City of Wolverhampton Council

Sustainability Strategy and Implementation Plan

2013 - 2018

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Part 1 - Background

What is ‘Sustainable Development’?
The word ‘sustainability’ has, arguably, never been more sought after, used, or abused but its definition can still be unclear.

‘Our Common Future’, the report of the UN’s World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, often referred to as the Brundtland Report, defined sustainable development as ‘development which meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’ It was recognised for the first time that the environment, economy and society are interconnected and mutually dependent, and that their management holistically would enable sustainable development.

The previous UK Government’s Sustainable Development Strategy ‘Securing the Future’, published in 2005, set out five guiding principles of sustainable development:

1. Living within the planet’s environmental limits
2. Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
3. Achieving a sustainable economy
4. Promoting good governance
5. Using sound science responsibly

The current Coalition Government published a refreshed vision of this strategy, ‘Mainstreaming Sustainable Development’, in February 2011, which defines sustainable development as, ‘making the necessary decisions now to realise our vision of stimulating economic growth and tackling the deficit, maximising wellbeing and protecting our environment, without negatively impacting on the ability of future generations to do the same.’ It also reiterates that ‘sustainable development recognises that the three ‘pillars’ of the economy, society and the natural environment are interconnected’.

International Context
The concept of sustainable development received its first major international recognition in 1972 at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm followed, in 1979, by the first World Climate Conference in Geneva which was the first occasion on which global governments were asked to consider and address man-made climate change.

The Rio Earth Summit in 1992 was in turn the first summit at which world leaders acknowledged that a range of global issues should be addressed holistically. An outcome was ‘Agenda 21’, which set out the main issues key to sustainable development in the 21st century, including social and economic dimensions as well as environmental protection.

In 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was put in place, committing the European community and 37 other industrialised nations to reducing their emissions of greenhouse gases by 5% compared to their 1990 base levels; this remains the world’s only encompassing climate change legislation and provided the framework for all future international agreements.

In 2002 the World Summit on Sustainable Development, also referred to as Rio +10, took place in Johannesburg. The Johannesburg Declaration produced a number of initiatives aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals, eight international development goals set in 2000, which integrate the three aspects of sustainable development; environment, economy and society.

As a result of the most recent response to the Kyoto Protocol, the Doha Climate Change Conference in 2012, developing as well as developed countries now have a legal obligation to reduce emissions.

Rio +20, in 2012, prioritised two particular themes for sustainable development; building a green economy and improving international co-ordination. They both emerge from ‘The Future We Want’ document which establishes
a common vision to integrate economic, social and environmental values in order to achieve sustainable development.

**European Context**

The European Union has produced much key legislation related to sustainability. The European Climate Change Programme was established in 2000, to implement the Kyoto Protocol and produced working groups on areas such as energy supply demand and efficiency, transport, carbon capture and storage and adaptation. The Directorate-General for Climate Action has developed strategies including the 2008 Climate Action and Renewable Energy (CARE) package which oversees the implementation of previously made commitments such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption, an increase in renewable energy sources and the promotion of environmentally safe and sound technologies.

The 2009 EU Renewables Directive is one such regulation stemming from the CARE package. It produced a mandatory target that the EU obtains 20% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020. The UK specifically has been given the target of sourcing 15% of our energy from renewable sources by 2020.

**National Context**

Nationally, mainstreaming sustainable development throughout government policy is led by the Environment Secretary. At a departmental level the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) leads on sustainable development and the Department for Energy & Climate Change (DECC) on energy and climate change.

One of the first pieces of legislation to directly address carbon dioxide emissions and energy efficiency was the Home Energy Conservation Act, 1995, which required councils to produce annual Energy Conservation Reports aimed at improving domestic energy efficiency. The Act was revised in 2012 to require biennial reports outlining practical and cost-effective local energy conservation measures.

The Climate Change Act, 2008 aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by the year 2050 compared to the 1990 base level. By doing so it aims to encourage the transition to a low carbon economy and reduce the effects of climate change on the economy, society and the environment to a manageable level. Though this Act is predominantly environment based, it has led to the development of further, more holistically considered regulations. At a local level, the Local Government Association, in June 2012, launched the Climate Local initiative to assist councils in reducing carbon emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change.

