

Buckinghamshire County Council

Sustainability Strategy

September 2009



Buckinghamshire County Council **Sustainable Development Strategy**

Foreword

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Purpose of strategy
- 1.2 Current drivers for change

2.0 Working Together

- 2.1 Community engagement
- 2.2 Community planning
- 2.3 Economic development
- 2.4 Responsible employer
- 2.5 Financial management and decision making

3.0 Reducing our Impact

- 3.1 Carbon management and climate change
- 3.2 Reducing the Council's carbon emissions
- 3.3 Managing our waste
- 3.4 Council travel

4.0 Managing our Assets

- 4.1 Existing property
- 4.2 Information Technology
- 4.3 Water management
- 4.4 New buildings and redevelopment
- 4.5 Managing our transport assets
- 4.6 Greening our schools
- 4.7 Sustainable procurement
- 4.8 Managing our procurement
- 4.9 Engaging with others

5.0 Improving our Environment

- 5.1 Biodiversity
- 5.2 Historic Environment
- 5.3 Green Infrastructure
- 5.4 Public Access
- 5.5 Cultural Assets
- 5.6 Management of Council's estate

6.0 Shaping our Future

- 6.1 A low carbon future
- 6.2 Education
- 6.3 Transport planning and management
- 6.4 Waste and minerals planning and management

7.0 Making it Happen

- 7.1 Reporting progress

Table I: Summary Action Plan

Foreword

At Buckinghamshire County Council we recognise that all our activities create an impact on both the natural and built environments, by the way we use and dispose of resources. It is our shared responsibility to improve the way we manage these impacts and at the Council we seek to lead by example. A sustainable future balances the needs of the environment, economy and community.

This Sustainability Strategy sets out how we plan to improve our sustainability performance. We aim to make this easy to understand and easy to do. Sustainability at its simplest is not using today what we will need tomorrow.

It will only happen if it is part of everything we do. In our Corporate Plan we set out the Council's priorities, which are all linked to sustainability. This alignment is critical to success and helps secure commitment to common goals.

Sustainability makes business sense for the Council. Using fewer resources by providing more efficient services will help us reduce financial burdens. Cost efficiency and providing value for money has always been, and remains one of our core objectives. This strategy will help us achieve this. The priorities in the document are based on our current funding position and our best estimate of future finances, if these change it is likely that we will need to revisit our priorities.

We will continue to work with others outside the Council to encourage and support them to improve sustainability in Buckinghamshire. We are also keen to learn from and share our good practice with other Councils and Government to further improve our performance.

In 2008, we set up a Council-wide working group to lead on sustainability and deliver our actions. It has already proved to be a powerful vehicle to drive improvements across the Council. It has also been responsible for developing this strategy, clearly demonstrating that Buckinghamshire County Council wants to create a sustainable future for everyone.

Bill Chapple
Deputy Leader

Executive Summary

Chapter1 Introduction

This strategy has been developed to demonstrate a coordinated approach to embedding sustainability across the organisation. The strategy is based around themes to align with both the Corporate Plan and the broader Sustainable Community Strategy.

This strategy summarises the main policy objectives and actions to build on what we have already achieved.

Chapter2 Working Together

Partnership working is central to the delivery of sustainable communities. We are committed to promoting and achieving sustainable development in Buckinghamshire. Through the Bucks Strategic Partnership (BSP) and the Local Strategic Partnerships we will work together to ensure a coordinated approach which enhances local service delivery.

Chapter 3 Reducing Our Impact

The Council is committed to ensuring that the impacts associated with delivering our services are managed to minimise any negative effects and maximise our positive contribution to sustainable development.

The County Council will establish, monitor and reduce the Council's own carbon emissions to achieve a sustainable level of resource use. A twin track approach will include activities to mitigate against the causes of and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Chapter 4 Managing our Assets

Public buildings and activities can have significant sustainability impacts, from their initial construction, management and use. Delivering our services uses natural resources, resulting in carbon emissions and financial costs

Continually improving the environmental performance of our properties across our estate will be a priority. As building design and construction standards continue to evolve, we will work with our contractors and suppliers to achieve more sustainable solutions in practice.

Chapter 5 Improving our Environment

The Council recognises the value of our natural and historic resources and along with other partners, aims to ensure that the County will maintain a high quality, well-managed and accessible environment with enhanced biodiversity.

Chapter 6 Shaping our Future

Sustainability principles will be applied throughout the Council as we plan for and deliver our future services, responding to changing environmental, social and economic circumstances.

Sustainability principles will be considered when planning the future infrastructure needs of the County. Strategies to adapt to the changing climate will be developed and education in the classroom, workplace and community will be crucial to the achievement of a low carbon future.

