



CABINET

Tuesday, 06 December 2022

Subject	Environment Task Group - Quarterly Update
Report by	Cllr James Mallinder Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment
Supporting Officer	Paul Mackie Lead Officer, Environment & Climate Change paul.mackie@east Suffolk.gov.uk

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
Wards Affected:	All Wards

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet on the work of the cross-party Environment Task, chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment, since its last report on 6 September 2022. Confirmation is also sought that the Group is continuing to deliver on the task it was set to investigate ways to cut East Suffolk Council's carbon and other harmful emissions

Options:

None.

Recommendation/s:

1. That this report from the Environment Task Group be accepted and approved.
2. That it be confirmed that the Environment Task Group is to continue to deliver the task it was set to investigate ways to cut East Suffolk Council's carbon and other harmful emissions.

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

The Environment Task Group is a cross-party group chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment and reports direct to Cabinet.

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

The work of the Environment Task Group directly supports the Council's Strategic Plan and delivering on the corporate commitment to "put the environment at the heart of everything we do" is progressively influencing all the Council's policies and strategies.

Environmental:

The Environment Task Group through the issues it is considering and monitoring is having a direct and far-reaching effect on the Council's environmental agenda and priorities.

Equalities and Diversity:

There are no specific equalities or diversity impacts arising from this report. The work of the Environment Task Group directly and through its influence the work of the Council to respond to the Climate Emergency will however impact on all those who live and work in East Suffolk or visit the area.

Financial:

There are no specific Financial impacts arising from this update report.

Human Resources:

There are no Human Resources impacts arising from this update report.

ICT:

There are no ICT impacts arising from this update report.

Legal:

There are no Legal impacts arising from this update report.

Risk:

There are no new Risks arising from this update report.

External Consultees:	None
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Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: (Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
T01	Growing our Economy		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment		
P20	Lead by example	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
XXX	Governance		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

How does this proposal support the priorities selected?

The Environment Task Group continues to be a valuable forum in which to consider and debate environmental issues and to help deliver on the Council's commitment to put the environment at the heart of everything we do. The environmental work done by Council and the resultant spending is directly impacting on the local economy and the Council is increasingly engaging with businesses engaged in renewable and low carbon energy, sustainable development and wider environmental protection work. Several initiatives the Task Group has worked on or has supported have involved community groups, for example environmental promotion, biodiversity projects, tree planting, action on plastic and as further projects are delivered it is confidently predicted that there will be an increasing feeling of community pride in what has been delivered. Financial Sustainability is a key consideration in the work of the Task Group, some carbon saving changes requires investment but many also result in coincidental cost savings, for example, energy cost savings/income from solar power generation on council buildings and savings on chemical and grass cutting costs. The Group have been supportive of the role digital technology can play in reducing carbon emission savings, for example, through the wider enablement of home working and video conferencing and the consequent reduction in travel. It is suggested that the Environment Task Group is good example of collaborative working and that in the comparatively short time it has been working it has helped the delivery of the Council environment priorities significantly. This is expected to continue as further significant challenges arise, for example in helping to formulate the Council's response to the nation Resources and Waste Strategy.

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	<p>FORMATION</p> <p>On 24 July 2019 (Full Council agenda item 9(a)), the Council resolved unanimously to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Declare a climate emergency• Set up a Cross Party Task Group, commencing by October 2019, to investigate ways to cut East Suffolk Council's carbon and harmful emissions on a spend to save basis, with ambition to make East Suffolk Council (including all buildings and services) carbon neutral by 2030.• To work with Suffolk County Council and other partners across the county and region, including the LEP and the Public Sector Leaders, towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030.• To work with the government to:• a) deliver its 25-year Environmental Plan, and• b) increase the powers and resources available to local authorities in order to make the 2030 target easier to achieve. <p>656 The Environment Task Group was formed as a cross-party Task Group</p>

2 In context of the East Suffolk Council Strategic Plan	
2.1	The Council's Strategic Plan sets out its vision to deliver the highest possible quality of life for everyone who lives, works in or visits the district. The five themes of the Strategic Plan are: Growing our Economy; Enabling our Communities; Remaining Financially Sustainable; Delivering Digital Transformation; and Caring for our Environment.
2.2	Within the theme of Caring for our Environment, the Council is committed to lead by example, seeking environmental benefit in everything we do, working with communities for biodiversity and optimising the use digital solutions to reduce environmental impacts; to minimise waste, promote reuse and maximise recycling; to explore opportunities to invest in renewable energy solutions as a council and encourage others to do the same; and to use our influence and regulatory functions to protect our natural environment and coastline.
2.3	The Strategic Plan recognises the interconnectivity between the five Themes of the Plan, with actions arising under each theme having the potential to contribute towards any or all of the other themes.

