



Economic Prosperity, Environment & Highways Board
19th October 2016

SMARTER WORKING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT – POLICY AND ACTION PLAN: Reducing Emissions and Building Resilience to a Changing Climate

Purpose of the report: Policy Development and Review

To outline the content and development process of the proposed new policy documents:

- i) An overarching Environment Policy for the council and
- ii) a Climate Resilience and Sustainability Action Plan.

Members are asked to consider and provide comments on this report and its annexes, prior to presentation to Cabinet in November 2016

Introduction:

1. In December 2015 a motion was carried at a full Council meeting to support action in reducing the Council's emissions and build resilience to a changing climate. Subsequently, in February 2016, the Leader signed a commitment to this effect as part of the LGA's Climate Local Initiative, committing to producing an action plan outlining our intentions to address these issues. This action plan will be called 'Smarter Working for the Environment'.
2. At the same time we are also presenting the 'Smarter Working for the Environment': Policy Statement (Annex 1), which will accompany the Action Plan. The policy sets out to the council's stakeholders, in particular residents, businesses, suppliers and staff, the prism through which the council sees its responsibilities to the environment.

Benefits and challenges

3. This policy has been developed to articulate the Council's approach to environmental sustainability. Such as policy statement is increasingly common amongst large organisations and is illustrated by neighbouring authorities including Buckingham CC, Kent CC, East and West Sussex CC. Benefits of such a policy include:

- Providing a basis for engagement with our suppliers when seeking their support for our objectives and maximising value from our contracts
 - Increased value for money by being joined up in our decision making
 - Providing support to external funding bids by publishing the council's overall commitment to environmental sustainability
 - Improved outcomes in relation to corporate priorities for the economy and resident wellbeing
4. The Council faces the challenge of rising demand for its services whilst financial resources are decreasing. Alongside this there is the challenge of a changing climate and the risks this brings to our residents, our businesses and infrastructure.

The severe weather and floods of 2013-14:

- The council incurred £27.1m on the response to and recovery from the severe weather and flooding over the winter of 2013/14 and only received £11.7m from central government departments leaving a gap of £15.4m to be found locally.

The flooding in particular:

- affected over 2,000 properties
- caused significant damage to council infrastructure
- required implementation of business continuity plans to manage service delivery
- has had health and wellbeing impacts for those affected, with subsequent extra costs to the health service¹

5. The policy and action plan needs to reflect how the Council can provide leadership in meeting such challenges, supporting ways of delivering services better, maximising resource efficiency and facilitating/supporting communities in local action.

Policy and Action Plan Development

6. Project development steps:
- benchmarking against Climate Local Action Plans, Environment/ Sustainability Strategies and Carbon Management Plans of other local authorities. Over 120 local authorities have Climate Local Action Plans and many of these are set with wide ranging environment and or sustainability strategies led by multi agency steering boards

¹ Nationally, the number of people suffering from anxiety, depression or other mental health problems due to flooding, is projected to rise from 3,500 – 4,500 annually today, to between 4,000 and 7,000 by the 2050s. *Ref: Health Protection Agency (2012) Health Effects of Climate Change)*

- internal consultation with relevant services to ascertain current baseline of activity and areas of opportunity
 - external consultation with partners via service partnership groups
 - development of themes and specific commitments to action
 - regular dialogue with Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning
7. As a result of this process, we have developed our current scope of activity, identified areas of opportunity and created a focus for future working. This is in the context of ongoing financial constraints.

Environment Policy

8. SCC recognises its role in managing resilience and conserving/enhancing our environment through its provision of services as well as its influence over the £37.5 billion of economic activity in Surrey and our role in the lives of 1.15 million residents.
9. The Policy aims to set out the context in which we will work with our stakeholders to manage our environmental responsibilities and harness leadership opportunities.
10. The challenge is to go beyond legal and regulatory minimum requirements and provide additional voluntary and collaborative action at a local level, whilst taking account of increased demand for services and funding reductions.
11. The Council's vision is to be 'one place, one budget, one team for Surrey' and by applying this in the context of environmental impacts we will ensure our activities are mutually reinforcing, provide value for money and be more enduring, in turn meeting the Council's strategic goals.
12. In light of the above, our approach is:

All services, business processes and suppliers will take account of their environmental risks and impacts, in particular and where relevant:

- Resilience to risks posed by a changing climate
- Sustainable travel
- Waste minimisation and recycling
- Efficient and low carbon energy
- Biodiversity and landscape quality in Surrey
- Prevention of hazardous pollution of air, water and soil

Our environmental services and initiatives will take account of the council's strategic goals, which are:

- Wellbeing - Everyone in Surrey has a great start to life and can live and age well
- Economic Prosperity - Surrey's economy remains strong and sustainable
- Resident Experience - Residents in Surrey experience public services that are easy to use, responsive and value for money

13. The Policy sets out the headline indicators to assess progress, which are designed not to duplicate the many existing service-level indicators and targets.

14. The Council delivers an extensive range of environmental services for which a range of strategies are already in place (Local Transport Plan, Surrey Waste Plan, Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy, Carbon and Energy Policy, Sustainable Procurement framework, Countryside strategies, Flood Risk Management Plan etc.). Many of these are linked to statutory duties as indicated in Appendix II of the policy.

Action Plan

15. To build on our existing work programme the Council's priority commitments for action focus on increasing our resilience to climate change and managing environmental impacts over which we have greatest influence. The Action Plan is attached as Annex 2 and actions are grouped in five themes:

- (1) Embedding environmental considerations (including impacts and resilience to risks) in decision making across council services
- (2) Resource efficient buildings and operations
- (3) Suppliers environmental impacts and risks
- (4) Air quality and lower carbon transport
- (5) Resilience of communities and our estate, to future climate conditions

16. The Action Plan sets out how we will work smarter in order to minimise negative environmental impacts and maximise the wider benefits of activities in these areas, focusing on:

- protection and enhancement of the local environment in Surrey
- improved value for money and business continuity of council services
- a more resilient and prosperous local economy
- improved wellbeing of residents, in particular reducing health inequalities

It is not expected that each individual action will deliver every benefit but it is the intention that as a package of measures the Council will create a balance across these benefits.

Finance

17. The net financial outcome has not been calculated as this is not possible at this stage. The key principle of the plan is 'working smarter for the environment' - reducing costs through maximising resource efficiency, gaining positive environmental value from our supplier contracts (including social value and benefit for our communities), reducing the costs of ill-health through improving air quality and encouraging active travel and reducing the costs of severe weather events by improving our community resilience. Any additional activities resulting from the action

plan will be subject to the council's standard approach for project development, including business case appraisal if appropriate.

Conclusions:

18. The Smarter Working for the Environment Policy and Action Plan have been developed as a result of a commitment made by the Leader in February 2016 which supports the need for the Council to provide a clear basis for its approach to environmental sustainability.
19. The policy is designed to be a simple statement of our approach which will bring multiple benefits to the council and operate in the context of ongoing financial pressures.
20. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually in order that it reflects current social, economic and environmental conditions.

Suggested recommendations:

- a. The Board is recommended to consider and provide comments on the emerging Policy and Action Plan documents prior to its consideration by Cabinet in November.

Next steps:

Following consideration by the EPEH Board the Environment Policy and Action Plan will be submitted to Cabinet in November 2016.

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Sources/background papers:

Annex 1 Smarter Working for the Environment: Policy Statement
Annex 2 Smarter Working for the Environment: Action Plan

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