Chapter 7 Making it Happen

The implementation of the strategy will be reviewed by the County Council's NI 185 Group to ensure that it progressively adopts emerging policies and does not remain static.

Sustainability progress will be reported annually in the Deputy Leader's Sustainability Report to Full Council.

1.0 Introduction

Sustainable development means improving our quality of life without storing up problems for the future or impacting unfairly on other people's lives. It is essential to balance the needs of people, profit and the planet.

'Economically prosperous and enterprising, in 2026 all Buckinghamshire communities enjoy a high quality of life in a valued and enhanced environment'

(Sustainable Community Strategy 2009)

The Bucks Strategic Partnership is currently developing a new Sustainable Community Strategy for Buckinghamshire which will set out a longer term vision for the future. This Sustainable Development strategy will be key to delivering the County Council's contribution to the sustainability agenda within a new Sustainable Community Strategy for Buckinghamshire.

1.1 Purpose of the Strategy

In recent years sustainability has moved progressively up the political agenda and into the mainstream of modern local government. It is understood that it is no longer a separate subject for occasional focus but a core aspect of business – protecting vital assets and resources, balancing competing needs, taking a longer term view and being efficient.

This strategy sets out our approach to sustainability in Buckinghamshire. It summarises our work to influence social, economic and environmental issues, describes programmes already in place, and sets targets and future actions.

The focus of the document is our actions, both across our Services and estate, and in partnership with others. It also underpins and supports the delivery of Buckinghamshire's Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council's Corporate Plan.

This strategy is part of a continuing process of improvement to deliver long-term results. We recognise that, whilst a lot of what we already do relates to creating and improving sustainability, we need to have a policy framework for our activities to ensure they are co-ordinated and coherent.

The sustainability agenda is huge and it is not possible to include all areas of sustainability work in this document. The annual update will provide an opportunity to address issues not covered here.

1.2 Current Drivers for Change

Each of the themes of the strategy are major challenges to us and the way we work, and cut across organisational boundaries, structures and geographies.

We recognise that whilst small scale, local or individual outcomes can gradually bring about more sustainable results, these big challenges cannot be met without more radical change, especially with climate, resource and economic pressures.

Key drivers that will help deliver our Strategy are:

- Transforming how we work – a wide ranging programme to improve services and reduce costs to meet future needs. A transformation programme is underway focussing on seven areas ranging from work styles and places to standardising business support.
- The new Performance Management Framework includes national indicators which ensure that sustainability principles such as minimising carbon emissions are core business.
- Comprehensive Area Assessments that will evaluate how we use our natural, physical and human resources to support delivery of priorities and achieve sustainable value for money. The assessment will focus on how we minimise impacts on the environment, tackle climate change, maintain and manage our assets, and plan our workforce.

We have taken account of these needs in the Strategy and, to reflect the way we work, have grouped plans and proposals into themes. Each chapter addresses one theme, providing an overview of issues, what we are already doing alone and with others. An action plan is included as an appendix to this strategy. The action plan is a live document and will be reviewed regularly at the NI 185 group meetings and updated annually. National Indicator 185 concerns the Council reducing carbon emissions from its own operations. A corporate working group with senior representation meets regularly, chaired by the Deputy Leader.

2.0 Working Together

We are committed to promoting and achieving sustainable development in Buckinghamshire through the services we provide and by working in partnership with others, including local communities. *We will work within the Buckinghamshire Strategic Partnership (BSP) and Local Strategic Partnerships to deliver sustainable communities in Buckinghamshire.*

2.1 **Community Engagement**

Planning for, developing and delivering sustainability in Buckinghamshire is a collective effort involving all partners. Therefore the focus for this approach has to be the Sustainable Community Strategy produced by the Bucks Strategic Partnership (BSP).

The Strategy sets out the main priorities for Buckinghamshire, linked to the four District Community Strategies that identify issues of local significance.

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) is the key delivery mechanism for all five Strategies, identifying how all partners will work together to deliver Government priorities at a local level.

We are addressing the Sustainable Communities agenda in a number of ways with the aim to improve community engagement:

- ‘Getting Closer to Communities’ - aims to improve the way we work with residents and partners.
- Improving access to the County’s natural and built environment and resources

2.2 Community Planning

The statutory planning system requires sustainability to be a fundamental consideration in the:

- Development of strategic plans for future growth
- Decision making process on individual schemes.

We will work to ensure sustainability principles are at the heart of strategic plans and planning guidance, and will work with Districts to secure the same for Local Development Frameworks.

We will seek to maximise developer contributions and external funding to provide the necessary infrastructure for the creation of truly sustainable communities.

