

REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES	AGENDA ITEM: 9
DATE OF MEETING:	12th November 2020	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	ALLISON THOMAS, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR – SERVICE DELIVERY	OPEN
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SUBJECT:	CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY GROUP	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS01

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That the Committee notes the progress made in improving the Council's environmental performance further to this Committee establishing a Corporate Environmental Sustainability Group in August 2018.
- 1.2. That the Committee notes the content of this report having regard to the Council's decision to declare a Climate Emergency at full Council on 27 June 2019.
- 1.3. That the Committee gives delegated authority to the Strategic Director – Service Delivery in liaison with the Chairman of the Committee to respond to the anticipated forthcoming consultations on the Environment Bill during 2021, should there be insufficient time to bring consultation responses to the Committee.

2. Purpose of the Report

- 2.1. To provide the Committee with details on the progress made by the Corporate Environmental Sustainability Group to co-ordinate the Council's work on improving its environmental credentials and performance.
- 2.2. To provide the Committee with a projection of the predicted challenges and opportunities over the next 12 months in the delivery of the work of the Corporate Environmental Sustainability Group.

3. Detail

Background

- 3.1. At a meeting of this Committee on 16 August 2018, approval was given to the establishment of a Corporate Environmental Sustainability Group (CESG). The purpose of the Group is to develop and implement measures that demonstrably improve the Council's environmental performance and support the delivery of the Council's strategic environmental objectives through a collaborative corporate approach.
- 3.2. Committee approved the terms of reference of the Group and agreed to receive further reports on the Group's work programme.

Corporate Environmental Sustainability Group Activity

- 3.3. The terms of reference approved by Committee directed the Group to give priority to six work streams to improve the Council's environmental performance, namely:
- To address issues arising from the **ISO14001 external accreditation** process;
 - To focus on reducing **Staff Travel** – core (miles driven by Council vehicles) and grey fleet miles (miles driven on Council business using employees' own transport);
 - To reduce the Council's **Energy Consumption**;
 - To improve the Council's **Water Management**;
 - To improve the Council's internal **Waste Management**;
 - To reduce the environmental impacts of Council contracts through greening the **Procurement** process.
- 3.4. Two further work streams were picked up by the Group during 2019;
- 3.5. At Full Council on 27 June 2019 the Council declared a **Climate Emergency**.
- 3.6. A request from members to explore opportunities to enhance **biodiversity** across the District.

ISO 14001 External Accreditation

- 3.7. On 20th December 2019, after a rigorous four-day audit, the Council's external auditors confirmed that the Council had been approved for recertification to the ISO14001 standard for the 11th successive year.
- 3.8. The auditor identified eleven 'minor' non-conformities and made a further 21 observations and improvement opportunities. Compared to previous audits this was a relatively high number of minor non-conformities. However, this was felt to be mainly attributable to the fact that the Council was allocated a new auditor for 2019 with relatively little experience of local authority activities. In addition, this was the first time that a new software system for managing our ISO14001 processes (My Compliance) had been subject to external audit.
- 3.9. The next re-certification audit is programmed for late 2020 or early 2021.

Staff Travel

- 3.10. The Council's first [Staff Travel Action Plan](#) was approved by this Committee on 25th November 2019.
- 3.11. The headline targets of the Plan are summarised in the following Table.

	Baseline (2019)	2021 Target	2024 Target
% of staff walking to work	3.7%	6.5%	15.0%
% of staff using public transport to work	1.9%		10.0%
% of staff cycling to work	0.6%	2.0%	10.0%
% of staff car sharing to work	2.2%	3.0%	10.0%

% of staff working flexibly	11.2%	15.0%	25.0%
Total % of staff participating in sustainable travel to work	19.6%	26.5%	70.0%

- 3.12. The Plan also set a target of **reducing the Council’s overall diesel consumption by 10% by 2024** and **reducing the miles travelled by Council staff for work (known as grey mileage) by 15% by 2024.**
- 3.13. The implementation of the Plan started in early 2020 along with the introduction of more robust processes across all Council services for gathering data to measure the performance targets.
- 3.14. These targets were subsequently included in the Service Plan Performance Measures 2020/21 for all Heads of Service to ensure that the Staff Travel Plan is embedded in the work of all services across the Council.
- 3.15. In March 2020, the Covid19 pandemic transformed staff travel behaviours with the closure of the Civic Offices, Rosliston Forestry Centre and Etwall and Greenbank Leisure Centres. As the pandemic continues, Council staff travel behaviours are still some way from normalising. As yet, it is unclear as to whether the Staff Travel Plan and its targets will be meaningful in the post-Covid19 workplace.
- 3.16. A staff travel behaviour survey will be carried out in late 2020 to replicate the survey which led to the development of the Staff Travel Plan. The results of this survey will be used to quantify progress towards the targets in the Table and to enable the Staff Travel Group to review the contents of the Staff Travel Plan in the light of the changes caused by Covid19.

Energy and Waste

- 3.17. Energy costs are at historically low prices arising from a combination of low demand due to Covid-19 and an increased supply as a result of a trade war. Corporate Property has responded to this by moving quickly to secure new, three-year fixed price contracts for energy supplies to all Council owned public buildings.
- 3.18. As well as delivering healthy savings at a fixed price, the new electricity contract is produced from 100% renewable, non-nuclear sources (wind, hydro, geo-thermal and solar), delivering on the Council’s Corporate Plan Climate Emergency priorities.
- 3.19. The new gas contract delivers a 22.5% annual saving and is supplied by a UK-based company offering improved levels of environmental and social sustainability in comparison with our previous provider.
- 3.20. With guidance from the Environmental Protection Officer, Corporate Property is compiling monthly records of utility usage and expenditure to better track trends, highlight any areas of concern and identify areas for improvement. This information is then used to produce a graph for the various areas (Public Buildings, Housing, etc) and distributed to the relevant Heads of Service for their information and analysis.
- 3.18 A new waste collection system (“waste hubs”) has been commissioned to improve collection and segregation of office waste streams from Council office activities. The implementation of the waste hubs has been delayed due to Covid-19, but will be progressed as circumstances develop over the next few months.

3.19 Officers, supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee input, have undertaken a review of the Council's Waste Collection Service which has considered the opportunities to increase recycling, reduce refuse and comply with potential future government legislation in relation to waste collection duties.

3.20 The objectives of this project are as follows:

- explore the feasibility of separately collecting food waste from all households that currently receive a kerbside dry recycling collection service;
- review the comparative costs, anticipated performance and resource implications of a range of collection profiles that meet the requirements of predicted government legislation.
- review the options for service delivery following the expiry of the recycling contract in October 2021.

3.21 The modelling examined a range of recycling collection methodologies, each with separate food waste collections. Restricted refuse capacity through alteration of container sizes and collection frequencies were also considered. A report on the outcome of the review will be considered by this Committee.

3.22 The Housing service has commissioned further research into the energy efficiency of the Council's own housing stock. The Council has engaged the assistance of the Nottingham City Council to complete this work. This assessment will provide further detailed analysis of the type of works required to improve the energy efficiency of council homes. This could range from the provision of additional loft and wall insulation to the installation of alternative sources of heating or power, including solar power. Progress in this area will be reported to the Housing and Community Services Committee.

Water

3.23 During 2020, the Corporate Property Team has reviewed the procurement of water supplies for the Council's portfolio of non-residential properties. Commercial water supplies were de-regularised in 2017 and as a result the Council inherited multiple suppliers to its various properties.

3.24 In 2020 these were merged into a single supplier, Castle Water, the UK's largest independent water supplier. This will help significantly streamline administration and generate cost savings of over £5,000 over the next three years as well as helping to meet one of the non-conformities identified in the ISO14001 audit.

3.25 The Council has adopted a new Corporate Plan performance indicator relating to the percentage of new homes granted planning permission which meet non-statutory water conservation standards. This will have a positive influence on the water conservation standards of future homes across the District.

