ITEM NO: 7

	Overview and Scrutiny Committee 10th October 2007 **Report from the Director of Environment and Culture**
For Action	Wards Affected: None

Proposed Climate Change Task Group

1.0 Summary

1.1 At its meeting on 18th June 2007, the Executive agreed a recommendation to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to set up a Climate Change Task Group to review the Council's Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan 2007-11 and in particular consider the achievability of its ambitious reduction targets.

1.2 This report sets out the case for setting up the Task Group.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to agree to set up a Climate Change Task Group in order to achieve the purposes set out in this report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan (CMS&IP) outlines how Brent Council will reduce its emissions of carbon dioxide by 20% by 2011 as committed to in the Corporate Strategy. The CMS&IP was approved by the Executive at its meeting held on 18th June 2007. The CMS&IP contains 38 projects that need to be delivered by different services from across the Council. The full document is available for inspection by Members on the intranet.

3.2 One of the report's recommendations agreed by the Executive was to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to set up a Climate Change Task Group to review the implementation of the CMS&IP 2007-11 and in particular to consider whether more ambitious reduction targets could be achieved in a cost effective manner.

3.3 The CMS&IP is solely focused on Brent Council's own emissions of carbon dioxide, making it an internal document. A carbon management strategy differs from a climate change strategy in that it does not attempt to address adaptation to climate change, but focuses on the management of emissions of green house gasses, specifically carbon dioxide, and in particular how these can be reduced by each of the Council's services.

3.4 To develop this CMS&IP, Brent Council participated in the fourth phase of the Carbon Trust's Local Authority Carbon Management Programme. Brent, by qualifying for, and fulfilling the programme, is now in a good position to take advantage of a variety of opportunities to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, such as the Local Authority Energy Efficiency Fund.

3.5 Ownership for the CMS&IP at Member level would provide the incentive, confidence, and momentum necessary to make substantial steps forward to Brent being a Borough leading in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The CMS&IP is just one front on which action can, and is, being taken to mitigate climate change, however, a wider climate change strategy is needed to respond to all of the drivers for action.

3.6 The Task Group would complement the work of an officer's Carbon Management Steering Group and would have an opportunity to contribute to the development work requested by the Executive.

3.7 Appendix A sets out the detailed case for setting up the proposed Task Group. As well as monitoring individual projects, reviewing the targets, suggesting additional measures and assessing the overall success of carbon reduction, the Task Group might also investigate a small number of related issues that the Strategy raises e.g. sustainable construction in Council owned buildings, sustainable travel plans, reducing the amount of waste produced by the Council or the wider sustainable development context.

3.8 Appendix B lists the possible impacts of climate change on specific Council services.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 Risk

4.1.1 Funding for projects totalling 34 percent of the required 13,000 tonne emissions reduction is as yet undetermined. These project areas are micro-renewables such as solar thermal water heating and panels, wind turbines, and biomass burners, improvements to the social housing stock, and improvements to the fleet, the provision of bio-diesel from used cooking oil, and the council's travel plan.

4.1.2 The government's Low Carbon Buildings Programme offers 40-50% grant funding for micro-renewable installations on public buildings, but currently there are no funds available to make up the remainder in order for Brent to take advantage. The Carbon Management Steering group will review options to secure funding to facilitate these projects or will seek additional allocations within overall existing funding levels as part of the 2008/09 budget setting process. Renewable energy technologies serve a dual purpose, they reduce carbon dioxide emissions and they also provide a visible commitment to the public.

4.1.3 BHP has recently adopted an Environmental Policy, based on Brent Council's. BHP is currently developing proposals for projects to improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock.

4.1.4 Achieving carbon savings from transport related activities remains an area of risk. The new oyster card system, the anticipated introduction of assisted purchasing for bicycles, and a new GIS based site visit system being developed by Building Control are some of the low and no cost measures being implemented to reduce emissions in this area. The travel plan implementation group will be reporting to the Executive separately.

4.2 Energy Efficiency Fund

4.2.1 Brent Council has set up an Energy Efficiency Fund worth £600K. Brent succeeded in obtaining £300K of limited public funding through a successful bidding and vetting process, and match funded this internally through prudential borrowing. The fund provides interest free internal loans for the installation of proven energy saving technologies in council buildings and schools. The loan is repaid to the fund through the savings made in energy bills and subsequently reinvested in other projects.