We will also work with local communities to support Parish and Community planning thus enabling individuals and groups in both urban and rural areas to play an active part in planning for the future.

2.3 Economic Development

The current economic downturn is creating significant pressures for businesses in Buckinghamshire and we recognise that we must work with them and their representatives to mitigate the effects of the recession.

In partnership with others, we will seek to:

- Boost business competitiveness
- Create and maintain a healthy private sector
- Raise the profile of the County through the Ambassadors programme
- Encourage new business start-ups and the development of Enterprise Hubs
- Supporting the business community around the impacts of climate change

We will also seek to attract inward investment, secure funding for projects from regional and national sources, and continue to promote local business relationships and interconnectivity solutions such as broadband coverage.

Climate change is a critical issue affecting the planet. In these tough economic times it is at risk of slipping down the agenda for business. Urgent action to cut emissions and improve resource efficiency must be delivered if we are to hit Government targets.

We are working with Bucks Economic and Learning Partnership and the District Councils to host a business summit on climate change helping businesses to reduce their carbon emissions.

2.4 Responsible Employer

Our ambition is to embed sustainability within our culture. We make every effort to ensure we are socially responsible, use our resources efficiently and effectively and provide a healthy working environment.

- We encourage flexible working where appropriate, helping to reduce carbon emissions
- We will ensure that sustainability forms part of the induction training for all new staff, members and school governors.

2.5 Financial Management and Decision Making

Our approach to the use of financial resources is to constantly monitor our outcomes and the sustainability of the investments we make, for example, capital expenditure on major projects is appraised using sustainability impacts and whole life costing wherever possible.

- Our capital investment strategy, which is currently being re-drafted, will incorporate sustainability principles.
- Sustainability will be incorporated into the Annual Governance Statement.

3.0 Reducing our Impact

The Council is committed to ensuring that the impacts associated with delivering our services are managed to minimise any negative effects and maximise our positive contribution to sustainable development.

The Council recognises that our own activities themselves entail use of energy and resources that can consequently have both local environmental impacts and contribute to wider concerns such as climate change.

3.1 Carbon Management and Climate Change

The Council is committed to acting on climate change and will:

- **Establish, monitor and reduce the Council's own carbon footprint;**
- **Achieve a sustainable level of resource use to mitigate climatic effects; and**
- **Minimise the impact of climate change and adapt to these changes.**

The significance of climate change and the need to both reduce climate affecting emissions and manage the effects of this change are increasingly understood. The UK government considers climate-related impacts as a major threat and targets an 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 from 1990 levels.

The South East region may experience some of the most severe climatic effects in the UK, with hotter, drier summers, warmer, wetter winters and an increased frequency of severe weather events (UKCIP 08). Buckinghamshire has emissions 4% per capita higher than the South East average, which is in turn higher than the UK mean, so we have a particular need to act to reduce our emissions.

Buckinghamshire County Council aims to be a leading local authority in carbon management, committed to minimising the impact of climate change. The drivers for the Council to act on climate change are through the adoption of Government performance targets, specifically:

- NI 185 - 4% CO₂ reduction from Local Authority operations (LAA)
- NI 186 - Per capita CO₂ emissions in the LA area
- NI 188 - Adapting to climate change - 08/09

These targets have both countywide and individual Council significance; hence there is a clear need to act collectively on climate change, with a consistent approach for monitoring and reporting progress.

The BSP has taken a lead in addressing these issues and commissioned a climate change report and action plan for Buckinghamshire. The report established baseline carbon emissions by sector and proposes a number of high level actions. The BSP Environment Task group is now developing a climate change action plan which will set a framework for each partner organisation to work to common objectives and help contribute to the new national indicators.

3.2 Reducing the Council's Carbon Emissions

The County Council recognises that a strategic response is required across its services, structures and activities. As part of the LAA, the County Council has committed to delivering significant CO₂ reductions, getting its 'own house in order' as a lead to encourage and demonstrate effective carbon management.

The County Council will continue to demonstrate its commitment to addressing climate change through the Carbon Management Programme,

which was first developed with The Carbon Trust 2004/5 and the emerging Climate Change Action Plan.

Carbon reduction projects will be evaluated, reviewed and refined to ensure continual improvement, reporting progress annually in the Deputy Leader's report and through annual reviews of the Sustainability Action Plan. As the first Programme reached its final stage the County Council made reductions of 3.8%.

The County Council acknowledges that saving energy and reducing CO₂ emissions is a priority and has committed £2.1 million to help achieve a 4% CO₂ reduction from its own operations by March 2011 as part of the LAA target.

