

Stockton Environment Partnership Meeting
Minutes of meeting held Thursday 24 September 2009
Education Centre, Junction Road, Norton

Present: J Garside (Chair) (JG), Cllr Mrs J Beaumont (JB), Cllr Mrs M Rigg (MR), M Chicken (MC), M Greenwood (MG) S Morrow (SM), R Wren (RW), N Anderson (NA) R S Atkinson (RSA), D Munt (DM), H Stuttard (HS), H Clayton (HC) (Minute Taker)

Apologies: J Arger, G Clingan, D Fionda, C Hayward, J Hutchinson, T Lewis, J McCann, N McKay, A-L Orange, C Straughan

1. Minutes & Matters Arising from Previous Meeting held 23 July 2009

No minutes were produced for the July meeting and there were no matters outstanding for discussion.

2. Renewable Energy Strategy – M Chicken

Presentation showing information relating to SBC proposals on the renewable Energy Strategy. It is estimated that SBC will achieve a 25% reduction in carbon emissions by 2013. A carbon tax of £12 tonne CO² is to be applied from 2011. Fossil fuel energy costs will rise. First steps would be to reduce demand. Current Council street lighting costs are over 1 million per annum. Fleet / business mileage as a whole is a significant user of carbon, along with large buildings like schools and sports centres. Efforts are required to reduce energy use i.e. voltage regulation, biodiesel. 2 electric vehicles have now arrived from France, a press release will be given next week. The vehicles will be a useful replacement for a couple of the litter picking vehicles currently in use. Real time energy monitoring in schools, funding will be available through regional partnerships for this work. Procurement exercise has now commenced and due to be complete by end of March 2010.

Practical renewables like wind energy and hydro-power could be considered. Small turbines do not produce a great output. Solar panels are still expensive to install. Ground source heat pumps are a good prospect – under floor heating is being installed in new build or refurbished schools via grants. Wind turbines – limited options for the placement of these. A question was raised about the material sources for the proposed Biomass Plant at Haverton Hill. Fields of Willow are grown to produce the wood to burn but it would need to be planted on 90 areas covering the size of Preston Park to produce energy for all SBC buildings as well as a 3 year wait for the crop. Power purchase agreement, provides renewable electricity on a long term contract that supports development of a remote renewable source. This is bought direct from a developer. There are limited opportunities in our area but offshore developments are possible. RSA asked what was the Archimedes screw? MC advised that it is connected to the canoe slalom and produces electricity during high tides and that electricity then drives the pump to circulate the water at low tide. It will be up and running before the 2012 Olympics.

The objectives to meet longer term Government targets on carbon reduction are 34% by 2020; 80% reduction by 2050 but could be required to be a 90% reduction by 2050. The ultimate aim is to reduce the Council's annual energy bills by using other options available like power purchasing, rather than relying on Government grants which are oversubscribed and only have another year to run. RSA asked about the future technology for low carbon buildings, private dwellings build in the area? MC advised that new builds have to maintain a high standard for carbon emissions. For existing housing stock, it is looking at opportunities to move away from fossil fuels. Also being mindful of wasting energy, un-insulated houses in the more affluent housing areas as some residents think their homes are already built to high energy standards. Older housing stock can prove difficult to insulate by the nature of their construction. MR mentioned about doing thermographic surveys in winter using equipment that indicates areas of heat loss from properties. MC advised he had spoken to a company already carrying out these types of surveys but certain restrictions are in place as to the time of day they can be carried out and rain and foggy weather conditions also cause restrictions. A survey around the Newcastle area will be taking place this coming winter. It was suggested Ingleby Barwick could be considered as a trial area for Stockton Council.

MC advised that this item will return to the Partnership when final actions of the strategy have been agreed.

3. Flood Risk Management – M Chicken

MC passed around briefing papers relating to the Pitt Review and the implications of the recommendations of which nine related to local authorities, along with what progress has been made for each recommendation.

This review then lead to the Tees Valley Flood Risk Group being set up to address the relevant recommendations from the Pitt Review. Members include the five Tees Valley local authorities, Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency. The plan is for the group to work together and not to take ownership. To clarify responsibilities and look at the impact heavy downpours and surface water flooding affect the areas. Northumbrian Water have information on where the high risk areas are. The plan is to identify these areas and take on board future developments and the impact of flooding. The final results are expected next month. It is thought the outcome will be that no new developments will have the right to connect surface water drainage to the sewerage system. The development of a sustainable drainage system could mean that Stockton Council would then be liable for adopting ponds where homes are connected to the surface water systems.

The local authority doesn't employ any drainage engineers, these have all moved to the water authorities. There is one course currently run at Bristol University for 2 days but it is not a viable option. Regional universities should be taking on courses like this.

First stage is about prioritisation and to come up with an action plan and work with the water authority. It will be a substantial piece of work, the estimated cost by Government is £100,000 to produce a surface water management plan.

RSA enquired of the costs to Stockton Council? MC advised this will depend on drains size as some of these are now at their full capacity. MR asked who is responsible for surface water? MC advised that Northumbrian Water is responsible for sewage and the local authority for surface water. For combined services it is Northumbrian Water, who would be happy to take pass the management of surface water onto the local authority.

RSA enquired what the motivation was for this? MC advised that the impact is significant if the authority don't do anything. Potential flooding can affect businesses and create social / economic problems. Some homes don't have insurance to cover claims. In the longer term, drainage engineers are required also the planning of strategies in developing grey water recycling.

MC proposed to give an update to the Partnership when the new legislation comes through and provide a few examples.

HS will provide some information and a map showing Stockton borough's flood sites.

4. Covenant of Mayors – M Greenwood

MG advised that this is a European Commission lead project which unites town and cities across Europe with a common environmental purpose. It aims to allow local authorities to work together in sharing ideas and strategies to create energy efficient and low carbon cities. Stockton Council have already signed up along with 11 other authorities from the North East. A Sustainable Energy Action Plan including a baseline emission inventory and how it is reached, will be submitted in January 2010. Stockton Council has committed to this with work in place. A development and implementation report must be submitted every 2 years. It was suggested to engage this Partnership as a base and widening the remit of this development plan to include local schools and businesses by having a more unified approach.

RSA commented isn't that what has already being taking place? MG advised that the European Commissioner's Department lead on this whole range of activities. European Mayors have a more powerful role. This is a voluntary scheme and over 400 authorities across Europe have already signed up to this. MR suggested the CFYA Awards as being a good example from Stockton. DM advised that the Billingham Partnership is looking at funding. JG thought it was a very good scheme.

MG will bring the action plan back to the Partnership at a later date.

5. E-genda – M Chicken

MC advised he wanted to gauge the group's views on this electronic system of reference and sharing information relating to details recorded at committee and other meeting groups within the Council.

Some group members were familiar with this system, which is useful for viewing information, but not always easy to print off the information required. Concerns were also mentioned that access is available to members of the public at some levels. After debating all the aspects of this system, it was agreed the Partnership did not want to go along this route for recording information and are happy to continue with the current system in place.

6. Any Other Business

HS advised the group about the Water Framework Directive whereby parts of streams are being assessed and categorised as bad and poor for which the reasons could relate to fish or chemicals. SBC officers at the group were not involved with the survey or aware it was taking place. HS will arrange for someone to come to the next meeting to discuss the streams involved in the Stockton borough.

HS also asked if Ed Restall from the Planetarium could be invited to the next group meeting to talk about light pollution levels. MC will make arrangements for this.

7. Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 12 November 2009