

17 September 2015

9. REPORTS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH RESPONSIBILITY

(a) 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 that it is the most essential piece of infrastructure we have, both for sustained quality of life and economic success. I continue to be a Board Member of Sustainability West Midlands and represent Worcestershire in a wider arena.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

3. Worcestershire County Council (WCC) is a leading member of the Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership (LNP). WCC continues to provide secretarial support, which ensures that the partnership is active. Areas of focus align closely with those of the County Council including green infrastructure, climate change, water resource management and flooding. Through the LNP we have continued to engage on environmental matters with the Worcestershire Local Economic Partnership who are also members.
4. WCC has worked in partnership on a number of development sites to promote green infrastructure as an integral part of the proposals, including strategic housing sites and the "gamechanger" employment sites and appeared at the South Worcestershire Development Plan Examination covering the proposed green infrastructure policy.
5. During 2014 another successful bid to Natural England facilitated the "Traditional Orchard Restoration Project" which provided small grants to owners of traditional orchards for management and restoration. Training on habitat management and marketing was also provided. Traditional orchards are a rare and unique habitat, which are found in only a few locations including Worcestershire and Herefordshire.
6. The in-house ecology team has continued to work alongside Property Services and Highways to support the delivery of school building and maintenance projects and major infrastructure projects, through the management of the ecological aspects of development to ensure compliance

with legislation. Major projects include Hoo Brook Link Road and ongoing work on Worcestershire Parkway and Hartlebury Energy from Waste plant.

7. The Renewable Energy Strategy has been revised and updated, and will now go out to public consultation.
8. We have worked closely with the Minerals and Waste Planning Policy Team to include environmental issues, in particular green infrastructure, and flooding at the heart of the Minerals Local Plan to ensure environmental concerns form the basis of the development of minerals sites and their restoration.
9. We have assessed the ecology and landscape implications of all county planning applications, to ensure that they align with policy recommendations and environmental legislation.

SUSTAINABILITY

10. **Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy:** The Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy sets a target to reduce the county's emissions by 30% by 2020 (from 2005 levels), to build Worcestershire's low carbon economy, reduce fuel poverty and improve the county's resilience to extreme weather. The Strategy is coordinated by WCC and includes businesses, community groups and public sector organisations working together. The latest data released shows the county's per capita emissions have decreased by 18.2% since 2005. I chair the Corporate Sustainability Group that oversees this work.
11. **WCC Carbon Management Plan:** In April 2011, the Council made a commitment to reduce CO₂ emissions from its own operations by 30% by the end of March 2016. Activity has focused on reducing emissions from Council buildings, vehicle fleet, staff mileage and large outsourced services such as highways and waste disposal.
12. CO₂ emissions decreased by 14% from 2009/10 to 2014/15. Successful projects to reduce CO₂ emissions include:
 - Installation of Automated Meter Reading across sites with associated staff training.
 - Upgrades to building stock through Property Services Capital Programme (e.g. boiler replacements, heating control systems etc.).
 - Better Use of Property and asset rationalisation programme.
 - Replacement of County Hall biomass boiler enabling the Council to benefit from the RHI (Renewable Heat Incentive) and save between £40,000 and £50,000 and 208 tonnes CO₂ a year.
 - Replacement of street lights with LEDs and part-night switch off.
 - Continuous implementation of the £1.7m Energy Efficiency Spend to Save fund, including improved insulation, efficient lighting, eco cooling for the IT server room, voltage optimisation and installation of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) panels. A total of 78 Spend to Save projects are now complete, 46 of which are solar PV projects.