4.2.2 The fund has enormous potential to help to establish Brent Council as a leader in energy efficiency. It provides a mechanism for all areas of Brent Council to proactively reduce energy consumption and achieve their 20% reductions in carbon dioxide emissions.

4.2.3 There is a risk in that if Brent fails to spend the fund within the constraints set by the grant fund provider, Brent would have to repay the money. Realistically, there is enough potential offered by the current building stock for energy efficiency work to meet these constraints. For example, the majority of schools have no or minimal loft insulation. However, budget holders will need the support of Members and senior managers in order to have the confidence to take advantage of this opportunity.

4.3 Funding the work of the Task Group

4.3.1 The work of the Task Group, if approved, will be supported by the Policy & Regeneration Unit (PRU) and any funding required to deliver the Task Group's work programme will be contained within existing unit budgets.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 The legal implications of the CMS&IP were included in the report to the Executive (18.6.07).

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 The diversity implications of the CMS&IP were included in the report to the Executive (18.6.07).

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 The staffing/accommodation implications of the CMS&IP were included in the report to the Executive (18.6.07).

Background Papers

- Carbon Management in Brent Council – CMT Report February 2007
- Climate Change – Strategic Overview – CMT Report February 2007
- Executive report – 18th June 2007 - Carbon Management in Brent – Achieving the Target

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APPENDIX A

Scoping document for Scrutiny review

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Date 21 June 2007
What are the main issues? *what is the policy background?, how does it link to the councils corporate priorities?*
Part of the Vision in the Council's Corporate Strategy 2006-10 is to promote environmentally sustainable practices, including developing new policies to address climate change. One of the Strategy's priorities is to, 'Make Brent Council an exemplar of environmental practice and performance on sustainability issues' and it contains a target for the Council to reduce its overall emissions of carbon dioxide by 20% by 2011. The Executive, at its meeting on 18th June 2007, adopted a Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan 2006-11 (CMS&IP). The Action Plan contains 38 projects and involves all departments and many services from across the Council. One of recommendations in this report was to, 'Ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to set up a Climate Change Task Group', because, '... ownership for the CMS&IP at Member level would provide the incentive, confidence, and momentum necessary to make substantial steps forward to Brent being a Borough leading in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The CMS&IP is just one front on which action can, and is, being taken to mitigate climate change, however, a wider climate change strategy is needed to respond to all of the drivers for action. The Executive are recommended to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to set up a Climate Change Task Group to oversee this work, and in particular to consider whether more ambitious carbon reduction targets could be achieved in a cost effective manner.' As background, the Mayor of London published a Climate Change Action Plan in February 2007. In 2005 Brent Council adopted its Environmental Policy. In 2002 the Council signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and in the same year the Council also signed up to the Mayor of London's Green Procurement Code. The Audit Commission's Comprehensive Area Agreement performance framework for 2008 may include measures related to the carbon emissions of the Council's estate and the borough as a whole. In addition, new government requirements for revising Local Area Agreements which will be implemented with effect from April 2008 may include government targets that are aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions in the borough.

Why are we looking at this area? Have there been recent legislation/policy changes? Are there any performance or budgetary issues?,

A Climate Change Bill has been published and consultation finished on 12th June 2007.

The 2006 Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act places a duty on local authorities, when exercising their functions, to have regard to a report published by the Secretary of State on ways in which they might improve energy efficiency, increase micro generation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and alleviate fuel poverty.

As mentioned above, the Executive, at its meeting on 18th June 2007, adopted a Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan 2006-11.

There are also other contextual external and internal policies driving this agenda. Together with those mentioned above there are volatile energy markets to contend with that are increasing the Council's costs for energy, an EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive requiring Council buildings of over 1000 m2 to display energy performance certificates and the 2006 revision to Part L of the Building Regulations in England and Wales requiring 10% of the total investment to be spent on energy efficiency measures. In 2005/6 the Council's energy bill was approximately £5,404,000. If Brent Council does not act to reduce its energy use, the costs accumulated in extra energy spend over the next four years are estimated to reach £3,117,543. This could result in an energy bill in 2011 of approximately £7,169,000and a further rise to £7,810,000 in 2013.