3.3 *Managing Our Own Waste*

The County Council has a corporate recycling programme in place to promote sustainable waste management practices. Waste monitoring is undertaken regularly and this feeds into corporate reporting on waste production and recycling.

We will also continue to promote the use of recycled products and expect our contractors to adopt this approach, particularly when significant opportunities are presented, such as the use of recycled aggregate in highways construction.

3.4 *Council Travel*

The Council has adopted a travel plan for employees since 1998, encouraging staff to commute using sustainable modes of transport (walking, cycling, public transport, car sharing). In delivering the plan a range of Council wide initiatives have been implemented, these include:

- Provision of travel cards and discounts for public transport;
- Flexible working; and
- Car sharing and bike schemes that are being rolled out at all of our offices.

The impact of the Travel Choice programme has been extremely positive – reported car use to work at County Hall has reduced from 73% in 1999/2000 to 35% in 2007/08. The success of the Council's efforts to deliver sustainable staff travel has been recognised through a range of awards during this time.

Further opportunities have been identified to reduce employee travel by as much as 5% and are currently being examined as part of the Transformation programme. These include:

- Further development of home and flexible working;
- Video, telephone and online conferencing,
- Rationalisation of Council buildings and improved space planning.

4.0 Managing our Assets

We are committed to continually improving the environmental performance of our properties across our estate. As building design and construction standards continue to evolve, we will work with our contractors and suppliers to achieve more sustainable solutions in practice.

Public buildings and activities can have significant sustainability impacts, from their initial construction, management and use. Delivering our services uses natural resources, resulting in carbon emissions and financial costs. The County Council is currently addressing a number of requirements to improve energy and resource consumption from their buildings, including:

- Reporting on NI 185 for carbon emissions, aiming for a 4% overall reduction over two years
- The Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC);
- Display Energy Certificates (DECs)
- Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

Implementing these requirements is a significant aspect of the Council's sustainability plan and considerable emphasis is being placed on delivering energy-saving measures at our sites. The cost savings realised will enable further improvements through the SALIX fund to support further work.

4.1 Existing Properties

There are approximately 700 County Council operational assets across Buckinghamshire, of which 237 are schools. The Council is delivering an ongoing improvement programme, whilst establishing accurate baseline data and performance monitoring that will enable more efficient portfolio management in the future. Work in progress to improve our energy performance includes:

- Energy plant improvements
- Increasing the number of Building Energy Management Systems and implementing smart metering for all council properties during 2009.
- Energy efficiency improvements to building fabric, including double glazing, roof insulation and replacement condensing boilers;
- Power correction units have been installed in County Hall to optimise and improve the incoming voltage and protect electrical and electronic equipment;
- Education and awareness campaigns

Renewable energy will also play a part in our energy programme. To help implement the policies set out in the South East Plan the County Council will work with schools to help them to progress renewable energy projects which will contribute to the sub-regional renewable energy generation targets. Some technologies such as wind turbines, solar water heating, photo voltaic and ground source heat pumps have already been installed and offer opportunities for learning. Following the installation of a biomass boiler at one of the County's schools, this technology will be considered for wider use.

4.2 Information Technology

IT has been widely highlighted as a major contributor to global warming, comparable with aviation. The Council's IT Unit has recently reviewed the 'Greening Government ICT: Efficient, Sustainable, Responsible' report and is assessing which recommendations will be viable for implementation. The ICT schools team are also formulating their plans in support of schools. A range of efficiencies have already been identified:

- Server Virtualisation
- Desktop Power Management
- Video Conferencing

4.3 Water Management

Water consumption within County Hall is monitored and reported annually. A number of initiatives have been implemented to reduce consumption and wastage, such as installation of cistern volume reducers in toilets and a replacement programme of taps. Following the rollout of smart metering for gas and electricity, water consumption will be similarly measured to further improve water management.

4.4 New Buildings and Redevelopments

The Council recognises that any new construction or significant building alteration offers an opportunity to apply good practice sustainability construction standards. Tightening Building Regulations and planning controls such as BREEAM certification also require better energy and water use performance and materials specifications.

As part of the 'building schools for the future' programme, a new school is currently in construction and is being designed to achieve 'excellent' BREEAM status. All future new-build will aim to achieve a minimum BREEAM "Very Good" rating. Building in flexibility and capacity for future uses – for example for changing school numbers, is important and will be taken into account in all construction programmes.

SystemsLink

SystemsLink, a new data system for energy monitoring, has been implemented across most of our property portfolio. The system electronically records electricity and gas and to enable energy management at sites through web technology. The software's web based facility will allow each site to have direct access to their energy consumption data, which is a good incentive to encourage energy saving practices.