The 2011 Carbon Plan provides a plan for implementing the Climate Change Act, with the intention of delivering a more efficient, low carbon and sustainable economy, by promoting the use of renewable heat incentives, biofuels and establishing efforts in agriculture, forestry and waste. The consequential opening of ‘green’ markets for low carbon technologies provides a pathway for the UK to move to a modern and sustainable low carbon economy, that uses natural resources more efficiently and maintains a good quality of life.

The Energy Act, 2011 provides a more sustainable government approach to energy. It addresses the issues of: energy infrastructure; climate change and conformity with international and national targets; economic growth and benefits for jobs and investment; affordability of energy; energy security; and safety.

As part of a national initiative to deliver sustainable development, the National Planning Policy Framework was established in March 2012. It seeks to build a strong and competitive economy; support high quality homes and healthy communities; and conserve, enhance and protect the natural and historic environment whilst meeting the challenge of climate change and its associated effects. The NPPF is therefore a key part of government policy to address the three aspects of sustainability holistically.
The Green Deal, launched in January 2013, aims to improve energy efficiency for business and home owners, by removing the up-front costs involved in insulation and power generation measures to consumers, as the cost is instead recouped through savings on energy bills. It is part of the revised Home Energy Conservation Act (1995); its central aim is to improve energy efficiency in residential and business dwellings. The Energy Company Obligation (ECO), an update of previous initiatives by which the energy companies provide funding for energy efficiency initiatives, was also introduced to help deliver the Green Deal.

Regional Context
Sustainability West Midlands is the leading advisory body on sustainability for the West Midlands region. In 2006 it published ‘Sustainable Future for the West Midlands’, a regional sustainable development framework from which councils could develop individual implementation plans. In line with national sustainability policy, it set out four key priorities for councils to act upon:

1. Sustainable consumption and production
2. Climate change and energy
3. Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement
4. Sustainable communities

In 2007, the ‘West Midlands Regional Climate Change Action Plan 2007-10’ was published by a partnership led by the West Midlands Regional Assembly. It contained a vision and six priorities for action, reflected in an action plan.

In 2010, a report on ‘Opportunities in the Low Carbon Economy’ was published for the West Midlands City Region alongside more detailed reports for each council area. This identified the largest potential opportunities for Wolverhampton as being within the sectors of construction, manufacturing, transport, environmental goods and services and public services.

Local Context
Wolverhampton City Council and Wolverhampton Local Strategic Partnership have jointly adopted a number of relevant strategies in the past decade, as a basis for the partners’ work:

1. The Sustainability Charter, adopted in 2004, which provided a set of strategic sustainability principles
2. The Wolverhampton Declaration on Climate Change, signed by the council in December 2006 and endorsed by the Wolverhampton Local Strategic Partnership Board in January 2007
3. The Wolverhampton Environment Strategy 2009
4. The Sustainable Communities Strategy for Wolverhampton 2008-2026, adopted in 2009 (now superseded by the City Strategy)

With regard to carbon dioxide (CO₂), a number of initiatives are in operation:

1. The council’s Carbon Management Strategy & Implementation Plan (S&IP) was approved by Cabinet in April 2008 and committed to reducing the council’s carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 25% by 2015 from a baseline of 2005/06. By 2011/12 the council had achieved a 13% reduction in emissions and was not on track to meet its original target for 2014/15.

