

## **GEM PERFORMANCE**

**Report By: Environmental Sustainability Officer**

### **Wards Affected**

None directly.

### **Purpose**

To consider GEM (Good Environmental Management) Performance issues and developments for the first 6 months of 2003/4.

### **Considerations**

#### **Background & current position**

1. The Council is committed to protection of the environment, one of its 4 corporate objectives. Within its own services the Council takes forward this commitment through the GEM system. A cross-directorate team runs GEM: they are responsible to their Directors and meet monthly under the chairmanship of Stuart Gent. Some Council functions are certified to ISO 14001, the international environmental management standard. This standard sets rigorous performance management requirements and continuous improvement is required to maintain certification.
2. At present the GEM system focuses on the direct effects the Council has on the environment – that is, those that are within its own immediate control. These include areas such as the Council's use of electricity and water, miles driven on Council business and production of waste from its buildings and services.

#### **ISO 14001 Surveillance results**

3. Our external auditors, SGS Yarsley, undertook a full year surveillance visit to audit our continued adherence to the standards required by ISO 14001 from 28-30<sup>th</sup> July 2003. Over twenty officers from six directorates were interviewed. Certifiers were impressed with their visits to:-
  - ◆ Bodenham Lake, including the newly planted orchard (Parks)
  - ◆ Bridge Sollars where the new bridge over the Wye is going up in close liaison with the Environment Agency (Engineering)
  - ◆ Whitecross PFI, where the specification for the new High School is highly energy efficient (Property Services & Education)
  - ◆ The Adult Learning Disability centres at Marshfield, Leominster and St Owens which run numerous environmental initiatives with their service users (Social Care)
4. Corrective Action Requests (CARs) and observations from SGS were again reduced in July compared with previous visits. The certifiers raised four CARs (6) and made seventeen observations (26). Our certification is conditional on us being able to demonstrate that we have addressed these points by the time of the next SGS

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
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surveillance visit in February 2004. Specific points will be addressed locally or tackled corporately as appropriate.

5. Certifiers noted that:-

- ◆ Energy monitoring does not yet cover all buildings and numerous bills are based on estimates, making it impractical to track the Council's 1% reduction target.
- ◆ Effectively review of legal compliance requires attention
- ◆ Further work with suppliers of IT equipment on environmental issues is needed
- ◆ Delays in closing out non-conformances raised during GEM audits need to be addressed.

Appendix 3 sets out the points raised in full and the actions planned to address them.

#### **Changes to ISO 14001 scope**

6. The Council's environmental policy covers all Council services. There is a longstanding commitment to cover all Council activities and services under ISO 14001 certification, and this is stated in the Environmental Policy. In July 2003 Chief Executive's Management Team approved a recommendation to extend certification to ISO 14001 for all activities and services by February 2005. A detailed timetable for this roll out will go to the GEM group shortly.
7. At the July 2003 visit the scope of the ISO 14001 system was extended to cover the Adult Learning Disability Service, part of the Social Care & Strategic Housing Directorate.
8. HCS were part of the Council ISO 14001 certification. They are now splitting their ISO 14001 system and certification from that of the Council and the certificate will be revised to reflect this in February 2004. Continued certification to ISO 14001 is written into the contract with HJS and a working group is monitoring quality issues.

#### **9 Performance in the first half of 2003/4**

A summary of progress in relation to our GEM objectives is attached at Appendix 1. A half year report on GEM targets due for completion by October 1st is attached at Appendix 2.

#### **10 Directorate approaches to GEM**

The environmental issues facing different Directorates vary. Directorate GEM Lead Officers attend or brief their Directorate Management Teams on a regular basis to ensure a flow of information in and out of the GEM system. All Directorates are involved in delivering the programme with regard to energy, waste and transport. Further details of Directorate involvement are given in Appendix 2 and the full GEM programme.

Directorate	Main GEM Issues
Education	Office related plus contract transport. Land & building management via Property Services.
Environment	Office related. Work on all objectives. Co-ordination of GEM & ISO 14001.
Strategic Housing & Social Care	Contract transport. Procurement. Office and premises management. Home Energy Conservation. Day centre activities.
County Secretary's	Office related. Procurement lead. Provision of legal advice.
County Treasurer	Office related. Capital programme. Co-ordination of GEM audits. Budget codes.

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Policy & Community	Office and premises management. Parks: land management IT: specification of equipment
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## 11 Emerging issues

During this year the profile of several issues has increased. These all affect the work of more than one directorate.

- ◆ There has been a strong push from Government for Councils to address Climate Change and the Herefordshire Partnership Management Team has supported the production of a Herefordshire strategy. Work to highlight the potential impact on Council services is well underway and will be introduced to members at a briefing on November 12<sup>th</sup>.
- ◆ Renewable Energy is also climbing up the agenda and a West Midlands Regional Energy Strategy setting targets for production of renewables by each county is due in the Spring. New planning guidance on this matter is due shortly and is expected to relax current restrictions. Some work to look at the options for Herefordshire is underway.
- ◆ The profile of sustainable procurement has also risen nationally in the last few months, setting out targets for Councils for the next two years. There is also particular emphasis on encouraging public bodies to specify sustainable food. This relates both to local food and to the way food is produced. The Council has no position currently on this matter. The Council will not be able to exert effective influence on its suppliers and contractors until a position is drawn up.
- ◆ Genetic Modification is a lively issue locally and nationally. The Cabinet member will decide shortly whether to review the Council's current position, which does not support the growing of GM commercial crops in the County of Herefordshire, after briefings for senior Councillors. The Council has no control over land it does not own. School caterers have been asked to avoid GM food
- ◆ Public pressure to tackle invasive weeds (ragwort, Japanese knotweed and Giant Hogweed) and proposed changes in relation to ragwort resulted in a seminar with a DEFRA expert. A procedure to standardise the treatments used for such weeds is currently being finalised.
- ◆ The Service Level Agreements with HJS and Owen Williams set high standards for environmental management. Active liaison will be needed to ensure that the Council sets clear environmental specifications for services, such as printing and catering, so that delivery supports its GEM objectives.

Progressing some of these issues is likely to feature in the GEM programme for 2004/5.

## 12 Training

A briefing session for all Councillors on GEM and ISO 14001 will take place on **Wednesday, Jan 28<sup>th</sup>** from 10am (before Northern Planning). Rosie Manise of Environmental Business Solutions has worked with us for several years on environmental management and will lead the session. Lunch will be provided.

## 13 Cabinet Member

The Cabinet Member has been asked to support

- ◆ The rollout of ISO 14001 to all Council activities and services by February 2005

- ◆ Filling the current vacancy for a Procurement Officer so that the GEM objective and national guidance on sustainable procurement can be moved forward.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the report be noted, subject to any comments members may wish to make to the Cabinet Member.**

## **Background Papers**

- Appendix 1 Summary of progress against GEM objectives
- Appendix 2 Performance on GEM targets due for completion up till October 1<sup>st</sup> 2003
- Appendix 3 Corrective Action Requests and observations raised by SGS in July 2003 & our planned response.

The full GEM programme for 2003/4 is available in the Members' Library or on request. Further information on GEM is available from the Environmental Sustainability Unit or in the GEM folder on the Intranet Info Library

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