

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Environment Policy 2006 – 2010

Introduction

Concern for protection of the environment is a worldwide concern and all individuals and organisations have their part to play. The Council, as a major employer, producer, and contributor has a particularly important role to play. As a Community Leader it is incumbent on the Council to set the standards within the Borough, and to become an advocate of environmental protection and enhancement.

This policy sets out the Council's framework for delivery of improvements to its own environmental performance for the period 2006 -2010. It builds on and replaces the Council's Environmental Action Plan for 2001 to 2006. It also supports and develops a wide and diverse range of other key national, regional and local plans and strategies.

It is the first stage in a two stage process. The next stage is the development of a detailed Action Plan that will detail the key actions that are needed to deliver the Policy, and how progress in the delivering then will be monitored. This Action Plan will be developed by summer 2006.

Environmental Policy

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council recognises that it has an impact on the environment when carrying out normal service delivery activities and is committed to protecting and enhancing the environment. It is central to the Council's and its partners' shared Vision for the Borough as articulated in Rotherham's Community Strategy. A key objective of this Vision is protecting and nurturing the Borough's high quality environment. We are committed to continually improving our environmental performance, by managing our own environmental impacts, preventing pollution and complying with relevant environmental legislation.

In support of this Vision, the Council has set itself a number of key objectives in relation to the environment. These have been developed in consultation with both our partners and with the community, and in response to the environmental trends and challenges facing the Borough, notably the need to balance economic growth, social responsibility and the protection of our high quality environment. These objectives are broad ranging from litter and graffiti to waste minimisation, air quality, wildlife, landscape and climate change.

In many cases these actions such as addressing climate change will be delivered primarily through working with partners, for others it will be mainly through direct action by the Council itself such as waste minimisation and improving the energy efficiency of council buildings.

The Council aims to improve its environmental performance by focusing on 6 significant environmental criteria. Each criteria has been derived in terms of actual or potential impact on the environment, and will be captured within a formal environmental performance management framework. The Council is committed to complying with all of its environmental liabilities and establishing an accredited Environmental Management

System across all of its services to ensure continuous improvement in its overall environmental performance. The Council will achieve this by taking direct action in the following areas:

Environmental Management (EM)

An environmental management system (EMS) provides a framework to manage significant environmental impacts produced by Rotherham Council. To ensure we achieve continual improvement in the Council's environmental performance, whilst carrying out normal service delivery activities, Rotherham Council are implementing an EMS complying with the international standard ISO 14001 and the European Regulation Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). Environmental performance will be reported annually through a publicly available Environmental Statement.

Key Objectives:

EM1 - Implement and maintain a Corporate Environmental Management System to maintain EMAS registration to identify and manage our environmental aspects.

EM2 – Monitor and report the environmental performance of the Council.

EM3 - Ensure compliance with all relevant environmental legislation

EM4 – Carry out regular review of the Council's environmental policy to ensure its on-going effectiveness.

Climate Change (CC)

Climate change is a global problem and requires a world-wide response. The international community has put in place a framework for action called the Kyoto Protocol. This sets legally-binding greenhouse gas emission targets for those industrial Countries that have ratified the treaty, including the UK.

At the local level, Rotherham MBC has a key part to play in addressing climate change. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide are released each year from the Council's direct use of energy. We must therefore try to minimise the release of this and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Transport is a major source of local air pollution and greenhouse gases. The Council operates a large number of vehicles and has many staff commuting every day and is therefore a significant contributor to the problem. To reduce the impact of Council activities, initiatives will be put into place to implement policies primarily through Fleet Management and the Council's Travel Plan.

Key Objectives:

CC1 - Reduce consumption of resources through improved operating techniques and employing new efficient technologies.

CC2 - Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases through the implementation of a corporate Carbon Management Action Plan focusing on

- Reduction of energy and water consumption in council properties, residential properties and street lighting and adopting /promoting renewable energy
- Reducing the environmental impact of fleet transport through training, technology,

and efficiencies

CC3 - Reduce the amount of waste produced through the adoption of the waste hierarchy 'reduce - reuse – recycle - recover'.

CC4 - Reduce the impact of our transport.

CC4.1 - Reduce the environmental impact of fleet transport through training, employing environmentally friendly technology and improving efficiencies where feasible.

CC4.2 – Promote the use of sustainable transport including car sharing, cycling, walking and public transport.)

Built and Natural Environment (BNE)

The Council has an obligation to conserve, protect and enhance the built and natural environment.

Cleanliness impacts significantly on the local environment and national policy identifies the links between cleanliness of neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour and fear of crime. Local consultation has identified cleanliness of neighbourhoods as a top priority. The Council has initiated a successful programme of regenerating derelict land resulting from the demise of the coal and steel industries. In line with Government Policy it continues to concentrate on brownfield regeneration and the preservation of green field areas.

