



# Sustainability & Climate Change: Interim Report



**A report from Overview & Scrutiny**







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<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Bethan Clemence</b>
	<b>tel:</b>	<b>0121 303 1669</b>
	<b>e-mail:</b>	<b>Bethan.Clemence@birmingham.gov.uk</b>



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*“We must become the change we want to see”*

Mahatma Gandhi



## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Why is this issue important?

“The goal of sustainable development, or sustainability, is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations”.

**UK Sustainable Development Strategy, 2005**

1.1.1 Over the past 20 years there has been a growing recognition that economic development, our lifestyles, use of resources, behaviours and expectations as consumers are unsustainable. Our way of life is placing an increasing burden on the planet on which we depend, the impacts of which are all too readily visible:

- The consequences of unavoidable climate change – we are already experiencing its impacts;
- Increasing stress on resources and environmental systems – water, land and air;
- Increasing stresses on, and losses of, biodiversity.

1.1.2 It is essential to consider too the international face of the issue. We live in a world where over a billion people live on less than a dollar a day, more than 800 million are malnourished whilst more than 2.5 billion people do not have access to adequate sanitation<sup>1</sup>. Just as increasing wealth is associated with negative environmental impacts; extreme poverty can also leave people with no alternative other than to deplete their local environment. It is important to understand the truly global nature of sustainability and climate change, to understand that our actions will impact on others and vice versa.

1.1.3 One of the barriers faced in progressing the sustainability and climate change agenda is the perception that any efforts towards tackling these issues would place a burden upon us. This is not the case, and if done properly initiatives which tackle climate change and incorporate sustainability will prove to be beneficial – not only in terms of social well-being, but also through the benefits received from long-term economic investments.

1.1.4 We need to make a decisive move towards more sustainable development both because it is the right thing to do, and because it is in our long-term interests. These issues touch every person who lives and works in Birmingham in some form. It is essential therefore to take responsibility and make a serious commitment to tackling sustainability and climate change. It is important to

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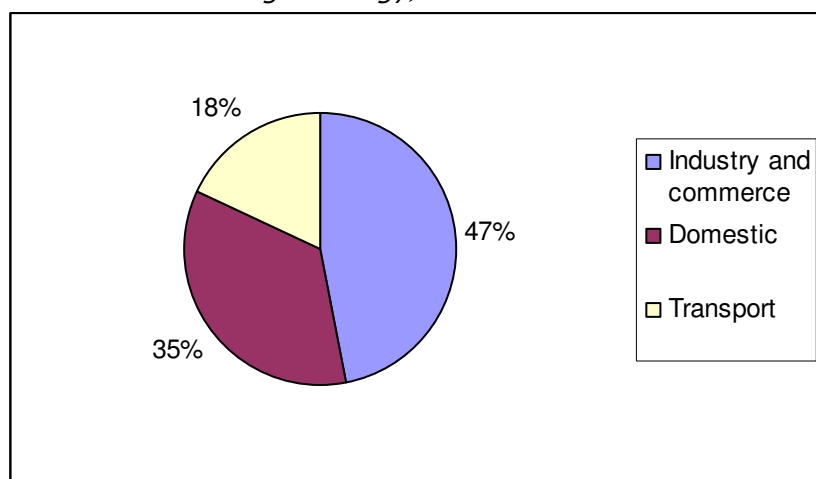
<sup>1</sup> *Securing the Future: delivering UK sustainable development strategy*. The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy 2005.



recognise that unless we do this, we all face a future that is less certain and less secure than we have previously enjoyed.

- 1.1.5 The challenges posed by sustainability and climate change have increasingly received attention on political agendas – a fact which is reflected in the high level of media coverage. The recent publication of the Stern Review<sup>2</sup>, which reported directly to both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and to the Prime Minister, is a clear indication of the awareness by central government that climate change is a serious issue and a significant challenge.
- 1.1.6 The Stern Review also recognises the long-term benefits of taking action now:  
“the benefits of strong, early action considerably outweigh the costs”
- 1.1.7 It suggests that the cost of taking action now is likely to be around 1% of the world’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This cost is small relative to the costs and risks of climate change that would be avoided. A 1% GDP cost equates to £11billion per year in Britain. Crude calculations suggest that this roughly translates to £200million per year in Birmingham.
- 1.1.8 Birmingham’s contribution to climate change, through its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, currently equates to 6.6 million tonnes each year<sup>3</sup>. As illustrated in Figure 1, one of the key challenges for the City is to tackle domestic energy consumption. However, emissions from transport are steadily increasing and pose a significant challenge particularly as across the West Midlands, 74% of transport emissions are from car-use alone<sup>4</sup>.

Figure 1: Breakdown of Birmingham's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (6.6 million tonnes/yr). *Source: BSP Draft Climate Change Strategy, November 2006.*



<sup>2</sup> *The Economics of Climate Change*. The Stern Review, October 2006.

<sup>3</sup> *Experimental carbon dioxide emissions statistics at Local Authority and Government Region level 2004*. Defra, November 2006.

<sup>4</sup> *Ecological Budget West Midlands – Counting Consumption*. WWF, 2006.



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- 1.1.9 Clearly, we need to start thinking about the actions that we as a City, and as a Local Authority, should be taking now and in the future. Doing nothing is not an option.
- 1.1.10 At the request of the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Sustainability and Climate Change Task and Finish Overview and Scrutiny Committee was convened in June 2006. Our purpose is to investigate the issues surrounding sustainability and climate change, and how they relate to the Council's priorities, what it does and how it does it.
- 1.1.11 We started with a broad remit, with the initial aim to scope the issues that Birmingham and the City Council face. We agreed with the Co-ordinating O&S Committee to report our initial findings following the scoping exercise, with a view to proposing a future programme of work. This interim report therefore sets out our findings and conclusions to date, and proposes priority areas which we wish to pursue.





## 2 Background

### 2.1 The Council and its partners

- 2.1.1 Sustainability and climate change are wide-ranging and important policy areas which give rise to a range of concerns to the public, from fundamental, long term issues such as the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, to potentially more immediate actions such as encouraging recycling or reducing the use of water in times of shortage.
- 2.1.2 Central government has drawn up a national sustainability strategy<sup>5</sup> which it expects to be implemented through a variety of agencies - including local authorities – and a range of statutory functions. Local Authority performance against these is assessed through a number of Best Value Performance Indicators, although these do not explicitly measure sustainability.
- 2.1.3 The growing central government pressure and its desire to push forward the sustainability and climate change agenda has increasingly been represented in the media headlines. In the local authority context, it can also be seen through the fact that the Council's 2006 Comprehensive Performance Assessment included a range of questions which addressed sustainability directly, summed up by the key line of enquiry: *"What has the council, with its partners, achieved in its ambitions to develop sustainable communities, integrating economic, social and environmental issues?"*<sup>6</sup>.
- 2.1.4 The City Council, along with all other local authorities, has under the Local Government Act 2000 the power to do anything it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of its area. As illustrated in Appendix 1, the way in which the Council approaches environmental and sustainability issues is through a number of strategic documents, all underpinned by the City's Local Area Agreement (LAA).
- 2.1.5 The Birmingham Local Area Agreement was negotiated by the Birmingham Strategic Partnership (BSP) and the Council with central Government and Government Office West Midlands in 2005. Through the LAA it is intended to deliver key priorities via a number of cross-cutting themes and over-arching strategies.
- 2.1.6 The LAA treats "environmental sustainability" as one of its six cross-cutting themes. The environmental sustainability theme is supported through the four blocks of the LAA as follows:
- **Children and young people** – encourage walking or cycling to school; schools to be smoke-free environments; "Building Schools for the Future" to be rated excellent against the Building

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<sup>5</sup> *Securing the Future: delivering UK sustainable development strategy*. The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Key Line Of Enquiry 5.2



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Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM); young people involved in Environmental projects; increasing number of schools achieving eco-homes status;

- **Healthier communities and older people** – proposed extension of affordable warmth impact on insulated homes;
- **Enterprise and economic development** – potential for job creation and enterprise in the environmental sector, especially recycling; improving local and neighbourhood conditions with the links to future inward investment and business growth; and
- **Safer and stronger communities** – cleaner public spaces; increased domestic recycling and reducing household CO<sub>2</sub> emissions; increase the number of "Friends of parks" groups.

