

SELECT COMMITTEE - RENEWABLE ENERGY

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Renewable Energy held in the Wantsum Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 26 January 2010.

PRESENT: Mr K A Ferrin, MBE, Mr C Hibberd, Mr D A Hirst, Mr R E King, Mr T Prater, Mr C P Smith, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mrs E M Tweed

ALSO PRESENT: Mr D L Brazier

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Frampton (Research Officer), Mr N Hilkene (Sustainability Manager) and Mrs C A Singh (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Election of Chairman (Item 1)

Mrs P Stockell proposed, Mr C Hibberd seconded that Mr K A Ferrin be elected Chairman of this Select Committee.

Agreed without a vote

2. To discuss and agree the terms of reference and general approach to the review (Item 2)

(1) The Chairman asked officers to introduce themselves to the Select Committee Members.

(2) The Chairman then asked Sue Frampton, Research officer to introduce the proposed scope of the Review. Sue highlighted key aspects of the Scope in particular paragraph 3 'To identify key challenges' suggesting that this was the biggest part of the review covering a range of challenges and opportunities for KCC to influence and develop leadership.

(3) Sue Frampton advised the Members that she had been in contact with Amy Wright, a member of KYCC from Thanet who was very keen to participate in the review. Members were in favour of Amy's involvement on behalf of KYCC, as far as possible, including hearings and visits, with consideration to her school commitments.

(4) Sue Frampton also informed the committee that there may be an opportunity for some joint work with Essex County Council who are conducting a review of the generation of energy and Mr Ferrin agreed to look at this further on 11th February.

(5) Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments on the Terms of Reference and the Proposed Scope of the Review. Discussion included:

- that there should be more emphasis on ‘Energy Efficiency’ within the Terms of Reference, as it will affect the baseline requirements. KCC should be leading on Energy Efficiency as the Strategic Authority for Kent and residents need to be able to receive guidance from KCC. (Members were advised that work was being carried out on KCC education estates regarding energy efficiency therefore this should not be duplicated by the Review but the work being undertaken could inform the report).
- establish existing energy patterns.
- Winter/Summer balance (energy requirements)
- the effect of taking energy to the consumer from its source.
- where Kent sits in the context of Europe – could import all energy requirements from Europe?
- the Energy Bill currently going through Parliament
- Medway as part of geographical Kent and its gas importation terminal
- tidal systems – potential for the future in Kent?
- Lack of experienced technicians and experts (covered by KEB task and finish group? – evidence will be requested)

(6) Following their discussion Members agreed the following changes to the Terms of Reference;

- (a) In paragraph 2 after the word ‘generation’ add the words ‘*and distribution*’,
- (b) In paragraph 3 (b) after the word ‘Kent’ alter the remainder of the sentence to read ‘*and it’s residents in relation to energy efficiency and renewable energy*, and
- (c) In paragraph 5 after the word ‘increased’ add the words ‘*energy efficiency*’; and the following changes to the scope,

(7) It will be necessary to read a lot of evidence before a clear vision is reached on the direction KCC wants to take and we should not be confined by a definitive list now (witnesses/visits). The need for particular witnesses or visits may emerge as the work progresses.

(8) The wish was expressed that the review recommendations are such that there could be real achievements in say 3 years time.

(9) The Chairman made a suggestion and Members agreed that Stuart Gibbons, the former Head of Rural Regeneration for KCC, who now worked as a consultant, be invited as an independent expert on the Review. Paul Wickenden agreed to pursue this on the Committee’s behalf.

(10) Members then discussed the list of potential witnesses to be invited to give evidence and visits to be made. Members’ suggestions and comments included the following:

- Add Ministry of Agriculture to the list of witnesses
- Conker Conservation was involved in small to major projects and was identified via an online database of householders across the County who had made energy saving alterations or added renewable technologies to their properties.

- A subgroup of the Kent Economic Board had focused on sustainable building issues and James Sweet, of C4Ci to be included on the witness list to give evidence about the work of the subgroup.
- The Kent Design guide should be acknowledged in the review.
- It was suggested the Committee look for input from the academic sector on skills issues.

(11) The Select Committee agreed to include visits to:

- Beaufort House – HQ off Renewable Energy Systems
- Graveney substation – indication of onshore impact of offshore windfarms (added to list)
- A working example of CHP (Maidstone Borough Council/Woking Borough Council)
- The focus of the Eco Build Conference was sustainable building but Members may wish to visit this independently.
- A suggestion was made that Members may like to attend the British Air Industry, Conference in North Hampshire.
- Other visits would not be excluded if time allowed as Members worked through the review.

(12) Mr Brazier, Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment Highways and Waste, who has an interest in the review as co-proposer, and provides an informal link to the Climate Change Cabinet Working Group, advised that he would be attending the Conference on Biomass in Austria, which had been arranged for him through the Forestry Commission. Mr Brazier also recommended a 1-day BWEA conference.

(13) Date of next meeting Thursday, 11 February 2010 for an Environment Highways and Waste Directorate briefing.

(14) RESOLVED that the Members suggestions and comments be noted to update the Terms of Reference and Scope of the Review *(as attached to these Minutes)*.