



## AGENDA ITEM 10

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

6 MARCH 2012

## ENERGY REDUCTION - UPDATE REPORT FROM ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To update the position following the Environment Scrutiny Panel's 2010 investigation of the topic of energy reduction.

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2. The total energy and water cost for all Council buildings (including schools) in 2008/09 was £5.7m - with 23,695 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) produced. In this context, the scrutiny panel's 2010 review of this topic sought to ascertain what steps the Council was taking to reduce energy usage and contribute towards CO<sub>2</sub> reduction.
3. In February 2010 the panel made four recommendations, which related to
  - Endorsing the Council's approach to energy reduction and climate change.
  - Publicising the importance of energy saving by all Council employees and encouraging changes in behaviour and culture.
  - Undertaking work to collate energy use figures on an individual Council building and departmental/service area basis and to validate meter readings and energy bills for all Council buildings. The introduction of departmental 'energy champions' was also suggested.
  - Updating the scrutiny panel on progress.
4. On 14 June 2010 all of these recommendations were approved by the Executive. The recommendations, together with the associated departmental action plan, are shown in full at the attached **Appendix 1**.

5. On 16 January 2012 an update on energy reduction was reported to the scrutiny panel. The panel heard that all of its earlier recommendations have been actioned/implemented. The update report highlighted the following points:
  - Overall fuel usage
  - Energy saving projects
  - Carbon reduction in Council Buildings
6. Between 2009-10 and 2010-11 there was an overall reduction of 5.51% in fuel (electricity and gas) usage. This was despite colder external temperatures during the period.
7. A breakdown of fuel usage by Council department was submitted, together with details of action that is being taken to address areas of high usage, or to correct estimated meter readings.
8. Electricity usage increased by 3.19% during the period with the following issues being highlighted:
  - Street lighting is now being added onto metered supplies.
  - The use of electric fan heaters in Council buildings.
  - Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) meters are being installed which will resolve issues with estimated reads.
  - The authority has no control over school usage.
9. In terms of schools, the scrutiny panel heard that the Council officers who are responsible for energy reduction will, on request, work with schools to provide free advice on the issue. The panel suggested that this was an issue which could be progressed further.
10. Water usage increased by 3.19 % between 2009-10 and 2010-11, with the following points being highlighted:
  - At the beginning of 2011, loggers were installed on the water meters at the 12 highest consuming sites to closely monitor and hence reduce the water consumption. At the end of 2011 another 12 loggers were installed.
  - There is no control over schools.
  - Northumbrian Water is to carry out free water audits in the 10 schools with highest consumption per pupil.
11. In accordance with the authority's One Planet Living Action Plan, the issue of reducing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions in Council buildings is closely linked to energy reduction. There was an overall reduction of 0.83% in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions between 2009-10 and 2010-11.
12. A working group has been established to further progress this issue and has gathered data relating to the level of gas, electricity and water being consumed at each Council site. This is to identify usage trends, with a objective of trying to identify options for reducing consumption. Energy Champions have also been created to act as a point of contact for staff to suggest how energy and water can be saved.

13. The scrutiny panel was informed of the following actions that have been taken to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, using various funding sources:
  - Building fabric - improved insulation to walls and roof spaces and window replacement schemes.
  - Plant & Controls - Replacing boilers, improving thermostatic control, use of energy efficient lighting and sensor controls.
  - Use of sustainable energy sources - including introduction of solar panels (at the Rainbow Centre, The Neptune and Beresford Buildings) and evaluation of the use of wind turbines.
14. It is anticipated that the solar panel installations will produce a total of £163 000 in income over 25 years. The installation of two wind turbines would each produce an estimated £270 000 worth of income each over their 25 year life.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

15. The Environment Scrutiny Panel was pleased to hear of the progress being made to reduce energy usage and also carbon emissions. Work is constantly ongoing, with a wide range of schemes and initiatives being implemented to both monitor energy usage and to reduce it. In the current climate of rising energy costs and the constraints on public expenditure, it is increasingly important that this work is continued.
16. The panel considers that the issue of reducing energy usage by schools is worthy of further action, particularly when Council officers are available to provide free advice in this area.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

17. It is recommended as follows:
  - (i). That the updated position, and the wide range of schemes and initiatives being implemented to both monitor energy usage and to reduce it, is noted.
  - (ii). That the issue of providing advice to schools on energy reduction is taken forward and highlighted - for example by Councillors who are school governors raising the issue with their schools and a joint letter from the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel and the Executive Member for Streetscene Services and Transport being sent to all head teachers.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

18. The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:
  - Report to and minutes of the Environment Scrutiny Panel Meeting held on 16 January 2012.
  - Environment Scrutiny Panel Final Report - 'Energy Reduction' submitted to The Executive on 14 June 2010.

**COUNCILLOR BOB KERR  
CHAIR OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL**

**27 February 2011**

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