



Belfast City Council.

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
Subject:	Sustainable Development Steering Group Action Plan 2009-2011.
Date:	19 June 2009.
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Relevant Background Information.

From a corporate standpoint, Belfast City Council continues to acknowledge sustainable development as its overarching strategic objective and has committed therefore, to taking an instrumental role in improving the quality of life now and for future generations of the people in Belfast by helping to make the city a better place to live in, work in, invest in, and visit.

The Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011 contributes towards the achievement of this objective by setting out the key issues that the Council wants to address in coming years. Under the strategic theme of 'Better care for Belfast's environment - a clean, green city now and for the future', the Council's Sustainable Development Steering Group proposed an indicative action of reviewing and updating the Sustainable Development Action Plan 2006 - 2009, with a principal focus upon environmental initiatives. Accordingly, a new Sustainable Development Action Plan has been developed by this cross-departmental group, which substantially builds upon the seven work themes addressed through the 2006 - 2009 plan.

The Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, which has overarching responsibility for sustainable development within Northern Ireland, published the Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland in 2006, supported by an interim Implementation Plan. OFMDFM has indicated that a review of the strategy is currently underway with a view to producing a new Sustainable Development Strategy, which will act as an enabling mechanism for the development of a second Sustainable Development Implementation Plan.

In order to ensure that sustainable development continues to be embedded within local authority actions, a sustainable development statutory duty was introduced from 31 March 2007. This duty requires that a public authority must, in exercising its functions, act in the way it considers best calculated to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in Northern Ireland, except to the extent that it considers that any such action is not reasonably practicable. The duty also requires that a public authority must have regard to any strategy or other guidance relating to sustainable development, issued by the Department of the Environment.

Key Issues.

The 2009 - 2011 Sustainable Development Steering Group Action Plan for Belfast City Council comprises seven priority action areas as follows:-

Implementation and refinement of environmental management systems.

This section of the action plan provides continuing support for the implementation of environmental management systems such as BS 8555:2003 and BS EN ISO 14001. The plan will assist the implementation process by undertaking audits of key stages of the environmental management system and by integrating environmental management practices within the business planning process. The structured approach to environmental management will also contribute towards reducing the Council's energy consumption and waste generation.

Key Issues contd.

Green Procurement.

Actions within this section of the plan are designed to mainstream the Council's 'green procurement' policy by encouraging Departments to assess the environmental aspects of their tenders and quotations. The plan also proposes collaborative working between the Procurement Unit and Waste Management Service in order to deliver aspects of the Council's internal waste strategy. Finally, the plan proposes actions to assist Council suppliers to address the adverse environmental impacts of their services and supplies.

Energy Conservation.

The Climate Change Act 2008 established a target of ensuring that the net UK carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 80% lower than the 1990 baseline. In order to ensure that appropriate progress towards this target is achieved, the UK government has tasked DEFRA with identifying those business sectors with significant greenhouse gas emissions and applying appropriate control mechanisms. This increasing governmental emphasis upon energy conservation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions has been reflected within the 2009-2011 plan. The plan outlines actions for developing a Carbon Emission Reduction Plan, achieving the Department of Finance and Personnel Public Sector Energy Campaign targets, complying with the requirements of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive in relation to display energy certificates, and participating in the statutory Carbon Reduction Commitment emissions trading scheme. The plan also contains proposals to participate in the adoption of a Northern Ireland Local Government declaration on climate change and to develop a prioritised action plan to address the causes and consequences of climate change within Belfast. The Council has already adopted a '% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from Council premises' primary performance indicator within its 2008-2011 Corporate Plan.

Waste Management.

The waste management section of the action plan commits the Council to reducing its waste production to 90% of 2006 levels by 2012 via the implementation of the Internal Waste Strategy. The Internal Waste Strategy contains commitments to the delivery and extension of the internal recycling scheme across Council properties, completion of a waste characterisation survey, and ensuring that the Council fulfils its statutory obligations in relation to waste management duty of care.

Green Transport.

This section of the action plan commits the Council to introducing a new fuel management system for fleet vehicles and to establishing indicators for efficient fuel consumption. Furthermore, there is a requirement for the Council to evaluate the applicability of emerging engine technologies and fuels. Regular emissions testing of the fleet will continue and workplace travel opportunities for Belfast City Council employees will be developed as a component of a revised 2009 Council Transport Policy.

Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement.

Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement is concerned with conserving priority species and habitats across Belfast and raising awareness of biodiversity. This is to be achieved by implementing the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, reviewing the Open Space Strategy, producing an Urban Forestry Strategy, and developing an 'access to heritage' strategy for the Ulster Hall.

Sustainable Development Communication.

Achieving many of the objectives proposed within the 2009-2011 Sustainable Development Action Plan will require the support of managers and staff. It has been recognised that managers require timely, accurate, and meaningful information in order to implement effective sustainable development management practices that deliver economic, operational, and environmental efficiencies. Therefore, as part of its communication commitment, the SDSG will introduce monitoring and reporting practices in order to provide appropriate performance data to managers. Additionally, the Council will continue its participation on the Belfast Fairtrade Steering Group in order to ensure that the City maintains its joint Fairtrade accreditation from the UK and Irish Fairtrade foundations.

Progress with the 2009 - 2011 SDSG Action Plan will be monitored using Sharepoint project management software and contributions to corporate performance indicators will be assessed via the CorVu performance management system. Annual progress reports will be submitted to the Chief Officers' Management Team and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

Resource Implications.

Appendix A of the Action Plan describes in detail those actions and projects to be delivered during the 2009 - 2011 Action Plan in terms of objectives, milestones, timeframes, key performance questions, resource requirements and risks. Where it has not been possible to characterise fully the resource requirements associated with a particular action or project, the Sustainable Development Steering Group seeks Committee adoption of that proposal in principle, subject to the submission of a more detailed report to the Committee prior to the project's commencement. Such reports will include an assessment of all financial, human resource and asset resource requirements.

Recommendations.

It is recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve adoption and implementation of the Sustainable Development Steering Group Action Plan 2009-2011.

Key to Abbreviations.

BS8555:2003 – Environmental management systems - Guide to the phased implementation of an environmental management system including the use of environmental performance evaluation.
BS EN ISO14001 – Environmental management systems - Requirements with guidance for use.
DEFRA – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
OFMDFM - Office of the First and Deputy First Minister.
SDSG - Sustainable Development Steering Group.

Documents Attached.

Appendix 1 - Belfast City Council Sustainable Development Steering Group Action Plan 2009-2011.

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