13. £36,148 income was generated from solar PV projects on Council property over the last year.
14. **Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC):** WCC is a participant in this mandatory Government carbon reduction scheme. In 2014/15, the Council emitted 17,756 tonnes of CO₂ under the CRC and had to pay £276,994 for our CRC allowances (at £15.60 per tonne). This is a 47% decrease in emissions from the previous year. This is in major part a reflection in the changes to the CRC scheme, as schools are now excluded from the scheme, but street lighting is now included. The Council was audited by an external auditor in June 2015 and they were satisfied that the Council is complying fully with the requirements of the scheme.
15. **Warmer Worcestershire:** WCC 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. The network was able to:
- Attend flu inoculation clinics to offer advice to vulnerable people on keeping warm and well during the winter months.
 - Provide thermometer cards containing advice and guidance.
16. **Green Deal Communities Fund:** WCC 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 is being delivered in partnership with District Councils and Act on Energy and has procured e.on to complete home energy assessments and installations.
17. Householders can receive up to £4,500 towards the cost of solid wall insulation through this scheme as well as funding from e.on through the ECO scheme. On average, households are potentially saving around £400 per year and 27 tonnes of CO₂ over the lifetime of the install.
18. The project will also be piloting an installation offer at two park home sites in Worcestershire (Broadway and Kinverdale in the Wyre Forest), who have previously shown an interest in solid wall insulation.
19. To date 221 Worcestershire households have signed up for solid wall insulation through the scheme. Installation works on 79 homes are either complete or underway.
20. Initially piloted in a number of Worcestershire communities, the project has recently been widened and is now available across the county. Due to recent changes in national policy, the project delivery timeframes have been extended. It is now due to finish by September 2016 and further promotion will continue.
21. **Electric Vehicle Charge Points:** WCC successfully obtained £600,000 funding from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (Department of Transport) and the private sector to install 12 rapid charge-points for electric vehicles at locations across the county. These points, which can charge a vehicle in 30 minutes, have recently been installed at the following locations:

- County Hall
- Evesham Leisure Centre
- Webbs of Wychbold
- Chateau Impney, Droitwich
- Evesham Country Park (2 charge points)
- Weaver's Wharf, Kidderminster
- Abbey Stadium, Redditch
- Greenlands Business Centre, Redditch
- Crowngate car park, Worcester (2 charge points)
- St Martin's Gate car park, Worcester

22. **Eco-Schools:** WCC is continuing to maintain its place as a national leader in this work. Worcestershire has 225 state schools and 92% are registered as Eco-schools, which is the most in the country. Of these, 41 schools hold the top Eco-schools Green Flag award. Two schools have also achieved Eco-Schools Ambassador status. Only fifteen Ambassador Schools are chosen per year across the country and they are recognised as outstanding and work nationally to mentor other schools.
23. Ten high performing Eco Schools (at least one per District) provide support and advice to other Eco Schools in their area. With the help of the mentor schools and through the schools' SLA with property services the Council has been able to run an Eco Schools support programme including training and a summer conference. The conference proved very popular with 100 plus students.
24. In June 2015 twenty schools attended a celebration event. Teachers, senior management and governors had an opportunity to meet a range of organisations that can assist with their work. The Council also supported the University of Worcester "Skills for Tomorrow" conferences in June, which sought to engage secondary pupils in careers in the green economy sector.
25. I had the pleasure in April 2015 to be the Chief Judge at the "Bright Sparks Energy Den" held at Bishops Wood Environmental Centre. This was organised by the Sustainability and Energy Teams and schools had to pitch ideas on saving energy. Seven finalist schools met the board of "Dragons" to win £500 for their school (kindly sponsored by Speller Metcalfe and West Mercia Energy). The best First School and High School were selected and the schools will be monitored in future to assess the effectiveness of their idea. Besides presentations to the "Dragons" the children attended energy and sustainability related workshops.
26. **Resource Efficient Worcestershire (REW):** WCC was awarded £672,000 from the European Regional Development Fund to help support Small and Medium Size Enterprises to become more resource efficient. I chair the board for the project, which is a partnership with Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce. Free assessments to enable companies to improve energy and water efficiency, better use raw materials, reduce waste and increase profitability are available. Grants were given with the business providing 55% of the total. A number of resource & efficiency business forums were held as well as two conferences. 161 businesses have now received Resource and Efficiency reviews to help reduce energy and waste costs.

27. Monitoring is showing businesses have reduced energy usage and have saved up to 35% of energy costs, as well carbon emissions through taking part in the programme.
28. **Environment & Energy Expo:** More than 100 people attended the Energy and Environmental Expo for businesses at Morgan Motor Company in June 2015. A result of collaboration between REW and Metnet (Marches Environmental Technology Network), the event showcased local environmental and energy technology companies and fed back on the successes of the Resource Efficient Worcestershire programme.
29. **Public Sector Sustainability Awards:** In November 2014 I attended the Excel Exhibition Centre in London where WCC was shortlisted in the category of Most Sustainable Local Authority amongst a large field of other councils. In the end WCC was Runner Up and Oxford City Council were the winners.
30. **Funding:** In the last two years the Sustainability Team have brought in £5m of European and Central Government funding, which has leveraged a further £3.5m private sector funding.

