

**REPORT TO:** EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING, 19<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2007

**REPORT BY:** ALAN CUFLEY, HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING

**WRITTEN BY:** HAZEL HINE, CORPORATE INITIATIVES MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** Directorate for Health, Housing and Social Care-  
**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME**

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1) To give a brief overview of the sustainability agenda and the programme, which is currently being pursued in the Corporate Initiatives Team on behalf of the HHSC Directorate.
- 2) To obtain commitment to supporting this work.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) That the report be noted and the actions taken as part of the HHSC Directorate Sustainable Communities Programme be supported in principle.
- 2) That the HHSC Budget Principles be amended to reflect this work.

## **3. THE DIRECTORATE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME**

**3.1 Background:** The HHSC Directorate Business Plan gives the Corporate Initiatives Manager in Community Housing the responsibility for taking forward the sustainability agenda across the Directorate.

Lessons about integrated working have also been learned during the course of the John Pounds redevelopment programme which she leads. These are being applied to other work in a broader sustainable communities approach.

The concept of a sustainability community is wide-ranging. The city council is currently engaged in clarifying a shared vision with its partners. Other ideas include:

- a) "A sustainable community is a place where people want to live and work, now and in the future. It is safe and inclusive, well planned, well run and offers equality of opportunity to all citizens. Local authorities have a crucial role to play in creating sustainable communities and building a sense of community" (IDeA).
- b) One Planet Living (OPL). Developed by BioRegional and Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), this has the vision of creating "A world in which people everywhere can lead happy, healthy lives within their share of the earth's resources". It aims to build a network of OPL communities with the principles of 1)zero carbon, 2)zero waste 3)sustainable transport 4)local and sustainable materials 5)local and

sustainable food 6)sustainable water 7)natural habitats and wildlife 8)culture and heritage 9)equity and fair trade 10) health and happiness.

Climate Change has been identified in the Stern Review as the major issue for the future of the planet, but, to be effective, integrated approaches such as these are needed.

### 3.2 REASONS FOR ACTING AS A DIRECTORATE

- a) **Leadership and getting our own house in order.** The “defaults” of our daily lives can have damaging consequences and make heavy demands on the use of resources. Very often ways of behaving which are less damaging to the environment also have health benefits. By modifying our behaviour and reducing the “carbon footprint” of the HHSC Directorate, we can lead by example in the wider community and contribute to a collective carbon reduction. There may also be cost savings.
- b) **Vulnerable groups.** Some groups are likely to be disproportionately affected by climate change. Many individuals fall into one of more of these categories **1) low income households** are generally less able to adapt to the consequences e.g. high density homes may be less easily ventilated, subject to more heat build up, adaptation measures like air conditioning may be expensive, fuel poverty may be an issue **2) elderly people** are generally living on fixed incomes and may experience issues as for low income groups **3) individuals with poor health** are affected by greater heat stress and higher levels of air pollution **4) residents** in areas liable to flooding may be less able to deal with the consequences through lack of insurance etc.
- c) **Local housing issues.** Strategic issues include: **1)** Development pressures and community concerns about the sustainability and infrastructure needs of large amounts of new housing stock. **2)** The amount and condition of existing housing, both public and private, and whether this can be successfully adapted to address energy issues, fuel poverty etc. **3)** The need for more affordable housing in the city and challenges about the cost of sustainability measures, ease of use and effectiveness of construction, including prefabrication. .
- d) **Government requirements.** **1)** The government is introducing a range of national targets around energy use, carbon emissions and developing alternative methods of energy generation. These will form a part of future CPA/CAA assessments **2)** The Government is also introducing design and planning targets, which place considerable challenges upon local authorities, e.g. all new homes to be zero carbon by 2016.
- e) **Opportunities for innovation.** Successful measures to tackle sustainability and climate change have a track record of arising from new ways of working, individual initiatives, rapid technological innovation and creativity. The adage that “if you do what you’ve always done you get what you always get” is really true for

sustainability work. There is a huge challenge in enabling innovation within management frameworks, whilst responding effectively to targets and immediate concerns. Equally there is an opportunity to discover new synergies between different parts of the Directorate.

### **3 CONTENT OF HHSC SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME**

- a) John Pounds Redevelopment Programme:** As the physical development programme proceeds, various programmes of activity linked to John Pounds Centre, but reaching out into Portsmouth, are being developed in partnership with others. These will continue into 2008. They include an health and arts strategy for which grant funding is being sought, information development, health and housing study, dental treatment.

