



CABINET

Tuesday, 01 June 2021

Subject	Work of the Environment Task Group
Report by	Cllr 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
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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 recent work of the cross-party Environment Task Group chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment and to request confirmation 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 the 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 is proving 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.

	The Environment Task Group was formed as a cross-party Task Group
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2 In context of the East Suffolk Council Strategic Plan

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| 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 Environment Task Group 2020/21

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| 3.1 | <p>East Suffolk Council Climate Action Plan</p> <p>The ETG has provided feedback on the process of drafting the Council's Climate Action Plan which sets out proposed actions to enable the Council to achieve its corporate goal of becoming a carbon neutral Council by 2030. The ETG will be ensuring the integration of the Climate Action Plan with the Council's Strategic Plan, and the clear ranking of actions, prioritising those that will deliver the greatest sustainable impact at the most beneficial cost.</p> <p>When considering the progress of work on the Climate Action Plan, the ETG recommended several additional actions, including more work to engage with environmental education in schools and biodiversity audits on the Council's sites under 'reduced mowing' regimes. These suggestions have fed into projects in train, including those being undertaken with the Suffolk Waste Partnership and the Greenprint Forum.</p> <p>The first edition of the Climate Action Plan is due to be reported for considered by Cabinet/Council in summer 2021 and subject to approval will then be published.</p> |
| 3.2 | <p>Electrification of car and van fleet</p> <p>During 2020/21 a further six new electric cars and vans were brought onto the Norse fleet to replace older diesel-fuelled vehicles, as well as a new electric pool car joining the Port Health fleet based at Felixstowe. This ongoing electrification of the Council's fleet was supported by the installation during 2020/21 of a further 22 fast chargers at our depots in Ufford and Rotterdam Road, and at Port Health premises in Felixstowe.</p> |

	<p>The ETG has monitored and supported this work including seeing to it that the livery of the vehicles provides high profile advertising of the proactive investment being made by the Council in zero emission vehicles.</p>
<p>3.3</p>	<p>Alternative Fuelled Vehicles Trial</p> <p>The ETG has been monitoring work led by the Council’s Operations Team working with East Suffolk Norse to develop a Business Case to migrate the Council’s Heavy and Light Goods fleets to an alternative (to diesel) low carbon fuel. The ultimate goal is considered to be a hydrogen powered fleet and some early feasibility and headline costing work has been undertaken. However, it has become clear that the technology (re-fuelling infrastructure, fuel supply and vehicles) is not yet sufficiently developed to enable the Council to move with confidence to convert a large fleet delivering a key frontline service.</p> <p>Work is however continuing and in the meantime the project is also investigating possible opportunities that might arise from proposals by EDF and Hutchison Ports UK to produce hydrogen fuel locally.</p> <p>Seeking an alternative to hydrogen, work has been commissioned on the possibility of using a biomethane based alternative fuel for the Refuse Collection HGVs. However, while the technology is more advanced in this instance the infrastructure costs are still substantial, in the region of £1m, with further significant costs for replacement vehicles and their ongoing maintenance.</p> <p>The above notwithstanding and mindful of the strength of the Council’s commitment to decarbonisation work the ETG has discussed a ‘meanwhile’ solution that is being developed with a number of other Suffolk authorities to use a Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel, certified as fully sustainably sourced. Transport accounts for some 40% of the Council’s carbon emissions and the Group will shortly be considering a draft business case which it is hoped will demonstrate that a switch to HVO could reduced the HGV fleets emissions by 90% and at a cost that will not unduly impact on the Council’s wider spending plans.</p>
<p>3.4</p>	<p>Housing Stock</p> <p>The Task Group is very keen to see more sustainability in housing and has discussed how the Council may act as an exemplar to other developers. May 2020 saw the launch of a new Housing Development Strategy to ensure the building of more environmentally friendly social housing by the Council.</p> <p>The redevelopment of the former Deben High School site for new housing will enable the Council to showcase an exemplary Passivhaus-inspired model for housing which will encompass the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved well-being for occupants/users • Pedestrian and child-friendly design • Passive design principles Natural ventilation and daylighting • ‘Fabric first’ approach to minimise energy use and address fuel poverty • Renewable energy in the form of solar panels to power common areas • Opportunities for social interaction such as food growing and play spaces • Inclusion of features to enable sharing of space with wildlife e.g. swift nest bricks, biodiversity-friendly trees, bird nest boxes.

