

## **LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW**

**CABINET – 10 APRIL 2014**

**REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 MARCH 2014**

### **CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND DELIVERING WARMER HOMES STRATEGIES**

Members received a report of the Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise which reviewed the progress of the existing climate change strategy and set out proposals to improve delivery. The officer outlined the content of the report and then responded to a series of questions and comments as follows:-

- It appeared that there had been a reduction in the Affordable Homes Programme. The officer confirmed that whilst the programme had overrun he expected it to be completed by the end of April.
- A Member questioned how many properties would be affected by the changes in the ECO (Energy Company Obligation) scheme. The officer advised that under the previous ECO arrangements, the support of the energy companies was £120 per tonne and this had now reduced to £40 per tonne which meant that support to residents would be substantially less. In addition, the officer advised that the Council had submitted a bid to Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) under Green Deal Communities Fund which (if granted) would mean that the subsidy previously supplied by the energy companies would be provided directly by the government. The Council was awaiting a decision.
- Clarification was sought on the number of houses in Harrow that had solid walls, when the last survey had been done and how the Council could tackle this issue. The officer advised that a survey had not been carried out recently and the data had been taken from the Energy Saving Trust. They estimated that 58% of homes in the borough (approximately 49,000 properties) had solid walls. The vast majority of these had not been insulated. If the bid for funding to the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) was successful he estimated that approximately 300 homes would be completed by April 2015 on a street by street basis
- In response to a question about the amount of energy used by academies, the officer advised that the figure was distorted because of the ongoing transfer of schools to academy status. However, it was clear that the combined increase of emissions from schools and academies was significant. One of the reasons for this may be due to the increase in the number of pupils.
- The officer confirmed that the use of LEDs for street- lighting would reduce the carbon footprint as well as energy bills, as long as the unit price of energy did not increase.

- A Member questioned whether residents were required to ensure that any replacement driveway that was installed was third water porous in order to aid the prevention of flooding. The officer undertook to look into this.
- In terms of the capital programme, a Member questioned the extent to which the effects of carbon emissions had been embedded and was advised that there was still work to be done. The officer cited the example of the school expansion and carbon reduction programmes working together. A suggestion was that Cabinet/ Committee reports should state what the carbon impact of proposals were.
- The officer confirmed that the individual projects that were funded under the carbon reduction programme were determined on the basis of a business case with a maximum pay-back period of eight to ten years.
- In terms of communication, a Member asked how residents would know that they may be entitled to support from the carbon reduction budget. The officer advised that if the Council received DECC funding, a number of areas would be targeted and, in particular, those areas with levels of fuel poverty.
- A Member commented that from the report it appeared that the number of schools with travel plans had halved and he questioned whether schools had provided reasons for this. The officer stated that he understood that the criteria for accreditation were now more strict so this reduction might be due to a technical change. He would seek clarification
- In response to a Member's question as to the purpose of the essential car users' allowance and the number of officers in receipt, the officer advised that those officers that were required to use their personal vehicle in order to perform their duties received an allowance. In terms of the current position in relation to the green travel plan, he would seek clarification.
- A Member raised the issue of flooding and noted that there had been some good work in the past which had alleviated some of the boroughs worst flooding areas. The officer agreed and pointed out that this work continued with more schemes coming forward in the capital programme.
- A Member suggested that it may be possible, as a Council, to reduce fuel costs by using wood waste from the tree maintenance service as a biomass fuel. The officer advised that he had spoken to the Leisure Centre contractor about the installation of biomass boilers and there were also opportunities at Harrow Museum. He thought it more likely that wood pellets would be used as these had a lower moisture content than wood chip from the Council's tree maintenance service.
- The officer's view was sought on the use of more gas efficient boilers by the Council. The officer advised that there had been discussions with Harrow Museum on the use of biomass waste and he suggested that, going forward, the carbon reduction programme would wish to consider the installation of biomass boilers wherever possible to ensure that the large reductions in carbon emissions were achieved.

- A Member suggested that the water usage at the depot could be reduced through the use of water meters. The officer confirmed that the water was metered. The high demand may be due to the vehicle washing facility and dust suppression at the civic amenity site. All the water currently used at the depot was drinking water quality and therefore had a high carbon footprint. It may be possible to use rainwater for washing vehicles – thereby reducing use of high quality water.
- A Member expressed concern that the 2 electric charging points outside the Civic Centre were no longer publicly accessible due to the change in car park layout. The officer undertook to seek clarification.
- A Member expressed concern in relation to the implementation of a Local Freight Operational Strategy and was advised that a response would be circulated to Members of the Committee.
- The lack of an Affordable Warmth Budget needed to be addressed as approximately 100 residents were affected by this annually.
- A Member suggested that an annual walk to school and work day would be an effective way of publicising the issues of climate change and travel impacts.

Members thanked the officer for his work, noting that he was due to retire shortly. The general view was that there should be a corporate ownership of the carbon reduction scheme and a concern about the number of school travel plans. It was felt that there should be further education in terms of saving energy, for example, switching off lights when a room was vacated. Members expressed support for an annual walk to school and work day, a green travel plan and Cabinet/ Committee reports including the carbon impact of proposals. It was also suggested that the Council actively participate in the European Mobility week in September.

In response to a Member's suggestion that there be a scrutiny review of school travel plans, the officer suggested that this be referenced in the work programme report due for submission to the April meeting.

Having reviewed the proposals for the Delivering Warmer Homes strategy, future consideration of an Affordable Warmth budget, and proposals to reduce carbon emissions it was

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the current performance on delivering the current Climate Change Action Plan be noted;
- (2) the potential projects to reduce emissions set out in Paragraph 2.3.4. of the Corporate Director's report be noted.
- (3) the change to reporting arrangements set out in Paragraph 2.3.5. of the Corporate Director's report be noted;

- (4) **the Committee's comments and suggestions be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.**

**FOR CONSIDERATION**

Background Documents:

Draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 18 March 2014

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