4.5 Managing Our Transport Assets

The Council operates and owns over 250 vehicles, including library vehicles, school mini buses and adult social care buses. Further vehicles are used by over 2,000 contractors who deliver transportation services on behalf of the Council.

A range of initiatives has been adopted to 'green' the Council's fleet. All new commercial vehicles purchased must meet the latest European emissions. The Council has also lowered the maximum CO2 emission limit on Council lease cars. The Council is also looking at pool vehicles as a more effective shared resource and investigating the use of alternative fuels.

Practices and policies are being developed to "green" our supply chain. Work is underway to develop a "sustainability standards" system for road maintenance contractor activities that suppliers will be required to adopt.

4.6 Greening our Schools

BCC will work to ensure that the educational facilities in the County are sustainable environments for learning and living. Key actions that will achieve this include:

- Implementation of the Eco-school programme –target of two thirds of schools to be accredited by 2012.
- Improving energy efficiency in schools
- Sustainable travel - The Council aim is for all schools to have a green travel plan by April 1st 2010.

4.7 Sustainable Procurement

The Council will adopt sustainable procurement principles where practicable to:

- ***Minimise climate change and environmental impacts;***
- ***Reduce packaging and waste generation;***
- ***Recognise social, economic and community impacts associated with procurement choices.***

Procurement is an important process for achieving greater sustainability in terms of the services provided and products used by the Council and within the County. Sustainable procurement is championed by the Deputy Leader and a member of the Chief Officer's Management Team, and the Council is committed to ensuring that government good practice guidance on sustainable procurement, such as the Office for Government Commerce and Environment Agency is adopted.

4.8 Managing Our Own Procurement

Development of the Procurement Strategy is work in progress, focussing on embedding sustainability into the procurement cycle (cradle to grave). The Council needs to ensure that sustainability becomes an integral part of the procurement process through:

- Using whole life costing methods to evaluate best value and the use of sustainability risk assessments to determine the risk and impact of each procurement activity on the sustainability agenda.

- Where appropriate, standardised sustainability questions to be used in procurement documentation and key performance indicators (KPIs) adopted in contracts.

4.9 Engaging with Others

The Council seeks to influence all partners in our supply chains and this is happening through a range of mechanisms. This includes engaging and working with key suppliers through events, engagement with the Federation of Small Businesses and collaboration with the South East Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership.

5.0 Improving our Environment

The Council recognises the value of our natural and historic resources and will work with others to protect and enhance Buckinghamshire's environment.

Buckinghamshire has many areas of highly valued landscape. Environment is central to a sustainable future for the county. The Council, with other partners, aim to ensure that the County will maintain a high quality, well-managed and accessible natural and historic environment with enhanced biodiversity.

5.1 Biodiversity

The Council is a member of the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Biodiversity Partnership with over 40 other organisations that are working to protect and enhance the wildlife of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

The partnership has developed and published the County's Biodiversity Action Plan, which sets targets for habitat protection, management restoration and creation. The partnership is also developing Biodiversity Opportunity Areas where it is looking to work with landowners and local people to protect and enhance local wildlife habitats. This will assist the ability of wildlife to adapt to climate change and should reduce local extinctions.

The Partnership also seeks to protect and promote the County's local wildlife sites and aims to raise awareness of the importance of these and to help landowners manage their sites to increase their wildlife interest.

5.2 Historic Environment

Buckinghamshire has a rich and diverse historic environment with over 19,000 historic sites recorded on the County Historic Environment Record. The historic environment is not just about individual sites, as the whole landscape is in some sense an historic construct – landscapes of 19th century or earlier origin cover 71% of Buckinghamshire but some valued historic landscape types have declined rapidly over the past century (source: Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Historic Landscape Characterisation).

The historic environment is a finite non-renewable resource with embodied heritage, economic and resource values. The County Council therefore works with partners such as the Chiltern Conservation Board, District Councils, English Heritage, the National Trust and voluntary groups to manage change to the historic environment in a sustainable manner and promote public access, appreciation and understanding. In addressing the challenges of climate change the County Council will give due consideration of its effects on the historic environment.

5.3 Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure is a planned network of multifunctional greenspaces and interconnecting links designed, developed and managed to meet the environmental, social and economic needs of communities. Forming an integral part of the planning system it is linked to a wide range of functions and benefits:

- providing opportunities for recreation and enjoyment provide important linkages, networks and gateways;
- helping preserve heritage and culture;
- supporting and enhancing habitat and biodiversity;
- supporting the economy and food production, and
- addressing flood risk, water management and therefore helps ameliorate the impacts of climatic change.

The Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Consortium is a multi-agency forum, promoting the need to protect, plan for and invest in Green Infrastructure at strategic and local scales. The Strategy developed by the Consortium provides a framework, and a twenty-year vision for establishing a strategic Green Infrastructure network.

Three Action Areas in Buckinghamshire have been identified: North Aylesbury Vale, Aylesbury Environs and Wycombe District South & South Bucks. The Consortium has identified a schedule of Green Infrastructure projects within these Action Areas. To ensure that it is kept relevant the Plan takes the form of a three-year rolling Action Plan that will be reviewed and updated annually.

5.4 Public Access

Buckinghamshire offers a high level of access opportunities, with a county-wide network of rights of way extending to 3324 km in length and 4783ha of green space where the public have a legal right of access.

Within a county that is 80% rural, the rights of way network has a major role in providing and promoting access to the natural environmental and to the built heritage, such as archaeological sites and flora and fauna of all types. Increasingly it has also become clear that the network serves and can serve a wider range of needs - it is therefore vital that these assets are well managed, protected and improved for the long term.

The County Council, as the local Highway Authority is required by law to develop and produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) under section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The ROWIP is the Council's strategic document, setting out its aspirations and priorities for the public rights of way and countryside access.

5.5 Cultural Assets

The Council's cultural vision defines culture as 'anything that makes life worth living' and sets out 6 cultural objectives for the future focusing on: access, diversity, pride, creativity, regional contribution and young people. Overall it aims to strengthen and promote culture and leisure provision, make a difference to people and communities and increase culture's contribution to our way of life.

5.6 Management of the Council's Estate

Our own facilities and land ownership present a range of opportunities for wildlife enhancement and access to natural environment for recreation including:

- New major parks are being facilitated by the council including Quarrendon at Aylesbury, managed by a Trust and current aggregate sites will be restored as Country Parks in 10 years time.
- Restoration of Langley Park to protect landscapes and wildlife sites of recognised European Importance.
- Investigating opportunities for carbon sequestration / offsetting on Council-owned land.
- Increasing the number of managed nature reserves
- Working with Highways maintenance to manage roadside nature reserve verges to improve biodiversity

Langley Park Restoration

This is a £3.1 million project supported by £1.9 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund grant. The park protects landscapes and wildlife sites of recognised European Importance

6.0 Shaping our Future

Sustainability principles will be applied throughout the Council as we plan for and deliver our future services, responding to changing environmental, social and economic circumstances.

6.1 A low carbon future

The Council will evaluate and respond to the risks and opportunities presented as a result of climate change and adopt lower carbon options wherever feasible.

The planning, design and delivery of our infrastructure and services will require innovative solutions and a range of measures will be progressively adopted:

- Associated improvements to infrastructure such as planned rail extensions and transport hubs will provide wider travel choices to combat the additional growth in carbon emissions from a growing population.
- The Council, through the LTP and emerging Rights of Way Improvement Plan, will promote the health benefits of cycling and walking. Addressing the school run through school travel planning will help cut carbon emissions and contribute towards a healthy society. Aylesbury is a cycling demonstration town and external funding has been awarded to develop necessary infrastructure.
- In rural communities where transport links are restrictive to employment opportunities, a broadband partnership will be established, minimising reliance on the car and reducing carbon emissions, also boosting the County's economic competitiveness, which relies heavily on small businesses in rural areas.
- In schools, climate change will not only be a classroom subject but also reflected in the way new schools are constructed, how they consume and generate energy and the way pupils travel to school. A programme of energy audits and energy efficiency improvements is underway in schools and a number of renewable energy technologies including biomass boilers, wind turbines, solar panels and photovoltaic arrays have been installed.
- Aylesbury Vale Advantage will encourage the consideration of sustainable construction practices and whole life costs in the proposed housing growth. New homes and employment centres will maximise energy efficiency through design.

Adapting to climate change in Buckinghamshire falls within the new Performance Framework, and the County Council will consider the risks associated with a changing climate through the Risk Working Group, to ensure that service delivery is maintained to the highest standards and expectations.

Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCLIP)

The County Council, in partnership with Aylesbury Vale District Council and UKCIP (UK Climate Impacts Programme), undertook an innovative project called LCLIP (Local Climate Impacts Profile), a new approach to help local authorities prepare and adapt to climate change or local extreme weather events. Evidence of the impacts of previous weather events has been researched and discussed with BCC operational managers to ascertain the implications and costs for future service provision, given that these events are expected to increase in frequency. This project, funded by the Bucks Strategic Partnership Innovation Fund, may be rolled out to include other districts in the future.