By late 2007 there will be a programme of good practice dissemination alongside the completion of the remaining physical build (housing and retail). Pilot and other activity programmes will be developed related to the wider sustainable communities agenda.

- b) Reducing the environmental footprint of the Directorate and developing HHSC strategies.** This currently includes :

- i) Green Office Policies for premises managed by the Directorate.** This is a pilot project to develop and support the implementation of tailor-made "green office" policies with staff teams in buildings managed by the Directorate. Energy usage and staff attitudes are being monitored. Findings are being fed into a national research study co-ordinated by the World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

The following HHSC premises are now in the scheme: John Pounds Centre, Paulsgrove Housing Office, Longdean Lodge, Somerstown Housing Office. All other housing offices have now signed up to take part.

The teams in these premises are all enthusiastic about the work. A variety of issues is emerging, especially concerning recycling and energy usage. These issues will be refined into general recommendations in the next few months. Initial findings include the payment of energy bills based on high usage estimates and potential improvements in recycling. It is hoped that savings found can be used by the offices for other improvements.

Much of the work done in connection with this HHSC programme has been used to support corporate sustainability work and the corporate sustainability strategy, including initiating sustainability sessions at corporate induction, developing sustainability postcards and incentives.

- ii) **Resident Green Champions:** This is a project working with tenants to promote greater understanding of environmental issues, fuel poverty etc including setting up “green champions” with accreditation, in partnership with the voluntary sector. A 10 week accredited training programme in environmental sustainability will start at the Navigators Resource Centre in September 2007. This programme, initially targeted at Local Authority tenants, has been made possible through a partnership between Learning Links Ltd, PCC Adult Learning, HHSC Corporate Initiatives and Resident Participation Teams. The various objectives include:
- ◆ Developing new pathways into training.
  - ◆ Creating new (and supporting existing) participation networks.
  - ◆ Creating groups of residents with whom to trial and discuss improvements.
  - ◆ Recognising the value of resident time and ensuring sustainability of the work through a reward scheme.
  - ◆ Assessing whether this could be extended into private sector work to support, for example, the Decent Homes campaign.

### iii) **Housing Carbon Challenge Group**

As part of the strategic housing role, a cross directorate group, with involvement also of the Planning and Asset Management Services, has recently been set up to look at sustainability issues for all types and tenures of existing and new housing. It is broadly based on the current English Partnerships “Carbon Challenge” Initiative and has the ambitious overarching purpose:

*“By working together to create and implement an action plan for improving the environmental performance of all housing in or owned by the city, to levels which meet or improve on national targets”.*

An action plan is being created which will support activity at all stages of the planning, design, construction, maintenance and use of housing to ensure good environmental standards will be met. Contact is being maintained through members of the group with local, regional and national organisations. Keeping abreast of legislation, regulation and technological changes is proving a major challenge.

The Group is concerned that there should be an emphasis on action. The scoping exercise, which has started, has already led to greater awareness of issues and is informing the production of a wide range of housing strategy recommendations. At the moment emphasis is on investigating the issues affecting those in greatest need in the city. An emerging challenge is whether more

demanding sustainability requirements (including social and economic sustainability) can be worked into options for corporate land disposals for housing.

A further report will be brought forward later in the year.

**v) Food And Housing**

In the next few months, a scoping exercise will start with involvement of the Health Improvement and Development Service to focus on the relationships between healthy eating, food miles and housing. A further report will be brought forward on this work at a future date.

**c) Researching the wider implications of the sustainable communities agenda.**

This work will continue subject to resource availability during 07/08. For example, consistent with the Egan Review on training needs, some work has been started on staff and resident support. Contact has been made with the Royal Town Planning Institute and a pilot free drop-in “Planning Aid” session with independent qualified Chartered Town Planners will be held for local residents in September 2007 at the Navigators Resource Centre. Further sessions will be arranged if this proves useful.

**4. CONCLUSION**

The sustainability agenda is a wide and challenging agenda, which is recognised as a core part of the Directorate’s future work.

**5. SIGNING OFF REPORT**

Signed.....  
Alan Cufley, Head of Community Housing  
Dated.....

**6. APPROVAL TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations set out above were approved / approved as amended / deferred / rejected by the Executive Member for Housing on.....

Signed.....  
**Councillor Hugh Mason, Executive Member for Housing**