

General Background

In the UK, energy policy is set out in the Energy White Paper “Our Energy Future – Creating a Low Carbon Economy”, published in 2003.

Regionally, the West Midlands Energy Strategy, launched in November 2004, aims to provide a co-ordinated regional approach to energy management and to meeting national objectives.

The Kyoto Protocol came into force in February 2005. It sets legally binding targets for reducing emissions for the six main greenhouse gas (GHG) emission; with each country having its own targets. Under this agreement the UK is committed to delivering a 12.5% reduction in GHG emissions, relative to 1990 baseline, by 2008 – 2012. The UK Government has set its own additional target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20% below 1990 levels by the year 2010 and a 60% cut by 2050.

A Climate Change Levy on the business use of energy was introduced in 2001. Its aim is to encourage energy efficiency and help meet its target for reducing greenhouse gases by imposing an additional rate onto electricity, gas and coal prices.

Since liberalisation of the energy markets it has been possible to purchase energy from different suppliers. The UK Government aims at achieving 10% of electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010. By purchasing “green” electricity some exemption from the Climate Change Levy is possible.

Council Background

Against this backdrop, it is recognised that local actions have a major part to play in meeting objectives relating to energy efficiency and use of renewable energy.

Local authorities have a key role, both as energy consumers and as community leaders. By adopting an Energy Policy, the Council is able to demonstrate its commitment to energy management with all the benefits that will ensue – from accruing financial savings, to minimising environmental costs.

Aims and objectives

The Council will aim to:

In connection with the operation of its public buildings

- Reduce energy costs
- Increase energy efficiency

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- Minimise emissions of carbon dioxide by reducing the amount of energy used in the operation of the Council's public buildings
- Reduce consumption of finite fossil fuels
- Increase use of renewable energy
- Invest in clean, energy efficient technologies
- Reduce consumption of water and other resources and minimise waste in line with other environmental targets

In connection with transport related activities

- Continue to implement the Council's Green Travel Plan
- In particular, promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport to staff and Members, for journeys to and from work and at work
- Promote land use patterns that can be served by a range of modes of transport other than private car

Responsibilities, Monitoring and Review

The Council will progress this work through an energy action plan; which will be part of the Key Themes Action Plan developed by the Sustainability Officers Working Group and approved by Corporate Management Group (CMG). The action plan will be monitored by the group and progress reported to CMG. This action plan will contain the detailed targets.

The key actions for 2006/07 are as follows:

- To improve energy management procedures
- To improve lighting controls at the Civic Centre, Gatehouse Theatre and St John's Market
- To install variable speed drives on motors at the Civic Centre, Gatehouse Theatre and St John's Market whenever the opportunity arises or is appropriate (i.e. whenever a replacement is considered)
- To develop coverage and review usage of the Building Management System
- To increase the number of space heating zones at the Civic Centre to optimise control

The Public Buildings Manager has the responsibility for the purchase of energy and for the management of the energy efficiency budget. A key objective will be to review energy contracts when they come up for renewal.

Recent achievements

In connection with the operation of its public buildings:

- Currently purchase more than 10% renewable energy

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- Light sensors have been fitted in common areas such as toilets and filing areas in the Civic Centre
- Variable drive motors have been fitted to lifts at the Civic Centre during refurbishment
- Draft proofing has been carried out in all of the Civic Centre
- High frequency strip lights fitted to over 95% of light fittings at the Civic Centre
- STARK Energy Management System is being used to report on use of gas, electricity and water
- SAVAWATT devices fitted to electric motors in the plant rooms and air conditioning units at the Civic Centre and Riverside Recreation Centre
- Combined heat and power unit used at the Riverside Recreation Centre
- Promotion of energy efficiency measures is undertaken; bulletins sent out during energy efficiency week, notices on light switches to switch off, on the wall posters etc
- Sustainability Officers Working Group and Energy Matters Group support energy efficiency and conservation and helps to promote it and monitor projects
- Carbon Trust funded "Assessment of Energy Saving Opportunities" carried out in May 2005 at the Civic Centre, Riverside Recreation Centre, St John's Market and Gatehouse Theatre

In connection with waste:

- A further 11,000 brown bins for garden waste to be collected from 1 April 2006 bring the total in the borough to 46,000
- Additional plastics and cardboard now collected in the trial areas
- 11.8% of household waste recycled (year to date 2005/06)
- 17.6% of household waste composted (year to date 2005/06)
- A large proportion of the waste that is not recycled or composted goes to a waste to energy plant for disposal

In connection with transport related activities and green travel:

- In 2005, 79.5% travelled by car, 20.5% by alternatives
- In 2005, 62% travelled by car alone
- In 2005, 10.8% walked to work, 4.7% came by bus, 3% by bicycle and 1.6% by train

The following have been provided:

- Secure, weatherproof cycle parking facilities at the Civic Centre
- Use of shower and changing facilities at the Riverside
- Pool bikes
- Various promotions and educational events such as Green Travel day, cycling events, website and on the wall etc.
- Development of the doorstep walks for health programme

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- Continued support from a number of working groups; the Walking Working Group, Cycling Working Group, Sustainability Officers Working Group and the Bike Users Group
- Expansion of the cycling path network
- Provision of cycle training
- Organising work patterns to minimise travel
- Repeat of the 2000 green travel survey to monitor trends in 2003 and 2005
- Use of the County Council car share database
- Green travel information included in new starter packs and as part of the SBC induction, including a copy of the Green Travel Plan
- Information on bus timetables provided in SBC reception
- Launch of the Bike Recycling Project in June 2004

Links to other policies & strategies, services & initiatives and new developments carried out by the Council

Policies and Strategies

- LA21 Strategy
 - Various initiatives promoting and supporting energy saving; “Action at Home” programme, annual Green Awards and working with schools through the Eco-schools network.
 - Promotion of Green Transport through the provision of facilities e.g. pool bikes and promotion of the objectives of the Green Travel Plan
- Financial Strategy
 - Develop a review of utilities (gas, electricity etc) consumption, reducing and recycling waste together with ensuring that the Council conserves non-renewable sources
- LDF
 - The new Local Development Framework will promote and make an impact on energy conservation, efficiency measures and the increased role of renewable energy. Topic areas are “To encourage and provide for renewable energy developments” and “To maximise energy efficiency in development proposals”.

Services and Initiatives

- Biomass project
 - In terms of Renewable Energy the Regeneration Section is supporting the work of the Biomass Projects using energy crops. This initiative may provide the basis to develop the Borough as a “centre for renewables” in the West Midlands
- Home Energy Conservation Act
 - Just under 10% energy efficiency improvement achieved up to March 2003 from a baseline 1996, 1.8% improvement in 2003/04

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- Home energy audits are available for householders
- Periodic press releases and promotion to raise awareness and articles on the website
- Provision of energy grants and energy plus grants, discounted insulation schemes
- Building Control
 - Promoting sustainability in building and construction (design, materials, operations and maintenance) and included in the new Building Regulations (Part L – Conservation of Fuel and Power)
- Development Control
 - The Planning System will play an important role in supporting a reduction in energy consumption by encouraging and enabling the development of renewables