Biodiversity

3.26 Officers have commenced work on an Action Plan for Nature and have met with stakeholders including the County Ecologist and The National Forest to devise an approach to biodiversity opportunity mapping. The work of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust has been adjusted to work collaboratively with Derbyshire County Council, this includes undertaking site surveys and calculations on biodiversity net gain to offset the ecological impact of the Swadlincote Regeneration Route.

- 3.27 The Council has undertaken a pilot scheme for pictorial wildflower planting at four roadside grass verge locations within the District, the pilot areas for pictorial wildflower planting were as follows:
- Hartshorne Road, Repton – Right hand side of road heading towards Hartshorne just after the Knights Lane junction.
 - Ticknall Road, Ticknall – Left hand side of road heading into Ticknall
 - The Mease, Hilton - Derby Road end nearest to A50.
 - William Nadin Way, Swadlincote
- 3.28 On the Ticknall and Repton sites a Corn Field seed mix was used and on the Hilton and Swadlincote sites a Magic Carpet seed mix was used. Three of the sites flowered successfully, with only the William Nadin Way site failing to take. Officers will be reviewing the success of the pilot and developing a report on the future strategy for highway verge management will be presented to a future Committee.
- 3.29 The Council has adopted a new Corporate Plan performance indicator relating to net gain in biodiversity from new development.

Climate Emergency

- 3.30 The Council's Climate Emergency states the intention to:
- Strive to make South Derbyshire District Council carbon neutral by 2030 and achieve Carbon Neutrality before the Government target of 2050;
 - Call on the UK Government to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target realistic;
 - Work with partners across the District and region to deliver this goal through all relevant strategies.
- 3.31 The Council published its first [Climate and Environment Action Plan](#) in January 2020.
- 3.32 Monitoring of the delivery of the actions contained in the Plan has been embedded in the Corporate Plan Performance Framework since April 2020 which is reported to this Committee.
- 3.33 The Climate and Environment Action Plan will be periodically reviewed to ensure that it provides an accurate reflection of the current position of the Council and of the regional, national and international trends in climate change science and innovation.
- 3.34 The Action Plan is currently programmed for a review every year. The next programmed Plan will be produced in Q4 2020/21.
- 3.35 Some of the highlights of progress made within the Plan to date include;
- Negotiating a corporate energy contract with a carbon neutral provider,
 - Acquiring baseline data to identify potential future carbon reduction measures across the Council's own housing stock
 - Embedding carbon neutrality into the Civic Hub project brief,
 - Revising the procurement tendering process to improve carbon neutral criteria within the scoring process,
 - Maximising take-up of Derbyshire County Councils "Derbyshire Healthy Homes Programme",

- Creating and delivering a new “South Derbyshire Healthy Homes Assistance Fund” following a review of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy,
- Undertaking effective enforcement of the Energy Efficiency Regulations in private rented properties

3.36 Other activities which contribute to the Council’s positive action on climate change and which were not in the Plan have included the following;

- Facilitating an on-line event in October 2020 to promote ‘deep retrofit’ energy saving and low carbon technology in all housing stock with the aim of stimulating the a “green recovery” of the local economy;
- Promoting uptake of the government’s Green Homes Grant in the 3,000 worst performing owner-occupied properties in South Derbyshire;
- Promoting and administering approximately £100,000 spend of government grant towards a Property Flood Resilience Recovery Support Scheme for all properties flooded in South Derbyshire as a result of Storm Ciara and Dennis in February 2020;
- Succeeding in an external funding application for the installation of publicly accessible EV charge-points in some public car parks owned by South Derbyshire District Council.
- Procuring two new refuse collection vehicles fitted with electric tail lifts saving £1500 in fuel and 3000kg of carbon per vehicle per year with a 20 decibel sound reduction.
- Procuring electric rechargeable grounds maintenance equipment.

