



meeting	ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY SELECT COMMITTEE	
date	Monday, 30 January 2006	agenda item number
from:	Cabinet Member for Resources	

REPORT FOR PERIOD DECEMBER 2005 – JANUARY 2006

1. Environment Direct Services

The latest monitoring reports on Trading Services, to 3rd December 2005, indicate a satisfactory position for the majority of the units, with performance largely in line with the expected position.

A number of businesses are slightly behind their targeted turnover positions, but savings in direct costs and overheads are being achieved to offset this, particularly within BuildingDirect and Landscape Services.

As reported previously, reduced demand in the take up of primary school meals is a source of concern, despite the fact that in Nottinghamshire we have been promoting healthier meals for some time. The use of the funding associated with the Government initiative "Turning the Tables: Transforming School Food" will allow us to expand and enhance this approach, and look to increase take up.

2. 'Green' Street Lighting

The County Council has been increasingly purchasing 'green' electricity over a number of years. I am pleased to report that street lighting throughout Nottinghamshire now uses 100% 'green' electricity. This is electricity which is produced using more environmentally friendly energy sources including wind, solar and tidal power. At present two thirds of electricity used in Britain is produced from burning coal and gas which emits millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year.

Carbon dioxide is the main gas responsible for global warming. The County Council is one of the largest local authority users of 'green' electricity in the UK and 90% of our schools, libraries and other sites use it. With the new street lighting contract, it is estimated that a total reduction of 35,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide will be achieved each year. This is equivalent to emissions from over 4,600 households and is good news for the County Council and the environment.

3. **Carbon Management Review**

I am grateful to the Environment and Sustainability Select Committee for requesting a “root and branch” review of carbon management practice within the Authority. Over the coming months this review will address the use of energy in buildings, street lighting, transport, office waste and procurement and it will inform the Authority’s comprehensive Carbon Management Plan which should be ready for approval in the Summer of 2006. The Plan will set out a programme for measuring and reducing carbon emissions from County Council activities.

4. **Woodheat - Update**

The Woodheat Programme has now been running for almost two years. The programme entails installing or converting boilers to burn wood rather than fossil fuels and forms part of the Authority’s strategic commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. In 2003 the County Council entered into a Public Service Agreement (PSA) under which the target for reducing emissions was stretched to 27% by 2006. The use of wood as a fuel reduces to near zero the net carbon emissions from heating buildings.

The use of woodheat is a relatively new and untried technology in the UK and supply chains for fuel are still relatively undeveloped. In partnership with a number of other organisations, the County Council established Renewable Nottinghamshire Utilities (ReNU) Ltd, a not-for-profit company set up to develop the woodfuel supply chain. Despite some early problems with fuel quality/consistency purchased by ReNU externally, there have been considerable successes. ReNU has been instrumental in procuring a pellet mill in Nottinghamshire to provide a long term source of local pellets and has worked closely with the industry to address problems with fuel quality through the introduction of testing regimes. I am proud to represent the County Council on the Board of ReNU Ltd.

Some 14 schools have taken part in the programme and by March 2006 the Authority will have exceeded its stretch target with a saving of some 2370 tonnes of CO₂ each year.

Once the PSA programme has been completed in Mar/April of this year, a full review of the initiative will take place. I very much hope that the benefits already gained will be extended with the adoption of a further woodheat programme. Any new programme will be presented to this Committee for comment before any decisions are taken.

5. **Procurement of Construction Partners**

The Environment Department procurement of framework contractors, to provide construction services for Nottinghamshire and other authorities in the region, is progressing well with the OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) notice now placed and 63 expressions of interest received.

The contract, which lasts for up to 4 years, follows national best practice in many areas following extensive consultation with external organisations and other leading authorities around the country. It is anticipated that the Framework tenders will be invited in early March 2006, with appointment in July 2006.

6. **Consultant Framework**

Environment Department will shortly be tendering for a framework of consultants to support in-house resources for property professionals. It is anticipated that the Framework will be in place by April 2006. Similar to the Construction Framework, other Local Authorities in the East Midlands have expressed interest in using the Framework.

7. **School Meals Update**

The consultation document "Turning the Tables: Transforming School Food" issued by the DfES closed on the 31st December and any changes identified are expected to be announced in the Spring. Members may remember the Cabinet Report I presented in November which outlined the proposals. The changes will see the compulsory introduction of 9 food based and 14 nutrient based standards over the next three years. There is also a recommendation that each LA sets up an improvement team with representation from interested parties. This team is now meeting on a regular basis in Nottinghamshire.

Work is progressing well on the introduction of the new standards across those schools which remain within the direct management control of the County Council, however meal numbers still continue to decline with a further 5 % drop over the last quarter. The first part of the action plan, therefore, is to raise awareness of why these standards are being introduced in the hope that more support can be received from pupils and schools. A series of conferences will be held across the County in March aimed at schools and catering staff to ensure that the importance of this issue is understood.

Members should be aware that whilst the school meals service has continued to provide a high standard over recent years, well in advance of the well-publicised Jamie Oliver national initiative. Much work has been done with schools and through the development of the Bytes and Early Bytes branding at secondary and primary schools. Nevertheless, customer perception of the service in some areas requires attention to persuade more parents and children of the benefits of our healthy meals programme.

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