

CABINET MEETING – 18 JULY 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

EU Covenant of Mayors – Sustainability

Author(s):

Chief Executive

Purpose of Report:

This report seeks retrospective authorisation for the Leader to participate in the EU Covenant of Mayors seminar, ‘Covenant Signatories Meet Business to Convert Plans into Actions’, in Brussels on 22 June 2012.

Description of Decision:

Cabinet is requested to:

- authorise participation in the EU Covenant of Mayors seminar and the consequential travel by the Leader to Brussels
- note the range of initiatives within Sunderland in relation to the city’s sustainability commitments

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

As a signatory to the EU Covenant of Mayors, engaging with the Covenant of Mayors’ Office and EURO CITIES colleagues as a speaker and panel member at this seminar provides an opportunity to raise Sunderland’s profile and strengthen the city’s influence within the field of sustainability and the low carbon economy. It is important that the City Council engages effectively within appropriate European networks, in line with the city’s International Strategy, to identify and pursue the opportunities they can open up for Sunderland.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

A decision could have been taken not to accept the request to present at this seminar. This would send a negative message about the City’s commitment as a signatory to the EU Covenant of Mayors, as well as about its participation in EURO CITIES, and mean that opportunities to strengthen Sunderland’s influence in relation to EU policy and legislation, and to develop and exchange good practice in relation to sustainability and the low carbon economy, would be lost.

Impacts analysed:

Equality **Privacy** **Sustainability** **Crime and Disorder**

Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution? **No**

Scrutiny Committee

Is it included in the Forward Plan? **No**

Scrutiny Lead Member for Skills, Economy and Regeneration

EU COVENANT OF MAYORS - SUSTAINABILITY

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks retrospective authorisation for the Leader to participate in the EU Covenant of Mayors seminar, 'Covenant Signatories Meet Business to Convert Plans into Actions', in Brussels on 22 June 2012.

2.0 Description of Decision

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to:

i) authorise participation in the EU Covenant of Mayors seminar and the consequential travel by the Leader to Brussels

ii) note the range of initiatives within Sunderland in relation to the city's sustainability commitments

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Sunderland has a long-standing commitment to sustainability, which is reflected in the city's Climate Change Action Plan.
- 3.2 The City Council is a signatory of both the EUROCITIES Declaration on Climate Change and the European Union (EU) Covenant of Mayors. Sunderland signed the EUROCITIES Declaration on Climate Change in October 2008 and subsequently, together with all local authorities within North East England, signed the EU Covenant of Mayors in January 2009, committing to carbon emission reductions of at least 20% by 2020. North East England was the first region in Europe where all local authorities signed up to the Covenant jointly.
- 3.3 Information provided by the Covenant of Mayors' Office in Brussels indicates that it has been instrumental in engaging almost 4,000 local authorities and over 100 regions and provinces across Europe in addressing shared energy and climate objectives. They acknowledge, however, that local authorities cannot address the challenges of the transition to sustainable energy alone and that partnership with the private sector and other local stakeholders will be key.
- 3.4 The Covenant of Mayors' seminar on 22 June 2012 therefore aims to showcase the private sector's engagement with European local and regional Action Plans (SEAPs) and prepare the ground for a 'covenant of companies'. It brings together city and private sector representatives during two sessions within the same event. Over 100 delegates are expected to attend the event.

- 3.5 The event takes place during the EU's annual Sustainable Energy Week which runs from 18-22 June 2012. The focus for the seventh EU Sustainable Energy Week is energy efficiency and renewables.
- 3.6 Sunderland was approached to speak at the event in late May as one of five speakers and panel members, and the sole local authority representative, within its session. This followed a visit by a EUROCITIES delegation to the city as part of a peer review exercise focussed on energy in urban transport under the EU-funded Cascade project. Further information on Cascade is included in paragraph 4.4.

4.0 Current Position

- 4.1 As part of its Covenant of Mayors' commitments, the City Council submitted a Sustainable Energy Action Plan in January 2010. This was based on the Climate Change Action Plan the city had already developed and outlined the ways in which the City planned to make carbon reductions in line with the agreed targets.
- 4.2 Sunderland is engaged in a series of initiatives related to sustainability which contribute towards achievement of the targets set out in the EU Covenant of Mayors and the city's Sustainable Energy Action Plan. These include individual initiatives as part of the City Council's own corporate commitments, but also reflect the centrality of sustainability to the city as a whole with creation of a low carbon economy at the heart of the city's Economic Master Plan.
- 4.3 Examples of initiatives across the city include: the Low Carbon Economic Area and Enterprise Zone; the production of Electric Vehicles by Nissan and Smith's Electric Vehicles; the Zero Carbon Futures project, which means the city is now home to one of Europe's leading facilities for training in Low Carbon Vehicle and Electric Vehicle development; flagship buildings such as the Sunderland Aquatic Centre, which was designed to be the greenest 50m swimming pool in the country; a fleet management review undertaken with the University to improve the opportunities for Electric and Hybrid vehicles; and installation of Solar Photovoltaic arrays in a number of the city's schools.
- 4.4 Sunderland is also currently involved in the EU-funded Cascade project, led by EUROCITIES. As part of this project, a delegation of Sustainable Transport practitioners from Sweden (Stockholm), Bulgaria (Burgas), Spain (Terrassa), Poland (Warsaw) and France (Nantes) visited Sunderland for several days in May of this year to take in part in a peer learning exercise. This was focussed on sustainable energy in urban transport, and in particular: transport policy and implementation; the North East Smart Ticketing Initiative; and the Policy Review undertaken on the deployment of low carbon vehicles in the delivery of public services.

5.0 Reasons for the Decision

- 5.1 The request for Sunderland to present at the EU Covenant of Mayors' seminar reflects the city's positive reputation with EUROCIITIES colleagues in relation to sustainability, notably in delivery of the EU funded Cascade project focusing on low carbon transport.
- 5.2 EUROCIITIES provides a strong platform through which to influence EU policy and legislation, exchange knowledge and experience, and develop best practice through dialogue with European Union institutions and fellow cities within the network. As a signatory to the EU Covenant of Mayors, engaging with the Covenant of Mayors' Office and EUROCIITIES colleagues as a speaker and panel member at this seminar provides an opportunity to raise Sunderland's profile and strengthen the city's influence within the field of sustainability and the low carbon economy.
- 5.2 It is important that the City Council engages effectively within appropriate European networks, in line with the city's International Strategy, to identify and pursue the opportunities they can open up for Sunderland.

6.0 Alternative Options

- 6.1 A decision could have been taken not to accept the request to present at this seminar. This would send a negative message about the City's commitment as a signatory to the EU Covenant of Mayors, as well as about its participation in EUROCIITIES, and mean that opportunities to strengthen Sunderland's influence in relation to EU policy and legislation, and to develop and exchange good practice in relation to sustainability and the low carbon economy, would be lost.

7.0 Relevant Consultations

7.1 Financial Implications

Costs for participation will be met from existing cash-limited budgets.

8.0 Background Papers

- 8.1 The following background papers are available from the Office of the Chief Executive:
Invitation from EUROCIITIES and Seminar Programme
Sustainable Energy Action Plan (Climate Change Action Plan)

