



## Regeneration and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item No. 7

**Date:** 15/10/08  
**Open Report**  
**Report of:** **Jenny Moreton**  
(Principal Health and Sustainability Officer)

### Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy

#### 1. Summary

This report provides an update on the requirement to tackle climate change in Wyre Forest. It sets out proposals for the development of the Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, which would supersede the previous Sustainability and Affordable Warmth strategies.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 The Health and Sustainability Team in Housing Services has responsibility for co-ordinating the Council's work on Climate Change, Sustainability and Affordable Warmth.
- 2.2 The Council's internal Sustainability Strategy, which was developed following a detailed scrutiny exercise in late 2003, covered the period 2004-2007. The council's internal Environmental Working Group (EWG) developed a series of annual action plans to help deliver this strategy.
- 2.3 The Wyre Forest Affordable Warmth Strategy was developed following detailed consultation with partners and with regard to the Worcestershire Affordable Warmth Strategy. It was adopted by the Council in 2004 and also covered the period 2004-2007. In order to deliver the strategy, annual action plans were developed by the Wyre Forest Affordable Warmth Steering Group. In addition to Wyre Forest District Council, the Group includes various partner organisations including the Primary Care Trust, Age Concern, the Fire and Rescue Service and the Worcestershire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre.
- 2.4 A Progress Report on the Wyre Forest District Council Sustainability Strategy and Wyre Forest Affordable Warmth Strategy was taken to the Community & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007. This report recognised the need to review both strategies in response to a number of local and national drivers. Between December 2007 and April 2008, both positions in the Health and Sustainability Team were vacant, hence the delay in work to review the strategies.

- 2.5 In April 2008, the Health and Sustainability Team was re-established and the Environmental Working Group and Wyre Forest Affordable Warmth Steering Group reconvened. Both groups developed action plans for 2008/9 in order to carry on this important area of work during the year. The Affordable Warmth Action Plan 2008/9 was endorsed by Cabinet at their meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2008.
- 2.6 Recognition of the need to tackle climate change has increase rapidly over recent years. Various climate change indicators have been included in the new Local Government Performance Framework and the Worcestershire Local Area Agreement 2008-11. The Council has also committed to tackle the issue in signing up to the Worcestershire Climate Change Pledge. Furthermore, the Climate Change Bill, expected to receive Royal Assent this autumn, will make the UK's greenhouse gas reduction targets legally binding and may have further implications for local government. A West Midlands Regional Action Plan has been developed as a first step in a programme of work to ensure that regional working addresses the challenges posed by climate change.
- 2.7 A report on the new strategy will be taken to Regeneration and Enterprise Committee on 22 April 2009 and to Cabinet on 23 April 2009.

### **3. Tackling Climate Change in Wyre Forest**

- 3.1 The Earth's climate is changing. The most recent Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) leaves us in no doubt that human activity is the primary driver of the observed changes. Earth has warmed by 0.74°C over the last century; around 0.4°C of this warming has occurred since the 1970s. Mean global temperatures are likely to rise between 1.1 and 6.4°C above 1990 levels by the end of this century, depending on our emissions. This will result in a further rise in global sea levels of between 20 and 60cm by the end of this century, continued melting of ice caps, glaciers and sea ice, changes in rainfall patterns and intensification of tropical cyclones.
- 3.2 A study into the impacts of climate change in Worcestershire, commissioned by the Worcestershire Partnership, revealed that the county's climate has also changed over the last century. For example, Worcestershire's annual temperature has risen by 0.6°C since the 1900s and we have seen an increased intensity of rainfall events. The county's climate is expected to carry on changing, with continuing changes in our temperature and rainfall patterns and increased frequency of short duration extreme weather events, such as storms and floods, predicted. As an example, the 2007 floods cost Worcestershire over £150 million, with many Wyre Forest households and businesses affected. Whilst a single such event cannot be attributed to climate change, the frequency of flooding events is expected to increase.

3.3 The extremity of further climate change, locally and globally, is likely to depend on future levels of emissions of climate change gases. The more we do now to reduce emissions, the less extreme the expected impact. The main human influence on global climate is emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). DEFRA provide data on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for each Local Authority area. In the Wyre Forest district, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are split as follows:

<b>Sector</b>	<b>CO2 emissions (2005) (tonnes per year/ % of total)</b>	<b>Main sources of emissions</b>
Domestic	239,000 tonnes 39%	Electricity, gas and other fuels used to heat & power Wyre Forest's housing stock.
Industry & Commerce	218,000 tonnes 36%	Electricity, gas and other fuels used to heat & power Wyre Forest's business and public service providers.
Transport	150,000 tonnes 25%	Petrol and diesel used by transport on the roads and railways of the Wyre Forest.