It is proposed that the Task Group monitors performance of the CMS&IP and has an opportunity to propose additional measures for reducing the Council's energy consumption and overall carbon dioxide emissions. This may lead to budget savings in the longer term.

What should the review cover? Give brief outline of what members could focus on, which partners to engage with, how residents/public can be involved.

It is recommended that the Task Group monitors the implementation and evaluates the results of the CMS&IP. It would receive regular reports on the progress of the 38 projects listed in the Plan and would make project leads more accountable for the project's performance. It would investigate poor performance on specific projects.

It could also identify and examine other opportunities for the Council to reduce its CO2 emissions further. It would review the existing targets and evaluate whether more ambitious reduction targets could be achieved in a cost effective manner.

Some of the wider issues raised in the Plan may also be investigated in more

depth by the Task Group, perhaps inviting residents, the public or organisations as witnesses where appropriate. Such issues might include sustainable construction standards in Council owned buildings, sustainable travel plans and the wider sustainable development context.

What could the review achieve?, influence policy change?, improvement to service delivery?, budget savings?, develop partnerships?.

It is intended that the overall performance of the CMS&IP and of individual projects will be improved as a result of the work of the Task Group. This may lead to an increase in the total amount of CO2 saved up to 2011. It may also contribute to achieving the target of a 20% reduction at an earlier date. It is intended that some of the measures will lead to financial savings for the Council. Via the Community Strategy, Local Strategic Partnership and the revised Local Area Agreement, other organisations may become involved in this work and reduce their own carbon emissions, thus reducing even further the total amount of CO2 emissions produced in the Borough.

APPENDIX B UK CLIMATE IMPACTS PROGRAMME – CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS ON LOCAL SERVICES

Activity	Some Impacts Of Climate Change
Forward Planning & Development Control	Higher risk of flooding of susceptible developments on floodplains
	Climate change influences suitable design for sustainable buildings and the scope of application necessary
Emergency Planning	Increased risk and frequency of flooding and severe weather
Housing	Increased risk of subsidence as soils shrink in hotter drier summers
	Higher risk to houses in floodplains
	Temperature increases affect living space environment
Management of Public Buildings	Temperature increases affect thermal comfort and staff satisfaction / sickness rates
	Wetter winters causing damp, condensation and mould problems
	Higher risk to buildings currently located in floodplains
Building Control	Drier summers increase risk of foundation subsidence
	Wetter winters and severe weather increase damp problems
	Increased demand for air conditioning and building alterations to adapt to new climate
Transport Planning	Increased risk of flood disruption due to wetter winters and severe weather
	Increased temperature causing service disruption and heat stress to traveling public
Highway Maintenance	Increased rainfall intensity affecting embankments and bridge piers, and washing more debris into gullies
	Drier summers increase risk of road subsidence and higher temperatures increase risk of surface damage
	Higher risk to roads located in floodplains or areas with poor urban drainage
	Increase in rate of growth and length of growing season of road verges
	Warmer winters with reduced risk of frost
Health and Social Services	Higher risk of skin cancer / sun burn due to hotter summers and increased outdoor recreation
	Heat stress to the old, poor and vulnerable communities and people likely to increase
	Fewer cold related fatalities
Environmental Health	Higher temperatures likely to increase cases of food poisoning and pests
	Higher levels of dust in the air due to drier summers
Green space Management	Increase in rate of growth leading to year-round grass maintenance
	Loss of trees and shrubs due to drier summers and wetter winters
	Climate change influence on natural environment, especially

Activity	Some Impacts Of Climate Change
	bio-diversity
Watercourse Management	Wetter winters and increased rainfall intensity causing local flooding
Waste Management	Rubbish will decay more rapidly in higher summer temperatures
	Higher summer temperatures and higher, more intense, winter rainfall may affect landfill design and operation
Community Awareness	Climate change will impact unprepared and vulnerable communities
Business support / Town Centre Management	Climate change provides changing markets, e.g. tourism and agriculture, and demand for new products