



Belfast City Council

Report to	:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject	:	Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Mullaghan Concerning Reducing Carbon Emissions from the Council's Vehicle Fleet
Date	:	20 March 2009
Reporting Officer:		William Francey, Director of Health & Environmental Services
Contact Officer:		Alastair Curran, Sustainable Development Manager

Relevant Background Information

At the Council meeting of 2 March 2009, Councillor Mullaghan proposed the following notice of motion: *'As a contribution to its climate change agenda, Belfast City Council commits to a review of the options for reducing carbon emissions from its vehicle fleet, with a view to adopting a strategy with defined targets, the report on the review to be submitted to the Council within six months'*.

The 2008 'State of the Environment Report' from DoE NI highlights that carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the most prevalent greenhouse gas in Northern Ireland, accounting for nearly three quarters of all greenhouse gas emissions. Sectoral analysis reveals that one third of emissions are attributable to road transport. Although some vehicle tailpipe emissions have declined in recent years due to advances in engine technology, increased vehicle mileage has meant that overall Northern Ireland transport emissions have increased from 3,985 kt CO₂e in 2000 to 4,800 kt CO₂e in 2006. As a significant vehicle fleet operator, the Council is therefore clearly in a position to demonstrate leadership in relation to this important climate change issue.

Members will also be aware that the Council is finalising a revised Transport Policy with the assistance of consultants, which will articulate the Council's transport vision, both for the City and for its own operational activities until 2015. A technical component of the draft revised transport policy is an assessment of possible opportunities for the Council to reduce emissions associated with its operational activities. It is anticipated that the draft transport policy will be presented to Council for consideration in May 2009.

Key Issues

Consumption of diesel fuel by the Council's vehicle fleet results in approximately 3,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions annually. Options for reducing overall vehicle fleet carbon emissions include reducing the amount of fuel consumed through improved vehicle utilisation or reducing overall distance travelled, adopting lower carbon or alternative fuels, introducing newer engine technologies or employing carbon offsetting.

Development of a strategy with specific targets for the reduction of vehicle fleet carbon emissions, as proposed by Councillor Mullaghan in the notice of motion, would inevitably involve a review of the available options, their associated environmental benefits and financial costs. As this is also likely to be required in due course to progress implementation of the Council's revised transport policy the Committee may wish to consider agreeing that a preliminary high-level review of options be undertaken through the Council's Sustainable Development Steering Group. Appropriate skills, knowledge and expertise exist within this group that would enable a report on such a high level review to be presented to Committee within two to three months. By that time, the Council is likely to have adopted a final revised transport policy and decisions could then be taken to authorise further work with external assistance as necessary to implement the notice of motion in the context of the relevant parts of the new Council transport policy.

Resource Implications

There are no additional financial resource implications associated with the recommendations. Officer time required to complete such a review can be accommodated in the timescale described with the bulk of the work being undertaken by the Council's Sustainable Development Manager. Potential implications in terms of the Council's vehicle assets would be highlighted as part of the review of options and further teased out in any subsequent detailed report.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to consider authorising the preparation of a preliminary high-level review of options for reducing carbon emissions from its vehicle fleet with the report being submitted to the Committee for consideration within two to three months.

Key to Abbreviations.

DoE – Department of Environment
CO₂ – carbon dioxide

Documents Attached.

N/A