

# **DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - RESOURCES**

**13 March 2014**

### **REPORT OF THE VICE-CHAIR OF THE IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – RESOURCES**

#### **REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE ENERGY – PROGRESS REPORT**

<b>1.</b>	<p><b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b></p> <p>To inform Members of the I &amp; S Resources Committee of progress made by the Sustainable Energy Review Working Group</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b><u>Information and Analysis</u></b></p> <p>The Sustainable Energy Working Group updated the Committee at the last meeting on 16 January on the work it had undertaken from the commencement of the review.</p> <p>The Members of the working group are Cllrs Paul Dunn (Chair), Bisknell, Lomax, Kemp and Moesby.</p> <p>At an initial meeting with officers responsible for carbon and energy management and Cllr John Owen (Deputy Cabinet Member with responsibility for overseeing the promotion of sustainable energy usage by the Council) Members of the working group asked to visit the Markham Environment Centre (to discuss the use of sustainable energy at the site) and Tapton Lock visitor centre (to view the potential for a small water power installation). Both visits took place on 24 January 2014.</p> <p>The working group met with Peter Storey, the Head of Markham Vale, Trudy Saxton, the Environment Centre Manager and Countryside Ranger, Gemma Gregory.</p> <p><b><u>Markham Vale</u></b></p> <p>Markham Vale Environment Centre had had a Biomass boiler system installed in the early stages of the operation of the site. However, this had not proved successful for a number of reasons and the managers were currently looking at a purpose built biomass system and alternative sustainable options for providing power at the site.</p> <p>The main problem with the original system was that it was too big for the</p>

task and required a lot of maintenance and day to day management. The boiler was now, in fact, obsolete and needed replacing. It was currently housed in an underground boiler room which also posed access difficulties.

The on-site willow coppicing project, which had been intended to fuel the biomass boiler, has not yet been fully utilised although the crop is now ready for harvesting. One option was to sell the willow product to outside buyers for them to harvest at their cost.

A smaller, stand-alone unit, house above ground, is an option being considered but other sustainable options were also being considered. These included a fuel source being offered by a company on the site next to the Environment Centre. This was drawn from the water in the subterranean mine workings below the company's site as a source of cheap heating. There would be no maintenance or running costs for the Environment Centre if this option was taken up – with the only charge being for the heat provided.

Members were also informed that the wind turbine situated on-site was not operational and had not proved effective.

The working group Members sought assurances that the Council's Director of Finance and Procurement and Legal teams were consulted on any options for renewable energy installations at the Environment Centre.

### **Tapton Lock Visitor Centre**

The second visit took place at Tapton Lock visitor centre where there was potential for a water power project from a fall of water through the canal system.

Officers were to investigate the viability of this option over the forthcoming months with a view to powering some or all of the centre's heat and lighting requirements.

Following the 2 site visits, the working group met with John Cooper of the Finance Division to clarify the process which should be adopted to ensure any investments made by the Council on sustainable energy projects were thoroughly protected, given the long term nature of these projects and the often lengthy "pay-back" periods.

It was noted that the Director of Finance would require that any project we referred to him in the early stages so that a rigorous financial assessment could be made prior to any commitment by the Authority.

Members agreed that a similar assessment should be undertaken at the same time by the Council's Legal Services team, in respect of any contractual obligations the projects would demand.

	<p><b><u>Assessment of Sites for Possible Sustainable Development</u></b></p> <p>The working group had a further meeting, on 27 February, with Rob Murfin, the Council's Head of Planning Service. He was currently looking at land/property owned by the County Council which could be used for sustainable energy development.</p> <p>Although the Council had, for some time, invested in small projects such as wind turbines at Shipley Park and some schools, Rob was keen to explore the possibility of commercial scale energy production. He raised the following key points;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal Authorities in Germany have been producing “green” energy on a large scale – mostly through solar power installations on closed landfill sites - and there was potential to undertake similar programmes in the UK. Whilst the environmental credentials of such schemes were evident, the German authorities based their projects purely on sound commercial reason.</li> <li>• There were a number of large scale private sector schemes in the south of England (which had slightly more sunlight hours than the more northern parts of the UK) but there had been issues with the grid infrastructure being unable to cope with the amount of energy being produced. There had also been local resistance to solar farms being sited on predominantly agricultural or greenbelt land.</li> <li>• Derbyshire was considered viable for this type of solar energy “farming” and the County Council had numerous sites which had potential, with a local infrastructure which could process the energy produced.</li> <li>• County Council owned sites were currently being assessed with a view to developing large scale energy production. To facilitate this Rob was liaising with national organisations and private sector companies to help inform his work in this area.</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed by the working group that Rob be invited to the next meeting of the I &amp; S Resources Committee to give all the Members information on the potential for solar power installations on County Council land.</p>
3	<p><b><u>Further Work</u></b></p> <p>The review has identified that there are a number of potential opportunities for sustainable energy. These opportunities could have an impact on a number of the Council's Departments and cross-cut the portfolio responsibilities of most, if not all, of the Council's Cabinet Members.</p>

	<p>The Council has an Environmental Sustainability Group which comprises of officers who have a responsibility to, predominantly, oversee reducing the Council's energy usage and associated costs and achieving carbon reduction targets.</p> <p>To ensure that an efficient and effective corporate approach is applied to assessing the viability of energy generation projects, the working group will consider the establishment of a corporate Sustainable Energy Project Group which will undertake project appraisals. The work of a project group should contribute to and compliment the work of the Environmental Sustainability Group.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p><b><u>Considerations</u></b></p> <p>Property, environmental, financial and legal considerations are set out in this report.</p> <p>The relevance of the following factors has also been considered in preparing this report; Human Relations, Human Rights, Prevention of Crime and Disorder, Equality and Diversity, Health and Transport.</p>
<b>5</b>	<p><b><u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u></b></p> <p>The Improvement and Scrutiny – Resources Committee is asked to note;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The report of the Chair of the Review of Sustainable Energy working group.</li> <li>(2) That a further meeting of the Review working group be held with Cllr John Owen (Deputy Cabinet Member) and appropriate officers to consider the development of a Sustainable Energy Project Group which will oversee all projects – or potential projects – to ensure a corporate approach.</li> <li>(3) That a final report will be submitted to the meeting of this Committee on 29 May.</li> </ul>