



CABINET

Tuesday, 05 October 2021

Subject	Environment Task Group - Quarterly Update
Report by	Councillor James Mallinder Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment
Supporting Officer	Andrew Jarvis Strategic Director andrew.jarvis@eastsoffolk.gov.uk 01394 444323

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
-------------------------------	------

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 1 June 2021. 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:

Not applicable

Recommendation/s:

1. That this report from the Environment Task Group be accepted and approved.
2. That Cabinet confirm that the 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

Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: <i>(Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)</i>		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"/>
<p>How does this proposal support the priorities selected?</p> <p>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.</p>			

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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 656 <p>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 Task Group activity since last report

3.1	<p>The ETG has met once (15 July 2021) since its last report to Cabinet on 1 June 2021 when it discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Suffolk Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS),• Alternative Vehicle fuel, and• The East Suffolk Climate Change Action Plan (under development) <p>In terms of actions:</p>
3.2	<p>Alternative Vehicle fuel – an interim fuel solution to reduce fleet emissions</p> <p>The ETG has encouraged the development of a 'meanwhile' solution using a Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel to replace the use of fossil diesel in the Council's fleet vehicles. Transport accounts for some 40% of the Council's carbon emissions. A report on this project was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 September when it resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve changing the fuel used by all the Euro 6 rated diesel-powered vehicles in the Council's vehicle fleet from diesel to certified palm oil free Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil fuel.• Approve a procurement process in autumn 2021 for the supply of certified palm oil free Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil fuel meeting the International Sustainability and Carbon Certification.• Require that other than in the most exceptional circumstances any replacement or new fleet vehicles (whether leased or purchased) are Euro 6 compliant.

	<p>The Head of Operations is now overseeing the procurement of a supply of certified palm oil free Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil fuel.</p> <p>It is anticipated that compatible existing vehicles on the fleet will begin to use HVO from the beginning of 2022, following a procurement process that will, as a prerequisite, specify that the fuel is certified free of palm oil under the International Sustainability & Carbon Certification programme.</p>
3.3	<p>Biodiversity and nature</p> <p>East Suffolk House (ESH) enhancements</p> <p>Following high-visibility work completed during the summer to plant strips of wildflower meadows and erect insect shelters along the entrance to ESH, and erection of bird and bat boxes on many of the trees on the grounds, further work has been carried out to enhance provision for nature and the ability for members of staff working from the site to enjoy the surroundings and wildlife attracted to it. Additionally, in September work will be completed on providing a new planted outdoor seating area. The work highlights the importance of sharing our outdoor spaces with nature and can act as an example to other land managers.</p>
3.4	<p>Greenprint small grants scheme Nature First</p> <p>The Greenprint Forum launched its small grant scheme, “Nature First”, funded by ESC, in summer 2021, to support community projects that promote and enhance biodiversity. It has so far awarded a total of £6170.18 to 8 projects. Examples include a project to provide swift next boxes and engage the students in learning about swift behaviour at a high school in Framlingham; training courses for volunteer hedge layers to create new hedgerows and enhance and conserve existing hedgerows in Waldringfield; and the creation of a nature garden in Lowestoft where children from local schools will be able to discover wildlife, learn where food comes from and carry out activities. The fund remains open for further bids from community groups.</p>
3.5	<p>Planning</p> <p>A Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document is being drafted to provide guidance on a range of topics including energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation, sustainable transport and use of materials, to support the implementation of the Council’s adopted Local Plan policies. A public consultation on the draft SPD will follow this autumn. Once adopted, the Sustainable Construction SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.</p>
3.6	<p>Resource and Waste Strategy</p> <p>The Government’s Resource & Waste Strategy is expected to have a fundamental impact on the delivery of services and the council’s resources to achieve this. However, beyond the need to introduce separate food waste collections and increase the range of materials collected, the final legislative framework is not expected to be published until late 2021, with significant local decisions likely to be required by April 2022 in order to prepare for the potential need for implementation from April 2023.</p>

	<p>Research to assess the viability of delivery on anticipated requirements of RAWs has been undertaken by the SWP which indicates that either a co-mingled dry recycle plus separate glass collection system, or an alternate weekly separate-stream collection system keeping glass, paper & card, plastics, and metal separate during collection, would be viable in principle with potential for c. 10% increase in local recycling rates. However significant issues lie ahead with likely higher operating and capital costs and resource implications and added complexity for service users and our delivery partners. This will require further discussion internally including via the ETG.</p>
3.7	<p>Delivering a sustainable Housing Portfolio</p> <p>The Council is in the course of engaging a consultant team to commence a review of the full portfolio of current HRA stock. Information from the data-driven review will be used to prioritise 2 pilot schemes for retro fit and determine what additional actions we can take to reduce carbon emissions and contribute to our climate emergency objectives as part of a longer-term refurbishment programmes across the HRA Stock.</p> <p>The review will be data-driven. Data describes the fabric of the building and its components; roof, floors, windows, insulation, heating and energy performance. We have identified new software, “Intelligent Energy”, that will improve greatly our capability to analyse this data and develop plans for improvements in energy efficiency and de-carbonisation of the housing stock.</p> <p>Whilst the HRA portfolio has been maintained to a good standard over the years the carbon neutral targets add significant strain to the existing maintenance programme. Much of the work required to decarbonise the existing HRA stock goes beyond the planned maintenance which has traditionally been done to ensure the homes are in a good condition and comfortable to live in. These interventions will give the properties a longer life span, reduce running cost for tenants and most importantly reduce the properties reliance on non-renewable sources of energy.</p> <p>Any proposed environmental enhancements will take into consideration the existing planned maintenance workstreams to ensure efficiencies can be achieved where properties are suitable for retrofit enhancements. This process will ensure the Council's housing portfolio positively contributes towards our carbon neutral ambitions whilst also provide truly sustainable and affordable homes for our tenants.</p> <p>New ‘Green’ New Build Design Guide</p> <p>The Council’s Housing Development Strategy 2020-2024 identifies ‘Environmental Sustainability’ as an essential element in the creation of homes and communities in which people want to live and work. It notes that lowering the whole-life carbon footprint of properties will help tenants save money and deliver lasting environmental, social, and economic benefits.</p>

	Housing, both our existing stock and new build programme, has a huge role to play in the current environmental challenges we are facing. The team are developing a new 'New Build Design Guide' which will outline our minimum requirements in terms of energy standards and environmental impact.
3.8	<p>Assets</p> <p>The Council is in the course of updating the EPC certificates of its built assets. All EPCs displayed in those assets that are open to the public are now up to date. A further 15 in non-public facing buildings are close to expiry and are in the process of being renewed.</p> <p>In the course of updating the EPC certificates the assets team are identifying those assets where opportunities for energy efficiency improvements exist and generate the business case for measures to reduce energy consumption and related emissions and improve the future EPC ratings of those assets.</p>
3.9	<p>Communication of wider activities of the Council with regards to the environment</p> <p>The ETG regularly hears from internal and external speakers on environmental projects that the council is leading on or contributing towards.</p> <p>To help communicate progress on the environmental agenda to a wider audience, even where the ETG itself has not played a central role in driving particular projects, in order to raise the profile of these wider activities, this progress is being collated and publicised on the ETG's webpage Work so far » East Suffolk Council.</p>

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.