2.1.7 From this, the most relevant overarching strategy in terms of sustainability and climate change is the approved Community Strategy for Birmingham - *"Taking Birmingham Forward"* – which includes "a green city" as one of its thematic aims. The strategy sees Birmingham as a city

"...where the ways we meet the needs of the present do not compromise our ability to meet needs in the future. We see Birmingham as a city where people can enjoy a clean and green environment. We see Birmingham as a place where natural resources are managed wisely".

2.1.8 Key actions (see Appendix 1), which are being co-ordinated through both the Council and the BSP, include the production of a Climate Change Strategy for the city. The Strategy commits the Council and its partners to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20% (based on a 1990 baseline) by 2010, and sets out how this will be achieved. It further sets out how the City will adapt to attempt to cope with the impact of climate change. Issues surrounding climate change and sustainability are inextricably linked, and this development is a positive step. The draft strategy is currently in the process of approval by the Deputy Leader of the City Council, and is expected to be available for public consultation in early 2007.

2.1.9 Meanwhile, the current Council Plan includes portfolio priorities such as the sustainable and efficient use of energy, promoting safer and sustainable travel, and supporting investment to improve economic regeneration as part of developing sustainable communities. These priorities are addressed through a range of strategies and plans (see Appendix 1).

2.1.10 The most relevant of these to date has been the City Council's Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan, which expired at the end of 2005. The Strategy and its Action Plan highlighted five key elements in addressing sustainability, one of which being measurement and accountability. However, since the strategy expired it has become apparent that performance monitoring has not occurred, nor has there been any reporting on measurable outcomes.



2.1.11 More recently, a Cabinet Statement on Sustainability was adopted (October 2006), with the intention that it leads to a new sustainability Action Plan in 2007. The Statement outlines the commitment of the City Council to:

“ the continuing improvement of Birmingham’s social, economic and environmental well-being so that it is recognised as a sustainable city of excellence at a global level”

2.1.12 The Statement then identifies a number of key action points for the City Council including:

- To mainstream its commitment to sustainability;
- To develop and adopt a revised Sustainability Action Plan by summer 2007;
- To investigate re-allocation of existing resources across the Council;
- To develop a Communication Plan to raise awareness of sustainability;
- Promotion of the economic benefits of sustainable development and the job creation potential of a low carbon economy;
- To use quality of life indicators to improve service provision;
- To measure and systematically reduce the Council’s ecological footprint and greenhouse gas emissions;
- To develop the City Council’s capacity for delivering more sustainable services by improving current practices;
- To ensure leadership and implement proposals for the establishment of a network of sustainable champions;
- To implement an Energy Service Company (ESCO) to deliver localised energy generation; and
- Proposals that the City Council should spend £1.5million on energy savings measures in Council buildings.

2.1.13 We are pleased to see that the Statement also outlines the objective to:

“review organisational arrangements consistent with the outcomes of the in-depth Scrutiny Review on Sustainability and Climate Change”

## 2.2 Scrutiny

2.2.1 In recent years, the scrutiny function has been active within the sustainability agenda, with for instance a number of reviews looking at issues concerned with waste and recycling, the latest only recently completed. One review, completed in 2003, was undertaken from another standpoint and looked at how twin objectives of sustainability and efficiency could go hand in hand – the review



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being entitled "In-house Sustainability Savings". Tracking of this review has recently been concluded.

2.2.2 As well as a responsibility to address sustainability in order to ensure the social, economic and environmental well-being of the City and its citizens, the Council has to make efficiency savings – it is in the Council's best interests to be sustainable. A particular aim of this review was to therefore establish how the 2000-2005 Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan was being implemented across the Council.

2.2.3 From the outset the review recognised:

"...insufficient accountability at Chief Officer level for taking [the] Sustainability Strategy Action Plan forward. Nor has there been adequate reporting to the politician responsible for this strategy... he does not currently have the ability to reach across the other Cabinet Portfolio's to do so"

2.2.4 The review further noted difficulties in implementing the Sustainability Strategy Action Plan and concluded that a corporate priority such as this "*needed better processes to ensure that it was both politically and officer driver*". Challenges were further raised as to the impact of the devolution agenda.

2.2.5 It would appear therefore, that there have been some issues with regards to the Council's approach to sustainability. Clearly, sustainability should be at the heart of the Council role as service deliverer, employer and civic leader. The challenge now is to ensure that this happens. We therefore find that our work is particularly appropriate and timely.



## 3 Evidence Gathering

### 3.1 Conduct of our work

3.1.1 Due to the broad, cross-cutting nature of sustainability and climate change, we felt it essential to create a thorough picture of all the issues, whilst avoiding inherent complexities. We did not want to be too prescriptive in the initial stages of our work, but instead pursued a knowledge gathering approach to deepen our understanding of the issues.

3.1.2 With this approach in mind, it was fundamental to start our work with a clear definition of what we mean by 'sustainability'. We have recognised from the outset that sustainability can be interpreted in different ways, and is often used in very different contexts. Therefore, we define sustainability as the integration of social, economic and environmental factors in everything that we do in order to improve our quality of life without placing an intolerable burden upon Earth's resources (see also section 1.1).

3.1.3 From the beginning we recognised and studied:

- The national priority areas for sustainability and climate change; and
- Common, overarching themes which are pertinent across the spectrum of council responsibilities.

Appendix 2 reflects these issues, and is a visual testament to the broad nature of the subject.

3.1.4 Initially, we aimed to support our key lines of enquiry through case studies from other local authorities, and evidence gathering from Officers and a range of expert witnesses.

3.1.5 A first step was to hear from Forum for the Future<sup>7</sup> about national perspectives on sustainability and climate change. This was supplemented by written briefings on the work being undertaken by Leeds City Council and Bristol City Council. Some of the key messages that came out of this evidence include:

- Sustainability must be considered in the context of integrating social, economic and environmental factors – it can't be put in a 'box' on its own.
- Sustainability must be applied as an overarching framework; shaping what is delivered and how it is delivered.

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<sup>7</sup> Forum for the Future is a sustainable development charity. Its aim is to promote sustainable development and to educate different groups in sustainable development, in order to accelerate the building of a sustainable way of life. The Forum has a Local and Regional Programme. The programme includes a team of 15 working with over 50 organisations from local and regional government. The Forum also hosts the Local Authority Partnership Scheme (LAPs) Network, where partners can benefit from shared learning, coordinated advice and guidance from the Forum's LRP team.



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- Sustainable development is synonymous with good corporate management, and this is embodied within a number of key principles:
  - Planning for the long term;
  - Build-in, not bolt-on, and delivering social, environmental and economic improvements together;
  - Considering the wider impacts of local actions; and
  - Community leadership and partnership.
- Climate change is a multidisciplinary challenge which affects a wide range of services; tackling climate change will require leadership and commitment at all levels.

3.1.6 With these perspectives in mind, we embarked on formal evidence gathering with Council Officers so as to understand the current position of the Council in terms of its actions on Sustainability and Climate Change.

3.1.7 We heard evidence from a number of City Council departments and teams:

- Urban Design;
- Corporate Procurement;
- Individual Client Services, Children, Young People and Families;
- Regulatory Services;
- Housing Strategy; and
- Planning Control and Planning Strategy.

3.1.8 Whilst we recognise that we have not heard from all areas of the Council, we have been encouraged to hear that there are various actions being undertaken by Council departments which offer examples of good practice within the context of sustainability and climate change.

3.1.9 It was also important to us to hear from key partners and local stakeholders, as we recognise that achieving a sustainable Birmingham requires partnership working and commitment from local organisations, businesses and the public in general. With this in mind, members of the Committee were involved in a series of meetings with local organisations, whose key purpose is to tackle sustainability issues in their field. Details of these meetings are included in Appendix 3, and the outcomes are incorporated within Section 4 of this report.