6.2 Education and Awareness

The Council is committed to delivering education for sustainable development through the following routes:

- Sustainability as a topic in a range of adult learning classes with resources and learning available online and through mobile libraries;
- Community awareness raising programmes in partnership with the District Councils
- Incorporating sustainability in the curriculum and range of education provided; and
- Adopting sustainability principles in the building and management of educational facilities.

Education has a central role to play in sustainable development by imparting sustainable values to current and future generations, particularly as young people will be the decision makers of the future.

The Government in England wants every school to be a sustainable school by 2020. Their Sustainable Schools Framework launched in 2006 sets out challenging long-term aspirations for schools to mainstream learning about sustainable development issues and sustainable practices into everyday school life. Further to this, Eco-Schools is an international award programme that guides schools on their sustainable journey, providing a framework to help embed these principles into the heart of school life. ***The Council is committed to forwarding both of these programmes.***

The Council is keen to embed sustainability learning within local curricula at all levels of education and will work with education providers to develop effective resources.

An example is the waste education programme, where the Council employs a waste education officer, covering a range of key stage 1 to 4 activities. This initiative has been running for 4 years and has proved to be very popular, with over 230 activity sessions this year.

Other good practice examples include:

- Sharing good practice through a network of schools working on Eco-School accreditation
- Sustainable Schools termly newsletter featuring information about grants, local developments, and support resources.
- Governor training tailored to school needs.
- Farm visits for teachers to encourage more pupil visits to farms to learn about and experience the countryside.
- Residential experience for primary pupils at Shortenills Eco-Centre, providing education on aspects of carbon footprint and sustainable living.
- Biodiversity support, encouraging schools to develop their grounds for nature conservation and study.

Further proposed developments:

- Develop a pack of teaching materials from a range of sources covering sustainability topics in the classroom.
- Training opportunities for school staff and governors, to cover sustainability issues.

Installing a biomass boiler in a local school

The County Council will replace inefficient oil fired boilers with modern, efficient biomass boilers which will use locally grown wood, helping to support the local farming economy, whilst enabling the school community to learn about low carbon energy and to see the links between where fuels are sourced through farm visits.

6.3 Transport Planning and Management

The Council is committed to delivering an effective and sustainable transport system, seeking to minimise negative impacts of transport resources under our control and influence.

Transport represents a particular challenge in sustainability terms for modern life – the positive and negative impacts of which can be significant across economic, social and environmental perspectives. Effective transport is vital for our businesses and communities to function, but has consequences in terms of carbon emissions and impacts on local environmental quality.

The “Excellent” rated Buckinghamshire Second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) outlines the Council’s commitments to delivering sustainable transportation improvements across the County.

Progress towards delivering this plan has contributed towards the award of ‘Transport Local Authority of the Year’ for Buckinghamshire in 2008.

Commitment towards delivering sustainable travel improvements (public transport, cycling, walking etc.) and mitigating negative transportation impacts (emissions, noise etc.) are an integral part of LTP2. A number of measures have been identified to improve energy efficiency of streetlights, signals and road signs to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Streetlighting - We are helping to reduce carbon emissions through our sustainable transport strategy, but also through innovative projects such as switching off 2,000 streetlights at selected locations across the County. High tech alternative measures have been put in place (e.g. solar powered road studs) to enhance road safety at these locations and nearly 600 tonnes of carbon emissions and £100,000 of expenditure on energy costs will be saved annually as a result.

6.4 Waste and Minerals Planning and Management

The Council is committed to a countywide approach to waste management, whilst maintaining waste production within its own property and supporting and promoting recycling wherever possible.

A sustainable approach to waste management is a challenging aspect of the strategy, requiring co-ordinated and practical solutions to be developed and adopted. Standards of waste management continue to improve and increasing pressure to both minimise waste generation, recycle and avoid landfilling necessitate effective planning and action from local authorities and community participation.

6.4.1 Buckinghamshire County Council as Waste Planning Authority

The Council has an adopted statutory Minerals and Waste Local Plan (BM&WLP, 2006), setting out a strategic approach to waste and minerals planning to 2016.

Work is underway on a suite of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that will replace the BM&WLP and extend plan coverage to 2026. The first of these will be the Minerals & Waste Core Strategy (MWCS), that establishes the amount of future waste and mineral provision that will be needed, a general pattern of the necessary facilities and the specific sites where major facilities should be located.

By 2026, to meet the demands made by European, national and regional policies, waste management will have undergone a radical change from its current pattern. A network of facilities for the collection, transfer, recycling, sustainable treatment and disposal of wastes will be in place across the county, linked geographically to the main sources of waste. Landfilling will be restricted to wastes which cannot be re-used or recycled, or from which value cannot be recovered. The number of active landfill sites in the county will have reduced to the necessary minimum.

