

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

21 JUNE 2012

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| SUBJECT: | CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY |
| WARD/S AFFECTED: | ALL |
| REPORT OF: | DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT |
| RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER: | <i>(RELEVANT CABINET MEMBER)</i> |
| KEY DECISION? | NO |

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the revision of the existing Corporate Environmental Policy which was adopted in January 2002.
- 1.2 The Environmental Policy is a statement of the Council's environmental commitment and a key document within the Environmental Management System (EMS). Two separate systems within the Council are currently being integrated into one corporate system. The scope will then be increased to include further service areas and operations throughout the Council that have a significant potential environmental impact.
- 1.3 The EMS helps towards achieving our Corporate Objective 'to create a clean, pleasant, safe and sustainable environment' and assists in driving the Corporate Priority to reduce the Council's carbon footprint. It also supports the Council's Carbon Budget process through the identification, monitoring and management of the environmental impacts of operations and service delivery.
- 1.4 Risks of non-compliance with environmental legislation and possible financial penalties will be reduced by an effective, ISO 14001 compliant EMS.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 A decision to implement an ISO 14001 compliant Environmental Management System (EMS) for the authority was taken at the Environment and Planning Committee on 13th June 2001 and ratified at Cabinet on 12th July 2001 (minute 115 refers). The adoption of the Corporate Environmental Policy was agreed at Cabinet on 31st January 2002. Following the restructure of Wirral Council's Departments in 2004, it was recognised that the Technical Services Department provided services that had the greatest likelihood of impacting on the environment and a decision was taken to implement an EMS in this Department first. This was successfully certified to ISO 14001 in January 2006. The Finance Department then implemented an EMS, which was certified in January 2007. Both of these systems currently have their own Departmental Environmental Policies which will be replaced by the proposed new Corporate Environmental Policy. Further plans for rolling the EMS out to other areas were then put on hold due to structural and operational reasons.

- 2.2 During a recent annual system audit, carried out by our external assessors BM Trada, a major non-conformance was raised against the Technical Services EMS. This was as a result of Departmental restructuring and personnel changes. Due to this non-conformance a decision was taken by Executive Management Team to integrate the two currently separate systems into one corporate system. The scope of this newly integrated system can then be increased to include further service areas and operations throughout the Council that have a significant potential environmental impact. This will achieve the Council's original goal of an EMS for the entire authority.
- 2.3 A key requirement of an ISO 14001 compliant EMS is that it is underpinned by an Environmental Policy. The Council's current corporate policy has not been updated since 2002 and is based on the old version of the ISO 14001 standard, which was revised in 2004. As a result of these changes and the need to update the old policy for the purposes of the EMS, some revisions to the current policy are now proposed. A copy of the 2002 policy and the proposed, revised policy, which is ISO 14001 compliant, are attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.4 The proposed revisions to the original policy are minor and reflect the wider changes that have occurred in national environmental policy and guidance and the revisions made to the ISO 14001 standard.
- 2.5 The revised policy will be made available and communicated to both the public and employees using the Council's internet and intranet and the established EMS.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 3.1 Failure to demonstrate to the external auditor that the Council has addressed the findings of their recent audit report and moved forward would mean that there is a risk of losing ISO 14001 certification.
- 3.2 There is a risk associated with the potential damage or loss to the Council's reputation for good environmental management should the original goal for a corporate Environmental Management System not be attained.
- 3.3 The effective operation of a robust corporate EMS will reduce the risk of environmental incidents occurring and of possible prosecution and financial costs.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The adoption of an ISO 14001 compliant Corporate Environmental Policy was agreed at Cabinet on 31st January 2002. The only other option is to do nothing which will lead to revocation of the current ISO 14001 certification.

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with officers across the Council departments affected by the content of this report and to the relevant Departments where there are implications arising from this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 6.1 None.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 7.1 There are no resource implications in changing the policy. The cost of maintaining the EMS is included in current budgets.
- 7.2 There are potential financial benefits from reduced energy usage, reduced waste disposal costs and more efficient resource consumption due to the implementation of the systems and procedures of the EMS.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There is a likelihood of increased risk for environmental incidents to occur leading to possible prosecution and financial costs if the systems and procedures required by an EMS are not in place.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?
- (b) No because there is no relevance to equality.

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Environmental Policy and Environmental Management System will assist the Council in meeting its corporate goal to reduce its carbon footprint and will also support the carbon budgeting process.

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 None.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 12.1 Cabinet agrees the proposed revisions to the Council's Environmental Policy and reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of an ISO14001 certified Environmental Management System across the authority.

13.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 13.1 The proposed revised Policy will underpin the Corporate Environmental Management System and allow for the continuing certification to ISO 14001.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – 2002 Environmental Policy and proposed Environmental Policy

REFERENCE MATERIAL

European Standard ISO 14001 and BM Trada audit report of Technical Services' EMS dated 17/01/2012.

Background papers and information used in the preparation of this report are held by the Sustainability Unit within the Department of Law, HR and Asset Management.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|-----------------|------|
| None | |

Appendix 1

2002 Policy

Environmental Management Policy

The Metropolitan Borough of Wirral in partnership with all sectors of the community will seek to improve the quality of life of residents and visitors in keeping with the principles of Local Agenda 21 and the Corporate Best Value Performance Plan. The Authority recognises the need to deliver services in an environmentally sustainable way and to include concern for the environment in all its activities.

The Metropolitan Borough of Wirral is committed to:

- minimising its negative impact on the environment through improvements in the management of waste, through energy and water conservation and in making more effective use of resources;
- preventing pollution in all activities over which it has control;
- setting and reviewing of objectives and targets with a view to continual improvement in environmental performance;
- establishing management programmes with designated responsibilities for achieving targets;
- meeting or surpassing statutory legal requirements and other relevant codes to which the Authority subscribes;
- ensuring that responsibility for environmental management is a prime function of all the Authority's managers;
- ensuring all employees are given adequate training so that they are aware of their own environmental impacts and responsibilities;
- ensuring that environmental issues are an integral part of the service planning process and form a central element in everyday service delivery;
- working towards the implementation and maintenance of an effective corporate Environmental Management System which is regularly audited and reviewed.
- This policy has been communicated to all employees and has been made available to the public. Copies of this policy and corporate environmental management objectives are available to interested parties on request.

Signatories

..... **Leader of the Council** **Chief Executive**



Environmental Policy

Wirral Council provides essential services to more than 312,000 residents across a number of key areas and recognises that its activities and services have both beneficial and adverse impacts on the environment. Wirral Council is committed to managing and where possible reducing any negative impacts.

In working towards a more sustainable future we will:

- Maintain an Environmental Management System which satisfies the requirements of the international standard ISO 14001.
- Comply with all applicable legal requirements and with any other requirements which relate to the Council's environmental aspects.
- Continually seek to minimise negative environmental impacts, prevent pollution and reduce waste during delivery of our services.
- Reduce carbon emissions arising from public sector buildings, operations and service delivery, and encourage others to do so.
- Increase the proportion of socially responsible goods and services that we procure.
- Increase the amount of waste reused and recycled and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.
- Undertake actions to improve our resilience to current and future climate change.
- Improve the quality and sustainability of the built and natural environment.
- Consider environmental costs, risks and impacts when making planning, contracting, purchasing and operating decisions.
- Regularly monitor and review our environmental performance.
- Ensure that all employees are aware of their environmental responsibilities through communication, training and support.
- Communicate this policy to employees, partners and the public.

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE
WIRRAL COUNCIL**

Date