3.1.10 A further issue of particular importance to us was engaging with the public, and to this end we have proactively sought a high media profile. Through the attendance of members at a range of local events, and through dialogue with local media, we feel that we have achieved this.

3.1.11 One important way in which we have actively engaged with members of the public has been through the City's Sustainability Forum. Administered by the City Council, the Forum meets around



4 or 5 times a year and is the best attended public meeting in Birmingham with regards to environment and sustainability issues.

- 3.1.12 We were fortunate to be invited to play a key role in October's Forum meeting, whereby Members of the Committee teamed up with the Sustainability Forum to promote ways in which everyone can play a role in helping to protect future resources in Birmingham. The event was promoted as an opportunity for members of the public to contribute to the debate and to shape a sustainable future for Birmingham.
- 3.1.13 Titled '*Sustainability and Climate Change – A Way Forward?*' the event proved highly successful, with around 130 people attending and participating in workshop exercises. By answering some key questions (see Appendix 4), it was hoped that comments from attendees would inform our work and assist in the formulation of recommendations to the City Council. The outcomes from the Forum are included in Appendix 4 and support the key issues discussed in Section 4.
- 3.1.14 Our work has also been supplemented by the attendance of members at a range of broader external events, such as the West Midlands regional Assembly 2006 Conference on Climate Change and the Sustainability Challenge, and the Sustainable Development Commission's annual national conference. We feel that these events, though not directly related to our work at a local level, are important in terms of understanding policy/legislative drivers, as well as providing examples of innovative practice elsewhere.
- 3.1.15 We also visited the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)<sup>8</sup>, where we witnessed first hand working examples of:
- environmentally responsible buildings and sustainable building design;
  - energy conservation;
  - organic growing and composting;
  - sustainable transport;
  - solar energy, wind and water power; and
  - whole-home displays.
- 3.1.16 Our visit to CAT proved to be particularly inspiring, as it demonstrated clear innovation and holistic approaches to best achievable environmental practices. The ways in which CAT integrated ideas and practice is certainly something that the City Council can aspire to.

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<sup>8</sup> CAT's primary objective is concerned with the search for globally sustainable and ecologically sound technologies and ways of life. Within this search the role of CAT is to explore and demonstrate a wide range of alternatives, communicating to other people the options for them to achieve positive change in their own lives.



## 4 Key issues

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Our evidence gathering has covered a wide range of issues and policy areas. The wealth of information received has been both diverse and immense. This in itself reflects both the overarching nature of sustainability and climate change in everything that we as a Council do, as well as illustrating the sheer complexity the Council and its partners face in tackling the issues.

4.1.2 We recognise that actions to address sustainability and climate change must be part of an overarching framework and embedded within the delivery of all of the Council's services and functions. However, a number of key issues emerged during our evidence gathering which ought to be given priority:

- Transportation;
- Regeneration and planning;
- Housing;
- Birmingham's economy;
- Procurement;
- Constitutional approach;
- Publicising and branding;
- Co-ordination; and
- Leadership.

### 4.2 Transportation

4.2.1 At October's Sustainability Forum, transportation was identified as one of the key challenges for Birmingham. When asked to identify the barriers to a sustainable Birmingham, 19% cited attitudes to transport whilst 29% cited transportation as the top priority for the City.

4.2.2 Comments from the Forum indicated a general perception that the car user is given priority in Birmingham, and that the two priorities for the City are tackling congestion and improving public transport:

"Prioritise Public Transport"

"Better Public Transport Service – Less Cars!"

"Major investment in the expansion of bus/tram/rail public transport to provide a world class transport system".





“Develop high quality integrated public transport in order to reduce congestion.”

- 4.2.3 Transportation issues pose a key challenge to Birmingham and are very much in the public domain. Alongside the evident congestion problems, the City has suffered a decline in public transport use, and is also failing to meet its emissions targets. Transportation is widely recognised as one of the key challenges in terms of reducing emissions - of Birmingham’s 6million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions each year, 20% is attributable to transport and is continuing to rise<sup>9</sup>.
- 4.2.4 It is important to understand that the transportation challenges are not simply limited to congestion and emissions. Indeed, we are aware that there are far reaching implications of transportation which cannot be ignored, whether they are through air pollution or impacts on business and the City’s economy. Simply put, transport affects our quality of life.
- 4.2.5 Equally, transportation is impacted upon by other issues. For example, the West Midlands Spatial Strategy aims to increase the attractiveness of employment markets and housing in the Region’s cities and urban areas. This will impact upon transportation policy.
- 4.2.6 Furthermore, we have heard that travel and parking issues are strangling attempts by some commercial developers in the City to reduce car dependency in the city centre. Recent incidents on roads demonstrate how close the road system is to full capacity, whilst temporary road closures and the gridlock arising highlight the risk to business by the number of private cars on the roads.
- 4.2.7 A key influence upon transportation policy is the recognition of the need to mitigate against climate change – namely reducing emissions from traffic. This is incorporated within both the West Midlands Regional Energy Strategy and the Local Transport Plan, the former with a target to stabilise emissions from transport by 2010 and reduce emissions by 7% by 2020. These targets are intended to be met through a range of measures including:
- Encouraging the use of green travel plans;
  - Flexible working; and
  - Greater investment in public transport.
- 4.2.8 In Birmingham, the largest transport consumer of fuel is the car, accounting for 62% of the 378.6 thousand tonnes of fuel consumed in the City during 2003 (see Figure 1). Modal shift and behavioural change is clearly needed, stimulated by innovative thinking. In exploring possible ways in which the transportation challenge can be addressed, we have heard some suggestions for radical changes, which could include:
- A car-free City Centre;
  - Cheaper public transport;

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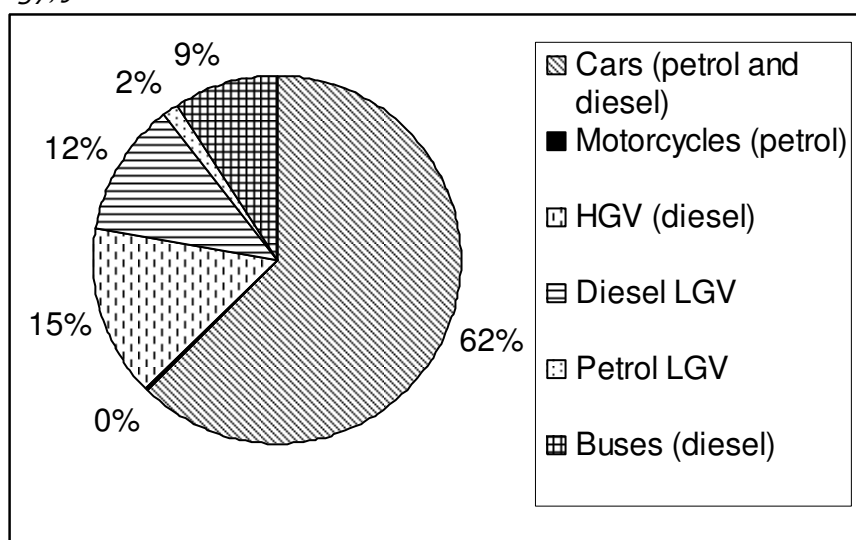
<sup>9</sup> BSP Draft Climate Change Strategy, June 2006.



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- Dedicated bus and cycle routes;
- Road pricing;
- Increased car parking fees;
- Green transport subsidies (e.g. free parking for 'green' cars); and
- Leadership and setting example with Council's own fleet.

