



Report of the Director of City Development

Executive Board

Date: 4 November 2009

Subject: Revised Environment Policy

Electoral Wards Affected:

All

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In
(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Leeds City Council's current Environment Policy requires updating to align it with the Leeds Strategic Plan (LSP) and the Council Business Plan (CBP). This report proposes a revised policy that complements both the LSP & CBP environmental outcomes and covers the 2008 – 2011 lifespan of the key strategic documents used by the organization. The revised policy will also fulfil the requirements of the Council's formal Environmental Management System. The report recommends that the revised policy be supported and signed by the Joint Leaders of the Council and the Chief Executive.

1.0 Purpose of this Report

- To present the revised Environment Policy.
- To clarify the rationale behind new Environment Policy
- To identify the core elements of the revised policy and link to the Leeds Strategic Plan, Council Business Plan, Eco Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and other requirements.
- To seek approval for the revised Environment Policy

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Leeds City Council carries out lots of activities that can have positive and negative impacts on the environment. Some of the environmental impacts we directly control ourselves, particularly those impacts associated with the Council's own estate and buildings. For others we influence the environmental impact through the way that we deliver our services and spend public money. Our greatest environmental impact is clearly through our service delivery.

2.2 The Council has signed up to the strategic priorities in the Leeds Strategic Plan (outlined in further detail below) and overall the authority clearly wishes to have as positive an impact on the environment as possible. The Council's Environment Policy should identify how we want to improve the environmental impact that the city council has. The policy should help with decisions over how services are run and delivered so that positive environmental impacts are maximised and negative ones minimised. It should also commit the authority to remaining legally compliant and to aim for continuous improvement in our environmental performance.

2.3 Possession of an up to date and meaningful Environment Policy is in line with best practice amongst local authorities and major institutions and is a requirement for companies tendering for Council contracts. As an EMAS accredited organisation, it is necessary that the Council has an Environment Policy and that it is reviewed periodically.

2.4 LCC has had a formal Environment Policy for many years. The current version has the following characteristics or historical background:-

- Developed and approved under the previous departmental structure (7 departments).
- Is a 3 page document that includes complex environmental commentary (1,365 words).
- Makes no reference to existing Leeds Strategic Plan, Council Business Plan or other relevant requirements i.e. strategic outcomes or improvement priorities.
- Makes no reference to corporate values.
- Has no definitive lifespan or review date.

2.5 The Environment Policy is the Council's commitment to improving the environment of Leeds by improving the environmental impacts that the Council controls or influences. This commitment is shared with other organisations in the city by signing up to the environmental priorities in the Leeds Strategic Plan (LSP).

Strategic Outcomes

- Reduce the ecological footprint of the city through responding to environment and climate change and influencing others (LSP);
- Create a cleaner, greener and more attractive city through effective environmental management and changed behaviours (LSP);
- We will take significant steps to reduce our carbon emissions (CBP);

- Increase accessibility and connectivity through investment in a high quality transport system and through influencing others and changing behaviours (LSP).

Improvement Priorities

- Reduce carbon emissions arising from public sector buildings, operations and service delivery, and encourage others to do so (LSP);
- Increase the proportion of socially responsible goods and services that we procure (CBP);
- Support the achievement of our strategic outcomes through our corporate social responsibility programme (CBP);
- Increase the amount of waste reused and recycled and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill (LSP);
- Undertake actions to improve our resilience to current and future climate change (LSP);
- Address neighbourhood problem sites; improve cleanliness, and access to and the quality of green spaces (LSP);
- Improve the quality and sustainability of the built and natural environment (LSP).

2.6 Further measures are used to monitor the environmental performance of LCC:

- National Indicators (environment theme) e.g. NI 185
- Key Lines of Enquiry for the 'Use of Natural Resources' part of CAA
- Nottingham Declaration commitment

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 LCC has had a formal Environment Policy for many years; however, in 2002 the council achieved certification to ISO 14001 and EMAS. These two standards have specific requirements that must form part of the official Environment Policy. The Environment Policy must contain a commitment to:

- Comply with legislation
- Prevent pollution
- Improve environmental performance

3.2 In addition, the Environment Policy must be made available to the public and be relevant to the nature, scale and environmental impacts of the organisation's activities, products or services.

3.3 The existing Environment Policy covers a broad range of environmental issues, however, it does not specifically identify the formal commitments in the LSP and CBP above. This is primarily a result of an ad-hoc approach to the revision process which has culminated in an Environment Policy that does not complement the existing environmental commitments for LCC.

4.0 Revised Environmental Policy

4.1 Officers have prepared a revised Environment Policy that aligns with the LSP and CBP and also fulfils the requirements of the Council's Environmental Management System.

4.2 The revised policy (appendix 1) has the following advantages over the current version:

- Utilises the most relevant 'core value' as the cornerstone of the document;
- Supports the 'one council' approach to environmental management;
- Contains all relevant strategic outcomes and improvement priorities;

- Identifies other relevant mechanisms used to measure environmental performance;
- More concise and user friendly document (589 words);
- Provides a definitive review date in line with LSP & CBP.

4.3 To assist with the implementation of the revised Environment Policy, officers are preparing guidance for staff on how to assess the environmental impacts of projects and proposals. This guidance will be incorporated as part of the Delivering Successful Change (DSC) framework.

4.4 All Directorates have been consulted on the revised Environment Policy together with the Executive Member for Environmental Services.

5.0 Implications for council policy and governance

5.1 The revised policy is aligned with the key values, improvement priorities and strategic outcomes of the organisation. It is also good practice to ensure supporting policies are reviewed in line with changing circumstances that face the organisation on a defined timescale. It is considered that the revised policy satisfies the requirements of EMAS and ISO 14001, identifies the key environmental issues for LCC and provides the opportunity to review the document in line with organisational change.

6.0 Legal and resource implications

6.1 There are no additional legal and resource implications arising from this report

7.0 Recommendations

Executive Board are requested to:

- approve the adoption of the revised Environment Policy at Appendix 1 which will be signed by the Joint Leaders of the Council and the Chief Executive.

Background Papers

Environmental Policy 2008 - 2011