

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL

17 JUNE 2013

Present :- Councillor Julie Young (Chairman)
Councillor John Elliott (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors Mark Cable, Nigel Chapman, Mark Cory,
Colin Mudie and Lesley Scott-Boutell

Substitute Member :- Councillor Helen Chuah for Councillor Barrie Cook

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 25 February 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. Invited Guests

The Chairman welcomed five guests who had been invited to the meeting in order to broaden the Panel's discussion on Environmental Sustainability:

- David Webb from Sustainability East
- Paul Hinsley from Essex County Council
- Andrew Wilkinson from En-form
- Jo Wheatley from Transition Town Wivenhoe
- Jason Pettit from Transition Town Wivenhoe

5. Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Councillor Chapman (in respect of his Board Membership of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services reviewing the past achievements of the Council on environmental sustainability with a view to making recommendations to Cabinet on the development of a new Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

Sam Preston, Interim Group Manager for Strategy and Business, explained that the Council's Nottingham Declaration Strategy and Carbon Management Programme had now come to an end, leaving an opportunity for the Council to review its achievements and plan for the future.

The Council had been highly committed to its environmental responsibilities and had undertaken a number of key projects to reduce its own CO₂ emissions, support local communities and businesses to reduce their emissions and save money on energy bills and to understand the potential long term impacts of climate change. It had also take part in the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme and had exceeded its

target to reduce CO₂ emissions from buildings and operations with a total reduction in CO₂ emissions by 26% (2,444 tonnes).

In addition the Council had undertaken a number of projects to raise environmental awareness within communities and businesses as well as supporting them to access grants and funding to implement energy saving projects such as:

- Green Deal/ECO – The Government launched schemes to provide an affordable way for households to install energy saving measures;
- Climate Local – a re-launch of the Nottingham Declaration. Local authorities are encouraged to sign up for the scheme which commits them to taking action on climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) – the Government revised guidance on HECA in 2012 to move from a data gathering process to a local priority and action planning system;
- Energy switching schemes – The Council has started a scheme with iChoosr to offer an energy switching solution for residents in the borough to access cheaper energy deals.

Councillor Tim Young, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Community Safety and Culture, attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel.

The Chairman invited each of the guests in turn to address the Panel on the issues from their organisation's perspective.

David Webb explained that Sustainability East had been launched in April 2011 to bring together elements of Climate East - the regional climate change partnership - and the former Sustainability East. He spoke about sustainability and climate change from a national and regional perspective giving an insight into government priorities and large regional programmes that could influence Colchester's Strategy going forward. He emphasised the need for local authority strategies to be aligned with environmental sustainability to ensure Councils were well placed to deal with issues as they emerged. It was also important to partner with other areas of policy such as economic growth, transport, health, energy and water. David went on to explain that for Authorities to successfully work together it was necessary for the issues to be fully embedded, for leadership to be demonstrated to show people how to achieve success and for broader collaboration to be in place in order to develop the right strategies and innovations.

Andrew Wilkinson explained that En-form was a local environmental charity which ran a number of projects to encourage residents and communities to be more sustainable. He referred to some of the projects that had been run successfully whilst giving an insight into local need. He explained that the organisation tried to concentrate on the themes of waste and recycling, energy, water and transport. In the past the organisation had raised between £50k and £60k for project work and because of its charitable status the organisation had the ability to access funding and expertise to complete projects that others were unable to undertake. Projects were assessed on the basis of need, value for money and costs. Andrew explained that certain initiatives were considered to

be logical initiatives (such as car sharing) whereas, in practice, very few people were prepared to commit to sharing themselves. In response to a question regarding the Frock Swap concept, he explained that Lottery Funding had been secured for a 'give and take' scheme whereby unwanted goods could be left outside on a certain day a week for others to take away free of charge.

Paul Hinsley explained the major sustainability projects that Essex County Council had been working on recently including climate change mitigation and adaptation. He explained the links with Planning, Economic Growth and Environment which reflected the need for sustainability to be supported by other areas of policy. Essex County Council was largely driven by the Carbon Reduction commitment which was reported to Government annually and had been a useful lever in terms of the financial penalties incurred where energy usage had not been measured accurately. In addition, the Essex Economic Growth Strategy was looking at low carbon technology such as the replication of off shore wind farms in suitable locations on land. In responding to a question regarding Local Enterprise Partnership funding, Paul explained that he assists in coordinating County and District investment teams to meet, discuss and bid for funds. Reference was made to the initiative undertaken by Suffolk County Council to install photo voltaic panels at the primary schools within its ownership and Paul explained that work had been undertaken at Essex to engage with the 600 or so primary and secondary schools across the County but the issue had been less straight forward due to the differing ownerships of the various schools.

Jo Wheatley and Jason Pettit explained that Transition Town Wivenhoe was an organisation which was working in partnership with a number of organisations towards a sustainable and resilient future. The group used grass root volunteers to concentrate on food issues which tended to have the greatest impact locally. The group had also worked with local market gardeners in Wivenhoe and was looking generally at the local economy. Jason went on to say that the group had achieved success at a local level through the activity of between 30 and 50 regular volunteers and now was looking for support at an infrastructure level, such as in relation to cycle ways and street lighting, in order to bring broader success. He felt it was important for Councillors to deliver strong leadership in terms of sustainability strategies. An active group had developed in Nayland, set up on the back of an energy initiative providing good returns on investment. Attempts had been made to deliver a similar regime in Colchester itself but it had proved more difficult to achieve over a larger area.

Particular discussion from the Panel members was in relation to:

- The legacy of the Nottingham Declaration and the need for the organisation to pull together various areas such as Planning and Neighbourhood Plans in a consistent and coherent manner as well as the need for the collection of robust data to demonstrate real impact;
- The added benefit of introducing 20 mph limits in residential areas which would assist in persuading parents of the potential to permit children to walk and cycle to school;
- The cause of high levels of emissions from in terms of density of vehicles and speed of travel;
- The potential to develop the concept of the Frock Swap across other areas of

Reduce – Re-use – Recycle;

- The potential for communities in rural areas to collaborate in purchasing oil in bulk in order to drive down the cost to individual consumers;
- The sustainability and environmental work included Colchester's Local Development Framework which had assisted in providing Colchester with a robust framework within which to operate;
- The fact that cooking fat had recently become a tradable commodity;
- The Council's current refuse freighter fleet being powered with bio diesel;
- The current situation regarding the provision of electric vehicle charging points and the funding available from the EU and the requirement on supermarket developments to include charging points;
- The options available to provide alternative heating solutions and the need for individuals to provide information in the form of case studies in order to share the information for the benefit of others.

RESOLVED that –

- (i) All the guests be thanked for their valuable contributions to the meeting

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- (i) The following issues be borne in mind when the Council's new Environmental Strategy is determined:

- The need for relevant strategies to be well aligned across various areas of the Council's operation;
- Concentration be directed at particular projects with a wider scale of impact;
- The need for environmental sustainability to be embedded in all that the Council delivers;
- The importance of projects at the grass roots level, such as Transition Town, to be supported, particularly in respect of assistance infrastructure levels;
- The importance of accurate data to be gathered in order to provide measurable evidence of the impact of strategies;
- The ability to work with other organisations to secure consistent funding support;
- The benefit of continuing with the broad collaboration with Essex County Council and other groups;
- The problem of oil dependency in rural areas and the need for sustainable alternatives to be explored more fully;
- The potential to communicate and develop more opportunities, such as the photo voltaic initiative at local schools, as well as other successful case studies;
- The requirement for the Council to take the lead in terms of sustainability in order to demonstrate to others how to take the issues forward.

6. Work Programme 2013-14

The Panel considered a report by the Assistant Chief Executive including an update,

giving details of items that Cabinet had indicated it would like to request the Policy Review and Development Panel to review as follows:-

- Transportation Strategy
- Housing, homelessness and welfare reform
- Behaviour Change
- Economic Growth
- Zone Working at CBC
- Market Strategy
- European Funding

The provisional scheduling of the areas of work had been undertaken for the Panel, bearing in mind availability and that the programming of some items will need to be at a specific time in the year.

The report also provided an update of the work of the 20mph and Waste and Recycling Task and Finish Groups

RESOLVED that –

- (i) The provisional scheduling of initiatives and policy reviews identified by the Cabinet be approved and the current situation regarding the Task and Finish Groups be noted.
- (ii) Details of the scheduling of the initiatives and policy reviews within the Panel's Work Programme be referred to Cabinet for information.