Figure 2. Road transport consumption statistics 2003 for Birmingham. *Source: BSP Draft Climate Change Strategy, June 2006*



- 4.2.9 However, before any consideration can be given to options such as these it is fundamental that the Council and its transportation partners draw up a comprehensive and sophisticated integrated transport policy. This should involve complementary measures to support and promote public transport as well as congestion. An example of this can be seen in London, where Transport for London have successfully improved public transport networks and increased the number of people using public transport. But an integral part of London's approach has been to simultaneously tackling congestion through charging, which has proved controversial.
- 4.2.10 We feel that it is also essential that any measures are supported and underpinned by appropriate capital investment from central government. A contemporary example of this is the current situation with New Street Station, and we are pleased to see the Council and its partners both lobbying central government and engaging with the public on this issue.



## 4.3 Regeneration

- 4.3.1 The Council has a proud record of economic development and regeneration. However, we have heard that with hindsight, opportunities to incorporate sustainability have been missed – for example the development of the Bull Ring.
- 4.3.2 Eastside has the potential to be an exemplar project, but could equally prove to be a missed opportunity. Indeed, we have heard some concerns that the developments to date have not been sustainable, nor have had long-term vision. There are particular concerns in relation to the planning involved and the Council's influence on the sale of land.
- 4.3.3 The planning process goes hand in hand with regeneration, and during the course of evidence gathering we have heard many concerns that the planning process is a barrier to more sustainable regeneration. The development of Eastside is a good example. We are aware of concerns with regards to the strategic control over developments, concerns which have translated into a perception of a lack of progress. We are also aware that the Eastside project commissioned Draft Planning Guidance in order to tackle the issue of strategic control, yet we are concerned to learn that it has not been officially adopted by the City Council.
- 4.3.4 Perhaps more challenging however are the difficulties faced outside of the public sector – particularly with regards to commercial developers and the construction industry. Referring to Eastside again, we have learnt that:
- It has been more difficult to engage with developers on the sustainable development agenda;
  - It has been difficult to prove and convey the business case for sustainable design and construction - that sustainable design and construction, by future-proofing built developments, can result in better quality design and higher value buildings;
  - Life cycle analysis and long term revenue savings are still not factored into many development decisions by investors;
  - There is still a lack of awareness or addressing of climate change adaptation beyond actions required in the 2006 Building Regulations Part L; and
  - Land values in Birmingham City Centre and the lack of strong land disposal criteria which include sustainability as a key criterion, mean that there is an ongoing loss of opportunity to achieve the most sustainable high quality environment that could be achieved with current investment.
- 4.3.5 Across the city there are some examples of good and interesting practice. We have been told of residential developments planned to high eco-standards at Warstock and near City Park Gate, Quinton. Within the city centre, the development in New Street which comprises Tesco's with apartments above does not include any residential car parking spaces – this is a particularly facet of sustainable urban living.



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- 4.3.6 The planned development at Martineau Galleries, where the old city centre core adjoins Eastside, will be of mixed uses complete with an element of affordable housing, green roofs and a Combined Heat and Power scheme. Other examples include sustainable urban drainage, and the use of section 106 agreements to promote public transport access to new developments such as that at the University Hospital. We are interested in investigating how the Council can progress on this front; how such approaches can be moved from being examples and instead become the norm.
- 4.3.7 The consideration of proposed developments has to take place within the framework of existing planning policy. We were informed about the national, regional and local planning context, including:
- Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1);
  - The Regional Spatial Strategy; and
  - The Unitary Development Plan and the Local Development Framework (LDF) that replaces it.
- 4.3.8 We are interested in how planners within the City Council could use supplementary planning guidance to create tools to promote sustainability and tackle climate change. We have heard that as part of LDF, a policy document entitled '*Places for the Future*' will be drawn up, and this will be the vehicle for developing such policy guidance.
- 4.3.9 We believe that the City Council has an excellent opportunity to produce strong planning guidance and policy which requires compliance with sustainable development and sustainable construction standards. We do, however, understand that the ability of the Council to do this will be influenced by regional planning frameworks and national planning policy guidance. We further believe that City Council land disposal should be assessed with sustainable development standards in mind.

## 4.4 Housing

- 4.4.1 Housing is a basic human need - its quality, cost and availability are crucial to individuals' quality of life. The position of houses, the materials which they are made of, the uses their occupants make of such resources as energy and water, and the availability of public transport/alternative forms of transport all have major environmental implications.
- 4.4.2 With around 68,000 council homes already, and continued projected growth through building and stock transfer, the Council and our housing association partners have a major role to play in helping achieve a sustainable future. 70 of the 147 national sustainable development indicators, and many of the regional and local indicators, can be linked to housing and community issues.
- 4.4.3 Local authorities and housing providers play a vital role in achieving sustainable energy in domestic housing. For local authorities this includes responsibilities under the Home Energy



Conservation Act (HECA)<sup>10</sup> and setting a good example in using sustainable energy. Under the HECA, local authorities are required to report progress annually. The most recent published figures for Birmingham state overall improvements in domestic energy efficiency of 21.5% since 1996<sup>11</sup>. It is, however, unclear as to how this figure compares to other core cities, as the methods of calculating improvements vary between individual local authorities.

- 4.4.4 However, energy efficiency is not the only facet of the sustainability and climate change agenda that involves housing. Fuel poverty and affordable warmth are particular priorities for the Council. Meanwhile, sustainable design and construction of homes, climate 'proofing' homes and assessing the ecological footprint of homes are increasingly being recognised as important considerations.
- 4.4.5 Given the nature of legislative requirements, we were unsurprised to hear that the Council is involved in a lot of work to tackle domestic energy efficiency, fuel poverty and affordable warmth in homes across Birmingham. Furthermore, it is understandable that more success has been had in Council-owned homes than privately-owned homes across the City.
- 4.4.6 In 2000, in its Decent Homes initiative, the government made a commitment to bring all public sector homes up to a decent standard by 2010. This places a responsibility on local authorities to set a timetable for eliminating backlog repairs in their stock, carrying out ongoing maintenance and taking the necessary actions to ensure these targets are met. In relation to sustainability issues, the Decent Homes Standard requires a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.
- 4.4.7 There are also requirements for local authority-owned/housing association homes to meet an EcoHomes Standard. EcoHomes is an environmental assessment method for homes which considers the broad environmental concerns of climate change, resource use and impact on wildlife. It balances these against the need for a high quality, safe and healthy internal environment<sup>12</sup>. Whilst the EcoHomes Standard is not a statutory requirement, environmental standards in homes is something that is considered in the CPA<sup>13</sup>.
- 4.4.8 We are encouraged to hear that the Council has been working towards a housing sustainability agenda for longer than the Decent Homes Initiative. Furthermore, we are pleased to note that the Council recognises the limitations in the Decent Homes Standard and is working to the level of EcoHomes Standard in new build homes across the City.
- 4.4.9 We heard however, that it is not possible to ensure that all houses built in the city are compliant with the EcoHomes Standard:

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<sup>10</sup> The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 required every UK local authority with housing responsibilities - "energy conservation authorities" - to prepare, publish and submit to the Secretary of State an energy conservation report identifying practicable and cost-effective measures to significantly improve the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation in their area; and to report on progress made in implementing the measures.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/Environment/energy/heca95/>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.sustainablehomes.co.uk/pdf/Guide\\_to\\_EcoHomes.pdf](http://www.sustainablehomes.co.uk/pdf/Guide_to_EcoHomes.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Key Question 5.2 'Housing Market', levels 2 and 3.



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- We understand that new build housing stock is no longer built by the Council, but by housing association partners. Whilst new homes built by these partners are built to the eco-homes standards, it is important that we continue to ensure that this continues.
- The Council can only encourage the private sector to apply the standards.
- There is also a need to consider the retro-fitting of existing housing stock. We understand there are significant challenges here, although we acknowledge that work is ongoing to encourage Registered Social Landlords to comply with Secure by Design Standards.

4.4.10 Evidently planning plays a vital role in delivering sustainable homes, and it is also essential that design and construction processes fully consider both sustainability requirements as well as 'climate proofing'.

4.4.11 We would be interested in exploring the potential of using contractual requirements and planning processes to address these issues. Using local sustainable contractors for housing work may also stimulate the local sustainable business market – again, this is something we would be keen to hear more on.

