efficiency improvements using the most appropriate form of finance available at any given time, such as Energy Company Obligation (ECO) grants / private funds / 'Green Deal' loans.
10. The service is funded by a combination of installer referral fees, local authority contributions and external grants for project management aspects.
11. By working together in the area of domestic energy efficiency, Surrey authorities are providing and continuously improving consistent, integrated and high quality energy efficiency support to residents and have worked collaboratively to leverage over £1M in additional funding into Surrey over the past 3 years. These funds have been delivered to Surrey residents and, wherever feasible, local suppliers have been involved in receiving work referrals. A further £2.5M from the Green Deal Communities fund has recently been approved from Department for Energy and Climate Change for insulating solid wall houses.

¹ Social rented sector housing provision, including energy efficiency improvements is a borough responsibility, which has not so far been the subject of joint initiatives.

12. The Energy and Sustainability Partnership also shares best practice in areas including energy on our own estates, local renewable energy supply chains in a Surrey context, such as wood fuel, and learning for sustainability, although to date the most significant partnership activity has focused on joint initiatives in the domestic energy sector.

The County Council's role

13. In 2014/15, the Sustainability Group in the Environment Service has a priority to work with services across the council, including Public Health, Adult Social Care, Trading Standards and Communications, to join up the council's referral systems to deliver affordable warmth for vulnerable residents.
14. The Sustainability Group will continue to work with Boroughs and Districts, Action Surrey and other external partners, to maximise the take up and efficient application of funds for reducing the energy bills and carbon emissions across all Surrey households. One specific project is a comprehensive Surrey-wide housing stock appraisal, which will be combined with welfare benefits data provided by Boroughs, to enable more targeted and effective communications.

Conclusions:

15. The Surrey Energy and Sustainability Partnership is a valuable forum for addressing environmental, health and economic challenges in relation to energy and the County Council will continue its active role in this area.

Recommendations:

- a) The Select Committee notes the work of the partnership, as outlined above.
- b) The Select Committee considers whether it wishes to take a position within the members' board group (as has been the case previously), alongside the Associate Cabinet Member for Environmental Services.

Next steps:

To agree whether a representative of the Environment and Transport Select Committee should be appointed to the Surrey Energy and Sustainability Partnership. If agreed, to identify a representative to be involved in steering and supporting the objectives of the Surrey Energy and Sustainability partnership, including attendance at meetings, approximately biannually.

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Sources/background papers: None