

Bringing to life the sustainability agenda in Staffordshire

Lead Organisation:

Sustainability West Midlands

Project Manager: Alan Carr (Sustainability Adviser)

Customers:



Project Duration:

March 2017 – June 2017

The Project

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) commissioned SWM to reinvigorate the sustainability agenda across the authority by convening a workshop that took place on 6 June 2017 that brought together staff from across the council as well as writing a report that reflected progress to date, recommendations for future activity and good practice examples from elsewhere.

Aims

- To raise the profile of sustainability across the organisation and to bring all key individuals up to date with the leadership SCC has shown on the subject.
- To make service areas aware that the whole organisation needs to work together to achieve a sustainable future for county of Staffordshire.
- To review SCC's current sustainability related strategies, completed projects and outcomes of a stakeholder workshop to assess progress to date, in order for SWM to provide an independent assessment outlining how SCC can fully embed sustainability across its operations and services in future.

Challenges

SCC recognises that the biggest challenges associated with embedding sustainable practice across the organisation is achieving coherence, coordination and integration. As with all local authorities, there are several departments containing staff from a variety of different backgrounds, along with some privatised services, meaning that at times it can be a challenge to involve each of these teams in the development of a new plan or project related to sustainability. The council's core sustainability team is small and cannot possibly keep up to date with everything going on across such a large authority.

As such, SWM was commissioned to help with this by bringing together members of the various teams into one place so that they could all feed in their ideas, perspectives and achievements to date around sustainability. We understood that time and resources are stretched so committing people to a date to attend the workshop was still a challenge and one of our roles was to make the event as appealing, important and accessible as possible.

SCC recognised SWM's ability in organising workshops and our experience in bringing stakeholders together. Despite the challenges, the workshop was a success and we applaud SCC's commitment to ensuring the integration of sustainable practices across the authority.



We also recognise that the issues with resourcing will make implementing actions around sustainability a challenge in the future. In our follow up report that we produced after the workshop, we have tried to provide realistic and practical recommendations that SCC can take forward, recognising that they cannot do it all.

The Outcome

Results

As a result of appointing SWM in this role, we were able to help reinvigorate the sustainability agenda with a view to developing a longer-term realistic plan of activity. Because of this project, the following achievements were realised:

- SWM produced sustainability criteria that SCC can use going forward; this includes the more common areas of activity, such as energy and transport, but also factors in social and economic aspects too.
- We identified a series of plans produced by SCC that are relevant to the sustainability agenda and have suggested a streamlining process to improve delivery.
- We were able to demonstrate existing good practice relating to sustainability and raise awareness of this across various teams who may have been unaware of the extent of activity beforehand. A total of 37 projects were identified.
- We were able to show that all of the sustainability metrics included in the criteria can fit in some way to SCC's 26 Commissioning Priorities, which will encourage buy-in in the future.
- SCC staff conveyed enthusiasm for the sustainability agenda, outlining 21 future project ideas that came from discussions at the workshop.
- As a result of the workshop and literature, we were able to provide SCC with a series of recommendations to consider when taking forward its sustainability related work. These included producing a new Sustainability and Resilience Action Plan, involving public health and

procurement teams in future discussions, working with partners, refreshing its carbon reduction targets and improving communications.

In the Future

As per our recommendations, the first step for SCC is to produce a new Sustainability and Resilience Plan that will capture future activity based on ideas given at the workshop. What we are keen to see is the Plan act as the catalyst to move the agenda forward across the authority. Ideally, the Plan should contain achievable,



realistic actions and it should also clearly demonstrate how those actions will be delivered across the whole authority, not just by the small sustainability team. This is a challenging task and one that will take time to get right, but SCC has demonstrated good practice in the past on this agenda and we are confident they can do so again – by using our newly developed criteria and recommendations!

The Extra's

Accolades

“We recognised the value of SWM in terms of their ability to convene high quality workshops and their knowledge and experience of wider sustainability issues. They were able to help us build on our work around this agenda in Staffordshire by bringing together and engaging with a number of SCC staff, giving us the remit to produce a series of integrated next steps. The success of the workshop was also due to SWM’s refreshing and engaging approach to facilitation and their subsequent recommendations were clear, honest and realistic.” – Rachel Melvin, Team Manager: Sustainability & Waste Strategy

Contact Details

For further information on the project or to work with us in one of a variety of ways, please contact the SWM team on 0121 237 5890 or enquiries@swm.org.uk.