

Report to: **Council**

Date: **16 July 2020**

Title: **Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan Update**

Portfolio Area: **Council – Cllr Judy Pearce (Leader)**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: immediately following this meeting.

Author: **Drew Powell** Role: **Director of Governance and Assurance**

Contact: **01803 861240 email: drew.powell@swdevon.gov.uk**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council is RECOMMENDED that:

- 1. the progress on the development of the Draft Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy be noted;**
- 2. the feedback from the Consultation on the draft Action Plan exercise undertaken in quarter 4 of 2019/20 be noted;**
- 3. the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group be requested to update the Strategy and Action Plan in light of the consultation responses and report back to Council on 24 September 2020; and**
- 4. the correlation between the Council's Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and the Emerging Recovery and Renewal Plans be recognised and that, in developing and implementing its plans, including working towards a resilient green and sustainable economy, it will engage with local businesses, organisations and residents.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council declared a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency on 25th July 2019 and committed to develop an action plan ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The draft Plan was subsequently adopted on December 19th 2019 and, at the same meeting, the Council resolved to develop a Strategy Framework and consult on the Plan.
- 1.3 This report provides an update to members and sets out progress to date which has been delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Background

- 2.1 At Full Council on 19th December 2019 Members considered a comprehensive report on Climate Change and Biodiversity (minute 60/19 refers).
- 2.2 A key part of the resolution arising from the meeting was a commitment to consult on the draft Action Plan with the public and Towns and Parish Councils by the end of March 2020.
- 2.3 In addition the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group were requested to develop a Framework for a Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy to be brought back to Full Council for approval on 21 May 2020.
- 2.4 Whilst progress has been made, the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that officer and Member resources have been focussed on the Council's response phase and the provision of support to residents and businesses.
- 2.5 The Council continues to play a key role, alongside partners, in responding to the short, medium and long term impacts of the pandemic and at this stage all plans need to remain flexible.
- 2.6 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Member Working Group met on 25th June for the first time since February and reviewed the current position.
- 2.7 In view of this, the report recommends amended time lines for completion of some elements of the work whilst seeking Members views on the draft Strategy.
- 2.8 It is important to highlight the correlation between the Council's emerging Recovery and Renewal Plans and the draft Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy. It is envisaged that these areas of work will converge over time, both locally and nationally, as part of a wider 'green recovery'.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The Council recognises the need to reduce its carbon footprint, and to respond to the challenges of climate change and loss of biodiversity in the interests of local, national and global well-being.

- 3.2 This report sets out a summary of the Council's progress and draft strategic approach to work towards its adopted aims in light of its declaration of a Climate Change and Biodiversity emergency.

4. Draft Action Plan Consultation Response

- 4.1 In the line with the resolution detailed above the Council consulted with the Public and the Towns and Parish Councils on the draft Plan.
- 4.2 It was recognised prior to the Consultation that the Plan was at this stage a compilation of proposals generated to date by officers and Members of the working Group.
- 4.3 A total of 15 responses were received from a range of consultees including individuals and groups. At this time the responses have simply been collated at Appendix 1 and grouped together by decarbonisation theme and colour coded in line with perceived level of influence.
- 4.4 Further analysis is to be undertaken and then the emerging Draft Strategy and Plan updated accordingly.
- 4.5 It is recognised that the consultation was limited in format and that the period coincided, in part, with the COVID-19 Pandemic. Further consultation with the Community as a whole, and/or specific sectors, will be needed as actions and options are developed.
- 4.6 This is a long term strategic approach and engagement with all sectors will be needed over time but it is important to consult and engage in a meaningful, targeted manner at the right time.

5. A Draft Strategy Framework

- 5.1 Whilst recognising that the development of a draft Action Plan and the establishment of the Council's first Greenhouse Gas inventory (Carbon footprint) were positive steps forward, the need for a strategic framework setting out evidence, aims and objectives became clear.
- 5.2 Appendix 2 is the first draft of the South Hams District Council Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy. This document has been put together by the Council's new Climate Change Officer, Adam Williams formerly a Planning Specialist for the Council, who was appointed during 'lockdown' after an external recruitment process and started on 1 June 2020.
- 5.3 As can be seen, the document is very much in draft form and text based. It will need to be added to, especially in terms of visuals, along with refinement of the actions, finalised and formatted for publication and adoption at a later date. The document does set out a strategic framework and Members views on this working copy are welcomed.
- 5.4 As highlighted in 2.8 above, how this strategy sits with the emerging Recovery and Renewal plans will develop over time but it is clear that

in pursuing the ambition to 'Build back better' there will be opportunities to deliver against the strategic aims within the strategy.

6. Proposed Way Forward

- 6.1 Further work is needed to finalise the Draft Strategy and consider, and incorporate where relevant, the consultation responses.
- 6.2 It is proposed that the Climate Change and Biodiversity Member Working group finalise the drafting of the Strategy, incorporating the Action Plan, in line with the draft at Appendix 2, with a view to it being presented back to the Council meeting on 24th September 2020 for adoption.

7. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	<p>As a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 the Council has a duty to plan and prepare a response to an emergency or provide support to those who do.</p> <p>Devon County Council, a Category 1 responder, declared a Climate Emergency on 21 February 2019.</p>
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	N	<p>The Council declared a climate change and biodiversity emergency on 25th July 2019 and the potential for this to have significant financial implications for the Council was highlighted. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report and it is not possible to estimate costs with regard to future implementation of the actions within the draft plan at this stage.</p>
Risk	Y	<p>A number of risks need to be highlighted; Based on the evidence put forward failing to respond to the declared emergency is likely to have long term impacts on the council and the community it serves.</p> <p>Acting in a disproportionate manner and directing resources away from other key areas may have adverse impacts in a number of areas including delivery of statutory services, customer</p>

		<p>satisfaction, vulnerable people and the financial sustainability of the organisation.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic may have significant implications on the Council's finance moving forward and the ability to deliver against previously adopted aims and objectives will have to be assessed as part of the Recovery and Renewal plans.</p> <p>Implementing new policies without full consideration of their impacts may directly impact on business, economic growth and delivery against the Joint Local Plan housing targets</p>
Supporting Corporate Strategy		Developing a strategy to meet the challenges of climate change and biodiversity supports all six corporate themes.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		There are no implications arising from this report
Safeguarding		There are no Safeguarding implications arising from this report.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		There are no positive or negative impacts on crime and disorder reduction.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		Developing a plan to meet the challenges of climate change and biodiversity is likely to have a net positive impact on health, safety and well-being. The magnitude of this impact cannot be assessed at this stage.
Other implications		None at this stage

Appendices:

- 1 - Summary of Consultation Responses; and
- 2 - Draft SHDC Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy.