Sustainability Forum, Council House, Birmingham

Monday 15th April 2013

Green Commission Vision Statement

The notes below are representations of the discussions that took place around the themed tables at the Sustainability Forum on the Green Commission's Vision Statement. Notes from the discussions have been summarised in tables and ordered by the themes that were assigned to individual groups on the evening. Themes included:

- Energy efficiency
- Energy
- Mobility
- Communities
- Planning
- Green Economy

The discussions were facilitated as follows:

1. Feedback on Green Vision Statement
2. What must we do to help achieve reduction/leading green city?
3. Choose two key things we must do. What are the barriers?
4. How could we overcome barriers?
5. Summary – feedback two key points, barriers and solutions.

The tables capture the above discussions under column headings of "General Feedback", "Barriers" and "Solutions" all of which will be considered for inclusion in the forthcoming Carbon Roadmap being produced for autumn 2013.

General feedback on Green Vision Statement (grouped into emerging themes)

Document and Vision
- The ambition is right but many cities claim to be green – what makes Birmingham different?
- Need a policy for innovation and geography planning
- Accounting system flawed – need to be aware of statistics as they do not take into account embedded energy
- Need to develop local leadership, not top down approach i.e. how to help local communities, needs to be owned and controlled locally
- LEP is crucial - should endorse this vision
- Document captures the opportunities to diversify.
- Pleased to see the change from "per capita" target to "total city" target.
- Birmingham can provide and encourage local buy in through this document.

General
- Promote role of innovation to lift technical barriers
- Takes a long time to make things happen
- Frustration with not making things happen
- Double edged dilemma of the scale of problem and the urgency – as per the Stern report.
- Serious practical projects required including on public buildings
- Presentation about the national picture focussed a lot on what needs to be done in the future; we should be making greater effort to tackle problems now

Green Infrastructure and Adaptation
- Does the vision address current impacts arising from climate change?
- Not enough about green open spaces, lots of community groups are doing some amazing work. The community is a massive resource that is being missed.
- The community Green Initiatives are not given enough focus in the vision. There are many great community initiatives but they are not being considered technical enough and are being ignored.
- Greater emphasis on adaptation and resilience.

Behaviour and attitudes
- Importance of education – schools/general public/behaviour change
- Birmingham is not celebrating green success
- Lack of trust in energy companies
- Need to improve the way the City sells itself
- Communication – selling the positives/early successes is important at all levels/audiences; needs to be done in an enthusiastic way.

Funding
- Sustainable Communities – need incentives, local investment bank
- Develop incentives for action (however difficult in public sector)
- Government policies do not come with investment – tend to lose out to international business.
- Private investment – local bonds – new instruments

Mobility

General Feedback	Barriers	Solutions
- Transport – uses energy to make cars. Need better, environmental ways to travel. - Stop worrying about being anti-car. - Inadequate bus travel - Electric cars are not a sufficient answer although electric bikes will be very useful.	- Too great an emphasis on big, expensive capital projects. Need to focus on daily journeys such as to work and door to door travel. - Personal safety on public transport- big deterrent.	- Reduce/remove general traffic in city core. - Transport planning should place greater emphasis on reducing traffic speeds, e.g. through shared spaces, rather than focussing solely on reducing traffic volumes - Oyster card – convenience and time ticket/pass. - Low emissions buses. More bus capacity and join up termini. - Cycling to be increased in city - Safe space for cyclists. - Cycle rent scheme in city centre - Rail stations to reopen. - More capacity and convenience for bus travel (and safety information).

Energy Efficiency

General Feedback	Barriers	Solutions
• Modifications done to green deal at local level • Make sure energy efficiency is done before generation to maximise efficiency and minimise excessive spend. Enforce energy hierarchy in retrofits and new developments. • Energy efficiency in buildings – need to lead by example	• BES – been a lot of problems. Don't think BES is successful and has alienated a lot of Birmingham residents. Assessments are not being lodged; BES is not getting back to people and problems with call centre. Trying to rush process through before the end of March 2013 has caused a lot of negativity. • Green Deal - horror stories relating to when you want to move but have a long term loan. Want Green Deal to offer a range of payments – most people don't want to pay for this through their bills. Not enough assessors and some are not very knowledgeable. Messages needs to be clearer • Hardly any houses without loft insulation now • Mentioned Super Homes website. • Social landlords – mechanisms for payment. Who pays and why? • Hiding behind money and technology • Knowledge and information gap for SMEs. • DECs are not enforced as they should be	• Use void properties when they are in between transfer of tenants. Set a minimum energy standard for the next tenant. 63,000 dwellings and 5,000 voids a year possible. Do it as part of re-decorating and making the properties fit for use. ECO funding and Green Deal could be used and linked to jobs. A C/D standard to be enforced. • In social housing – insulation, boilers, double glazing – social landlords need incentives. Protecting the fuel poor and vulnerable should be a priority. • PV - large housing stock in city. Negotiation with PV installers to rent out roofs and make money? Put PV on the Council House and tower blocks. City could negotiate with private sector. • Every building to have Display Energy Certificates. All public buildings should have them and the information should be put onto a central database for public knowledge. Data then used as part of a marketing campaign to get the high users to do take action. • BES contract allows for non-domestic properties – do all 450 schools as quickly as possible. • High intensity users – hospitals, public buildings. E.g. NHS, JLR engine plant, Smurfit Kappa – great opportunities. • Need more efficient insulation of walls and ways to measure thermal conductivity of walls. Maximum can do to houses is to make them zero carbon. • Fit more solid wall insulation – but consider need to balance visual appearance and energy efficiency. Train people to fit cladding so it looks like the house next door. Have external cladding on the rear of houses and internal cladding on the front. • Replace halogen lights with LED lights and use compact fluorescent light bulbs.

	- Some boilers have suffered corrosion and burners rusted through so people don't want to give up their reliable, old, but less efficient boilers. Bosch are testing a new combined heat and power boiler. - Sourcing new technology from this country – some smaller companies are finding this difficult. - Colleges not providing the right people. - Fitting internal cladding can be disruptive and it reduces the size of rooms and is expensive. Can have problems with terraced houses if not all owners want it.	- Hard to treat properties have most benefits. - People's Understanding/Awareness – a lot of people need basic training in how to read a meter and use their central heating system properly as well as effective DIY for efficiency. Improve education – students/adults/installers/supply chain - Awareness raising – educate children from a young age/have school road shows - Need to improve training and exposure to new technologies. Apprenticeships/sponsoring students. - Knowledge and information for tenants on what they can do. Decent Homes Standards – local policy on housing quality to be changed for energy efficiency. - Property energy certificates to be online - BES – improve call centre and contact problems. Need to give feedback on why assessment/EPC not been lodged.

Energy

General Feedback	Barriers	Solutions
- Nuclear power is not affordable, safe or sustainable - Use of pellets in biomass boilers. - Need to create the market - Supermarkets are changing and exploring renewable energy investment of £600k looking at sources such as ground source heating under car parks	- Investment and funding arrangements are complex for citizens to get involved with. - Not enough funding to get the step change required. - Lack of widespread understanding of the big issues and why urgent action is required and what it means for people and businesses of Birmingham	- Need to consider community funding e.g. community ownership. Need new models of investments and groups/communities - Sewers will need to be renewed – opportunity to collect heat and nutrients. Concept of Birmingham thermal ring discussed. Energy is currently imported to Birmingham. How much energy could be generated in the City? - Collaboration is key across various companies as combination of skills and technologies is required - Council needs to treat waste as a resource - Energy efficiency schemes to be promoted (e.g. insulate buildings,…), then need to consider how to generate energy more efficiently (e.g. use waste). Council to lead on energy consumption reduction - Need to change people's habits - Incentivisation is key. Need to encourage/promote public engagement (PR) - Need to think of ways the public could invest - Need to have information on how to save energy on the Council website - Publicise (lack of trust in Council) - Engage communities most affected; younger generation will be most affected by 2050. Engage students (will lead to job creation) - Move from individualism to collective - Need innovative finance (Birmingham citizen to set up a Co-operative?) - Allowable solutions" (eg offsetting, carbon trading) should be considered, but need to be able to demonstrate how Birmingham will benefit from whatever solutions/interventions are agreed.

Green Economy

General Feedback	Barriers	Solutions/what needs to be done
• Green economy is increased productivity/value of good going up • Decarbonisation • Equalities issue best and worst health reduced • It becomes the main economy and involves employers and employees in more sustainable processes • Product life spans to be reviewed • Different range of providers at local networks •	• Centralised economy is a barrier • Waste management – not seen as an issue; green waste is paid for similar to schemes in USA. • Problem is capacity issue of the authority – visible absence at senior management teer at BCC. Capacity shortage at these levels relating to scale and urgency. • Do we need a new delivery vehicle?	• Birmingham to take the lead in its local economy • Explore decentralisation of the banking system • Decentralised finance – no barriers in principle. Or work with banks to obtain favourable business loan rates • District energy implementation • Planning policies – proactive planning proper technical resource to assist businesses and ensure that bids stand up Green procurement • Energy efficiency in non-domestic buildings – identify stock (become a broker) landlords are blockage – business break rates. Bundle a range of properties with low pay-back to encourage investment • Top level commitment – political commitment, senior management. • Deliverables and accountable – published • Public sector and community sector partnership – a new delivery vehicle • Scale – local authority should direct the green economy • Remember fairness, social justice at all scales • Celebrate local successes – "bright sparks" • Drive behavioural change Birmingham to work with businesses to get its objectives and outputs written into delivery of services in international companies to explore local skills. • Review waste management explore best re-use - increase recyclables in food, compost etc. explore community composting

Planning

General Feedback	Barriers	Solutions
• Icknield Port Loop – good example of sustainable development, focussing on broader environmental/quality of life enhancements rather than just on houses/built environment – eg pleasant green spaces, improving connectivity to the city centre for walking and cycling via canal network improvements. • What does sustainable development mean for Birmingham? This needs to be defined, e.g. within Your Green and Healthy City SPD. • Must have cost effective, energy effective and space effective solutions • Future proofing of development/communities is essential, to avoid sterilising the potential for communities, current or future, to become more sustainable. We need to ensure that new development has capability to link to district heating schemes that may be established in the future, or adapt to future sustainable development advances. Important to ensure that high speed internet connections can be accessed now or when they are available in the future. • Encourage innovative developments – ways to avoid cherry picking by developers	• Education – improving awareness and understanding is essential, through good communication. • Financial viability • More emphasis on undertaking difficult actions now; it's unfair to load future generations with delivering the solutions. • Leadership required – politicians and (Council) officers. • How is value measured – should not focus just on economic value; social and environmental accounting are required too.	• Use LDOs to alter/influence the market to become more innovative; be innovative with spatial planning/current mechanisms to secure sustainable development objectives. Use to secure development which requires higher environmental standards, but has reduced uncertainty/risk for developers. Housing Action Plans – another tool to be considered – use of Action Areas as a focus for regeneration. • Solid wall insulation (e.g. for late 19th/early 20th century terraces) – important measure from an energy efficiency point of view – but there can be problems with planning because of visual impact issues (e.g. impact on front elevations of properties in conservation areas). Need to make it easier for entire streets/terraces to get involved collectively with BES. • New housing that the City will require (up to 80k new homes by 2031) needs to be carbon neutral. It needs to demonstrate the highest environmental standards – in design, GI provision, building techniques, resource use etc, and require high standards of energy efficiency during occupancy (householders need to be educated about behaviour that will maximise the benefits derived from energy efficiency measure installed in new homes). • Integrated/holistic approach to planning. • Short term – we need to play to/promote Birmingham's advantages/strengths in terms of development opportunities; long term – we need to change the market to favour Birmingham's situation.

		- There need to be mechanisms to guard against cherry picking by developers (i.e. to stop developers building only in prime locations and building expensive (profitable) units) – to avoid development which suits developers, but is not what Birmingham needs. - High density housing should be encouraged, but should be innovatively designed to create a sense of community and space, and should be low carbon. - Should not cherry pick with regeneration either – too much focus on economic development at the expense of social and environmental/sustainable regeneration, need to re-balance and re-focus to consider ecosystems services. - Car-free developments in the Netherlands – scope for a similar approach in Birmingham? Development built around GI and car-free transport networks – but who would pay for the GI/transport infrastructure in advance of development? - Need to look at the feasibility of bringing unused rail lines back into passenger use, and increasing capacity of city centre stations (Bordesley Chord). - Retro-fit car-free developments - in association with re-opening rail lines and improving pedestrian and cycle routes. - Support industry (which is the base of Birmingham's economic development and regeneration) to change and become more sustainable.

Community

General Feedback	Barriers	Solutions
• Community hardly mentioned in the Vision Statement. • More on social justice and fairness • More effort needed to engage and educate people (all audiences – businesses, schools, families), to communicate ideas, enthuse and encourage action – especially long term action). • Social agenda evidence; the "who" or "where" – i.e. who is going to do these actions, and where will specific actions be targeted? • Value green contributions community groups are already making. Community contributions and being able to measure and present it, it's not in the document to measure it. • Local co-operatives (circular economy) • To be more people focused – importance of quality of life • Value work from Community Groups to be acknowledged (however difficult to measure hence need more support and financial help)	• Too many technical fixes, ignoring the softer things like Green Space-barrier to community development. • Behaviour-Same effort needs to be given by the Council and put into collecting community activity as what is put into carbon emissions. They need to document this activity and publicize it, e.g. Big Dig needs more support or we won't make a difference. Needs dedicated post. • People involved and money • Better communication required	• Enhance people's lives – make unemployed people active - a contractual obligation to employ more local community groups to be involved with the bigger technical projects. • Provide a funding stream similar to BEP fund; bringing small community groups together with council bodies to bid for this fund. • Fair, prosperous and just – social values – Social Value Act • Green procurement – e.g. KPI of BES to be replicated. • Local cooperative/community ownership models • Green marketing/inspiring local action success stories. Communicate success stories – Council to give same officer support to community activities as it gives to energy. Share experiences of what is already happening (Green "YouTube" channel? Improve people's understanding of issues, challenges and solutions. • LEP role all infrastructure decisions - Investment corporations and banking community are absent – community local economic development • Spatial priority map (zones/areas of the city) for interventions is required to have clear understanding of how policy will be translated into project delivery/tangible actions. • Council needs to value worth - they need to do what they can for community groups, supporting them and measure what they are doing and be more joined up in their thinking. • Technology can be measured - community aspect can be measured - it needs to be worked on and taken further. • Take a leaf from Camden measure community social capital in the area-Measure all these things in surveys.