

18 September 2014

8. REPORTS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH RESPONSIBILITY

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. It is my pleasure as Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Environment to submit my report to Council on the work that has taken place in my areas of responsibility within the last year.

2. The role of CMR for Environment is a cross-cutting one covering a number of service areas. The Environment is one of the Council's Corporate Priorities and I believe it is not an added extra but an essential resource which must be sustained for local economic prosperity, continued biodiversity and as a place to improve the quality of life for both residents and visitors alike.

3. To this end I am trying to embed environmental considerations into the general work of each Directorate where practical.

WASTE DISPOSAL

4. **Local Authority Collected Waste:** I continue to work with colleagues from both Herefordshire Council and all the Worcestershire district councils and I chair the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Strategic Waste Management Members' Board, which is made up of waste portfolio holders and their relevant Heads of Service.

5. The Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy Review was published in August 2011 and adopted by all partners. An overview of the targets is shown below. It should be noted that kilograms of residual waste per household had consistently been reducing in the last few years, but are now starting to rise again, but we still remain on track to achieve our targets in 2015 and 2020:

Council	Kg/household 2000	2013/14 performance	Target 2015	Target 2020
Herefordshire Council	1,077	561	700	592
Worcestershire County Council	1,075	592	699	591

6. Recycling has reduced in 2013/14 and this is mainly due to changes in the market for timber. This means our performance, in terms of the amount of 'Household Waste Recycled', has dropped to 38.9% meaning we missed our target of 43%. We continue to work with our partners to increase performance in this area.

7. Recovery of value from waste has remained at 49.9% and we are working towards a step change in performance when our residual waste treatment facility becomes operational in 2017. This means we will not achieve our target of 78% recovery of value from waste by 2015, but we do now have a plan in place to deliver that performance level in 2017/18.

8. The Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme finished in 2012/13 and we complied with it through the seven years it was in place. We continue to work to move waste up the waste hierarchy with the ultimate aim of preventing it arising.

9. **Waste Prevention:** We are continuing our successful partnership with the University of Worcester working to promote composting and food growing on the University's allotment site.

10. The *Let's Waste Less* website continues to be very popular with users and has proved a valuable resource for waste prevention advice and we are seeking to improve it further with suggestions from the public.

11. **Reuse:** We continue to work with third-sector re-use organisations through the SEWAR (Social Enterprises Involved in Waste and Recycling) forum.

12. Re-use partnerships have expanded to a total of eight Household Recycling Centres across Worcestershire and Herefordshire where charities collect furniture, bicycles and other household items to divert this material away from landfill and help people on low incomes set up home.

13. **Recycling/Composting:** Our home composting contract with Straights remains popular and we continue to supply composting bins at much reduced prices direct to residents' homes. Since it started we have sold more than 100,000 compost bins diverting nearly 100,000 tonnes from landfill, saving more than £4.3m in landfill tax.

14. The EnviroSort recycling plant at Norton continues to process more than 70,000 tonnes of commingled recyclables per year.

15. Our Household Recycling Centres are now recovering value from more than 73% of the material delivered to them.

16. Our contractor Severn Waste Services has submitted a planning application for the relocation and improvement of the Household Recycling Centre in Tenbury to the Bromyard Road Business Park which will allow easier access and wider recycling potential.

17. Following its closure, for the demolition of the old animal incinerator building, the Kidderminster Household Recycling Centre has now reopened and I would like to take this opportunity to thank residents for continuing to recycle their waste at our nearby Stourport Household Recycling Centre.

18. I visited a number of recycling plants during the year including the Sita and Aquaforce facilities in Wolverhampton where our street sweepings and fridges/freezers are sent for reprocessing.

19. **Energy Recovery:** Following the Secretary of State granting planning permission in July 2012, work has continued to progress plans for the Energy from Waste plant (EFW), "EnviRecover", at Hartlebury Trading Estate.

20. In December 2013, the Cabinet considered a value-for-money assessment of a number of options relating to the management of residual waste. In outline these included: continue as is; vary the existing Waste Management Service Contract to design, build and operate an Energy-from-Waste (EFW) Plant at Hartlebury Trading Estate; and terminate the existing contract. The Cabinet agreed to progress the variation to the existing Waste Management Service Contract to design, build and operate an EFW plant at Hartlebury Trading Estate. Herefordshire Council also agreed to progress this variation at a separate meeting.