Biodiversity is a key indicator of sustainability and is a crucial component of the quality of life for the communities that RMBC serves. Rotherham contains a series of nationally and locally important nature conservation sites and is home to hundreds of protected and priority plant and animal species. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity in line with the Borough Biodiversity Action Plan will bring clear social, economic and environmental benefits for Rotherham citizens. Rotherham's Local Development Framework provides a key mechanism to protect species and wildlife habitats and also to prevent inappropriate development affecting both the built and natural environments.

Key Objectives

BNE1 – Ensure that the Council's asset portfolio is sustainable by integrating sustainability into all the Council's Capital and Asset Management Strategies, Plans, Programmes and Projects.

BNE2 - Manage and improve the quality and accessibility of parks, open spaces and public rights of way.

BNE3 - Improve street cleanliness by reducing litter, graffiti, fly tipping and other environmental crime.

BNE4 – Regenerate derelict land and focus new developments on brown-field sites.

BNE5 - Protect and enhance the natural environment and the diversity of natural habitats and wildlife.

BNE6 - Maintain, manage and conserve trees & woodlands in the Borough

Procurement (P)

Supporting the Council's Corporate Plan and following the guidelines set down by the National Procurement Strategy, sustainability issues need to be fully considered throughout the Council's procurement process. The key to achieving this within the directives is to ensure that sustainability is taken into consideration right at the very beginning of the procurement process - in the initial business case and specification processes. A programme of supplier engagement is also required, with the Council reviewing its procurement processes to enable better access for suppliers, followed by knowledge transfer to assist the market in its understanding of how to meet the Council's standards

Key Objectives

- P1** - Work in partnership with our contractors and suppliers to minimise the environmental impact of their goods and services.
- P2** - Promote Sustainability and environmental considerations through the Council's Procurement Strategy and adopting whole life costing.
- P3** - Encourage procurement of local products and services.
- P4** - Where practicable purchase goods and materials that can be manufactured and disposed of in an environmentally sustainable way.

Pollution prevention and control (PPC)

Local environmental quality is a key area of concern to our residents. Poor air quality has a significant effect on the health of communities. The Council monitors air quality throughout the Borough and has regulatory and strategic functions to reduce or minimise pollution from a wide variety of sources.

Key Objectives

- PPC1** - Reduce air pollution through traffic management and reviewing and assessing air quality.
- PPC2** – Minimise the adverse impacts of new developments by working proactively within the Planning and Development Control framework.
- PPC3** - Support the reduction of local environmental issues such as noise, light and dust pollution
- PPC4** – Ensure potential environmental damage is minimised in emergency situations and accidents through the development of emergency response plans at sites of significant environmental risk.

Communication and Education (CE)

We recognise that the power the individual has to make change should not be underestimated. There are many things that members of the community can do as individuals, part of a local group or organisation or in the workplace to help protect and improve the environment. What at the individual level may appear to be only a minor change, when taken by many thousands of people can have a big impact. A better understanding of environmental issues is needed amongst all sections of the community.

As an employer of 13000 people the Council can make a significant impact by changing individual behaviours. The Council is also in a prime position to raise awareness through the services it provides such as schools and transport, its community leadership role and to utilise its powers of well-being to promote economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. Ensuring that each individual fully appreciates the impact their day to day activities have on the environment is key to protecting the environment.

Key Objectives:

CE1 - Provide environmental training for councillors, employees, in order to raise awareness of individual responsibilities and overall council performance

CE2 – Provide environmental information and guidance to businesses in order to ensure their compliance with legislation and improve their environmental performance and awareness

CE3 – Promote and support community awareness projects that are beneficial to the environment and promote environmental awareness

CE4 – Communicate the Council's environmental performance to all stakeholders

CE 5 - Promote and develop campaigns and projects/actions to increase awareness of the public, schools, community groups of environmental issues and responses

Funding and Evaluating the Policy

The policy provides direction for the next five years but will be reviewed each year in light of what has been achieved and emerging priorities. The outcome of this process will be reported widely internally and externally to the Council and will be made publicly available on the Councils' webs-site.

Each of the objectives will require considerable commitment and resources to implement. Through the Council's budgetary process and other funding opportunities resources have been identified to enable the implementation of the individual objectives. Additional funding will be sought as opportunities to arise from Council, national government and other funding sources.

For further information on the environmental management of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council please contact: Bob Crosby, Head of Neighbourhood Services on (01709) 823100 or e-mail him on bob.crosby@rotherham.gov.uk

*Sustainable development can be defined as 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' Such a definition addresses economic, social and environmental issues on an equal basis.