We have therefore planned in the emerging Core Strategy for reduced reliance upon landfill, and in the earlier years of the plan it is likely that most progress will be made in maximising the contribution of recycling and composting.

A full business review has recently been undertaken to evaluate the best technology for treating residual household waste, concluding that Energy from Waste is the most viable option. The procurement process for commissioning partners is underway and it is envisaged that the new Energy from Waste facility will be open in 2014.

6.4.2 Buckinghamshire County Council as Waste Disposal Authority

As the Waste Disposal Authority for Buckinghamshire, the Council is responsible for disposing of municipal waste generated in the County and managing the Council's waste facilities. In providing this service, recent achievements include:

- Recycling rates of over 70% at Household Waste and Recycling Centres;
- Construction and operation of In-vessel composting facility since July 2004;
- Completion of construction in June 2009 of new Household Waste and Recycling Centre in Aston Clinton;
- New Household Waste and Recycling Centre scheduled for construction and opening at Booker, High Wycombe in late 2009;
- Financial support for some districts to help their roll out of food and garden waste collection.
- In 2007, all five of Buckinghamshire's councils formally approved and adopted a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS). Aiming to secure a long term strategy for the management of municipal wastes, the JMWMS identifies how we will work with District Councils and other partners to comprehensively address municipal waste management operations and initiatives.

The Strategy aims to see Buckinghamshire recycling and composting 45% of its waste by 2011 and 60% by 2025. We are currently recycling over 41% of municipal waste. The JMWMS is supported by a series of detailed plans that set out actions for each partner authority. A number of successes can be highlighted from these action plans:

- The campaign 'Recycle for Buckinghamshire' is helping to increase recycling rates. BCC has secured £700k of funding through WRAP over the last few years to help deliver this campaign. The most recent campaign has been the launch of the 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign;
- Successful roll out of food and garden waste collection to some 65,000 households in Buckinghamshire;
- Since 1999 over 60,000 discounted home compost bins have been distributed diverting over 4000 tonnes of waste per year from landfill.

Education is a key focus of the strategy. BCC has one waste education officer to deliver the Rethink Rubbish at School waste education programme.

Illegal Dumping Costs Campaign - this campaign has cut levels of illegal dumping of waste (known as fly tipping) by well over 30% since 2003. Since the campaign began there have been over 130 successful convictions of illegal dumping or duty of care offences.

7.0 Making It Happen

The Council will ensure that the Strategy is implemented throughout our services and is regularly reviewed to ensure that it progressively adopts emerging policies and does not remain static.

The main structural groups for taking this agenda forward will be:

- The cross-service NI 185 Group, with a focus on carbon management.
- The Policy Network Group will ensure that sustainability is embedded in all our work.
- The Environmental Task Group of the Bucks Strategic Partnership which drives the countywide sustainability agenda, focussing on developing and implementing actions to address climate change and broader sustainability issues.

Further to this, a communications plan is being developed that will address how sustainability can be continuously kept in focus across the Council. This will identify:

- staff training and awareness requirements;
- programmes of internal and external events specifically on sustainability issues; and
- publications and electronic media.

Further actions have been previously highlighted that will centralise sustainability in the Council's processes and decision making, influencing our use of resources, procurement, policy and plan making. *We will also incorporate sustainability criteria into all service plans.*

7.1 Reporting Progress

The strategy will be comprehensively reviewed each year and an annual sustainability report produced. Progress will be reported through BCC's governance structures and to the Full Council each year.

Integral to the performance monitoring process is the adoption of sustainability indicators that can be routinely measured to track progress. The Council is currently monitoring against a core set of these indicators (table 1) as a means of characterising our environment footprint through resources consumed.

The requirements of the Local Area Agreement and national performance indicators such as NI 185 (reducing carbon emissions from local authority

operations), 186 (reducing countywide carbon emissions), 188 (adapting to climate change) and 194 (air quality), will require new reporting mechanisms to be developed and baselines established during 2008/09. The Council will work with all services and key partners to ensure that a consistent and streamlined good practice approach is taken for collecting and reporting this information.

Further to this, as the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) replaces the Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPA), the County Council will ensure that new reporting requirements are met, particularly in a sustainability context for the Key Line of Enquiry (KLoE) on the Council's Use of Resources.

All progress will be reported and published to communicate to the wider community what has been achieved to date.

In establishing partnership arrangements with service providers the Council has introduced key sustainability performance targets and indicators (for example with Amey on Client Transport) and will continue to do with all potential new partnerships.