



CABINET

Tuesday 3 March 2020

ENVIRONMENT TASK GROUP UPDATE

Report by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment – Councillor James Mallinder

Since declaring a climate emergency in July 2019 the Council's Environment Task Group has been established and will meet quarterly to consider what action needs to be taken to meet the Council's challenging target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. As Chairman of the task group and Cabinet member for the Environment I will be reporting to Cabinet on a quarterly basis on progress with this important new strategic priority for the Council. I will also bring reports to Cabinet where changes are required to Council policy or investment is recommended by the task group to achieve the Council's goal.

As well as looking internally at what the Council can do to reduce its carbon emissions and improve its environmental performance the task group will also be looking at what can be delivered with partners and stakeholders to reduce carbon emissions across Suffolk to help the County of Suffolk become carbon neutral by the target date of 2030.

OCTOBER 2019 MEETING: COUNCIL EMISSIONS

To assist the task group to prioritise actions to reduce the Council's own carbon emissions Groundwork Suffolk was commissioned to carry out an external independent review of the Council's annual greenhouse gas reports for the last three years and this review along with recommendations for action were presented to members at the first meeting of the task group.

The review confirmed that in 2018/19 the Council's carbon emissions were 6,262 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) and compared with emissions for the year 2016/17 the Council has reduced its total greenhouse gas emissions by 1,859 tonnes (22.9%). This has been achieved through action already taken such as the move to new, more energy efficient office accommodation, use of renewable energy on Council property including the installation of 251 air-source heating units and 233 solar panel arrays on Council houses and solar panels on our Sheltered Housing Scheme properties. Measures taken nationally to decarbonise the electricity supply have also contributed to this reduction. Although progress

has already been made, the Council faces a significant challenge if it is to become carbon neutral by 2030.

The largest proportion of the Council's carbon emissions arise from its fleet vehicles at 39% and electricity and gas consumption account for 28% and 27% respectively with a further 4% arising from business mileage and the remaining 2% from electricity transmission and distribution.

In response to the climate declaration and the Groundwork report the task group are overseeing the development of an East Suffolk Climate Action Plan which will provide a pathway for the reduction of the Council's own emissions. This action plan will be presented for Cabinet approval and where specific projects or improvements requiring investment are recommended by the task group, individual business cases will be presented for Cabinet approval.

Actions that have already been delivered or are being developed since the Council's declaration include:

- A programme of staff awareness events delivered at each of the five main office locations to promote energy efficiency and wider environmental awareness amongst Council employees to help behavioural change and start to embed the Council's new strategic priority.
- Planning for a programme of Eco Driver training for the Housing Maintenance Team which could deliver a 5% reduction in fuel use and associated emissions. There may be the potential to roll this out more widely to essential car users.
- Continuation of the programme of leisure centre refurbishment with the installation of a combined heat and power unit at Bungay Pool and Gym.
- Development of a business case for the provision of solar PV at East Suffolk House.
- Commissioning a review of the refuse collection vehicles (HGV's) which visit every house in the District every week with the aim of trialling the use of a biodiesel mix in the Council's refuse freighters as a short-term improvement measure and transition to non-diesel fleet over the term of the current vehicle replacement programme.
- Provision of EV charging infrastructure at Ufford and Rotterdam Road Depots and provision of 3 electric lease vehicles and 4 electric vans for the Norse fleet.
- Drafting of a sustainable development guide for developers to encourage the adoption of high environmental standards in new build.
- Exploring opportunities for the use of Council land for tree planting or rewilding by local community groups as a means of offsetting emissions and improving natural habitats and encouraging biodiversity.
- Testing alternatives to the use of glyphosates for weed control
- Carrying out environmental improvements at our East Suffolk House site including general rewilding and environmental planting.
- Engaged with our east Suffolk communities through a climate change conference for local community representatives and members of the public sponsored by the East Suffolk Greenprint Forum and the Council's Environment Task Group. The event attracted a maximum capacity audience of 75 at the Riverside Road conference rooms with some excellent speakers including Peter Aldous MP. The Greenprint

Steering Group will be reviewing the output from the conference and how best to support local community groups in taking local action on climate change.

JANUARY 2020 MEETING: SUFFOLK EMISSIONS

The focus of the task group meeting in January was to consider a presentation from David Walton, Suffolk Climate Change Partnership Manager, on the work that the partnership has delivered since its formation in 2007 with the support of all Suffolk local authorities. The partnership has successfully bid for a total of £19.7M of grant funding to support free energy efficiency services for businesses across Suffolk through the BEE Anglia project, support for local communities including two rounds of Solar Together Suffolk which has drawn in £2.7M of funding from Suffolk residents for the installation of solar PV on their own homes and £1.6M of DECC funding for central heating upgrades. The partnership has also been looking for investment opportunities for solar PV installations with one already funded and installed on the University of Suffolk building.

The latest national data indicates that in 2017 Suffolk emissions were 4,000,000 tonnes CO₂ with transport now being the largest contributing factor. In a similar approach to that taken by East Suffolk Council, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership has commissioned a review of the data for the county which is being undertaken by Ricardo Energy & Environment. Their report is due in March and will:

- Set an emission baseline and reduction pathway to achieve carbon neutrality in Suffolk by 2030 for each key sector – business/commercial, residential and transport;
- Identify what levers Suffolk local authorities can use to bring about change where they do not have direct control;
- Feasibility test the options recommended in the report.

The findings will be subject to wide stakeholder consultation in the spring with a view to developing a new Suffolk Climate Change Action Plan in the summer.

As well as receiving the presentation on the work of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership the task group were given an update on some of actions being taken forward and were consulted on a draft East Suffolk Climate Action Plan.

ENVIRONMENT TASK GROUP FORWARD PLAN

The next meeting of the task group will be held on 23 April 2020 and will focus on Planning Services and a draft Sustainable Development Guide for developers which will encourage higher environmental standards in new build.

The meeting on 15 July will focus on waste and recycling with a presentation from Rob Cole, Suffolk Waste Management Partnership.

Other areas that the task group will focus on at future meetings include housing services, procurement and biodiversity.

RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet notes the update on the work of the Environment Task Group.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None.

Supporting Officer – Phil Gore – Head of Environmental Services and Port Health
Email: phil.gore@eastsuffolk.gov.uk - Telephone: 01394 444286