SCIENTIFIC SERVICES

31. Worcestershire Scientific Services (WSS) made a small profit for 2014/15. WSS has now become the leading official food control laboratory in the UK for DNA based techniques and this has added to its income. Following the horsemeat scandal of 2013, hot topics in authenticity continue to be meat species, basmati rice, fish species and adulteration of durum wheat pasta. Its technical lead on DNA sampling has enabled WSS to gain business from other public analyst (PA) laboratories in the country and income on DNA work has increased to £350,000 for the last financial year.
32. The Government is continuing to act on the recommendations of the Elliott Review, which includes developing closer working arrangements between the six PA laboratories in England. Worcestershire has taken a lead in these talks, with the Director of Business, Environment and Community chairing the discussions on how this can be achieved. It is expected that a joint working arrangement will be reached, allowing the further development of centres of excellence model.
33. In a further drive for efficiency the asbestos unit within WSS has bought state of the art surveying and reporting software. This enables surveyors to enter details onto handheld devices on site, negating the need to write reports later. It is anticipated that an increase in productivity of 10-15% will be achieved.

WASTE DISPOSAL

34. I continue to work with colleagues from both Herefordshire and the Worcestershire District Councils and chair the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Strategic Waste Management Members Board, which includes waste portfolio holders and their relevant Heads of Service.

35. An overview of the targets of Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy review of 2011 is shown below. Kilograms of residual waste per household had consistently been reducing since then but are now starting to rise again. Despite this rise we are currently exceeding our target for 2015 and continue to work with partners to achieve targets for 2020:

Authority	Kg/household 2000	2014/15 Provisional performance	Target 2015	Target 2020
Herefordshire Council	1,077	575	700	592
Worcestershire County Council	1,075	637	699	591

36. **Waste Prevention:** The LetsWasteLess website continues to be well used by residents and has proved to be a valuable resource for waste prevention advice. During the year we have introduced Love Food Hate Waste and Home Composting Facebook pages, which have both proved popular.

37. Our main focus continues to be to encourage food waste prevention by promoting Love Food Hate Waste as food waste is not only environmentally unfriendly but heavy in relation to other material. Activities in this area now include live cooking demonstrations as well as radio and press campaigns over the Christmas period.

38. **Reuse:** We continue to work with third sector reuse organisations through the SEWAR (Social Enterprises involved in Waste And Recycling) forum and following a recent survey of those organisations we supported them through adverts in the local press as well as refreshing our literature and online communications.

39. Reuse partnerships have expanded to a total of nine Household Recycling Centres across Worcestershire and Herefordshire where charities collect furniture, bicycles and bric a brac, diverting this material away from landfill and helping people set up home. More than 63 tonnes of materials were sent for reuse in 2014/15.

40. **Recycling/Composting:** Recycling has increased in 2014/15, but at 39.8% remains below our 2014/15 target. The main reason for this is the lack of recycling opportunities for timber, which is now sent for energy production as biomass fuel counting as recovery. We continue to work with our partners to increase performance in this area.

41. We continue to work with Straight supplying composting bins at much reduced prices direct to our residents. Ongoing support from our "Master Composter" volunteers promotes the scheme in the local community and schools.

42. The EnviroSort recycling plant at Norton continued to process more than 70,000 tonnes of recyclate per year. In December 2014 Severn Waste obtained Planning Permission to extend the operating and maintenance

hours at this facility, which along with other planned improvements to the plant, should lead to increased operational flexibility and plant performance.

43. Our Household Recycling Centres (HRC) have maintained their performance recovering value from more than 73% of the material delivered to them. Planning permission for the relocation of Tenbury HRC was approved last year and the new facilities at Bromyard Road Business Park will bring the site up to or above the county average.
44. **Energy Recovery:** Recovery of value from waste shows a slight drop in performance since last year and now stands at 48.5%. This was due to a reduction in tonnage sent to the Energy from Waste facility at Coventry. Once operational in 2017, EnviRecover will provide a step change in recovery performance meaning that, although we will not achieve our target of 78% recovery of value from waste by 2015, we will be able to deliver that performance level from 2017/18.
45. Work continues with the construction of EnviRecover, our Energy from Waste plant at Hartlebury Trading Estate. Work on the waste reception bunker, processing structure, turbine hall, access ramps and administration building is underway. Installation of the process equipment has started with the waste hopper, primary air ducting, grate and elements of the boiler already in place.
46. Utility connections have been made for both telecommunications and water. Work is also underway to enable the electricity grid connection to be made which will generate a net power output of 16.5 MW from 200,000 tonnes of residual waste per annum.
47. Planning conditions continue to be discharged as required by the local Planning Authority and the project remains on schedule.
48. Mercia Waste has established a Community Liaison Group for EnviRecover that has now met several times. The group is made up of representatives from local parish councils as well as local county and district council members. The contractor has dedicated a number of pages on their website to keep residents up to date with progress.
49. In November 2014 I visited the new 300,000 tonnes per annum state of the art Energy from Waste plant at Wolverhampton operated by Veolia through a PFI contract with Staffordshire County Council. I have also visited other waste processing sites throughout the year.
50. **Safe Disposal to Landfill:** The Pollution Control Team continues to monitor the closed landfill sites in Worcestershire and carry out, or commission, any necessary remedial works.
51. The Team also carried out improvement works on the gas collection system at Hartlebury closed landfill, increasing its efficiency.
52. Commissioning of the reed bed at Shirley continues, ensuring that any discharges from the site are within consent limits.

FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

53. **Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS):** This Strategy is a statutory requirement of the Flood & Water Management Act (2010) and will guide the efforts of Worcestershire County Council and its partners over the next six years.
54. The draft Strategy has undergone a period of informal consultation with partners and the feedback is being woven into the next draft ahead of the imminent formal public consultation.
55. **County-wide Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP):** The draft County-wide Surface Water Management Plan provides a key evidence base for the LFRMS and has accompanied the LFRMS on the informal consultation process. The SWMP includes an extensive assessment of all known past flood hotspots, from all sources, across the county. This has allowed prioritisation in order to aid the targeting of both existing resources and future fund raising activity.
56. The data within the Plan is also already being extensively used to inform the assessment of new infrastructure proposals and planning applications.
57. **Local Surface Water Management Plans (LSWP):** LSWMP's focused on specific geographical areas including Bromsgrove, Droitwich, Kempsey and Hagley are being produced. The plans bring together all agencies with relevant responsibility along with local stakeholders and the community in order to assess flood risk and implement solutions.
58. **Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS):** In order to support the expectation that SuDS will be required in new developments via the planning system, WCC became a statutory consultee in April 2015 on major planning applications which have surface water implications. This ensures that surface water and the need for appropriate SuDS is taken into account although construction and future maintenance of SuDS features remain the responsibility of the developer.
59. **Relief Schemes:** A range of flood alleviation schemes have been completed or brought closer to completion representing a significant reduction in flood risk and an additional inward investment into Worcestershire. The schemes include the following:
- Callow Brook, Rubery – flood attenuation
 - Green Lane, Catshill – flood attenuation
 - Badsey Brook, Broadway – flood attenuation
 - Wribbenhall, Bewdley – Property Level Protection
 - Upper High Street, Broadway – Culvert replacement
 - Bournheath, Bromsgrove – watercourse, surface water and sewerage infrastructure improvements
 - Perdiswell, Worcester – culvert repair
60. **Community Engagement:** A new Community Engagement Officer has joined the Flood Risk Management Team. They will work to strengthen the bond with communities at risk whilst also encouraging and enabling them to become more resilient and help themselves. The Officer is employed via the

Bewdley-based charity The National Flood Forum and will work two days a week in Worcestershire and three in Warwickshire.

61. **Highway Drainage:** Further progress has been made with implementation of the programme of highway drainage improvement schemes with a focus on reducing flooding to properties and key sections of highway. In addition, work has begun on a programme of major SEP-funded highway flood adaptation schemes, which includes raising the road in front of the Worcestershire County Cricket Club and in front of the marina in Upton-upon Severn.

62. **District Council Partnership:** The District Council Land Drainage Partnerships have continued to successfully deliver the roles delegated to them by Worcestershire County Council, most notably enforcement of the Land Drainage Act on Ordinary Watercourses – the vast network of smaller brooks, streams and ditches.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to place on record my continued thanks to the Director of Business, Environment and Community along with his team for their commitment and work over the past 12 months through what have continued to be 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 helpful suggestions.

Anthony Blagg

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment

**(b) REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

(To follow)