3.37 It has not been possible as yet to quantify all of the carbon reduction impacts of these activities. The first accurate calculation of carbon emissions from Council activity was completed for the financial year 2018/19. Subsequent carbon emission calculations will quantify progression towards the carbon neutral target.

Forthcoming Activities and Consultations

3.38 After some delays, the Environment Bill is currently progressing through Parliament. The Bill sets out the government’s intention to put the environment at the centre of policy making and to make sure that the country is cleaner, greener and more resilient for the next generation.

3.39 It includes;

- Creating a new governance framework for the environment
- A new direction for resources and waste management
- Improving air quality
- Securing water services
- Enhancing green spaces
- Updating laws on chemicals (REACH)

3.40 The government has indicated that the Bill is likely to be developed through a series of short (three to six week), topic specific consultations. Under the current constitutional arrangements, responses to government consultations are approved by

the relevant Committee. Any consultations requiring such a rapid response are unlikely to have adequate time to be taken through a Committee cycle in order to meet the consultation response deadlines.

3.41 If consultations in relation to the Act are produced which do not enable reports to be brought to this Committee within the deadlines, then Committee is requested to approve the following proposal;

- Firstly, the consulting body will be advised of the Council's intention to respond and of its constitutional arrangements, and will be requested to extend the consultation period to enable the Council to respond democratically;
- If the extended consultation period is refused then Committee is asked to approve that the Strategic Director – Service Delivery is given delegated authority, in liaison with the Chair of this Committee, to respond to these specific consultations.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 Beneficial impacts - Improved environmental performance could lead to potential cost savings e.g. in reducing the cost of staff mileage claims and waste disposal. Any spend to save opportunities which are identified will need to be the subject of a business case and will need to meet the financial procedural rules of the Council.

4.2 Adverse impacts – Improvements in both carbon equivalent emissions and biodiversity are both likely to require capital and revenue investment in equipment, training and staffing resources. Further detailed assessments of costs will become clearer as the action plans around both projects develop further.

5 Corporate Implications

Employment Implications

5.1 Beneficial. The proposals will improve the reputation of the Council and make South Derbyshire District Council an even more desirable employer to work for.

Legal Implications

5.2 None.

Corporate Plan Implications

5.3 The proposals align with the 'Our Environment' key priority and in particular with the key aims of "Strive to make South Derbyshire District Council carbon neutral by 2030" and "Work with residents, businesses and partners to reduce their carbon footprint".

Risk Impact

5.4 The proposals will have a beneficial mitigating action against the corporate risk of "Managing the environmental impact of incidents across the District".

6 Community Impact

Consultation

- 6.1 A number of the activities have been the subject of internal staff consultations, such as through the staff travel planning survey and Staff Travel Group, the Biodiversity Working Group and the Employee forum.
- 6.2 To date there has been relatively limited consultation outside the Council. However, external consultations will begin over the next 12 months in relation to matters such as the Local Plan and the Climate and Emergency Plan, subject to the necessary Committee approvals.

Equality and Diversity Impact

- 6.3 None.

Social Value Impact

- 6.4 Beneficial.

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.5 Beneficial.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The retention of ISO14001 certification and the Climate Emergency declaration has signalled the clear commitment of the Council to build and improve on its previous environmental performance.
- 7.2 Staff involvement with the staff travel survey and staff responses to the Corporate Plan revision show that there is a high level of internal interest in continuing to develop sustainability throughout the Council.
- 7.3 The new Corporate Plan 2020-24 contains a strong environmental content with a range of new performance measures which reflect the original concerns of members. This provides assurance that environmental issues will remain central to the Council's development over the next four years.

8 Background Papers

[Environment and Development Services Committee, 16 August 2018.](#)

[Environment and Development Services Committee, 17 April 2019.](#)

[Environment and Development Services Committee, 15 August 2019.](#)

[Staff Travel Plan](#)

[Staff Travel Action Plan](#)

[Climate and Environment Strategy 2020](#)

[Climate and Environment Action Plan 2020](#)