## 4.5 Birmingham's Economy

4.5.1 A fundamental issue is the link between economic development and sustainable development. The Council has had many successes in economic development and regeneration, but now needs to question how it can drive economic and sustainable development hand in hand.

4.5.2 Birmingham and the wider region has a strong history in manufacturing, and we have heard strong arguments that it makes good economic and sustainable sense to use this to develop a market in environmental manufacturing. There are, perhaps, opportunities to divert the decline in the car manufacturing industry towards renewables manufacturing, as many of the technologies employed are the same.

4.5.3 One example is the promotion of supply and innovation to the wind energy industry, and this is being stimulated in other parts of the West Midlands Region. We are aware that there are markets for other renewable technologies such as wave and solar power, and we are keen to learn more with regards to its potential application to Birmingham's manufacturing economy. Indeed, it is our opinion that there is a particular opportunity for Birmingham to gain an economic advantage within new and emerging renewable technologies.

4.5.4 Furthermore, we should not forget that as Birmingham increases its recycling rate through the Council's kerbside and garden waste collections, there is the potential for the stimulation of local reprocessing markets.

4.5.5 There are other examples of West Midlands companies engaging in the overseas sustainable development economy, bringing revenue back into the region. One country in particular is China – dozens of West Midlands companies are working in China within the sustainable development



agenda and this is of immense value to the region. We feel this is could offer a good opportunity for the City, given the recent links made during the Council Leader's visit to China.

- 4.5.6 The environmental economy in the West Midlands is worth around £1.8billion alone, and Birmingham could be an exemplar of using sustainable development to drive its economy forward. There are huge opportunities for the city to have 'quick wins' through innovative showcase projects which could, in turn, influence the mainstream. It is essential to market this as pioneering – that Birmingham is a forerunner on the economic/sustainable development agenda.
- 4.5.7 Moreover, if the City can become a pioneer in the sustainability agenda it will attract 'sustainable' businesses, and companies with green credentials . As these businesses grow and flourish, this in turn will maximise Birmingham's benefits from sustainability.
- 4.5.8 it is essential that the focus is truly local. Any initiatives need to involve local people and businesses from start to finish. There are examples where local authorities have implemented 'local' initiatives, yet continued to source materials/services from overseas. We are keen to ensure that this does not happen.
- 4.5.9 The business community often struggles to have confidence in local authorities due to lengthy, bureaucratic processes. A key issue the Council needs to address is how it can provide leadership in sustainable development which is visible to the business community. This may manifest itself by doing things simply and quickly in order to demonstrate commitment to the sustainable development agenda.

## 4.6 Procurement

- 4.6.1 The public sector is a huge influence on the local and regional economy, quite simply due to the vast number of goods and services that it procures. For example, approximately 1.1 million invoices are paid each year through our Central Payments team. Evidently, the way in which the Council specifies its procurement needs and requirements will in turn shape and boost the local economy. This offers significant potential for the Council to shape a 'green economy' locally.
- 4.6.2 During evidence gathering, we heard from Corporate Procurement Services (CPS) – the Council's central resource, and centre of expertise for dealing with a range of procurement activities. It is charged with establishing, managing and monitoring all procurement activity in the Council. Two particular issues became apparent from the information we received from CPS: procurement activity across Council directorates/departments and the Council's Procurement Strategy.
- 4.6.3 Whilst CPS continues to ensure that all its corporate procurement contracts consider sustainability within their evaluation criteria (and include sustainability issues in contract specifications when appropriate), separate areas within the Council also administer large contracts and spending – for example, Urban Design, Housing, Social Care carry out construction related work – which CPS can not immediately influence.





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- 4.6.4 CPS undertook a green prohibitions survey during 2006, the aim of which was to compare procurement policies and actions across UK local authorities. The results of this survey (see Appendix 5 for full details) indicate that when compared to other local authorities, the City Council is lagging behind in a number of areas:
- Birmingham City Council does not have a Sustainable Procurement Strategy: 8 out of the 16 local authorities have one and 2 are developing one;
  - Birmingham City Council does not have an Ethical Purchasing or Corporate Social Responsibility Policy: 5 out of the 16 did;
  - Birmingham City Council is not EMAS, ISO14001 or BS8555 accredited: 5 out of the 16 were, 2 were undergoing accreditation; and
  - Many of the local authorities purchased recycled paper as standard and prohibited the procurement of timber unless it was from certified sustainable sources: Birmingham City Council does not specify these as standard.
- 4.6.5 Half of the local authorities also promoted Fair Trade products, with some registered Fair Trade Cities. Birmingham is a registered Fair Trade City and the Council does have a Fair Trade policy. However, we were disappointed to hear that this policy is optional rather than compulsory.
- 4.6.6 We consider that the procurement of Fair Trade products is good practice. However, we are also particularly keen that the Council should, wherever possible, consider the procurement of local goods. This is not only essential for the promotion of sustainable communities, but also addresses the issue of 'food miles'<sup>14</sup>. We felt one way in which this could be addressed is through the specification of certain conditions in our tenders and contracts.
- 4.6.7 The Council's Procurement Strategy 2004-06 is due to expire at the end of the financial year, and work has begun on revising the documents and its objectives. We want to see a much stronger procurement policy around sustainability, and this is an issue which has already been taken up by the Co-ordinating O&S procurement review. However, we feel it is important to note that we view the current approach of corporate procurement to currently be particularly cautious and self censored, with imagined legal barriers. We would like to see bold decision-making in the future.
- 4.6.8 However, we also understand that having a corporate policy for sustainable procurement is one thing, but what we need is for Council directorates to procure sustainably. We were told that the Council's recently expired Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan had a particular target for green and ethical purchasing, to be achieved through:
- The appointment of a member of each Department's Management Team to be its Sustainability Purchasing Officer; and
  - Departmental audits and increases in percentage of green items procured.

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<sup>14</sup> Food miles: the distance food travels from where it is grown to where it is ultimately purchased by consumers.





Because of the afore mentioned lack of a monitoring and review process, we are unaware if this target was achieved council-wide. However, we strongly suspect that it wasn't.

- 4.6.9 One of the arguments against the purchase of green products is that they are more expensive. There is no doubt that in some cases this is true. However, whole-life costing can demonstrate that a product which is initially more expensive to purchase can be cheaper over its lifespan when, for example, energy use and efficiency are taken into account. We strongly urge all Council departments to make this a consideration in all procurement decisions.

## 4.7 Strategic and Constitutional Approach

- 4.7.1 We recognise the need to embed sustainability and climate change actions within Council processes. What would be the impact upon the Council if the CPA had climate change and sustainability explicitly built into it? We feel that it is necessary to incorporate sustainability and climate change into the Council's values and procedures and to embed the ideologies into our management and auditing systems. If this is done, strategies such as the BSP's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan could prove important tools.
- 4.7.2 However, we are concerned that such strategies may prove to be token gestures if they are not fully incorporated across the Council and embedded into its processes. For example, Birmingham was awarded Fair Trade City status in 2005, which was strongly promoted by the Council at the time. However, we have heard that the Council does not use Fair Trade goods as a standard for all its functions, nor does it promote the procurement of Fair Trade goods for council business – product use is optional rather than compulsory.
- 4.7.3 The strategy and structure in place is important, yet to date this hasn't necessarily been recognised. The Council's Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan expired in 2005 and has not yet been replaced. Furthermore, it has not been subject to any form of review and monitoring process – this has meant that measuring progress has been difficult. There is currently no forum for officers with an interest in sustainability to exchange views and information, and no corporate training on sustainability. We are keen to see these issues addressed as a matter of urgency.
- 4.7.4 A new Sustainability Action Plan is expected to be developed in 2007 to support the recent Cabinet Statement on Sustainability. However, we strongly urge that for it to be effective, it must resolve the issue of monitoring and review, and in due course this should be a mandatory measure.
- 4.7.5 During our evidence gathering, we heard some suggestions that changes in the constitutional arrangements could also prove effective. The possibility of the Council having a Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Climate Change, held to account by a dedicated scrutiny committee, was one idea discussed. However, there is some suggestion that this could be more effectively combined or aligned with other Cabinet posts, and we recognise that strategic gains could be made through aligning sustainability and climate change with planning, regeneration and economic development.



