

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT
GROUP HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON
23 OCTOBER 2008**

MEMBERS

* Cllr R Rowe - Chairman

* Cllr R J Carter - Vice-Chairman

* Cllr P Coulson

∅ Cllr S L Rankin

* Cllr G Date

* Cllr R J Vint

* Cllr D W May

* Cllr A Ward

* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Also in attendance and participating:
Cllr Squire

Officers in attendance:

Items 5 and 6 (minutes EPDG.06/08 and EPDG.07/08 below refer): Head of
Environment Services

Item 5 (minute EPDG.06/08 below refers): Head of Environmental Health and
Divisional Environmental Health Officer;

Item 7 (minute EPDG.8/08 below refers) Head of Property Services

EPDG.4/08 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment Policy Development Group (EPDG) held on 3 July 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

EPDG.5/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting. These were recorded as follows:-

Cllr G Date declared a personal interest in item 6 'Waste Strategy Update' (minute EPDG.7/08 below refers) by virtue of his business use of the commercial waste service administered by the council and remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and vote thereon.

EPDG.6/08 REVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report which sought Members' views on the proposal to review the current Occupational Health & Safety Strategy (2003-07) to reflect current local and national initiatives. The report related to the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and reminded Members that the council had a duty to enforce the provisions of the Act.

The report set out the strategic direction in which the Council's Occupational Health & Safety intervention programme could progress, building on the successful work already undertaken in this area and ensuring the Council carried out its responsibilities in an effective, fair and consistent manner, meeting its statutory requirements. It also highlighted to Members the opportunity for the Council to engage in further partnership work, especially the local business sector.

To supplement the report and set the issue in context, the Divisional Environmental Health Officer gave a presentation to Members.

During discussion, particular reference was made to :-

- i) accident levels and those with the highest frequency. Officers informed members that whilst there was not currently detailed information relating to types of accidents locally, it was recognised that the tourism industry generated slip and trip type injuries and equine centres incurred rider accidents. It was noted that initiatives eg the training of equine staff, were undertaken to help reduce these incidents;
- ii) negative media coverage of precautionary measures taken by local authorities to avoid accidents. In attempting to promote sensible Health & Safety management, the Head of Environmental Health advised that these measures were often attributed to Health & Safety regulations, whereas most usually they were driven by the need to avoid potentially costly litigation and insurance claims;
- iii) Health & Safety information packs supplied to businesses. It was noted that as a result of the Government's strategy to deregulate, new start up businesses would no longer be required to inform local authorities thus reducing the opportunities for engagement. This was considered to be an unfortunate consequence of deregulation;
- iv) targets to reduce accidents. Officers advised Members that targets to reduce accidents were more nationally based than ascribed locally, however, Members requested that they would like statistics to both monitor national trends, and to compare these with South Hams and similar authorities. The Head of Environmental Health advised that an interim report could be presented to the Group on a two yearly basis, which outlined this information.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that the revised Occupational Health & Safety strategy be approved.

EPDG.7/08 WASTE STRATEGY UPDATE

Officers informed Members on the strategic issues relating to how the Council would undertake its duty to manage its municipal waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 within the Devon area until 2035.

The report outlined targets for Devon in relation to recycling and the reduction of biodegradable municipal waste, in addition to those set by The Waste and Emissions Trading Act.

To supplement the report and set the issue in context, the Divisional Environmental Health Officer gave a presentation to Members.

During discussion, particular reference was made to :-

- i) the cost implication of managing trade waste in outlying areas. The Group was informed that the cost of collection from business premises in rural parts of the district were not met by the income generated from the waste. This presented a problem to the council in terms of setting targets for waste management and in undertaking its' statutory duties in these areas. The Head of Environmental Services advised that he was in the process of producing a business case for offering a rural trade waste service;
- ii) targets for household waste. It was agreed that the Government's target of zero waste per household was not achievable but that the focus of the Council's targets would be to continue to reduce waste year on year and maintain the profile of the re-use/repair schemes;
- iii) Communal bins for resident groups (eg occupants of flats and houses of multiple occupancies). Members expressed support for such an initiative but noted that such bins need committed management. It was felt that groups requesting a bin should submit an agreed management plan when making an application;
- iv) energy from waste. Some members felt that such an energy from waste facility would present a lost opportunity to recycle and believed that waste should be dealt with as close to source as possible. In response, others emphasised that such a facility presented an alternative to burying and highlighted that the County Council onus on cleanliness would result in a vastly

superior facility in respect of dealing with dioxins;

- v) Tri Waste. The Head of Environment Services advised that there was not yet sufficient funding for the business case, but that Devon County Council hoped to participate in the scheme. It was felt that this would help deliver economies of scale and ultimately produce cheaper services.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that the report be noted.

EPDG. 8/08 CARBON MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The Head of Property Services informed Members regarding the participation of the Council in the Carbon Trust's Management Programme for local authorities. The scheme was run on behalf of the Government to assist authorities in identifying the carbon footprint they produced as a result.

Furthermore, it also assisted them to set aspirational targets in the reduction of their carbon output.

The target for South Hams District Council had been set as a 20% reduction (from the current 2007/08 baseline of 3,800 tonnes per year) over a period of two years. Longer term goals would be adopted once the issue of local Government reorganisation had been resolved.

Currently the council spent £1,150,000 on fuel. With expected rising costs in fuel, the Group noted that a 20 % reduction in carbon output would have a corresponding reduction in fuel costs, or maintain costs at current levels.

During discussion, particular reference was made to :-

- i) the Green Team. The team was a collection of officers from across the Council with specialist knowledge who supported the programme and were led by a board that determined the strategic direction of the programme. Members requested that the Climate Change Member Champions be invited to participate in the Carbon Management plan;
- ii) DEFRA's statistics for carbon output per head per district. A Member emphasised that he had gained information which stated that the South Hams was rated as one of the highest emissions generated per head in the region. The Head of Property Services advised that the baseline information for DEFRA was not the same as that calculated by South Hams District Council. Members requested that national baseline figures be produced to monitor

and compare the South Hams output against similar authorities;

- iii) insulation of Council buildings. A Member requested that buildings feature prominently in the strategic plan of the Green Team, as all other efforts would be diminished if the buildings insulations issue was not addressed;
- iv) Council business travel. Members requested details on how the reduction in business travel was intended to be met. A Member also requested that the 'whole life' (origination to purchase) agenda be incorporated into the Council's strategic plans when considering business travel;
- v) replacement of the Vehicle Fleet Programme. The Group was advised that this was underway and represented the largest investment in the in the carbon reduction programme, at a cost of £500,000.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** to consider the Group's comments on the development of the Management Plan (as recorded above).

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.15 pm).

Chairman