

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 4 February 2021

**Title:** Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2021

**Report of:** Ian Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Planning and Regeneration

**Cabinet member:** Cllr Matthew Bird, Cabinet member for sustainability

**Ward(s):** All

**Purpose of report:** To agree the strategy and action plan to deliver against the Council's climate emergency declaration and net zero targets agreed in 2019

**Decision type:** Key

**Officer recommendation(s):** (1) To approve the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2021 and Action Plan set out in Appendix 1 and 2.

(2) To require the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Planning and Regeneration to produce an annual progress report detailing the council and district carbon footprints, and progress against the action plan in September each year.

(3) To note the 'Summary of Engagement Responses' report at Appendix 3.

**Reasons for recommendations:** To progress the aims of the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration (2019) to make the Council Net Zero Carbon by 2030 and to assist the same aim to be achieved within the wider district.

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## **1 Introduction**

1.1 This report seeks Cabinet's consideration of three documents: The Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2021; Action Plan and Sustainability Indicators; and a Summary of Engagement Responses received during consultation and engagement on the draft strategy during summer and autumn 2020.

- 1.2 The strategy has been produced following the Climate Emergency declaration made at Full Council in July 2019 and sets out the Council's corporate and district wide strategy and vision for a net zero carbon district by 2030.

The visions and actions contained within the strategy have been developed in response to the urgency of the climate emergency being faced. The strategy will enable the Council to work with the community to co-ordinate its response into meaningful and long-lasting action.

With limited financial resources the Council needs to ensure it prioritises the right actions to have a lasting positive impact on the district in relation to carbon reduction, sustainability and a green economic recovery. To this end effective partnerships must be enabled so that opportunities for external funding and support are identified.

The Corporate Plan prioritises Sustainability and Community Wealth Building. Community wealth building is a key part of the sustainability strategy and forms part of action area 7 Circular Economy and Community Wealth. The Council is considered 'an anchor institution' and can use its substantial spending power and influence to drive investment into the local economy to enable a green economic recovery and local job creation and retention. Community wealth is a thread that runs throughout the climate change and sustainability strategy particularly in relation to procurement but also training and skills. The action plan and strategy refer directly to the 'Reimagining Lewes District Action Plan' that was subject to a cabinet paper in December 2020.

- 1.3 The Council originally aimed to adopt a full strategy by July 2020. With the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdown in mid-March, requiring the council to focus on practical community response activities, it quickly became clear that the production of the strategy was going to be impacted.

Reduced staffing and partnership capacity due to emergency work in particular impacted upon our ability to perform the appropriate engagement that was needed. However, that work has now been undertaken enabling this report to be considered by Cabinet.

- 1.4 The pandemic and lockdown has been mentally and financially challenging for many residents as well as the Council and its staff. However it has also had some positive environmental and social impacts such as: improved air quality; an appreciation of carless streets; increasing appreciation of local nature, renewed interest in cycling and walking; and an improved sense of community cohesion as society has very quickly pulled together for the greater good.

There is an opportunity to harness the positives of this situation and determine how best to take these on into the future. The Council's strategic approach can now build on these positives and work not to revert to the 'old business as

usual'. A new impetus can be given to the sustainability agenda by encouraging support for a sustainable restart and economic recovery. The potential for a new Food Partnership is a good example of this. It had not been a priority workstream for the Council but the pandemic showed how vulnerable we are regarding food supplies and food poverty so the need to support such a partnership has risen up the agenda very quickly and the Council will now work closely with SCDA and others as they set up the partnership.

Some outcomes of the pandemic, which could have taken years of encouragement to develop, have come together over days during this crisis.

This change in attitude and behaviour has been demonstrated by the whole workforce of the Council as they have become more flexible as to their working arrangements in order to enable the corporate Recovery and Reset programme, carry out day to day business as well as progress sustainability actions. The council will need to monitor how these changes affect staff wellbeing as well as district wide carbon emissions.

One action that became clear earlier in the year was the need to produce new Planning Policy Technical Advice Notes (TANs) on sustainability subjects including Biodiversity Net Gain. These TANs have been developed over the last few months and are presented for approval on the agenda of this same Cabinet meeting.

## **2 The Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy and Summary of Engagement Responses**

- 2.1 Three documents have been brought forward for approval by Cabinet. The strategy itself sets the framework to decarbonise the Council's own operations and how we will work in partnership with the community to deliver the Net Zero Carbon by 2030 target. The second is the action plan to deliver the strategy and the initial set of indicators that will be used to measure progress; and thirdly a summary of the engagement work undertaken and how it has influenced the development of the strategy.

### **Appendix 1 and Appendix 2: Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2021 and Action Plan**

The full strategy sets the policy framework supported by an evidence base and action plan to deliver against the net zero target. It includes a summary of the pathway analysis conducted by carbon consultants, Anthesis, using the SCATTER tool and illustrates the scope of the challenge faced and the opportunity the council has, to facilitate change and lead by example.

The strategy contains summaries of both the district-wide and Council's own carbon baselines and it also details the vision for Lewes district in 2030 that builds upon the council's Corporate Plan objectives.

The full baseline reports were reported at Cabinet in July 2020 and can be found at [www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/climatechange](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/climatechange)

An action plan accompanies the strategy which sets out more detail on the work required to deliver the vision along with a suite of indicators to demonstrate progress. Some indicators are still in development and will be finalised over the coming months.

It is acknowledged that Lewes District Council is at the beginning of a significant journey that will involve changing the way people think about and operate assets, and how the council works with and enables the community to deliver projects. The strategy does not usurp the multitude of work streams already being delivered by our communities, or indeed the council, but hopefully brings this together under a shared vision and ambition to meet the challenges and develop the opportunities posed by the 2030 target.