*Source: DEFRA*

3.4 Rising energy costs are likely to cause increasing concern amongst the district's residents and businesses. The National Housing Federation, for example, predicts that a quarter of UK households will be pushed into fuel poverty by the end of 2009, with average household electricity and gas bills expected to reach £1,400. Improving energy efficiency should have economic, social and environmental benefits for the district.

3.5 Research carried out through the Worcestershire Citizen's Panel in 2007 shows that there is a high awareness of the issue of Climate Change throughout the county, including Wyre Forest. 87% of Wyre Forest residents surveyed are concerned about climate change and 84% think it is important that action is taken to tackle climate change.

## **4. The New Local Government Performance Framework**

4.1 The 2008-11 Worcestershire Local Area Agreement (LAA) includes a number of indicators and targets to tackle climate change issues:

NI186: Per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the Local Authority area. There is a LAA target to reduce these emissions in the Wyre Forest (based on the DEFRA figures referred to in section 3.3 above) by 3% per year.

NI187: Tackling fuel poverty - % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low and high energy efficiency rating. A survey will be carried out in 2008/9 in order to establish a baseline and set LAA targets for this indicator.

NI188: Planning to Adapt to Climate Change. This is a process indicator which gauges the level of progress by a Local Authority in assessing and addressing the risks and opportunities of a changing climate. There is a LAA target to increase this level, measured on a scale from 0 to 5, in the Wyre Forest district.

- 4.2 In addition to the LAA indicators, the Council is required to report on a number of other related indicators, including:

NI185: Percentage CO2 reduction from Local Authority operations. This requires the Council to monitor and reduce CO2 emissions arising from the energy used at its sites and fuel used by its fleet and for business mileage.

NI194: Air quality - % reduction in nitrous oxides (NOX) and primary particulate matters (PM10) emissions through local authority's estate and operations.

- 4.3 Further information about all of the above National Indicators is provided in Appendix A.

## **5. Climate Change and the Local Strategic Partnerships**

- 5.1 The Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy was developed through the Worcestershire Partnership's Environment Group and endorsed by the Partnership Board in 2005. It set out how partners would work together to raise awareness about climate change issues, reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and adapt to the impacts of climate change in Worcestershire. Wyre Forest District Council was one of the partners involved in developing this strategy. The partnership work to develop and deliver this strategy, and the accompanying Pledge, was one of the key factors contributing to Worcestershire County Council being awarded Beacon Status for Tackling Climate Change.
- 5.2 The Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy is currently being reviewed. One aim of the review is to ensure it provides a framework for the delivery of the relevant LAA targets. Annual action plans will be developed to deliver the strategy. Wyre Forest District Council is part of the task group set up to carry out the review. The new strategy will be out for consultation from November to January, with a view to be signed off in April 2009.

5.3 The Wyre Forest Matters Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2014 includes a priority to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Whilst some good work is already happening in the district, such as improvements to the energy efficiency of the housing stock, much more will need to be done to tackle this issue. No single organisation will be able to carry out all of this work- it will require a concerted effort by a whole range of partners.

5.4 It is proposed that:

- a. The Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy is written to align with the Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy, setting the direction for delivering the county strategy within the district. See Appendix B for the proposed structure for these strategies.
- b. The Wyre Forest Climate Change Strategy replaces the previous Sustainability and Affordable Warmth strategies and incorporates -and builds upon- the issues addressed within them.
- c. An event is held in December 2008 or January 2009 for Wyre Forest partners, to engage them in this work and to help develop the strategy and an associated action plan.
- d. The existing Wyre Forest Affordable Warmth Group carries on delivering the relevant areas of the strategy.
- e. A review of membership of the Council's Environmental Working Group is undertaken with CMT to ensure the key officers are involved to deliver the strategy within the council, for example by ensuring climate change issues and sustainability are addressed in the proposed move to a single site.
- f. A proposal to set up a sub- group to co-ordinate partnership work to tackle climate change is taken to the Wyre Forest Matters Forum.

## **6. Options**

6.1 The Committee may wish to:

- Endorse the proposals set out in this paper to the Cabinet.
- Put forward alternative or additional proposals to the Cabinet.

## **7. Relevant Council Policies/Strategies**

- 7.1 [Wyre Forest Sustainability Strategy 2004/7](#)
- 7.2 [Wyre Forest Affordable Warmth Strategy 2004-7 and Action Plan 2008/9](#)

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix A - National Indicators relating to Climate Change
- 8.2 Appendix B - Proposed structure for the Climate Change Strategy

## **9. Background Papers**

- 9.1 [Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy and Pledge](#)
- 9.2 [Worcestershire Climate Change Impacts Study](#)
- 9.3 [Worcestershire Citizen's Panel Surveys June and November 2007](#)

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