

ENVIRONMENT AND LIVING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 DECEMBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillor M Winn (Chairman); Councillors S Jenkins (Vice-Chairman), C Adams, M Bateman, A Bond, S Cole, B Everitt, B Foster, N Glover (In place of S Chapple) and S Lambert (In place of P Agoro). Councillor Sir Beville Stanier attended also).

APOLOGIES: Councillors P Agoro, S Chapple and A Cole.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 November, 2016, be approved as a correct record.

2. CARBON AND ENERGY REPORT

The Committee received a report updating Members on progress made on carbon, renewables and energy in the four years since the previous report of 14 November 2012. It detailed the Council's achievements in terms of savings delivered, discussed the commencement of the Council's consultancy deliveries through its trading arm Novae Consulting Limited and later Incgen Ltd and introduced the Bucks Energy Strategy.

The report was also timely as the UK Government had reaffirmed its commitment to carbon reduction targets and would launch new plans to address weakness in transport and the housing sector low-carbon policy in the New Year. Local Government would have an important role to play in these areas.

Members were informed that carbon reduction aimed at reducing the effects of climate change had two major strands, specifically Mitigation and Adaptation.

Adaptation (often termed climate resilience) concerned itself with adapting to a world with a changing climate. This area of work tended to look at actions that can be pre-planned to allow for business as usual in a future with more frequently occurring and extreme weather conditions and events caused by the increases in global average temperatures. More detail on adaptation was provided at Appendix 2 to the Committee report.

Mitigation was the act of installing measures and changing behaviours towards reducing energy use and consequently the amount of carbon emitted.

An update piece of work on adaptation was awaiting completion in early January 2017 following research and interviews in August and September 2016. This had been conducted for AVDC by a University of Manchester student at no cost and would cover the period from the point at which the last LCLIP ended (March 2008) to date.

Although Central Government policy had recently stalled, the role of energy efficiency continued to be recognised, "reducing emissions and energy bills, improving competitiveness and asset values for business and make buildings more suitable for low-carbon heating in future" – *Committee on Climate Change October 2016*. The Committee report detailed in tabular form the energy reduction/generation projects delivered by class leading AVDC, demonstrating in-house activity in this area since the last report. In total, 19 projects over the 4 years period had cost £375,000 to implement

and were producing savings of £115,000 per annum (average return on investment of 3.27 years)

Taken alongside other measures installed and managed since 2008, the savings to the council amount to over two million kilogrammes of carbon dioxide reduced alongside a financial saving in 2016 of over £200,000. Overall, this represented class-leading cost reduction performance within the public sector.

The Council operated a Salix Finance Plan setting out the next four years of projects. Salix was a 0% loan agreed by the Council in 2008 which the Council matched to create a ring-fenced fund for energy efficiency measures amounting to £280,000. A regularly updated four year plan ensured that projects were managed proactively and avoided the need for reactive responses to plant failure and asset management. Available spend in any one year depended on committed project spend. The fund was managed nationally by our *Not for Profit* partner Salix Finance. The plan adjusted to meet the needs of the Council and included a large number of projects; some of the larger of which were set out in Appendix 4 to the Committee report. These included the Waitrose multi-storey car park, the High Street offices, projects at The Gateway offices, the Pembroke Road Waste depot, Aylesbury Waterside theatre and the Hawkslade Community Centre.

The Council had renewed and updated its Carbon Management Plan in 2014 to include new targets following the exceeding of the 22% Council agreed 5 year reduction target (to 2013) in 4 years, a full one year ahead of schedule. The Council's target now stood at reducing carbon emission by 2.5% per annum. This placed the Council in line with the UK Governments 34% target to be met by 2020 and amongst the top Public Sector performers in its field. The Council's 2016 data was not yet available but the carbon reduction rate achieved as at April 2015 was 27% from the 2008 baseline. This was a total of 5,681.3 tonnes of CO₂ emitted, a reduction from the 2008 baseline of 2,072 tonnes or a little over 2 million kg of CO₂.

Following the installation of dual vehicle chargers in 2012 at no cost to the Council, a bid had been submitted for funding a further 3 *Rapid* chargers. This had allowed three additional chargers to be installed in the Gateway (beside the post room) in June 2015. These had allowed the Council to increase use and availability of its electric car fleet and streamline use with re-charge to 80% capacity could now be delivered in 30 minutes (as opposed to 4 hours with standard chargers). This had led to a further improvement on the Council's saving in the first 12 months (2014/15) of £90,000 on car travel implemented by the Sustainability Team. The second year savings for the scheme against the same baseline year was showing a saving of £104,254.

Over the past 3 years the Sustainability Team had helped a number of external organisations and businesses to reduce their energy costs/carbon emissions. This has also generated consultancy income of £26,000 for the Council.

Members were informed that a County wide Energy Strategy was being put together and was attached as Appendices 1a and 1b to the Committee report. The Bucks Affordable Warmth Strategy was also currently under review and being updated.