It should be noted that some areas are at an early stage of development. Through annual reporting, the public and Members will be kept up to date on evolving workstreams and the benefits they will bring to the district.

## 2.2 **Appendix 3: The Summary of Engagement Responses**

The proposed strategy and vision has been developed in partnership with the Expert Panel and the Climate Change Scrutiny Panel, a cross-party panel of councillors over the months July-October 2020. This engagement period utilised a draft framework strategy (approved by Cabinet July 2020) containing baseline information and proposed goals to focus facilitated workshops on each action area with key 'experts'. The first Climate Action Forum was held in October and was also used to publicise a public response to the framework questions.

The survey was completed online but was available in word format and passed accessibility criteria for reading software.

In terms of the expert panels we worked with 36 individuals from 33 different organisations based or working within East Sussex and the district, these included the County Council, other district and borough councils, wildlife charities and trusts, community groups and organisations, both Brighton and Sussex University, community interest companies and individual specialists and sustainability practitioners.

In addition to the panel workshops the council received back 38 completed surveys to the framework and had around 70 people attended the first virtual Climate Action Forum.

In total this represents input from around 140 people and organisations.

## **3 Resources to deliver the action plan**

3.1 In the action plan (Appendix 1-part 3 Action Plan) it has been indicated what resources will be required to deliver the various actions in the strategy. In many

instances it is stated that the work will be undertaken within existing staff resources. This work is being progressed through the following;

- An internal Officer Working Group has been established to co-ordinate projects to deliver Net Zero by 2030. This is attended by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Planning and Regeneration, Ian Fitzpatrick.
- A dedicated Strategy and Partnership Lead for Sustainability (shared with Eastbourne Borough Council), to manage delivery of the strategy and action plan both internally and borough wide.
- Through the Decarbonising Our Housing Stock project, a Community Development and Sustainability Specialist is being appointed to undertake tenant engagement work.

3.2 In addition to staff, other resources will be required to enable the delivery of the strategy. Given the challenging financial climate being experienced by the council, a variety of approaches are planned to fund this work.

- The majority of capital funding for decarbonisation projects will be from existing budgets where the intention will be to direct spend towards low carbon options. As the Asset Management Plan is currently being determined, the action plan reflects the need to assess assets on a case by case basis. Any additional capital bids will be made on an invest to save basis
- Competitive funding grants applications will be pursued as and when they become available. An example of this is the recent bid made to the Net Zero Innovation Fund for a research project on alternative finance.
- Non-competitive grants, such as those for Electric Vehicle Charge-points currently available through OLEV, will also be assessed for suitability and applications made where appropriate.
- £500,000 has been allocated to the Decarbonising Our Housing Stock (DOHS) project that will run through to 2024, overseen by a project board that includes the Cabinet Members for Sustainability and Housing. The DOHS project has multiple objectives within the themes of stock analysis, solution development, supply chain development and tenant engagement. The project will enable the primary outcome to decarbonise all the council's housing stock by 2030.

## **4 Financial appraisal**

4.1 The Council expects that there will be resource implications to deliver its Climate Change challenge, and in the current financial climate post COVID-19, it is not possible to confirm where and when this funding will be available. A major part of the Council's role will be to seek external resources, partnership working, lobby for policy and regulatory changes to support investment in the right infrastructure to achieve the Council's Net Zero Carbon by 2030.

4.2 Most of the capital funding for decarbonisation projects will be from existing budgets and given the cost estimates, implementing the Council's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2021 cannot be fully delivered from the existing Council resources alone. Therefore, any additional budget required to

achieve the targets will need to be approved in the usual way through the Council's Budget/Financial Planning process.

## **5 Legal implications**

5.1 Approval of the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy is an executive function and therefore a matter for Cabinet.

5.2 The Council's duties and powers in relation to climate change and sustainability have been detailed in previous reports to Cabinet on this subject, for example the report considered on 10 February 2020.

*Lawyer consulted 04.01.21*

*Legal ref: 009826-LDC-OD*

## **6 Risk management implications**

6.1 Failure to agree and progress the strategy could impact upon the Council achieving its net zero goals. Delaying action will make actions financially more costly, potentially increasing the requirement for carbon offsetting.

## **7 Equality analysis**

7.1 An Equality analysis has been undertaken on these proposals. This has concluded that;

Improved responses to the impacts of climate change and reducing carbon emissions will generate co-benefits such as improved air quality, and this would generally be positive for all residents in the borough. It was noted also that children will be the owners of our legacy of carbon emissions, and that we have a duty to do what we can to reduce these as soon as possible.

Potentially, vulnerable residents may be more susceptible to the impacts of climate change. For groups such as the elderly, low-income households and those with certain underlying health conditions, tackling climate change is particularly positive. The strategy itself includes actions which will assist different need, including those least able to pay for home improvements to reduce their energy bills, enabling them to cope better with unpredictability of energy prices.

## **8 Environmental sustainability implications**

8.1 The strategy is key to delivering the net zero goals of Lewes District Council by 2030.

It will seek to ensure that carbon implications are taken into account throughout the Council and in all decisions.

Implementation of actions to achieve carbon neutrality is key to mitigate the predicted negative impacts of climate change on the environment, economy and communities.

## 9 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2021
- Appendix 2 - Action Plan and Sustainability Indicators
- Appendix 3 – Summary of engagement responses (2020)

## 10 Background papers

The background papers used in compiling this report were as follows:

- **Baseline reports-** [www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/climatechange](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/climatechange)
- [Sustainability Policy](#)
- [Lewes District Council Full Council July 2019- Declaration of Climate Emergency](#)
- [Lewes District Council Cabinet July 2020- Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy Framework](#)
- [Lewes District Council Cabinet December 2020- Community wealth building](#)