



BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Approval to carry out energy conservation projects
Date:	24 th September 2010
Reporting Officer:	George Wright, Head of Facilities Management (ext 5206/6232)
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Relevant background information

At its meeting on 22nd January 2010, the SP&R Committee accepted a recommendation from the Chief Officers' Management Team to approve an overall budget of £78k for a range of projects under the strategic theme of Better Care for Belfast's Environment. At that time, it was agreed that officers would seek approval for each specific project from the relevant Committee prior to commencement.

Energy usage in council premises cost **£2,849,144** in 2009/10, with over 60% of this being used within the Parks and Leisure Department. It should be noted that, from 1st April 2011, the council is statutorily required to participate in the government's Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme (CRC EES), which is intended to deliver greater energy efficiency and to cut emissions of greenhouse gases.

Under this scheme, the Council is required to purchase an allowance or 'credit' for every tonne of carbon dioxide (CO₂) that it emits. In the longer term – once a baseline position for emissions has been established – the intention is that these credits will be traded on a quasi-commercial basis, under a 'cap and trade' type scheme. It is anticipated that the annual cost to the council of participating in this scheme will be in the region of **£211,000** on present emissions trends.

However, this cost can potentially be reduced by improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions in our premises now, and this report seeks to suggest some ways in which this could be achieved. The proposals set out below have been discussed with the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDSG) and are endorsed by that group.

Key Issues

Within the overall thematic budget of £78k for 'Better Care of Belfast's Environment' three projects have been identified which have the potential to bring about savings in energy use. These are; (a) improvements to the control of energy use in leisure centres by installing enhanced control systems, (b) staff training on energy conservation and (c) a study into the use of waste woodchip as a fuel for heating.

A sum of **£14,000** is required to make alterations to existing energy controls at 7 leisure centre buildings, which has the potential to provide energy savings as well as providing management with a daily indication of energy usage.

A sum of **£10,000** is required to investigate the feasibility of using existing waste woodchip from Council parks and street trees as an alternative heating fuel in some of our premises. The Carbon Trust has already funded a study into several of our buildings including Botanic Gardens, and the Ozone Tennis Centre, and both of these premises could be suitable for switching from oil/ gas to a woodchip fuel.

Woodchip fuel is regarded as carbon neutral and therefore has the potential to reduce our financial obligations under the CRC EES. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the Council's existing supply of waste woodchip is suitable for use as a fuel, and if so, to investigate the issues around storing and drying this product, as well as growing further wood as required.

Finally, a sum of **£3,000** is required to carry out further energy conservation training for approx. 200 staff within the Parks and Leisure Department.

Resources Implications

Financial

£14k is required for the alteration to the energy controls at buildings.

£3k is required for the staff training.

£10k is required for a bio-mass feasibility study.

However this expenditure has the potential to reduce the council's financial obligations under the CRC EES.

Human Resources

Each staff member attending energy conservation training will be required to set aside 2 hours.

Asset & other implications

These schemes, though fairly small, have the potential to reduce the council's overall emissions of CO₂ in the longer term

Recommendations & Decisions

The Committee is requested to approve the use of up to £27,000 of the corporate strategic thematic budget to provide alterations to energy controls at 7 leisure centre buildings, provide energy conservation training for 200 Parks and Leisure Centre staff, and to carry out a study on the viability of using waste woodchip as an alternative fuel for heating.

In terms of the wider implications for the Council of the likely implementation of a carbon 'cap & trade' scheme and also the practical ways in which the council might seek to achieve the statutory target of a 1% per annum reduction in CO₂ emissions, a report is scheduled to be submitted to the Committee in **November 2010** setting out costed options and seeking decisions. Where necessary, party briefings will be arranged beforehand to apprise members of the various issues.

Key to Abbreviations

CRC EES – Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme