



greencities

AN INVITATION TO JOIN AN ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIP

2009

Preface

A municipality has many functions and has to service many different people, in many different areas, every day. One of those areas is the environment, which presents us with two major tasks: first, our responsibility to make sure that citizens, enterprises, and we ourselves, are always in compliance with existing legislation; second, our duty to continuously plan ahead and always be prepared to deal with environmental issues. In general, solutions and decisions should be made so as to avoid environmental problems altogether. This is perhaps our greatest and most important task.

In 2000 a handful of municipalities agreed that visionary ideas on how to solve day to day environmental tasks would work better if we joined forces. This is how the environmental partnership Dogme 2000 - now Green Cities - came into existence. In 2006 two more municipalities joined our ranks - including one Swedish municipality - so maybe the idea is not so bad after all?

Cooperation commitment

Being a Green Cities municipality means showing commitment. It is not just a social arrangement, even though we do enjoy each other's company. We set high standards for our projects, and we subject our work to an official audit every year. This allows all members to see which areas seem to be successful, and which areas will need extra attention the following year.

We are not in competition with each other, but we do like a friendly banter with each other if the work does not progress as planned. All municipalities that want to make a special effort to improve the environment are eligible for joining the Green Cities.

I hope this Presentation will give you an idea of the many different aspects of Green Cities, and that it will inspire you to join us as a Green Cities municipality.

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Finn Stengel Petersen

Chairmann of the Green Cities partnership
Herning Kommune

Once upon a time...

The idea to join forces in improving the environment emerged from the municipalities of Albertslund, Ballerup and Copenhagen. These three municipalities agreed that efforts on municipal environmental areas needed a boost, and that together, we would stand stronger. This was the birth of the cooperation. Soon after, the municipalities of Fredericia and Herning joined in, then Kolding and Swedish Malmö and in 2009 Allerød have also become a member.

Environmental cooperation commitment

The Green Cities framework has been set up in a common agreement, in which the member municipalities have stated a number of environmental goals. This cooperation agreement has been politically adopted and includes 10 sustainability areas and 16 common benchmarks for how and when the goals will have been fulfilled.

Keeping the wheels turning is not free

Green Cities municipalities with less than 100,000 inhabitants pay an annual of DKK 55,000, while municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants pay DKK 110,000 per year. We need the money to finance working group activities, conferences, newsletters, our web-site and other information activities.

The 10 sustainability areas



Earth

We want to improve the quality of our earth so as to ensure our health.



Noise

We want to remove damaging noise from all buildings and public spaces.



Groundwater

We want the quality of our drinking water to be so good that only simple water treatment is needed. Groundwater consumption should follow its natural recharge rate.



Chemicals

We want to stop all use and emission of substances and products that are damaging to health and environment.



Air

We want to stop air pollution.



Waste

We want to implement waste management methods that do not strain the environment.



The climate

We want to make energy consumption CO₂ neutral.



Municipal planning

We want to include sustainability principles and environmental stress assessment as a natural part of all municipal planning activities.



The countryside

The Danish countryside offers rich and varied possibilities for adventure. We want to manage countryside areas through ecological principles, ensuring as much biodiversity as possible.



Anchorage

We want to encourage citizens, companies and public authorities to act environmentally conscious and show commitment to sustainable environment development.

Common benchmarks

- We want to reduce domestic water consumption to a maximum of 100L /day per inhabitant before 2012
- We want to manage municipal agricultural areas according to ecological principles
- We want to stop the use of pesticides on municipal areas and we want to influence citizens, companies and farmers to stop using pesticides in general
- We want to reduce air pollution and we want to comply with NO₂ and particular air-pollution limits by 2015
- We want to reduce CO₂ emissions by 25 per cent compared to 2006 by 2015
- We want to stop loss of biodiversity by 2010, and by 2015, we want to have increased the number of prioritized species
- We want all municipal food to be organic. At least 75 per cent of our food should be organic by 2012
- We want to have reduced the number of buildings with damaging noise by 2015, so that no citizen should be exposed to damaging noise in their homes at night
- We want to establish and implement an environmentally progressive purchasing policy that includes specific environmental targets
- We want to phase out municipal use of the 13 most dangerous chemicals that have been pointed out by the Green Cities municipalities. A specification on municipal usage should be finished by 2010
- We will deposit a maximum of 5 per cent waste per year by 2015
- We want to develop common sustainability guidelines within the road construction and building sector
- We want all municipal institutions to be environmentally certified by 2015. New Green Cities members must work out a plan for full environmental certification and have all measures implemented within a period of 10 years.
- We want to implement and support targeted activities aimed at ensuring cooperation with citizens.
- We want to strengthen environmental efforts that go beyond legal requirements through formal cooperation with the business community.
- We want to include sustainability in all policies and service areas.