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4.7.6 Indeed, it is important that we recognise the fundamental link between economic and sustainable development. We are aware that other local authorities have tackled this strategically, for example by linking the role of Director of Economic Development with Sustainable Development.

4.7.7 However, before the Council can start to make considerations on constitutional and strategic arrangements, we feel that it is of utmost importance that resource issues are addressed as a matter of priority. As one member of the Sustainability Forum commented when identifying barriers to a sustainable Birmingham:

“The low priority of staffing for the Sustainability Team. Virtually one staff member for a city of a million people”

4.7.8 By comparison, we have heard that Leeds City Council has a dedicated Sustainable Development Unit comprising of 6 teams and 38 members of staff. Similarly, Bristol City Council have a Environmental Quality and Sustainable City Policy and Projects Team, which delivers two main functions (mainstreaming sustainable development and environmental protection) through 5 teams, supported by 30 staff. It is, however, important to put this in the context of the type of services delivered by such teams – for example, the 30 staff at Bristol City Council work to a wide remit which, although underpinning sustainability, addresses the environmental performance of the Council (see Appendix 5).

4.7.9 Resources issues are not limited to this particular team either. For example, Urban Design has a team of 10 whereas the rule of thumb is usually one member of staff per £1million energy spend on a pro-rate basis: the Council’s energy spend is c.£32million.

4.7.10 Another facet to the resources issue is that of funding. Urban Design gave an example of an occasion where government funding of £120,000 had been secured but had to be returned as it proved impossible to secure £80,000 match funding from the Council. The inability to match fund is a serious problem.

## 4.8 Publicising and Branding

4.8.1 Many good initiatives have come to light during the course of our evidence gathering. What has been immediately apparent is the fact that there is very little awareness of the work that is already underway, both within the Council and externally.

4.8.2 A number of Council-organised events have occurred recently, which have aimed to raise awareness of sustainability and climate change. For example June’s Environment Week and October’s Energy Awareness Day. However, whilst raising public awareness is vital, this doesn’t necessarily promote the work that is actually being undertaken.

4.8.3 Thought also needs to be given to the Birmingham ‘brand’. It currently successfully focuses on shopping and culture and, to a decreasing extent on the car industry. Much more should be done



to promote the City's image for sustainable development. Perhaps it would not be so difficult to adapt the current Birmingham branding to reflect the City as a centre of sustainable culture?

- 4.8.4 Branding and marketing Birmingham as a sustainable City can only prove to be beneficial, and could attract inward investment and expertise as a direct result. By promoting the City as being sustainable, we can also support sustainability and climate change initiatives in other areas – for example this could actively support the stimulation of an environmental economy. It could also get the message across to businesses and members of public that the Council is taking these issues seriously – again supporting many other initiatives, such as planning requirements for commercial developers, or increasing the uptake in recycling.
- 4.8.5 However, some thought needs to be given to mixed messages. For example, June 2006 saw hydrogen-fuelled cars parked in Victoria Square as part of Environment Week, yet in October the Council was seen to be promoting 'gas-guzzling' 4x4 vehicles at the same venue. We feel that it is important to ensure that every function within the Council is sending out the same message.

## 4.9 Co-ordination

- 4.9.1 There is a lot of good work going on within Birmingham, which as previously mentioned has not been rigorously self-promoted. This in part may be due to the *ad hoc* nature of the range of initiatives – various different things going on within different agencies and delivered by a range of not necessarily connected partners.
- 4.9.2 There is, perhaps, a strong need for some level of co-ordination. How this would be delivered however would need some thought – the Council is only a partner in the delivery of many of the initiatives. We have heard suggestions of a Birmingham Climate Change Agency and/or a Sustainability Commission, and would be keen to hear more as our work continues.
- 4.9.3 This issue is also a priority at the smaller, Council scale. We have heard that there are several teams across the Council working on aspects of sustainability, but there is a lack of a sense of joined-up corporate commitment to sustainability as an overarching agenda, and a significant lack of communication and coordination between those teams who do have a remit. In addition to an obvious need for an overarching/co-ordination role, there is also a necessity to address the imbalance within departments and directorates.
- 4.9.4 We have heard from some Council Officers that whilst they feel they are successfully addressing sustainability and climate change issues in their own departments, they do not feel part of a Council-wide, co-ordinated effort. For a cross-cutting subject such as sustainability and climate change, this means that the difference aspects of the subjects remain unconnected across the Council, and trapped by the agendas of their particular departments. One particular risk here is that work may be duplicated across the Council.
- 4.9.5 The lack of coordination and management over the last few years has also seen the internal promotion of sustainability suffer. This is compounded by the growing focus upon efficiency



savings, which are likely to have made it more difficult to explore sustainable objectives. This may be due to a perception that sustainable options are more costly, and therefore less efficient, or simply that importance has not been placed on being sustainable. Either way, this is an issue which needs to be addressed, not least because efficiency savings should be viewed as synonymous with sustainability in the same way in which being sustainable is simply good management practice.

- 4.9.6 We have heard that it is difficult to ensure adequate information transfer about all the activities of the City Council, due to the size of the authority and the range of neighbourhoods it covers. This may be limiting both the ability to learn from good/best practice already going on in the City and to influence the work of others through partnership approaches to adding value to all activity.

## 4.10 Leadership

**“We must become the change we want to see”**

**Mahatma Gandhi**

- 4.10.1 Leadership, in the context of our work, is the influence of key individuals throughout the organisation on others to achieve a common goal. It is also where stakeholders desire to achieve particular goals rather than simply being forced to do so – an issue which is particularly important when promoting a more environmentally aware and responsible society. It is about embedding beliefs and values within organisational culture.
- 4.10.2 Leadership is a process which involves:
- Developing a sense of responsibility;
  - Setting an example;
  - Following through on commitments;
  - Effective communication;
  - Making sound and timely decisions; and
  - Embedding beliefs and values.
- 4.10.3 Leadership has been a prevalent theme during the course of our evidence gathering. The Sustainability Forum placed leadership, at 49%, as the biggest barrier to a sustainable Birmingham.
- 4.10.4 Digging a bit deeper into the comments received at the Forum, it is evident that the issue of leadership is viewed as a concern on a number of different levels, not just with the City’s politicians:



“No practical incentives, only rhetoric from Government”

“No cohesive approach to Sustainable Development within the Council”

“Lack of will amongst Politicians, Officers and Business People”

- 4.10.5 Leadership, through vision and actions, can drive forward the sustainability and climate change agenda. It can also promote and encourage everyone to take ownership and responsibility for their actions, both individually and corporately.
- 4.10.6 People are looking for stronger leadership from Birmingham City Council, both corporately and politically. We are aware of best practice in other local authorities, where the key issue for success has been strong leadership through political will and senior-level champions.
- 4.10.7 Sustainability West Midlands and the Environment Agency have identified Birmingham as a leader in sustainability at the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) level. Indeed, the BSP was the first to employ a dedicated sustainability champion - recognized by Government as a best practice case study<sup>15</sup> - although this role is only funded on a one-year basis. It was also the first LSP in the region to appraise its Community Strategy against the regional sustainability framework. Moreover, Birmingham is the first core city to develop a climate change strategy that incorporates all partners, rather than just being a council strategy.
- 4.10.8 The BSP has established a champion's programme at a Constituency level, with a direct link to Constituency Strategic Partnerships and Constituency Directors. However, there appears to be some dislocation between the strategic drive of the BSP and the actions of the City Council, in terms of the importance placed upon sustainability and climate change. The good work being done by the BSP needs to be reflected and built upon at the City Council level.
- 4.10.9 We accept that in the context of sustainability and climate change, leadership issues are not specific to Birmingham; indeed, the public are dissatisfied with political leadership at all levels of government. We feel however, that this should be viewed as an opportunity for the Council to rise to the challenge so that it is indeed recognised as a sustainable city of excellence – it is an opportunity for Birmingham to lead the way and put itself in the national spotlight.

