

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY 29 JUNE 2004 AT 10.00 AM

Agenda Item No.

4

**PROGRESS REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT'S
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (EMS)**

Report of the Director of Environment

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1. Purpose of report

1.1 This report has been written to inform Scrutiny Members of the progress made in the Environment Department with the development and implementation of an Environmental Management System (EMS) and to assist them in considering how the topic should be scrutinised.

2. Summary

2.1 The Environment Department has developed, implemented and achieved external certification to the International Standard ISO 14001 for its Environmental Management System.

2.2 The management system focuses on the internal procedures and practices that the Department follows to provide and deliver its services and strategic goals across the county. It helps to ensure that the direction and targets set through the service planning process are being achieved and that the department is looking to continually improve on its performance.

3. Conclusions

3.1 The Committee is invited to indicate how it wishes to scrutinise this subject further.

4. Background

- 4.1 In 1995 the Local Agenda 21 Policy Panel identified environmental performance of the County Council as one of the areas that would need to be considered as part of the Council's contribution to Local Agenda 21. Environmental management was identified as being of particular importance in terms of the credibility of the organisation. Following consideration at the policy panel it was agreed that in order to achieve improved environmental performance, a methodical approach would need to be adopted in order to be able to deliver and demonstrate its commitment.
- 4.2 It was recognised that there could be significant implications if the County Council embarked on this project as a whole, so it was agreed that the system should be piloted in an area to enable the implications of implementing such a system to be fully assessed.
- 4.3 The 1999 / 2000 Environment Department Business Plan identified the development of an Environmental Management System (EMS) as a departmental project to demonstrate a systematic approach to sound environmental practice and continual improvement in environmental performance. The system was initially piloted in Strategy, one of the four groups, which make up the Environment Department.
- 4.4 During the project's implementation the Department's Management Board has overseen the management system's development and implementation.
- 4.5. The day to day facilitation has been the responsibility of an officer based in the Forward Planning Unit and she is supported by staff in various units who act as auditors / critical friends.
- 4.6. The key to the system's successful development and implementation has been to make full use of existing systems and the existing service-planning framework. Another key attribute has been the enthusiasm of officers for ensuring that the environmental implications of key issues are made clear and understood before decisions are made.
- 4.7 Once the pilot Group had achieved external certification to ISO 14001, the Environment Board agreed to roll out the system to the other Groups in the Department on a Group by Group basis, with the final Group – Transport Management achieving certification for their EMS in December 2002.
- 4.8 The Environmental Management System can be used to demonstrate the Council's commitment to sustainability through its Best Value Performance Plan promises and indicators. Similarly the EMS has an important role to play in terms of performance management and demonstrating that the County Council is committed to improved environmental performance. The County Council should after all be seen to lead by example and demonstrate that it is prepared to get its own house in order.

- 4.9 The environmental pressures facing the County Council need to be addressed in an integrated and proactive manner. Environmental probity is essential to satisfy the expectations of its customers and interested parties and to avoid challenge, liabilities and damage to the County Council's image.
- 4.10 The discipline and systematic approach that an Environmental Management System has brought to the Environment Department's internal procedures, helps with this. In the Department it has also led to a greater confidence in the way that key issues are being dealt with. That the decisions taken are well informed, and the environmental implications of the decisions being taken are understood.
- 4.11 Other benefits include increased confidence in being legally compliant and an enhanced service planning process, which encourages continual improvement.
- 4.12 Overall it has helped the Department to meet the expectations of its own employees, customers, partners and the wider community at large.

5 Financial implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The costs of maintaining and developing the management system is met from within existing budgets.

6 Access to Service Implications

- 6.1 The EMS process assists our services in terms of the understanding of the implications of its decisions and accessibility is one of the factors, which is recognised as contributing to enhanced service delivery.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Committee is invited to indicate how it wishes to scrutinise this subject further.

Background information used by the author in compiling this report

ISO 14001: 1996 – International standard for Environmental Management Systems – Specification with guidance for use.