21. Following the Cabinet decisions, the Council agreed to provide finance for the varied Waste Management Service Contract through a loan to Mercia Waste Management. Herefordshire Council also agreed to provide a loan.

22. Following intensive negotiations in May 2014, Worcestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Mercia concluded a variation to the Waste Management Service Contract. This provided an improved financial position since the December 2013 Cabinet decision in that:

- The Net Present Cost of the agreed Option (Option 2 as defined in the Cabinet reports and Variation Business Case) is £680 million over the full asset life of the EFW Plant. This was £700 million in December 2013.
- In December 2013 it was reported that the Agreed Option would save £128million when comparing to continuing as is, as things stand today (Net Present Cost). Following agreement of the contract variation in May 2014, this saving is £163 million.
- In Nominal Cost terms the Agreed Option is £577 million cheaper over the full asset life of the EnviRecover than continuing as is (it was £517 million cheaper in December 2013).
- The December 2013 Cabinet reports defined our 'uplift' affordability envelope (both Worcestershire and Herefordshire) at the point that EnviRecover becomes operational at £6 million. At that time the price being asked by Mercia was an uplift of £6.5million. As a result of negotiations with the contractor, the 'uplift' cost to both authorities has significantly reduced with the final position being a like-for-like saving of £2.2 million per annum below the affordability envelope.

23. A Variation Business Case provides the updated financial information based on the position reached at financial close of the contract variation in May 2014. Recognising the plans regarding the operational life of the plant beyond the end of the contract with Mercia (2023), a revised Joint Working Agreement was agreed between Worcestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council in May 2014.

24. Since agreement of the variation to the Waste Management Service Contract, work has commenced on the site at Hartlebury Trading Estate. This has included site mobilisation, site preparation and earth works. The subsoil from the site is being taken to Hill and Moor to assist in landscaping works at the landfill site.

EnviRecover is scheduled to be operational in 2017 when the new plant will receive up to 200,000 tonnes of residual waste from Herefordshire and Worcestershire per annum and generate a net power output of 16.5 MW.

25. As with other waste facilities, Mercia has established a Community Liaison Group for EnviRecover that will meet from September onwards. The group will be made up from representatives of the local parish councils as well as local County and District Council members.

26. **Safe Disposal to Landfill:** The Pollution Control Team continues to successfully monitor the closed landfill sites in Worcestershire and carry out, or commission, any necessary remedial works. During 2013 they oversaw the completion of a reed bed at Shirley to reduce the levels of dissolved methane to within those specified in the current consent limits.

FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

27. Yet again a series of storms through the late autumn 2013 and winter 2013-14 brought successive bands of heavy rain from the Atlantic, resulting in record levels of rainfall in December and January and the winter being the wettest on record. In Worcestershire this led to near record river levels and significant flooding, in particular of the River Severn and its surrounds.

28. Various agencies including the County Council, West Mercia Police, Environment Agency, District Councils and the military, responded to the flooding in support of communities. The County Council played a key role to provide for the coordinated management of impacts upon highways and key access points within the county, to ensure the issues from the flooding were well managed and communities supported during the floods and equally in the recovery period afterwards.

29. The impacts would have been considerably more significant but for the success of flood defences such as those at Bewdley, Worcester, Powick, Upton-upon-Severn, Kempsey and Uckinghall. These defences, along with other more local defences and drainage schemes, protected many properties and businesses.

30. To date the Council has invested over £14 million and completed in excess of 860 flood mitigation projects across Worcestershire. We have and will continue to invest in completing a wide variety of flood mitigation works across the county to help alleviate and reduce the impacts these floods have on our roads, infrastructure and communities.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

31. The Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership, of which we are a member, has developed a close working relationship with the Worcestershire LEP, developing the environment and economy relationship and contributing the Strategic Economic Plan and EU Investment Strategy. This approach has been recognised and welcomed by Defra.

32. A key example of this has been working on the Local Environment and Economic Development Toolkit with the Worcestershire LEP. This was developed by the Defra statutory agencies and provides a framework for the strategic consideration of the interconnections between the economy and the environment, to

frame policy and practical approaches. This shaped input into the plans and further work is proposed on this in 2014.

33. The Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Partnership has completed and published the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Worcestershire. This document provides the framework for the delivery of green infrastructure in the county, and supports planning policy. The Local Planning Authorities are in the process of adopting this for planning purposes.

34. A series of Green Infrastructure concept plans have been developed to provide detailed guidance for delivery on strategic sites. Initially, the focus was on housing land, but this approach is also now being used to work with the developers on employment land sites, in particular the Game-changers.

35. Work has progressed on the Landscape Green Economy project, in partnership with Environment Agency, Natural England, Forestry Commission and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. The project is focussing on the Vale of Evesham, to link with the aspirations of the horticultural industry, water quality and availability and biodiversity enhancements.

36. During both 2013 and 2014, successful bids to Natural England facilitated the *Traditional Orchard Restoration Project*, which provided small grants to owners of traditional orchards for their management and restoration. Training was also provided on habitat management, biodiversity and produce use and marketing. Traditional orchards are a rare and unique habitat the remnants of which are found in only a few locations in the UK.

37. The in-house ecology team has continued to work alongside Property Services and Highways to support the delivery of school building, maintenance projects and major infrastructure projects, through the management of the ecological aspects of development and ensuring compliance with the legislation. Major projects include Hoo Brook Link Road and ongoing work on Worcestershire Parkway proposals.

38. Detailed business cases and proposals are being developed to guide Council investment in renewable energy, focussing on opportunities for solar photo-voltaics. This will contribute to the Carbon Reduction Management Plan targets and potentially reduce our electricity bill and provide an additional income stream. I visited the Willersley Solar Farm in Gloucestershire over the summer.

39. In March 2014, I hosted a seminar at The Hive, for colleagues from a number of agencies in the county to promote best practice in Sustainable Urban Drainage in anticipation of proposals to enact the Sustainable Drainage Approving Body legislation arising from the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

SUSTAINABILITY

40. **Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy:** In 2008 the Worcestershire Partnership set a target to reduce CO₂ emissions in the county by 11% from 2005 levels by 2011. This target was met and exceeded.

41. The new Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy, consulted on in 2013, sets a target to reduce the county's emissions by 30% by 2020 (from 2005 levels) build Worcestershire's low carbon economy, reduce fuel poverty and improve the county's resilience to extreme weather, such as flooding. The Strategy and action

plan are coordinated by the Council. Businesses, community groups and public sector organisations are working together with the Council to deliver the Strategy.

42. The latest data released shows the county's per capita emissions have decreased by 15.2% since 2005.

43. Sustainability Policy and Action Plan: I continue to chair the Sustainability Stewards' Group which oversees this work through the Council's Sustainability Policy and Action Plan.

43. WCC Carbon Management Plan: In April 2011, the Council made a commitment to reduce CO₂ emissions from its own operations by 30% by March 2016. Activity has focused on reducing emissions from Council buildings, vehicle fleet, staff mileage and large outsourced services. We are well on the way to achieving this target. CO₂ emissions have decreased by 15% from 2009/10 to 2013/14. This reduction equates to savings of approximately £1.25m. Successful projects to reduce CO₂ emissions include installation of automated meter reading (AMR) across sites with associated staff training, fuel management for the council fleet, upgrades to building stock through Property Services capital programme, better use of property and asset rationalisation, replacement of the County Hall wood fuel boiler (enabling the Council to benefit from the Renewable Heat Incentive and save £50,000 and 208 tonnes CO₂ a year), eco cooling for the IT server room, efficient lighting, voltage optimization and installation of solar photovoltaic panels on 55 sites, (including over 15% of schools).

44. Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Energy Efficiency Scheme: The Council is a participant in this mandatory Government carbon reduction scheme. In 2013/14, the Council emitted 33,274 tonnes of CO₂ under the CRC and had to pay £392,316 for our CRC allowances (at £12 per tonne). This is a 10% decrease in cost from 2012/13; £435,503. The Council was audited by an external auditor in June 2014 and they were satisfied that the Council is complying fully with the requirements of the scheme.