## 4.11 Other Issues

- 4.11.1 We recognise that there are other important issues for Birmingham, and have heard evidence covering two further areas in particular: education and waste/recycling.

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<sup>15</sup> In "Sustainable Communities, a shared agenda, a share of the action. A guide for local authorities" (DEFRA, LGA, Sustainable Development Commission 2006).



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## Education

4.11.2 17% of responses from the Sustainability Forum highlighted education as a key priority for the City in terms of sustainability and climate change. During our evidence gathering, we learned that there are two particular facets to sustainability and education: curriculum and campus.

4.11.3 With respect to the curriculum, we note that although there isn't a national curriculum for sustainability, sustainable development is a theme which is addressed across a number of subjects, and noted by Ofsted. Through discussions with Tide~<sup>16</sup>, we were encouraged to hear about a wide range of initiatives which aim to get sustainability and climate change issues on the curriculum in Birmingham schools. These include:

- A Sustainable Development Framework that has led to a range of sustainable development teaching resources (produced by teachers in the West Midlands) which support children's engagement in sustainable development issues;
- A range of educational projects, one example of which being the Soho and Handsworth project. This was pilot work on sustainable development within a Birmingham community and involved joint-working between five schools; and
- Tide's newest project, which stems from Defra's Climate Challenge Fund. Over the next two years, the "Lets Talk" Climate Change Project aims to engage Sixth Form teachers and students in Birmingham, primarily through workshops, in order to encourage attitudinal change and confidence in seeking appropriate actions.

4.11.4 With regards to the latter, we hope to engage further with the young people involved in the 'Lets Talk' project within the coming months of our work.

4.11.5 We recognise that sustainability and climate issues in education extend further than simply placing it on the curriculum. As stated by the Prime Minister:

"Sustainable development will not just be a subject in the classroom: it will be in the bricks and mortar and the way the school uses and even generates its own power"

**Tony Blair, Prime Minister, 2004**

4.11.6 Britain's 40,000 school buildings are responsible for a quarter of the public sector's energy costs and 15% of all public sector carbon emissions<sup>17</sup>. Here in Birmingham, this is being tackled through the Birmingham Action 21 Schools Involvement Certificate (Basic21), which requires schools to

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<sup>16</sup> Based at Millennium Point, Tide~ (Teachers in Development Education) is a teachers' network. This partnership supports creative work to meet young people's educational entitlement to understand the global dimensions, development perspectives and human rights principles which will shape their lives. It provides new opportunities, projects and publications.

<sup>17</sup> <http://environment.guardian.co.uk/energy/story/0,,1940832,00.html>



take action on five or more sustainability themes. This builds upon existing initiatives such as School Travel Plans, the national Eco-Schools Award and the Litter Charter.

- 4.11.7 Basic21 has only recently been launched, and we will be particularly keen to monitor its success over the coming year. However, we also recognise that school buildings are part of the Council's estate and therefore the Council has a responsibility to demonstrate leadership and facilitate initiatives to its schools. We are mindful of the significant programme of capital investment into school estates, and have a view that any contracts let with the private sector should reflect an ambition for sustainable development.

## **Waste and Recycling**

- 4.11.8 Waste, and recycling in particular, is also a key issue in the sustainability agenda: 29% of responses from the Sustainability Forum highlighted waste and recycling as a key priority for the City. This is an issue which has received a lot of public attention and has previously undergone a fair amount of Scrutinising. The most recent Scrutiny review of recycling is currently being tracked by the Transportation and Street Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 4.11.9 Over recent years, the Council has made significant investment and advances in the provision of recycling facilities to residents; the results of which can be seen in the Council's year-on-year increase in recycling rates:

- 2003/04            13% (target 10%)
- 2004/05            15.1% (target 16%)
- 2005/06            16.99% (target 19%)

The current Council Plan indicates a target recycling rate for 2006/07 as 20%; preliminary information indicates a provisional rate of around 22% in the first half of 2006/07.

- 4.11.10 Over the past year, the fortnightly multi-material kerbside collection and garden waste collection scheme has started to be rolled out across Birmingham. This is in addition to existing paper recycling collections.

- 4.11.11 Currently, the kerbside multi-materials collection covers 100,000 households and is expected to generate around 2,000 tonnes of recyclable materials. Meanwhile, the green garden waste collection covers 240,000 households and is expected to generate around 20,000 tonnes of waste for composting. These collections are intended to be available to most households in Birmingham within 3 years. There are, however, some issues and concerns as to how such a service will be made available to residents in flats and apartments.

- 4.11.12 The Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2006-26 replaces the City Council's 2000 Waste Management Strategy. Its aims are broadly:





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- To provide a strategic vision for managing municipal<sup>18</sup> wastes over the whole of the Birmingham City Council area;
- To address waste growth and improve the recovery of waste as a resource which may be utilised for materials or energy content;
- To make Birmingham an international leader in recycling and composting activity for a city of its size and type.

4.11.13 The Strategy is supported by an Action Plan which is intended to evolve over time in order to reflect changes in legislation, policy direction and advances in technology.

4.11.14 A number of specific recycling targets are set within the Strategy, including:

- To double the recycling and composting performance (from 2005/06 levels) within 5 years;
- To reach a 40% recycling and composting rate by the end of the strategy period (2026).

4.11.15 We are encouraged to see significant emphasis being placed upon the need for recycling, and we recognise that there has undeniably been considerable progress in recent years. However, we do feel the strategy does not have sufficient ambition, and we are concerned that its targets do not clearly support its vision.

4.11.16 We note that the strategy's long-term vision is for Birmingham to become an international leader in recycling activity. We have also heard of ideal comparisons with cities such as Vienna, Berlin and Geneva. However, we feel that a 40% recycling rate target within 20 years does not reflect the Strategy's vision for the City. Indeed, cities such as Vienna, Berlin and Geneva already have recycling rates of 30-36%; in 20 years time, these will be in excess of 75% - something which Birmingham should be aspiring to.

4.11.17 These are issues which we hope the Council will take into consideration during the implementation of the Strategy and the evolution of the Action Plan over time. We are particularly keen that Scrutiny is involved in this process wherever possible.

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<sup>18</sup> Municipal waste refers to all waste under control of the local authority. This mainly refers to waste arising from households and municipal services, although some waste from commercial and industrial sources are managed by the Council.





## 5 The Way Forward

### 5.1 Our Vision

- 5.1.1 We embarked on our work with a clear idea of what we hope to achieve. We wish to create a vision of where the City, and the Council, will be in 20 years time in the context of sustainability and climate change. In essence, we wish to see Birmingham as a national, even international, leader on the sustainability and climate change agenda. We hope that over the remainder of our work, we can highlight how we are going to get there.
- 5.1.2 However, we recognise that there is a need to strike a balance between a long-term vision and the immediate actions that the Council and its partners can take now. We feel that there are already 'quick-wins' to be made which can be part of a longer-term framework.
- 5.1.3 We also recognise that we are scrutinising what is essentially a 'moving target'. The policy developments surrounding sustainability and climate change are moving rapidly within all levels of government. Here in Birmingham, two important strategies – the BSP Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, and the Council's Sustainability Action Plan – are currently under development.
- 5.1.4 It is our wish that the work we do does not duplicate the work supporting these strategies, rather that we complement it. However, we are keen to play an active role within the ongoing developments. To this end, we intend to discuss the BSP's Draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan at our Committee meeting in December. However, we are concerned that the draft strategy, despite being agreed in June this year, has been delayed and cannot yet be formally signed off for public consultation.
- 5.1.5 Given the rapid developments in sustainability and climate change policy, we believe that the Scrutiny process as a whole can add value to the work of this Task and Finish Committee. It is conceivable that each Overview & Scrutiny Committee can monitor its work programme to identify current actions within the Council which could be more sustainable. Actions like this exemplify our vision for 'quick-wins'.