The Council continued to work in partnership with NEF in Milton Keynes beyond the conclusion of the Government's Green Deal. Work including assisting with necessary fuel poverty activities, dissemination of advice, grants and loans to householders living in hard to treat properties (for example with no cavity wall). At the time of the last housing stock condition survey 6,317 (10.9%) private sector households in the Vale were living in fuel poverty (the equivalent national average at the time was 11.1%). However rates were above average in some areas, particularly in the private rented sector (14.4%) and for inter-war housing (21.2%).

The report also detailed the work that the Council was doing, some of it in partnership with the National Energy Foundation (NEF), on fuel poverty and affordable warmth. The work of NEF had a huge overlap with statutory private sector housing enforcement work and the Council's housing grants programme. Environmental Health officers routinely directed customers to NEF and also used them as a source of expertise for advice on fuel poverty where they come across vulnerable tenants during housing interventions.

Excess cold hazards in housing was one of the most common housing enforcement issues and was an area where risks to health were most significant. The Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy had been approved by Cabinet in February 2016 and referenced the roles of NEF and the Council to fulfil our fuel poverty obligations. NEF provided invaluable and very cost effective way for AVDC to deal with fuel poverty, insulation enquiries and helped to ensure that we are able to offer available schemes as and when they come to the energy market for the benefit of our residents.

The Sustainability work of the Council and the staff have been recognised through a number of awards received over the past 4 years and these were mentioned in the Committee report. In addition, Mr Alan Asbury of the Sustainability Team had been awarded Sustainability Manager of the Year in December 2012 by the National Public Sector Sustainability Journal.

As the Council's business to business trading arm Incgen expanded, there would be further opportunities to provide energy related services to businesses, especially on the "demand side response" which allowed companies to trade surplus power when the grid demands. The Council's relationship with Enterprise Rent a Car was developing towards a partnership to look at the roll out of an Aylesbury centric car club scheme. Further discussions were also planned with Aylesbury Vale Estates to assess opportunities for the Council estate in the future.

Members requested further information and were informed:-

- (i) on the current position regarding solar power generated locally going into the National Grid. If all 120 MW of local solar power was fed into the grid at one time and during low national demand, it then caused an imbalance which had to be managed.
- (ii) that it might be possible for the Council to operate hydrogen fuelled cars in the future. Currently there were only 3 hydrogen filling stations in the UK, all located in London.
- (iii) that solar panels were being phased down in some areas, as the feed-in tariffs had been reduced which in some cases had adversely impacted on payback periods.
- (iv) that housing developers could still be more proactive to provide energy efficiency measures as a part of new developments. For example, solar panels installed on roofs, connected to an electric vehicle charging point at the side of houses to allow for optimisation of a future smart grid.
- (v) that it was likely the Council would receive more applications in the future for solar farms. Solar farms were favoured by most local people, compared to wind generated power, and pension funds were also more likely to invest in them. Wind delivered power at different periods of the day/night and year and as such it was important to recognise it as important to the energy mix so as to avoid excess power generation at times of limited demand.

- (vi) that the Sustainability team was investigating the position regarding income from business rates payable by the new Energy from Waste (EfW) plant at Calvert and other local decentralised energy generating plants.. The EfW plant was also generating a massive amount of heat that was not being used so it would also make sense to investigate how this heat might be better utilised. The Sustainability team were in ongoing discussions with the County Council over Heat Mapping and alternative uses for this heat.
- (vii) that the Sustainability team was working with the Aylesbury Waterside theatre on demand response initiatives and working with the National Grid to receive payments (which were then shared) for turning down motors and pumps at the theatre at certain times.
- (viii) that Sustainability team within Incgen Ltd was talking with utilities, housing associations and other organisations regarding the requirement, from 1 April 2018, for any properties rented out in the private rented sector to normally have a minimum energy performance rating of E on an Energy Performance Certificate.
- (ix) that AVDC was looking at the feasibility of brokering bulk buying energy initiatives that could offer better energy pricing to both local people and the Council.
- (x) that the LED re-lamping, dimming and controls installed at the Friarscroft multi-storey car park had a payback period of 4.31 years but the lamps should have a lifespan on current operation of 18-20 years.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Sustainability and Energy Manager be thanked for attending and briefing Members on carbon, renewables and energy.
- (2) That the progress made by AVDC over the last four years on carbon, renewables and energy be noted.

3. AVDC AND THE BUCKS WASTE PARTNERSHIP

The Committee received a presentation from the Service Manager, Recycling, Waste and Community Spaces on the waste strategy for Buckinghamshire including information on household waste and combined recycling rates.

