

13 March 2012		ITEM <u>7</u>
Cleaner, Greener, Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
DEVELOPMENT OF A GREEN CAR STRATEGY		
Report of: Councillor Halden (Conservative, Homesteads), Chairman of the Cleaning, Greener, Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Accountable Head of Service: Andy Millard, Head of Planning and Transportation		
Accountable Director: Bill Newman, Director, Sustainable Communities		
This report is Public		
Purpose of Report: To guide the development and content of a draft Green Car strategy		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are aware of the big issues we face with CO2 in Thurrock, both due to us being a logistics hub and due to demographic growth and the resulting air pollution. The Government runs many schemes to support a “green car agenda” and Thurrock Council is currently delivering a range of programmes following its successful Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid. It is the view of cross party Members that focused work would be needed to collate options and opportunities into a full and comprehensive strategy. The strategy would be a market based approach – seeking to encourage the use of the greenest technology in the market via incentives rather than force changes via arbitrary targets. The aim is to form a flexible policy of advice and advertising that can evolve, based on the market, to help build a sustainable cleaner and greener Thurrock.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 **That, in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Housing and the relevant shadow portfolio holder, Officers investigate the feasibility of delivering the options listed in paragraph 3.20 of this report and work on putting together a draft strategy, which shall be reported back to the Committee.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 Green car agenda in Thurrock can be defined broadly as a policy plan for supporting and promoting environmentally friendly transport in Thurrock (i.e. not limited to a single plan or technology). The agenda is not limited to technology, but touches all areas that the technology interact with i.e. licensing, planning, etc by making use of the Council as a central point of promotion and support. We can't pick and choose potential winners and losers in the market.
- 2.2 We acknowledge that the Council is currently delivering a comprehensive programme of schemes and initiatives following its successful Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) bid, but we felt that some targeted work on this specific agenda could yield large results to complement the LSTF.
- 2.3 In late August 2011, Cllr Mark Coxshall spoke to the Environment Committee Chairman, Cllr James Halden, to enquire about if there was an existing plan to make use of Government schemes relating to the Green Transport. There were many schemes available but there seemed to be a lack of action on the council's behalf and a general lack of synergy.
- 2.4 At the Full Council meeting in October, Cleaner, Greener and Safer O&S (CGS) chairman, Cllr James Halden asked Cllr Andy Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, a question about the Green Car agenda. Cllr Smith agreed to meet with Cllr Halden to discuss the issues and options for Thurrock.
- 2.5 Cllr Smith and Cllr Halden met on the 9th November 2011 where Cllr Smith supported CGS O&S undertaking some dedicated work with a view to provide recommendations to Cabinet. This was after discussing the fact that Thurrock, as a logistics hub, had seen high levels of car generated pollution and thus a comprehensive approach should be developed and a full policy will make sure that Thurrock does not miss out on opportunities or fail to be able to make use of Government support. Cllr Smith agreed a focused piece of work would be of significant benefit.
- 2.6 At the December meeting of CGS O&S, Cllr Halden moved that the Committee should undertake some work on the agenda in a similar manner to the multi skilled team report. The Committee made it clear that we would not be "picking or choosing" potential winners and losers in the technology market; nor would we seek to force certain modes of transport on people or businesses. Instead we would look to a policy that will promote a business friendly support network for a Green Car scheme that would make sense to Thurrock. It was the view that, if done correctly, this would be of little cost to

the Council but could be of great environmental benefit. We certainly do not want to use tax payer's money to play with the natural supply and demand of the market but we acknowledge that the Council has a real role in prompting the best practice and encouraging this new and vital market.