3 Summary of Environment-related activity since last report	
3.1	<p>The ETG has met once since its last report to Cabinet (on 9 November 2022) when it discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Green building and development design. ▪ Progress on the ESC Climate Action Plan and Environment KPI dashboard. ▪ Ocean recovery. ▪ Member training session on the Warmer Homes programme. <p>Updates on ESC's environment and climate-related activities since the last report follow below.</p>
3.2	<p>Hydrogen Strategy</p> <p>This quarter, ESC is producing a 5-year hydrogen strategy to progress the delivery of our vision, establish how the local authority can support the progression of the embryonic hydrogen economy, and realise the associated economic benefits. The strategy will examine the current hydrogen context nationally, regionally, and locally which will enable ESC to set out impactful priorities and outcomes that will build on the broad objectives set out in the positioning paper (above). This strategy is expected to be before cabinet in February.</p> <p>As part of the hydrogen strategy and ESC's net zero target by 2030, we will be examining our own assets and vehicle fleets, which could potentially be converted to hydrogen in the mid-term and provide an anchor end-user agreement for an associated electrolyser.</p>

	<p>Building on from the success of the quarterly hydrogen developers forum, ESC is leading on the development of a Hydrogen Conference. This is in response to strong support from developers and stakeholders, and an identified gap regionally that should bring hydrogen developers, end-users, innovators, and wider stakeholders together to raise the profile of local hydrogen developments and address any barriers that are likely to be inhibiting the pace and scale of growth. The planned event date is 23 February 2023.</p>
3.3	<p>ESC Procurement Strategy</p> <p>The new ESC Procurement Strategy has been approved and there is an implementation plan to carry out the requirements of the strategy – this is a 3 year plan. The new strategy includes aspects around social value and carbon reduction and, once implemented, all tenders would ask for information on these aspects to be considered as part of the selection criteria.</p>
3.4	<p>Leisure Centre decarbonisation programme</p> <p>Surveys and plans for each of ESC’s leisure facilities are currently being undertaken to ascertain options for each individual centre to reduce their Carbon footprint.</p>
3.5	<p>Delivering a sustainable Housing Portfolio</p> <p>The two pilot projects testing low carbon retrofits to HRA properties are progressing and are providing ESC with an insight into the technologies we need to put in place to work towards our low carbon ambitions. One of the pilot project’s properties is being monitored to determine the most effective retrofit technologies. The the other pilot scheme has progressed to design stage and is due to be presented to Cabinet for approval.</p>
3.6	<p>Deben redevelopment PassivHaus project</p> <p>The project at the Former Deben High School site in Felixstowe is now in Phase 3 – Housing delivery. At the last update we advised a proposed start on site is scheduled for summer 2022 with homes being delivered in phases between 2023/24 – this has been pushed back slightly and the proposed start on site has been postponed to early 2023 as a reaction to market constraints and the proposed procurement strategy for the appointment of a main contractor, which is happening at the current time. The project continues to be environmentally focused on all aspects of its delivery.</p>
3.7	<p>The East Suffolk Cycling and Walking Strategy</p> <p>The Strategy was adopted on 4 October 2022 and aims to create safe, coherent, direct, comfortable, and attractive cycling, walking and wheeling environments. This can lead to improvements in health and wellbeing, facilitate greater social interaction and play, encourage more environmentally sustainable lifestyles, reduce road congestion and support economic growth. The Strategy and accompanying documents can be viewed here.</p>

3.8	<p>Air Quality update</p> <p>Further to our consultation in May 2022, we would like to inform you that the Woodbridge Junction Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was revoked by East Suffolk Council on 29th September 2022. A copy of the Revocation Order can be seen at Air Quality Reports » East Suffolk Council.</p> <p>The Woodbridge AQMA was established in 2006 after high levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) were detected at the junction of Lime Kiln Quay Road, Thoroughfare and St John's Street. Studies showed that these levels were most likely caused by both moving and idling traffic. Since this time NO₂ concentrations within the AQMA have decreased, and since 2014 have been consistently below the national objective levels. As a result, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) requested that the AQMA be revoked, and an assessment was carried out in 2021 to establish whether removal of the AQMA was appropriate. Using measurements taken in 2019 and 2020, the assessment predicted future NO₂ concentrations within the AQMA over the next 5 years and concludes that the AQMA could be revoked.</p> <p>These findings were discussed by East Suffolk Council's Cabinet on 3 May 2022, and following a six-week public consultation the AQMA was revoked.</p> <p>Further information can be found on our website at Air Quality Management Areas » East Suffolk Council.</p> <p>East Suffolk Council's 2022 Air Quality Annual Status Report has also recently been completed and submitted to Defra and can be viewed at Air Quality Reports » East Suffolk Council should you wish.</p>
3.9	<p>Greenprint Forum update</p> <p>Small grants scheme "Nature First"</p> <p>The Greenprint Forum's small grant scheme Nature First remains open to applications to support community-based projects that enhance and/or promote biodiversity. Two further meetings of the grant panel have occurred since the last update (September), issuing grants to the following projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinda Education CIC near Halesworth have been awarded £1600 Elders and Children Hedge/Woodland Planting: An intergenerational project planting for the future, a seven hectare link between Upper Holton and the valley of the River Blyth. • Greener Waldringfield have been awarded £245 for further Community Hedge Laying Training (Tranche 2) providing a course in hedgelaying for volunteer community hedgelayers to help create, restore and maintain healthy hedgerows in the parish of Waldringfield. • Enterprise Badingham have been awarded £600 to restore and enhance the community gardens, encouraging biodiversity within the gardens and churchyard whilst preserving a popular amenity for the local community.

- Kesgrave Town Council have been awarded £511.05 towards their Cedarwood Walk Rewilding Project, a project to rewild a 260m stretch of land that connects two large public areas through the planting of trees (Crab Apple, Rowan & Field Maple) along with sowing grass/wildflowers seeds around them, with the involvement of local volunteers from the community.
- Creative Leiston have been awarded £900 towards their project to create two new enchanted gardens in the town providing for biodiversity (wildflower plantings, homes for birds and other animals) alongside the creation of fictional stories tying the gardens closely to the local area, community and natural environment to foster more appreciation in the younger children through interaction with the gardens.
- Rendlesham Parish Council have been awarded £1000 towards their project to raise awareness and assist with the conservation & preservation of the hedgehog population in Rendlesham by providing hedgehog shelters for local residents' gardens and supporting the work of the local hedgehog rehabilitator.

The full list of projects that have been awarded grants since the scheme launched can be found here: [Nature-First-projects-funded-2021-2022.pdf \(eastsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://eastsuffolk.gov.uk/nature-first-projects-funded-2021-2022.pdf)

Quiet Lanes

Since the last update in April 2022, lanes in Wave 3 (including a further 46 lanes in 21 East Suffolk parishes) have secured formal designation through Suffolk County Council and these lanes now await the erection of poles by SCC Highways and signs by the parish councils.

The final Wave 4 is now also underway, with final completion expected in early 2023, subject to process and budget. The volunteer team responsible for managing and delivering the project were nominated by the Greenprint Forum to the Suffolk Community Awards, and were delighted to win the Colonel Probert Award for best community or volunteer group at the awards ceremony held on 20 September.

Beachwatch

Two Beachwatch activities were held on behalf of the Greenprint Forum in the autumn, in Felixstowe on 25th September attended by 8 volunteers, and Gunton on 9th October attended by 7 volunteers including local MP Peter Aldous. An additional Beachwatch activity was held on 26th September in Pakefield as part of the programme of induction of the 2022/23 cohort of graduates serving with local authorities in Suffolk as part of the Suffolk Graduate Scheme.

Beachwatch is a national campaign held every autumn to combine a beach clean with citizen science, recording and categorising the marine litter found to support nationwide data capture by the Marine Conservation Society in quantifying and comprehending the nature and scale of marine litter.

4 Reason/s for recommendation	
4.1	It has been agreed that the Environment Task Group would provide quarterly updates on its work to Cabinet. The Group has been performing well and considers it is fulfilling the role set and the tasks allocated.
4.2	As the need to react further and faster to the climate emergency becomes increasingly apparent the Group will continue to have a significant role considering and supporting initiatives and providing opinions to Cabinet on any matters referred to it. For this reason, Cabinet is invited to confirm it is delivering the task it was set and to give any further guidance it considers appropriate.

Appendices

Appendices:

None.

Background reference papers:

None.