

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

14 JANUARY 2016

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Environment – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mike Smith

ENVIRONMENT POLICY

1. Summary

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is committed to environmental improvement and sustainability, demonstrated by significant performance in areas such as carbon reduction, waste management, energy efficiency and green infrastructure. Sustainability features heavily in many of our plans and strategies, such as our Social Value Policy, in order to ensure the highest standards when delivering projects and services. Despite policies in previous years we do not currently have an adopted Environment Policy statement in place under which our adopted strategies, plans and processes should sit. This policy revises, and brings together, our priorities under environment and sustainability.

This policy provides the framework for our actions across the organisation to improve environmental performance, the guiding principles and objectives for our decisions, and will steer the work of the organisation on a number of key priorities. An Environment Policy allows us to evidence the actions we are delivering to improve the environment, demonstrates a public commitment to the wider environment and sets the standard to our partners and contractors in placing environmental performance at the heart of service delivery. A range of services across the Council have contributed to its development through consultation before review by the Policy Officers Group.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet note the report and the rationale for a new Environment Policy, and approve the attached policy.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To ensure Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has an adopted framework for our actions across the organisation to improve environmental performance. It will provide the guiding principles and objectives for our environmental decisions, operations and plans, and strengthens the ability to maintain good environmental performance from contractors, suppliers and partner organisations.

4. **Members' Interests** (the text below is fixed and should not be altered by the author, however, extensive guidance on the Members' Code of conduct is available to officers if required)

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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CABINET DECISION

ENVIRONMENT POLICY

SUMMARY

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is committed to environmental improvement and sustainability, demonstrated by significant performance in areas such as carbon reduction, waste management, energy efficiency and green infrastructure. Sustainability features heavily in many of our plans and strategies, such as our Social Value Policy, in order to ensure the highest standards when delivering projects and services. However, we do not currently have an adopted Environment Policy statement in place under which our adopted strategies, plans and processes should sit.

This policy provides the framework for our actions across the organisation to improve environmental performance, the guiding principles and objectives for our decisions, and will steer the work of the organisation on a number of key priorities. An Environment Policy allows us to evidence the actions we are delivering to improve the environment, demonstrates a public commitment to the wider environment and sets the standard to our partners and contractors in placing environmental performance at the heart of service delivery. A range of services across the Council have contributed to its development through consultation before review by the Policy Officers Group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet note the report and the rationale for a new Environment Policy and approve the attached policy.

DETAIL

1. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is committed to environmental improvement and sustainability and this is demonstrated through a variety of strategic and operational commitments ranging from the significant investment and performance in areas such as waste and recycling to the progress we have made, and the challenging targets we have set ourselves, on carbon reduction and climate change through initiatives such as Climate Local.
2. In terms of setting out what we will deliver to improve our performance on environment and sustainability, we have good, demonstrable evidence of our commitment, such as through the Borough's Greenhouse Gas Emissions report, our new adopted Affordable Warmth Strategy and the Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan. A new overarching Environment Strategy is due to be presented to Cabinet in March 2016.

3. As a Council, we are signatories to a number of commitments, possess adopted strategies and action plans in place to deliver improvement and have good partnership arrangements in place to further deliver on this agenda. We also possess a strong sustainability element as part of our Social Value Policy in order to obtain sustainability gain as part of the procurement process and this significant area of spend. However, we do not currently have an adopted Environment Policy statement in place under which the adopted strategies, plans and processes should sit.
4. This policy statement will provide the framework for our actions across the organisation to improve environmental performance. It provides the guiding principles and objectives for our decisions, operations and plans and will steer the work of the organisation to the priority areas listed. Thus not only does it guide what we do but just as importantly it will determine the actions that we don't do. By restricting the actions that we undertake we avoid unnecessary tasks in the pursuit of our objectives, thus saving time and resources. Adopted policies also have the ability to raise awareness and these will ensure that environment, sustainability, sustainable procurement, climate change and good carbon and energy management is considered 'everyone's business' in the organisation. We also expect that any organisation working on our behalf, either contracted or otherwise, to abide by this policy.
5. We have set out a number of key environmental and sustainability themes as priorities, which are embedded in our Council Plan and Service Plans, and which officers and partners have contributed to developing. It is now prudent for us to adopt an Environment Policy as while we can evidence the actions we are delivering to improve the environment, in the event that we are asked to evidence what our policy is on the environment, climate change, resource use for example, we cannot currently provide a policy statement setting out the organisations agreed and adopted priorities.
6. We currently include environmental and sustainability criteria in our tender process and our Social Value Policy priority 4 states that organisations we work with must "commit to protecting the environment, minimising waste and energy consumption and using other resources efficiently. These commitments will also apply to their supply chain." It would be prudent to have an adopted policy in place for our own organisation.
7. The critical aspect of adopting the policy is that it is underpinned by action. The Environment Policy Team have produced an Affordable Warmth strategy and action plan in September 2015, a new Climate Change Strategy and action plan is being presented to Cabinet on 14 January 2016 and an Environment Strategy will be presented to Cabinet on 23 March 2016. Other plans in place to deliver the policy include the Local Transport Plan, Social Value Policy, development of a Flood Risk Management Strategy and Green Infrastructure Strategy.
8. During consultation a range of service areas contributed to its development including Planning Development, Policy Improvement, Housing, Procurement and Governance, Highway Network and Flood Risk Management, Grounds Maintenance, Arboricultural Services, Urban Landscape, and Greenspace and Partnerships.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. There is no cost associated with the adoption of this policy. Delivery of underpinning strategies and action plans will have resource implications and these are evidenced in each individual strategy and plan. Furthermore, there are efficiencies to be made by implementing an Environment Policy and hence changing the way we do business, for example making us more energy efficient, reducing waste, and getting better value for money from our procurement decisions.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10. There are no legal implications associated with this decision.

RISK ASSESSMENT

11. The principal risk of adopting a policy is that actions to meet the objectives are not delivered, and no improvement is gained in performance. This could lead to a reputational risk and the Council perceived as signing up to commitments and not following them through. However, as described in section 3.1, under these five key themes we have good partnership arrangements in place, possess detailed action plans and are delivering measurable improvement.

COUNCIL PLAN THEMES

12. Economic Regeneration and Transport
Environment and Housing

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

13. This report is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

14. Environment and Housing Cabinet Member briefing, 7 December 2015.
Policy Officers Group 18 December 2015

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Education related?

No

Background Papers

Environment Policy statement

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

All wards

Property

Not applicable