- 2.7 The Committee Chair and Vice Chair invited Committee Members to come along or submit comments to an initial scoping meeting on the 19th December. The meeting saw a comprehensive set of questions asked to be sent to officers so this report could be shaped. This was followed by an "issues and options meeting" that mainly focused on practical and implementation issues between Cllr Halden and Cllr Stone, the Chairman of Licensing.
- 2.8 Cllr Halden and Cllr Stone took a meeting with the Head of Planning and Transportation who agreed that this scheme could have great benefit in terms of supporting and promoting sustainable transport in a organic way and he undertook to lead on it from an Officer perspective.
- 2.9 Cllr Halden also met with the Corporate Director for Finance who was excited about the prospects of launching a pro-business green scheme and assured committee that the financial implications were easily manageable.
- 2.10 Progress of this work was announced by the Chair at the February meeting of CGS O&S and all members were invited to join a decision making session during the following weeks with a view for this more detailed report to come before Committee in March.

3. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS:

- 3.1 Results of questions found that it was electric vehicles that had the most scope for a Thurrock policy to be able to support, but options for other ULEV (ultra low emissions vehicles) i.e. hydrogen, should be left open with the possibility of further work as the technology has real merit. In respect of electronic vehicles, the Council has already undertaken work with EEDA and Evalu8 which has resulted in the provision of 4 EV charging points in the Borough.
- 3.2 Committee recognised the Government's vision outlined in the "green book" published in late 2011, where they signal a commitment to ULEV's (ultra low emission vehicle) and pledge support in the measure of £300million over the life time of the parliament to help cut the costs of ULEV. Committee felt this was very encouraging but they questioned how many people were aware of this support and to what extent, if any, the Council was making good use of this help.
- 3.3 Certain cars are tax and VAT exempt as well as having certain other provisions e.g. being congestion charge exempt.

- 3.4 However, we cannot just rely on Government support. It was clear that power points and a public campaign fell into the realms of detail that we would need to deliver locally.
- 3.5 As a multifaceted organisation with a large reach, the local authority is best placed to communicate ideas and support to all residents in terms of what support can be offered towards ULEV. Again, this will be less like “re inventing the wheel” and more like properly communicating the benefits. There are many opportunities that we can communicate but to do this we need to bring them together in a Thurrock policy.
- 3.6 It is clear that Thurrock does suffer from a high level of CO2 emission and poor air quality etc, and while this is in no small way a result of being a logistics hub, we also having a very large share proportion of car and regular vehicle CO2 to contend with. This is recognised in the Thurrock Transport Strategy as an issue which needs to be addressed. Thus any mitigation would be very welcome.
- 3.7 The Council does not hold information on business to a level where we could target certain “travel or vehicle intensive” business with our scheme. Thus, we would need a policy that was robust from a Council perspective to promote the policy as we interact with businesses, rather than “hunting” for opportunities. However, our interaction with business, e.g. licensing and NNDR was still a real opportunity, but in a less focused way. An active and joined up approach would be vital.
- 3.8 In addition, this could be used to link in with the LSTF travel plan also with the view to ensure that travel intensive Council functions, e.g. health and safety inspections, move towards a Green Car approved style.
- 3.9 We don’t want this to be a “taxi only” policy but they are the most immediate businesses that are travel intensive that we can interact with and support.
- 3.10 For businesses such as taxi firms, the Council does place a significant financial and paperwork cost, thus there is real scope to use a relaxation of this for an incentive scheme.
- 3.11 It was also clear that the Council could not force taxis to change vehicles but there was next to no work going on in terms of advising taxis of the support of ULEV that was on offer from the government or support that we could provide.
- 3.12 The opportunity outlined could see a loss in revenue but this is not expected to be a large and sudden uptake in the initial period thus the chance to modify policy will be available if the scheme seems likely to run a outrageous short term cost. In addition, there will not be a great net loss to the council in financial terms because costs for elements of the scheme i.e. charging points could be included in planning conditions.