	<p>The ETG will also be monitoring the soon to be commissioned review of the Council's existing social housing stock. It will then assist in the discussion that will determine what additional actions can be taken to reduce carbon emissions and contribute to our climate emergency objectives. It is hoped that the Group will be able to support the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing to develop and deliver a programme of upgrades to heating systems replacing oil and gas fired heating systems wherever possible and prioritising heat pumps and solar water heating where appropriate and affordable.</p> <p>In February 2021 a consortium of Suffolk local authorities was awarded a £3m grant from the Government's Green Homes Grant. In East Suffolk this will be used towards external wall insulation retrofit measures in 150 park homes in East Suffolk. The ETG looks forward to reviewing progress on this initiative in due course.</p>
3.5	<p>Biodiversity</p> <p>The Council's flagship policy, under the banner of "Pardon the Weeds we're Feeding the Bees", of reduced mowing to allow flora to flourish during the growing season to encourage wildflowers and pollinators has been extended during 20/21 to a further 60 public open space and roadside verge sites bringing the total of such sites to around 100. The policy has also been expanded to cover all cemeteries and closed churchyards that the council is responsible for.</p> <p>The ETG regularly discuss the Council's use of glyphosate which has been reduced by 45% across the whole grounds maintenance service.</p> <p>A programme of work to improve provision for wildlife is being undertaken at East Suffolk House, including the planting of new wildflower beds and the siting of bird nesting boxes and shelters for bees and other pollinators.</p>
3.6	<p>Consultation on Fireworks</p> <p>Concerns raised by ETG members about the impacts on fireworks on vulnerable people and animals has led to the ETG agreeing to launch a public consultation to seek views on potentially preventing or limiting firework displays from land owned by the Council. The consultation is due to run in summer 2021 and will then inform a decision by Cabinet on the matter.</p>
3.7	<p>Net Zero Leiston</p> <p>Net Zero Leiston is a partnership project involving Leiston Town Council, EdF, SCC, ESC, and other partners with the objective of producing a route map for the town to achieve net zero carbon which would be replicable for other communities. The ETG has received a presentation by EDF and as subsequently agreed by the Group, Cllr Mallinder is the Council's representative on the Steering Group for this project.</p>
3.8	<p>Covid-19 and home working</p> <p>The ETG has provided feedback on the planned reassessment of office accommodation as a result of working from home due to Covid-19 restrictions, with regard to potential energy/carbon savings and ensuring that any longer-term plans consider the impacts on staff.</p>

3.9	<p>Planning</p> <p>An Environmental Guidance Note was published in November 2020 to offer clear, concise information on a range of key environmental issues relating to the building industry, assisting those seeking to mitigate the contribution of construction to climate change and its impact on the environment by offering support and advice.</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. Once drafted a public consultation on the draft SPD will follow; a public consultation seeking representations on the scope of the SPD has already been completed. Once adopted, the Sustainable Construction SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.</p>
3.10	<p>Local Energy Bill</p> <p>In November 2020 following a referral from full Council the Environment Task Group considered the proposals contained within the Local Energy Bill championed by Peter Aldous MP. The Group wrote to Peter Aldous expressing support for his work to bring forward a Bill to promote renewable energy and to tackle fuel poverty. The Group also considered the development of community energy companies and the benefits that they can generate in their localities. The Group also heard that various of these local authority run companies had not run as expected and the conclusion was reached that the Council had other exciting environmental priorities to deliver. : Microsoft Word - Peter Aldous for Cllr Mallinder 02Nov (eastsoffolk.gov.uk)</p>
3.11	<p>Air Quality Strategy</p> <p>The Council has drafted an air quality strategy which will look at bringing all the different pieces of the puzzle together, by looking at the actions and interventions East Suffolk Council currently makes. It aims to celebrate our successes and find new areas which can be explored to make further improvements. It also contributes to our commitment to play a key role as a member of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, and other stakeholders, to make Suffolk as a whole carbon-neutral by 2030, following this Council’s recognition of the existence of the climate emergency declared on 24 July 2019, and reflects our commitment to make the Council’s estates and operations carbon neutral by 2030. Furthermore, our air quality strategy contributes to the Council’s new Strategic Plan which places the Environment as one of its five key themes.</p>
3.12	<p>Solar PV on East Suffolk Buildings</p> <p>The Group has discussed the installation of solar panels on council-owned buildings several times. It was pleased to hear of the significant installations on various Housing Revenue Account properties, the installation of more panels on appropriate leisure centre roofs as part of the wider leisure centre refurbishment programme and that panels would also be installed as part of the Council’s sustainable housing projects. The feasibility of installing solar PV on East Suffolk House came up several times and following a couple of false starts, most notably due to covid lockdowns this is under active investigation at present. An engineer has been appointed to carry out the structural assessment and to advise on the likely impact on the existing living roof of the building.</p>

3.13	<p>The Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill</p> <p>Following a further referral from full Council the Group are shortly to consider a report on the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill. This matter will come before the Group at its meeting on 27 May 2021.</p>
3.14	<p>Correspondence with Westminster</p> <p>Reflecting the Council’s commitment stated in its Strategic Plan to use its influence at all levels to protect our environment, the Environment Task Group has, in partnership with the East Suffolk Greenprint Forum, embarked on a programme of joint correspondence directed towards appropriate departments of central Government to communicate our vision on carbon neutrality and the environment more broadly, and to seek to engage with Government on suggested areas where the legislative framework and resources for local authorities could be developed. The correspondence with Government is ongoing, with the following Departments engaged thus far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy • Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs • Department for Transport • Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government <p>Topics raised so far have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expressing concerns over relaxation of Government policy on neonicotinoids • urging legislation on sky lanterns, balloons and fireworks • requesting enablement of Planning Authorities to make decisions aligned with climate change commitments • calling for Government funding available to those directly affected by coastal erosion • suggesting introduction of tax incentives to ensure new housing developments are zero-carbon • suggesting various measures to encourage and support sustainable travel • calling for implementation of the circular economy and designing waste out at source • calling for carbon ratings on products to help consumers make informed decisions • urging an end to the mining and sale of peat • calling for funding of flood prevention schemes to prioritise sustainable nature-based adaptation schemes • urging the implementation of proposed changes to the Highway Code to protect vulnerable active modes of travel <p>Responses have been received from DfT, BEIS, and MHCLG. The ETG and Greenprint Forum intend to continue this programme of correspondence and communicate the content of all letters sent and received on the Council’s website. Work so far » East Suffolk Council</p>
3.15	<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 has been collated and publicised on the ETG's webpage Work so far » East Suffolk Council and was summarised in a press release issued in January 2021 Council continues to fight impact of climate change » East Suffolk Council</p>
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4 Reason/s for recommendation	
4.1	It has been agreed that the Environment Task Group would provide regular 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.