45. The Council has qualified for Phase 2 of the CRC (2014/15 to 2018/19). Schools and academies will be removed from the scheme and we will no longer have to pay for their emissions but street lighting will be included. Price per tonne of Carbon for Phase 2 has increased to £15.60 per tonne in a pre-purchase sale; £16.40 per tonne in a "Buy to Comply" sale. We have pre-purchased emissions to save on costs with a prediction of costs to be £271,594 for 2014/15. This is a 31% decrease in cost from 2013/14.

46. Warmer Worcestershire: The Council coordinates the Warmer Worcestershire Network, which aims to reduce fuel poverty and improve the energy efficiency of homes in the county. The network includes District Councils, Age UK, Act on Energy and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service. Despite a significant reduction in funding compared to previous years, the network was still able to provide training for 182 frontline staff to help residents who can't afford to heat their homes, support 540 families in need and provide assistance with a boiler repair service as well as attend flu jab clinics in the county to offer advice to vulnerable people on keeping warm and well.

47. Green Deal Communities Fund: The Council successfully bid for £3.6m from the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to subsidise solid wall insulation for up to 750 households in a range of eligible communities across the

county. The project, delivered in partnership with District councils and charity Act on Energy, is due to launch in the autumn and finish by April 2015.

48. Householders in eligible streets should be able to receive up to £4,000 towards the cost of solid wall insulation through this scheme. Once installed, homes will save up to £460 a year in energy bills and more than a tonne of CO₂. Communities were selected through a public request for community groups willing to help encourage take up of the scheme. Streets have so far been selected in Bromsgrove, Redditch, Kidderminster, Worcester and in Wychavon.

49. **Electric Vehicle Charge Points:** The Council successfully bid for £450,000 from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (part of the DoT) to install 12 rapid charge points for electric vehicles at locations across the county. These points, which can charge a vehicle in 30 minutes, are due to be installed by April 2015.

50. **Severe Weather Resilience:** Support has been given to Worcestershire businesses helping them to better prepare themselves for incidents of extreme weather. The Council has arranged training and distribution of government grant to help enterprises install flood prevention measures.

51. **Eco-Schools:** The Council is continuing to maintain its place as a national leader in this field. We have 237 schools registered as Eco-schools, which is the most in the country. The public are taught to appreciate the value of our environment at school, at home and as part of the community. 69 schools have achieved the top Eco-schools Green Flag award, (highest in the country) and 3 schools have also achieved Eco-schools Ambassador status recognising their outstanding work nationally to help other schools.

52. The Council is moving the county's Eco-schools towards greater sector-led improvement through a successful pilot programme of mentor schools. Ten high performing Eco Schools (at least one per district) provide support and advice to other Eco-Schools in their area.

53. As part of the schools' programme, the Council supported a 'Your Green Future' careers event for young people held in June at the University of Worcester. The event provided a unique opportunity for school children to explore, with business, the growing opportunities in the low carbon economy.

54. **Resource Efficient Worcestershire:** The Council was awarded £672,000 from the West Midlands European Regional Development Fund to help support small- and medium-size enterprises to become more resource efficient. I chair the project, which, in partnership with Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, provides free assessments to enable companies to improve energy and water efficiency, make better use of raw materials, reduce waste and increase profitability. Grants are available with the business providing 55% of the money. Since February 2013 over 130 businesses have registered on the programme with potential average savings of over £1million and potential CO₂ emission reductions of nearly 5,000 tonnes. Grants have been used to help purchase energy efficient lighting, introduce heating improvements, better insulation, heat loss shutter doors, new compressors, refrigeration equipment, variable speed drives, voltage optimisation, energy efficient equipment, double glazing, an air-to-air heat pump, a gas management system, and recycling equipment.

55. **Sustainability West Midlands:** I was elected to the Board of Sustainability West Midlands last year to represent local government in the region.

56. **Growing Worcestershire:** I was one of the founder members of this multi-agency organisation which works with food growing, from the back garden to the agri-industrial scale, in order to achieve lower food miles, improved economic prospects and a healthier population. To this end over 80 delegates attended the launch of the project in the Council Chamber last November.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

57. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Director of Business, Environment and Community, along with the relevant heads of service, managers and staff within the Directorate for their commitment and work over the past 12 months through what have been very challenging times. I would also like to thank the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel under its Chairmanship of Dr K A Pollock for its work and positive suggestions.

Anthony Blagg

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment