

Environment Policy Development Group – 14th September 2006**DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY AND STRATEGY****Report of the Strategic Director (Community)**

Statutory Powers: Local Government Act 2000 and various environmental legislation

Financial Implications

At this stage of development it is anticipated that the draft climate change action plan will largely take place within existing budgets. However there are elements of the action plan which will require additional resources if Members decide to pursue such actions. The financial implications will be assessed as part of the annual budget process.

Purpose

To consider the draft climate change policy, strategy and action plan.

Links to Council Priorities

Responding to climate change particularly relates to Council priorities CP3 (distinctive environment) and CP4 (clean environment). It also closely relates to the Council's commitment to CC2 (sustainability).

Recommendations

That the Environment Policy Development Group RESOLVES to make comments on the draft strategy and action plan to the Executive to inform the development of the document, and recommends approval of the climate change policy statement for consultation with partners.

Background

1. Global warming is the publicly recognised term for the current concern about changes to the earth's climate. Addressing climate change is a complex global issue which is likely not have far reaching impacts on society and the world economy. The Council has a role to play in encouraging mitigation and adaption to climate change across the South Hams, within a framework provided by corporate priorities, commitments, and resource constraints.
2. The draft policy further develops the Council's current Environmental Policy. In March 2005 the Council signed the Devon Wide Declaration on Climate Change and Fuel Poverty. In December 2005 the Council reviewed its corporate priorities and confirmed the current CP1 to CP6 priorities but with some increased emphasis to be given to responding to climate change within existing priorities. This strategy is a step forward in ensuring that existing and future actions occur

within a co-ordinated cross cutting framework. It will also help to ensure that the Council meets the obligations of the Devon Wide Declaration on Climate Change and Fuel Poverty.

3. Across the Council there is an improved understanding of climate change issues and how the Council's activities can contribute to mitigating problems. Key current activities, include greater use of the internet to provide information, facilitate communication and improve access to services to reduce the need to travel; the establishment of sustainability criteria in the assessment of capital projects; the purchase of 'green' electricity from renewable sources; recycling of waste; promotion of sustainable development through planning policies (in particular work associated with Sherford and Totnes Southern Area); grants and loans to improve energy efficiency in dwellings; sustainable tourism initiatives (in particular the Green Tourism Business Scheme); and the promotion of tree planting schemes.

A Draft Climate Change Policy

4. The suggested draft Climate Change Policy is as follows:

"South Hams District Council's Climate Change Policy is to improve the well-being of the community by looking at the needs of our customers, and the services we provide, and working in partnership to reduce the causes of climate change with a particular emphasis on

- *reducing CO₂ emissions*
- *adapting to climate change*
- *promoting sustainable development*
- *encouraging the development of new business opportunities*
- *community awareness raising.*

Developing the Strategy and Action Plan

5. In December 2005 the Council agreed that it would provide greater emphasis to climate change. Members concluded that climate change would not be established as a new independent priority, but that action would be included within the existing corporate priorities as a cross-cutting theme.
6. The strategy includes a draft action plan which will be subject to consultation with key services and agencies if there is Member support for the approach. The action plan does not replicate all the actions of other existing strategies but establishes clear linkages to corporate priorities. The role of the action plan is to provide an umbrella document to sign-post action in other strategies including those of partner agencies, and to identify new actions, which this policy will act as a catalyst for.

Strategic risk management

7. The following risks have been identified:-

RISK	MITIGATION
Failure to deliver this Council's priorities and commitments with sufficient acknowledgement of climate change considerations.	Ensure, where appropriate, clear links are made to the contribution the Climate Change Strategy makes towards this Council's priorities and commitments, and that subsequent actions achieve value for money.
Failure to deliver on the community's priorities, and national requirements.	Take account of consultation feedback and national priorities in developing the Climate Change Strategy and associated action plan.
Failure to promote and encourage partnership working to address cross agency issues.	Encourage buy-in through ensuring that the appropriate agencies involved in drawing up Action Plans as prospective partners.
An over ambitious Strategy may stretch resources and lead to community disappointment.	Draw together a realistic Action Plan within the Strategy.

Conclusion

8. In December 2005 the Council introduced climate change as a new cross cutting theme. This draft document is therefore an important milestone to making progress on this matter

Alan Robinson
Strategic Director (Community)

Environment Policy Development Group
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Katie Shears
Community Development Assistant

Background Documents

Draft Climate Change Policy and Strategy