- 3.13 We discussed the fact that the technology exists, it works and will constantly be refined; it will get cheaper and more effective. However, the main issues originally centred on the current cost as a barrier, as well as red tape, but we did not give much thought to logistical barriers such as parking and charge time. We did discuss the fact that we could mitigate this by putting specific bays in place, and while we can't increase charge time, if we started to map out potential areas for future charge points, with certain bays for charging only, then it would provide a road map to give "recharge confidence" to the market (i.e. being confident that a re-charge area is within a good distance and will be available on demand). We need to provide strategic direction.
- 3.14 It was clear that this scheme had a "fuel fear" attached i.e. how much mileage can you achieve. While a map will help provide vision, we also need to be looking at new points. It was suggested that more significant existing developments could be asked to buy into the scheme e.g. DP World (we are aware Lakeside Shopping Centre are in support).
- 3.15 It was raised that we would also want to expand the policy beyond just taxis etc but a massive public awareness campaign would be costly. However, it was raised by Cllr Stone that the Mayor's car is not very fuel efficient and thus we should seek to address this. From this point it was clear to the Committee that the Mayoral car or other Council vehicles could be used as a public campaign i.e. having an electric or ULEV car for Mayoral duties could be a great PR campaign.
- 3.16 The Committee discussed the LSTF and the fact that we now have a new communications professional in the communications team who could aid this PR work. The committee was keen on this work as it was the definition of "sustainable transport".
- 3.17 The use of these power points prompted some concern i.e. electricity theft. We were made aware that a permit would be required and that we could subsidise such a cost to the permit and use this as a part of the PR campaign.
- 3.18 Some concerns were raised that a communications approach with discounted permits, licensing and the Mayor's car could result in mounting costs. The Committee was happy with the discussion about allowing the Principal Licensing Officer to monitor the scheme and advise the Portfolio Holder if a pause was needed due to excessive usage. This then prompted a discussion whether a ULEV "tariff" could be put into place to off set all these costs.
- 3.19 Finally the Committee was happy with the amount of practical ideas that could be put into action with little costs but the major focus point was ensuring that all departments mentioned do work together so we can best advertise what we can offer in terms of the "green car agenda". An "ad hoc" approach would not achieve the needed Council synergy to produce a comprehensive policy.
- 3.20 In summary, the list of potential actions set out below should be investigated further with a view to informing a draft Green Car strategy: That the use of

planning conditions/S106 Agreements to provide the necessary infrastructure (charging points etc) be investigated.

1. That procurement examine the process to ensure that council vehicles are electric or ULEV when they are re tendered.
2. That the Communication Team draft a cost effective PR campaign to communicate what support the Council can offer with a new “Green Council fleet” as a flag ship model.
3. That a “contact us about green discounts” option be included with NNDR letters from 13/14.
4. That our scheme and all Governmental etc aid in this area is compiled in a “green agenda” booklet for Thurrock and published online.
5. That licences for ULEV are renewed every 3 years; opposed to yearly (this excludes CRB checks etc).
6. That licences for ULEV are free.
7. That permits for charging points in Thurrock are free.
8. That the Council actively advise taxi firms etc about Government grants and the Councils scheme etc periodically and when they renew.
9. That the Head of Licensing monitor expenses related to this scheme with a view to advise the Cabinet Member of its status and if a pause is needed.
10. That the Council look at more viable sites for charging points.
11. That the Council install ULEV bays only around charging points, with some ‘taxi only’ bays.
12. That the Council talk to major Thurrock investors/infrastructure owners about the possibly of installing charging points or sponsoring their installation.
13. That the Council produce a rolling “map” type document showing our installation of charging points and our plans to give market confidence by showing vision.
14. That the Council look to the use of planning conditions to off set costs of elements of the scheme such as charging points.

4. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

4.1 None

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 5.1 The report related directly to the Corporate priority of ensuring a safe, clean and green environment.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Funké Nana**
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There are no direct financial implications at this stage. However, the draft strategy will need to consider any potential loss in revenue (subject to the options that emerge).

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Alison Stuart**
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There are no direct legal implications.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
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There are no direct diversity and equality implications.

6.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

None.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Green Car agenda is central to the Council's priority of delivering a safe, clean and green environment. The formulation of a draft strategy is therefore seen as an important step forward. This report sets out the key areas that need to be investigated in developing that strategy.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

- None

~~APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:~~

~~Appendix one – papers used forming this report
Working group background~~

~~Appendix two – papers used forming this report
Data used/requested~~

~~Appendix three – papers used forming this report
Consultation/decision-making~~

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