If you want to peek over our shoulder...

It is possible to obtain observer status for 6-12 months. Within that period, observers may participate in the Directors Group and Steering Committee meetings as well as other arrangements, such as the spring and autumn conferences. You only have to pay your own travelling expenses.

This is how we have organised ourselves

Green Cities has become a complex organisation that involves a lot of people. To keep track of it all, we have organised ourselves in the following way:

The Steering Committee is our primary decision-making body. This is where political, organisational and financial decisions that affect all aspects of the Green Cities partnership are made. The Steering Committee is composed of one local government politician and one senior municipal officer from each municipality. The Steering Committee holds meetings four times a year.

The Directors Group functions as a filter for the Steering Committee. This group will screen all cases to be considered at Green Cities level and decide whether to transfer them to the Steering Committee. The Directors Group is composed of one or two senior municipal officers from each municipality. They hold meetings five-six times a year, and four of those meetings are held just before the Steering Committee meetings.

The Working Groups typically consist of a representative from each municipality. Participating in the Green Cities working groups is voluntary. Meetings are held typically four times a year. There may also be additional telephone meetings.

We take turns at the chairmanship

The Green Cities partners take turns at the chairmanship, which lasts for a period of two years. In 2008 and 2009 the municipality of Herning will be holding the chairmanship, headed by Mr Finn Stengel Petersen, who is chairman of the Technical and Environmental Committee in Herning. His main responsibilities will be to lay down the line for partnership cooperation and to chair the Steering Committee meetings.

The chairing municipality is responsible for the Secretariat

In addition to the responsibilities that follow from the chairmanship, the chairing municipality is also responsible for the administrative functions of the Green Cities Secretariat. It is the responsibility of the Secretariat to convene meetings in the Directors Group as well as in the Steering Committees, to draw up agendas, complete minutes of meetings, keep the web-site updated, publish newsletters and other information concerning Green Cities, and answer general questions concerning the partnership.

You can contact Ms Hanne Ellgaard at the Green Cities Secretariat on tel. +45 96 28 81 55 or by e-mail: info@miljokommunerne.dk. There are some materials available in English.

The working Groups in Green Cities

The majority of our knowledge sharing activities are carried out within the working groups. Presently, there are five of them:

The Working Group on Organic Food has developed a model which has made it simple to register how much organic food is used in all municipally run kitchens. Based on this model, the municipalities have now completed their third registration round.

Ms Annemette Bargum
Municipality of Fredericia
tebg@fredericiakom.dk

The Working Group on Sustainable Construction has drawn up a set of guidelines for sustainable construction, which all Green Cities municipalities have joined.

Mr Erik Karup
Municipality of Herning
ejdek@herning.dk

The Working Group on Climate will concentrate on sharing knowledge on working out and implementing climate plans, producing exhibition material and increase public awareness on the Green Cities members' climate efforts.

Ms Trine Baarstrøm
Municipality of Ballerup
tba@balk.dk

The Working Group on Sustainable Purchasing study environmental requirements for public purchases in more detail.

Ms Bente Møller Jessen
Municipality of Kolding
bmje@kolding.dk

The Working Group on Chemicals will be making a plan for phasing out the most environmentally dangerous chemicals and a priority list for this process.

Ms Lisbet Kjærsgaard
Municipality of Kolding
lick@kolding.dk

The Working Group on nature will be making a plan for how to measure retrogression and increase of biodiversity in the nature.