2. The Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan for Wolverhampton 2009-2012 was prepared in parallel with the Environment Strategy and was also adopted by both the council and partnership in 2009. This set a local target to reduce the city’s CO₂ emissions by at least 12% by 2012 and 35% by 2026 using a 2005 baseline. The latest government figures available are for 2010 and show a 14% reduction in CO₂ emissions from 2005 to 2010, ahead of the target.
Part 2 - Strategy

Priorities
The City Strategy 2011-2026, launched in October 2011, is the overarching strategy for the city council and the wider Wolverhampton Partnership. This superseded the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

It has an overarching goal of ‘Prosperity for all’ with three Key Themes and priority actions relevant to sustainable development:

Theme 1: Encouraging Enterprise and Business
Theme 2: Empowering People and Communities
Theme 3: Re-invigorating the City

The council’s Corporate Plan 2012-2015 follows the same structure with an additional fourth aim, which also has a broad relevance to sustainability:

Aim 4: A Confident, Capable Council

In order to ensure that the principles of sustainability underpinned these main strategic documents, the Sustainable Wolverhampton – Simplified Delivery report was approved by Cabinet on 25 July 2012. It outlines an additional set of priorities and delivery methods for achieving sustainability in the city, to enhance those already identified by the City Strategy.

The priorities are:

A - Providing effective support to deliver a green economy and achieve sustainable economic development

B - Promoting social inclusion and tackling fuel poverty

C - Protecting and enhancing the environment

Reflecting the national priority of climate change and energy, and its significance to the council’s functions, it is identified as an additional priority in its own right.

The four priorities of this strategy, linked to the themes of the City Strategy, are therefore the following:

1. Provide effective support to deliver a green economy and achieve sustainable economic development (Reflects City Strategy Theme 1 – Encouraging Enterprise and Business)

2. Address the causes and effects of climate change and support the move to renewable & low carbon energy (Reflects City Strategy Theme 1 – Encouraging Enterprise and Business)

3. Promote social inclusion and equal opportunities (Reflects City Strategy Theme 2 - Empowering People and Communities)

4. Protect and enhancing the natural and built environment (Reflects City Strategy Theme 3 – Re-invigorating the City)

3. Under the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC), the council has a statutory annual requirement from 2010-2011 to report carbon emissions generated by city council activities. The first year was a reporting year only but, from 2011-12, a payment must be made to the Department of Energy & Climate Change for the carbon produced in the form of purchasing a ‘Carbon Allowance’. The CRC produced a figure of 35,012 tonnes of CO₂ for 2011-12.
The aim of the Sustainability Strategy and Implementation Plan is to deliver these priorities, in support of the themes and aims identified in the City Strategy and the Corporate Plan.

In support of these priorities, on 24 April 2013, the leaders of the council’s three political parties signed the Climate Local Wolverhampton commitment on behalf of the city council, following approval by Cabinet. This commits the council to the following:

• Set locally-owned and determined commitments and actions to reduce carbon emissions and to manage climate impacts which are specific, measurable and challenging
• Publish our commitments, actions and progress, enabling local communities to hold us to account
• Share the learning from our experiences and achievements with other councils
• Regularly refresh our commitments and actions to ensure they are current and continue to reflect local priorities

This Sustainability Strategy and Implementation Plan also forms the council’s Climate Local Wolverhampton Action Plan and will be published, monitored, reported upon and reviewed as such.

Scope
The Sustainability Strategy and Implementation Plan will focus initially on the city council’s own activities and is accompanied by an Implementation Plan that will deliver major changes. It supersedes the following documents which have been withdrawn as council policy:

• Sustainability Charter
• Wolverhampton Declaration on Climate Change
• Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan
• Wolverhampton Environment Strategy

• Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for Wolverhampton

Other strategies and action plans will remain and be reviewed and replaced as appropriate as part of the Implementation Plan.

Delivery
The Sustainable Wolverhampton – Simplified Delivery Report set out a new structure to deliver the council’s sustainability priorities. A Sustainability Delivery Group of council employees has been established which is leading on the development, co-ordination and delivery of the Sustainability Strategy and Implementation Plan and all other activity related to sustainability within the city council. It reports directly to a Sustainability Advisory Group of councillors. Both will work, where relevant, with the Wolverhampton Partnership and other external partners, including contractors, the local enterprise partnership, local nature partnership, local businesses, Centro and adjacent authorities.

Monitoring & Review
The Sustainability Strategy and Implementation Plan is for the five years from 2013-14 to 2017-18. The Strategy will be reviewed in its final year. The Implementation Plan will be monitored quarterly and progress reported annually; it will be reviewed in the third year, 2015-16, and along with the Strategy in 2017-18.