

A low carb diet plan for councillors?

Responding to the draft Climate Change Bill Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive of APSE, which represents over 300 UK wide local authorities said Councils must '**make a step change in local leadership**' to ensure councils play the fullest possible role in reducing the carbon footprint within the public sector.

Highlighting the £40 billion direct expenditure by local councils Mr O'Brien said that despite some areas of concern within the draft Bill the reality is the public sector is spending huge amounts of public money. Such money ought to be spent on helping to reduce carbon emissions not, in many cases, contributing to the growth in CO₂.

Mr O'Brien stated '**Whether it is the road miles used in transporting food for school meals or the vehicles that councils use to grit our roads in winter we should not be procuring anything without looking at the ecological impact of our public sector purchasing decisions**' adding " **We know that many councils face the prospect of squaring the circle between environmental considerations and value for money. They ought not to have to face that challenge. We need innovative ways of financing councils to ensure that by being conscientious purchasers of goods and services, councils and council tax payers do not face stiff financial penalties**".

Currently councils face a council tax capping regime and restrictive capital finance processes which can inhibit the ability of councils to invest in new technologies or in upgrading supplies and services to limit environmental damage. APSE would support a more innovative financial framework allowing councils greater flexibility to develop environmental friendly solutions and allowing upgrading of assets, vehicles and new technology as well as supply contracts to meet revised environmental standards more quickly.

In closing Mr O'Brien stated '**We need a low carb diet plan for councillors that rewards their efforts to go green and shed those carbon emissions generated within the public sector**'

ENDS

- APSE is the Association for Public Service Excellence and works with over 300 authorities throughout the UK
- The draft climate change Bill currently proposes reserved powers to the Secretary of State for the Environment across the four nations meaning that the powers available to the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Administration may be formally linked to those across England potentially fettering those bodies from independent action on climate change outside of the UK wide targets
- Local Government has around £40 billion in purchasing powers and supplies a range of local services from school meals through to local parks, refuse and waste collection services.
- Whilst Councils are making strenuous efforts to look at the ecological footprint of purchasing decisions the EU public Procurement Law is not sufficiently flexible to allow Councils broad freedoms in specifying environmental issues in procurement. EU law has a permissive rather than a regulatory framework on environmental and social issues.
- The draft Bill proposes:-

- A series of clear targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions - including making the UK's targets for a 60% reduction by 2050 and a 26 to 32% reduction by 2020 legally binding.
- A new system of legally binding five year "carbon budgets", set at least 15 years ahead, to provide clarity on the UK's pathway towards its key targets and increase the certainty that businesses and individuals need to invest in low-carbon technologies.
- A new statutory body, the *Committee on Climate Change*, to provide independent expert advice and guidance to Government on achieving its targets and staying within its carbon budgets.
- New powers to enable the Government to more easily implement policies to cut emissions.
- A new system of annual open and transparent reporting to Parliament. The Committee on Climate Change will provide an independent progress report to which the Government must respond. This will ensure the Government is held to account every year on its progress towards each five year carbon budget and the 2020 and 2050 targets.
- A requirement for Government to report at least every five years on current and predicted impacts of climate change and on its proposals and policy for adapting to climate change

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Issue date Tuesday 13.03.2007