Ms Inger Birkebæk Madsen
Municipality of Kolding
inbm@kolding.dk

There is also a group exchanging experiences of environmental certificates

EU-project has expanded its environmental working scope

In 2004, the municipalities of Albertslund, Ballerup, Fredericia, Herning and Copenhagen received a grant from the EU Life-programme, worth DKK 7.5m. The grant was used for supporting and developing the partnership, based on the theme "Environmental Management at City Level". To ensure that project results can also be used in a European context outside Denmark, two external partners have been attached to the project - Sialai in Lithuania and Neumünster in Germany. The Life-project was completed by the end of 2007.

Reporting

The Life-project results have been presented in a manual. Containing a selection of specific tools and models, this manual is meant to inspire and activate other municipalities to start making an extra effort to preserve the environment.

If you would like to know more about the Life-project, you are welcome to visit www.dogme2000.org/life.

Carbon network - a Climate-project

Green Cities has in 2009, in corporation with the Danish Association of Municipalities, applied EU for a grant to the project "Carbon network". A project to optimize climate-effort on industries in the eight member-municipalities with heavy energy-consumption.

New website

The website offers factual information on Green Cities. Here you will find information on members of the Steering Committee and Directors Groups, and the Green Cities working groups. The website also contains coverage from fairs which the Green Cities municipalities participate in and coverage of our spring and autumn conferences. Unfortunately, the web-site is available in Danish only.

The Secret Files

We have chosen to reserve a small part of the web-site for members only - our archives. This is where we keep our minutes of meetings and other working papers. In this way we are able to work with our results and present them to the public at our own pace.

www.miljokommunerne.dk

greennews

The Green Cities municipalities publish a newsletter - the Green Cities News - four times a year. This newsletter brings both fixed columns and journalistic articles about good stories on environmental work in the Green Cities municipalities.

The Green Cities Secretariat is also the Green Cities News editor.

Themes for cooperation

In 2008 the Steering Committee adopted an action plan for the Green Cities partnership for the next two years. The action plan will focus on the special Green Cities focus areas for the two-year period. This includes climate, knowledge sharing and communication.

Climate

The Green Cities partnership agreement contains ambitious climate targets, such as a 25 per cent CO₂ reduction by 2015 compared to levels in 2006. All Green Cities municipalities have put climate on their agenda and have implemented plans and projects to that end, and progress will be followed closely.

Knowledge Sharing

If we want success in cooperating across municipal borders, it is important that we all share our knowledge. Because our municipalities are so different, it does not take long to realise that each of us have knowledge which others may benefit from. It feels good to know that you do not have to start from scratch every time you face a problem or want to start up something new. Instead, you can call a colleague in another municipality who has experience from a similar problem or task.

Currently, our most established knowledge sharing forums are the working groups and the biannual conferences.

Knowledge sharing has become a Green Cities theme because we need to “keep the pot boiling”. We need to be diligent in sharing the knowledge we have, and we must explore new ways of improving knowledge sharing processes.

Communication

Communication is an important tool in an effective collaboration effort between municipalities across the country. For this reason and to increase public awareness about the partnership, Green Cities has extra focus on both internal and external communication.

Keeping busy...

Every year, the environmental efforts of the Green Cities municipalities are subjected to external audits. We do this to ensure progress in municipal efforts, and to ensure that each member lives up to the Green Cities targets. So the audits are not really used to compare results between the members, but to make sure that each member does its best to maintain and improve their environmental approach.

The audit reports are publicly available and you can find them on www.miljokommunerne.dk under the Revision link. (Only available in Danish)

Testing audit methods

The Life-project has opened up possibilities for testing new audit methods. Instead of auditing all of the environmental areas in each municipality, it will now be tested whether it is possible to perform audits at theme levels. Working at theme level with areas such as organic food provides the opportunity for auditing efforts at a greater number of organisational levels than a general audit would otherwise give. It is, however, only possible for municipalities to choose theme audits every second year. This is to ensure that it will still be possible to monitor the general development within environmental efforts.