### 5.2 Future Work Programme

- 5.2.1 Considering the timeframe we are expected to work to, and conceding that we cannot incorporate every facet of the sustainability and climate change agenda, we therefore outline the areas of work that we wish to investigate further and areas of work that we will not pursue.
- 5.2.2 We propose that our immediate work programme addresses the following priorities:
- The Council's estate and practices;
  - Leadership; and



- Sustainable development.

## The Council's estate and practices

- 5.2.3 We feel that the Council needs to review the sustainability and climate change actions within its own estates and practices as a matter of urgency. Simply put, we need to get our own house in order before we can expect others to do the same. The Council thus needs to address its behaviour as a corporate entity and demonstrate the ability to embed sustainability and climate change policy within everything that it does.
- 5.2.4 We wish to pursue this issue with emphasis upon 3 key areas:
- Procurement of goods and services;
  - Property management; and
  - Our people.
- 5.2.5 We hope to place emphasis upon how the Council manages its resources more sustainably, in particular:
- encouraging staff to act more sustainably;
  - to improve management of its property and to reduce energy consumption; and
  - to use its £900M annual purchasing power to buy more sustainable goods and services.
- 5.2.6 We are also particularly keen to learn more about the Council's plans for future energy generation in Birmingham. We have heard that energy generation will play a key part in delivering Birmingham's CO<sub>2</sub> targets over the next 20 years, and that housing, communities, economy and business will all benefit from a joined up approach. This is an issue that our evidence gathering to date has only touched upon briefly. However, we are aware of the development of two CHP<sup>19</sup> district heating schemes planned for Broad Street and Eastside in which the Council is investing in.

## Leadership

- 5.2.7 We believe that leadership is fundamental to our vision of a sustainable Birmingham, and is something that needs to be addressed not only politically, but corporately too.
- 5.2.8 In particular, we wish to investigate:
- What leadership means for the Council and the City; and
  - How we achieve effective leadership.

## Sustainable Development

- 5.2.9 We believe that Birmingham should be pursuing a culture of sustainable development rather than simply one of economic development. Embedding sustainability within the development and

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<sup>19</sup> CHP – Combined Heat and Power



regeneration culture will likely be a challenge. However, this is not a reason for the Council not to do so. Indeed, with the forthcoming work on the '*Place for the Future*' planning policy document, addressing this issue would be timely.

5.2.10 We wish to investigate further the Council's role in development including

- Attracting development;
- The Council's planning policies and practices;
- The Council's role in using its land holdings to enable development.

5.2.11 The planning regime in particular is a particular concern, and one which we are keen to address. There are problems with the interpretation of planning guidance at all levels of government, and this hampers innovation and good design practice. Moreover, the implications of the planning regime are far reaching, impacting upon:

- The learning curve for planners in 'climate proofing' the City for the next 20 years;
- Sustainable housing standards and targets, both council stock and privately owned;
- Commercial and industrial developments;
- Business operations; and
- The vision for a sustainable city, its future regeneration and economic development.

## Areas to defer

5.2.12 We recognise that there are key issues and challenges surrounding:

- Transportation;
- Waste and recycling;
- The green economy;
- Housing; and
- Education.

5.2.13 However, on the basis of the evidence we have heard so far, we also recognise that some work is already underway to tackle sustainability and climate change within these areas. Furthermore, in particular cases such as transportation and the green economy, the City Council does not have a core responsibility for them – rather, it has a shared responsibility with a wide range of partners. Whilst we recognise the importance of Council's responsibilities as one of these partners, we are also aware that other work is being carried out in these areas and we do not wish to duplicate it.

5.2.14 As indicated in 5.2.2 – 5.2.11, our priority therefore is to focus our work upon areas which the Council is directly responsible for. This is a basis upon which future work – by Scrutiny or the Executive - can then build to address the issues which we have had to defer. However, we do not wish to entirely disconnect our work from other areas, as we understand that they will have



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linkages with other priorities. We will continue to have an active interest in ongoing work and will be maintaining our links into transportation, waste and recycling, and education in particular.

## 5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Although the intention of this report is to outline our priorities for future work, we feel that given the evidence we have heard so far, and in the knowledge that there are likely to be changes to strategic arrangements in the near future, there are a number of recommendations that we feel we should be making now.

### Resources

5.3.2 We feel that it is timely to recommend a thorough review of the Council's staff resources which are dedicated to sustainability. We believe that in order for the Council to coherently tackle sustainability and climate change within its internal process, service delivery and partnership working, it must have adequate resources to do so. Furthermore, these resources need to be in place to support the development of the Council's Sustainability Action Plan.

5.3.3 We therefore recommend that:

	Recommendation
R1	The Deputy Leader conducts a review of the Council's resource needs in terms of sustainability and climate change.
R2	That elected Members consider the allocation of adequate resources to support sustainability and climate change when formalising the 2007/08 budget at February's Council meeting, and that the Leader of the Council ensures that this case is put forward during early budget negotiations.

### Governance

5.3.4 We are aware that the City Council's governance arrangements are likely to undergo some change over the next six months. The make-up of Cabinet portfolios is being reviewed to ensure that they provide the most effective focus on the Council's priorities, and concomitant changes to Overview & Scrutiny remits are under discussion. Given the evidence we have heard concerning constitutional and strategic arrangements, and the issues concerning leadership, we feel that this is an opportunity to sharpen the City Council's focus on, and leadership of, sustainability issues.

5.3.5 Such changes are neither simple nor straightforward. The law places a limit of 10 on the number of seats in the City Council's Cabinet, so the introduction of an extra Cabinet Member to lead this area is not possible at the moment; it may well not be possible to devise a set of Cabinet remits whereby one Cabinet Member has sustainability and climate change as their only responsibility. What we are looking for is an improvement on the current situation whereby the Deputy Leader's



portfolio (and we repeat that this is not a reflection on the performance of the individuals who have held this post), in addition to sustainability, contains other high corporate priorities such as performance, information technology, procurement and trading operations.

5.3.6 We therefore recommend that:

	Recommendation
<b>R3</b>	The Leader of the Council considers either the creation of a Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Climate Change or re-allocates duties between Cabinet Members so that the responsible Cabinet Member can place a much higher, and more appropriate, priority on leading Birmingham's response to these issues.
<b>R4</b>	The Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider whether to propose to the Council Business Management Committee the creation of a standing Overview and Scrutiny Committee for sustainability and climate change.
<b>R5</b>	The Deputy Leader considers the place of sustainability and climate change within corporate management arrangements, such as officer structures and responsibilities, and performance management arrangements.

## Policy Developments

5.3.7 As part of our work, we have expressed a keen interest in taking an active role in ongoing policy developments which have sustainability and climate change concerns. We feel that the Scrutiny process, through its role as a 'critical friend', can only add value to these developments. We wish to ensure that we continue to be actively involved in ongoing work and that we are properly consulted during policy development.

5.3.8 We will therefore be requesting that:

- The Cabinet Member for Transportation and Street Services keeps the Task and Finish Committee regularly informed on the progress of the Municipal Waste Strategy and its Action Plan.
- The Deputy Leader keeps us informed of, and where possible involves the Task and Finish Committee in, the developments of the BSP Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.
- The Deputy Leader keeps us informed of, and where possible involves the Task and Finish Committee in, the development of the City Council's Sustainability Action Plan.



## Our Work Programme

5.3.9 Our proposed priority areas for the next stage of our work are thus set out in paragraphs 5.2.5 – 5.2.12 above.

5.3.10 It is clear that there is much more work to be done than can be achieved within the Committee's agreed timeframe. The limited scope of our proposals has been driven by the need to complete the Task and Finish by the end of the municipal year, which we accept. However, there is an evident need for the continued scrutiny of sustainability and climate change issues in some form.

5.3.11 We therefore recommend that:

- The Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee approve the continuation of this Task & Finish Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, to investigate the three areas of -
  - Council property and people;
  - Leadership; and
  - Sustainable development.

with a view to presenting a report to City Council in June 2007.



# Appendices