

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17th March 2022

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION / KEY DECISION

Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mike Smith

Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32

1. Summary

Climate change poses a real threat to society and over time will impact on all residents of Stockton on Tees. Efforts to limit climate change by reducing carbon emissions and promoting environmental sustainability will need to be widespread and sustained. The Council delivers services which contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, Council policies set the parameters in which other companies and individuals act and which themselves impact on the environment, and the Council influences residents in ways which affect their environmental impact. In each of these aspects we aim to shape our policies and actions to make a positive difference.

For Stockton Borough Council, work on environmental sustainability is not new and much has already been achieved. Overall, between 2009/10 and 2019/20 the Council achieved a 57.6% reduction on its net greenhouse gas emissions. However, to play our part in achieving the UN Climate Change target of keeping global warming within 1.5°C, we must do a lot more.

The Environment Act 2021, defines a number of targets and commits the Government to setting additional targets across the priority areas of air quality, water, biodiversity, resource efficiency and waste reduction. It is expected that many of these targets will apply to the work of Local Government and our performance is likely to be monitored. Anticipating this, the proposed Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS) reflects the structure of the Act and sets out areas of work that might contribute to the achievement of national targets.

The suggested timeframe of the ES&CRS is 10 years, many scientist consider the next decade to be crucial, but our efforts to address climate change will need to continue over a much longer timeframe. The suggested approach is similar to that adopted by the Council in relation to the Equality Strategy; it seeks to influence and realign activity across the spectrum of Council Services, rather than pursue environmental sustainability and carbon reduction exclusively through isolated programmes of work.

It is clear that the national and international response to climate change needs to be fundamental and radical. In some aspects it is possible to calculate the potential costs of the changes that might be required, but in many the cost is not yet known.

The ES&CRS sets out the direction we should take and describes the actions that would contribute to the achievement of a set of overarching objectives. In some cases targets have already been quantified and can be adopted, but in many cases the setting of the timeframe within which objectives can be achieved, or the quantum of change we can deliver, is dependent on resources. In other words, we know which direction we should travel in, but we don't know how far and how fast we can travel.

Through the Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy, Stockton Council will commit to the principles and goals of carbon reduction and environmental improvements and undertake to pursue the resources necessary to achieve our objectives.

2. Recommendations

To approve the Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32

3. Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32 will provide a framework within which the Council will work to reduce its own emissions and also influence others to do so. The development of an ambitious environmental sustainability strategy was a priority identified in the 2020/21 Council Plan.

4. Members' Interests

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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SUMMARY

Climate change poses a real threat to society and over time will impact on all residents of Stockton on Tees. Efforts to limit climate change by reducing carbon emissions and promoting environmental sustainability will need to be widespread and sustained. The Council delivers services which contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, Council policies set the parameters in which other companies and individuals act and which themselves impact on the environment, and the Council influences residents in ways which affect their environmental impact. In each of these aspects we aim to shape our policies and actions to make a positive difference.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

To approve the Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32

DETAIL

1. Climate change and the contribution of greenhouse gases to that change is no longer in doubt. The impacts of more extreme weather are already being felt and many species of animals are in steep decline.
2. The main sources of carbon dioxide emissions are well documented and significant progress has been made nationally and internationally in the development sustainable energy technologies such as wind and solar power. Areas such as domestic heating and transport represent major challenges.
3. In everything that we do; the services we commission or deliver, the lifestyles we encourage, the ways in which we enable recycling, we want to reduce consumption and maximise efficiency.
4. The natural environment is threatened by climate change, species are becoming extinct, ecosystems are under strain. The protection of habitats and reinstatement of landscapes such woodland and wetland will provide a dual benefit of species protection and carbon sequestration.
5. The unavoidable changes that are already taking place and which scientists predict will worsen under any currently agreed carbon reduction targets, require us to plan for the impacts of climate change on the weather and sea level. Our strategy must consider the resilience of communities and services.
6. The Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy sets out 4 overarching aims;
 - Achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions
 - Protect and enhance the natural environment
 - Use all resources efficiently and minimise waste
 - Adapt to the impacts of climate change
7. Within each of these aims there a number of objectives, some of which will evolve and change over time. The details of these will be reflected in an action plan which will be monitored and updated on an annual rolling basis.
8. Some of the objectives relate to things we have direct control over and can change, subject to resources. Other areas of work concern things we can influence, by setting policies or providing incentives that encourage others to modify their activity to reduce the environmental impact. We believe the Council and its partners can also be powerful advocates, encouraging changes in behavior and highlighting examples of good practice.
9. The Council's approach to the delivery of the strategy starts with an emphasis on the things over which we have direct control, setting ourselves challenging targets and working hard to develop sustainable alternatives to the activities that currently lead to the greatest emissions or have the most detrimental affect on the environment. Then, building on this experience

and leading by example, we will increase our emphasis on the changes that partners and communities can achieve.

10. We recognise that climate change is already a priority for many in the Borough, not least the young people involved in the Bright Minds Big Futures movement. There are also businesses in the Borough and the wider Tees Valley who are keen to make a contribution to the climate response. We will work to harness all of the energy and commitment of organisations and communities to drive a gradual but sustained shift in resource consumption and environmental impact.
11. The ES&CRS strategy is being led by Environment Leisure & Greenspace Service, but officers from services across all Directorates have been involved in the production of this document and almost every team will have a contribution to make to the achievement of the Strategy's objectives. Using the resources identified in the 2021/22 MTFP, we have already established a Carbon Reduction Officer role and begun to raise external funding and deliver significant programmes. One such scheme which highlights the benefits of using match funding to lever in external resources is a new development to equip our Cowpen Depot with photovoltaic panels, which will reduce our energy costs and carbon. The £94,000 scheme used match funding to secure £66,860 of funding from Salix to install 286 PV panels. It is expected that we will save 17.86 tonnes of carbon annually together with associated energy costs.
12. There is a need to develop an action plan and will need to establish baseline date. The delivery, monitoring and evaluation is likely to require additional human resources, either within the Environment Leisure & Green Infrastructure Team or embedded within other relevant services. Further work will be undertaken to develop these delivery proposals as a commencement of the action plan development.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

The effects of climate change will be felt by all communities. The strategy will aim to protect those at greatest risk and to mitigate the impacts for our most vulnerable communities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As described in the body of the report a significant long and medium term financial commitment will be required in order to achieve our Net Zero challenge.

No additional financial commitments are required at this stage to support this strategy.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Although the details are still in development it is likely that the authority will have stringent reporting requirements in order for the Government to fulfil its requirements under the Environment Act 2021. The act sets requirements which is in line with our strategy documents.

RISK ASSESSMENT

A detailed risk assessment will be produced as part of the action planning development work. Pre action planning is low to medium risk, therefore existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

Policy Principles:

This ES&CRS is a direct response to the principle of the development of an ambitious carbon reduction and environmental sustainability strategy for the Borough.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications for children in our care, other than those that apply to all children and young people, being those whose lives will be most profoundly affected in decades to come

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

Extensive consultation has taken place with both officers and ward members. Ward members have been invited to participate in workshops and sessions designed to involve and encourage participation/awareness. Ongoing Cabinet lead briefing sessions have taken place and an animated video was produced to encourage input.

Name of Contact Officer: Reuben Kench

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Education related? No

Background Papers

Draft strategy document attached.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

As the strategy is a wide-ranging document all wards will be affected.

Property

The strategy could have significant implications in relation to the Council's property, details of implications will be highlighted through the action plan development.