The Bucks Waste Strategy sought, as a partnership, to work together to deliver the best value, most customer-focused waste and recycling service, incorporating prevention, reuse, collection and disposal. Some of the key data presented included:-

- Total household waste arising was increasing at 0.4% above housing growth and equated to every household in Bucks producing an extra 4.5kgs of waste (1129.80kgs per household in 2013/14 to 1134.09 per household in 2015/16). This was 4,056 tonnes extra total waste.
- District-wide, 56.5% of waste was now composted or recycled. This compared to 45% in 2010/11. (The UK average recycling rate was 44.9%, against a UK target of 50% and a Bucks Waste Partnership (BWP) target of 60%).
- For AVDC, approximately 53% of waste was recycled or composted which compared to 20% in 2011/12.
- that fly-tipping continued to be an issue. Following illegal dumping in Slapton and Aston Clinton, one main group had been summonsed by the police for 8 offences. (Similar data on flytipping on the other Districts was also provided).

- that residual waste tonnage trends were increasing by 1.3% over the last 2 years, while food waste tonnage trends were decreasing by 7% over the same period.
- an explanation of how dry recycling and food waste was collected and then disposed of. It was explained that it cost four times the price to send food waste to the EfW facility compared to sending it for anaerobic digestion (AD).
- that residents could assist with rubbish disposal by placing the correct rubbish in the correct bins (e.g. 47% of households placed recyclable items in the general rubbish bin, 47% placed non-recyclable items in their recycling, 35-41% did not take food out of its wrapping before placing it in the food waste collection or used the general rubbish bin.)

Fly-tipping clearances from public land were usually done by Districts and disposal was paid by the County. There had been significant spikes in clearances total noted and combatted during 2016 by massively increasing surveillance work. Work would continue to promote deterrence against dumping including through the media and to encourage witnesses to report instances.

Members were informed that DCLG had awarded the BWP £889,000 and funding for a recycling reward scheme. A new Project Manager was overseeing the Recycling project implementation over a two year period (September 2016 to August 2018) and would be working with commercial partners, members of the partnership and residents.

It was also explained that the average UK household disposed of £700 of food each year that could have been eaten but was thrown away. The Fighting Food Waste Programme aimed to reduce this waste through:-

- identifying and setting our food waste recycling.
- increasing food waste participation in Buckinghamshire County households from 25% to 40%.
- reducing food waste tonnage per head by 15%.
- increasing awareness of various ways of food preparation and preservation, using Love Food Hate Waste (LFHW) campaign tools, by 25%.

Members requested further information and were informed:-

- (i) that the Council did not have a planning policy specifically relating to waste disposal units incorporated into new properties.
- (ii) that it was important to have regular communications with people to ensure that they recycled and disposed of their household and food waste correctly. Some research would be undertaken in early 2017 to try to ascertain why
- (iii) that while clearer labelling by manufacturers would make recycling easier, this was not helped by the 320 different types of refuse collection systems that operated across the UK. The Government was looking to harmonise the collections systems to 4 different types, one of which fitted with the system currently used by AVDC.
- (iv) on the detection work and latest cameras that were being deployed to identify and reduce instances of fly tipping. Experience had shown that as the cost of disposing of waste had increased, the size of flytippings had also increased.
- (v) that the whole recycling process worked more smoothly if materials recycled by households were not contaminated. Nationally, 14% of household recyclates contained contaminants. The percentage rate for AVDC recyclates had risen

from 3% to 11.6% (for the last quarter). Increased efforts would be made over the coming months to assist in reducing the contaminant rate.

- (vi) that AVDC disposed of food waste through a contractor at Westcott. It would cost approximately 4 times the amount to dispose of the same waste via the EfW plant at Calvert.
- (vii) that people could check a Register of waste carriers, brokers and dealers electronically on the Environment Agency's website.
- (viii) that AVDC had no jurisdiction regarding the disposal of waste and, at the request of the County Council, separated food waste from household waste. It was explained the UK legislation on the disposal of waste concentrated on reducing tonnages of waste, rather than reducing carbon metrics or the amount of nitrous oxide that the waste might generate.
- (ix) that the Council was able to charge for the collection of offensive waste which included such things as clinical waste. It would be possible to charge for a service such as nappy / dog poo disposal, subject to a business case, but 3 nappy recycling facilities had opened and subsequently closed in the UK in the last 10 years due to being uneconomical. As such, it was still more economical to dispose of this sort of waste at EfW.
- (x) that the Council provided new residents to the Vale with a resident's pack with useful information including on waste and recycling. The funding received from the DCLG would also enable the Council to fund a Projects Officer post. Part of the DCLG monies would also be used to survey people and to use this customer insight to help improve people's behaviour regarding waste/recycling disposal.
- (xi) on the position regarding Houses in multiple occupation and refuse/recycling bins.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Service Manager, Recycling, Waste and Community Spaces be thanked for attending and presenting to Members on the waste strategy for Buckinghamshire.
- (2) That Members were supportive of the work being done by AVDC to support the Bucks Waste Strategy, including on providing a customer-focused waste and recycling service, and on reducing fly tipping.

4. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered their future work programme as submitted to the meeting. In addition to the scheduled agenda items Member commented that they would also like to review the operation of the Horticultural / Street Cleansing contract and to receive a report regarding littering.

RESOLVED –

That the current work programme be noted.