

Report to: **Council**
Date: **22 September 2020**
Title: **Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy**
Portfolio Area: **Council – Cllr Neil Jory (Leader)**
Wards Affected: **All**
Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Immediately following this meeting

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group RECOMMENDED to Council that the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy as detailed at Appendix 1 be adopted.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council declared a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency on 23 July 2019 and committed to develop an Action Plan ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The draft Plan was subsequently adopted on 17 December 2019 and the Council also resolved to develop a Strategy Framework.
- 1.3 The Draft Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy, detailed at Appendix 1, has been developed by the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group (CC&BWG) and the adopted Action Plan updated.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Member Working Group have met on a number of occasions and have worked with officers to refine the Action Plan whilst developing a strategic framework that sets out the background and context of the declaration and the aims that have been set.
- 2.2 It is also important to highlight the correlation between the Council's emerging Recovery and Renewal Plans and the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy. These areas of work have continued to evolve and 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 recommends the adoption of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy.

4. A Strategic Framework for Delivering against the Councils adopted Aims

- 4.1 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 was recognised by Members.
- 4.2 Appendix 1 sets out the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy. This document has been put together by the Councils new Climate Change Officer, Adam Williams formerly a Planning Specialist for the Council.
- 4.3 The Actions within the Strategy have been refined following discussions between officers and the CC&BWG and represent a culmination of key priorities that the Council should focus on in order to assist the Borough, and the County, to become net-zero by 2050.
- 4.4 Members will note that the majority of actions proposed are high level, capitalising on the Councils position as an influencer, partner and facilitator between residents, business, stakeholders and elected members.
- 4.5 Clearly, where a proposal requires potential expenditure, a cost-benefit analysis will be undertaken and will be considered through the normal decision-making process.

- 4.6 It is also important to highlight that setting targets for reducing carbon emissions is notoriously difficult. A key factor is the level of control over which, in this case, the Council have in securing the necessary reductions.
- 4.7 Whilst the Council can influence, promote and support change it has very limited direct control other than over its own activities. The Strategy proposes to continue to monitor yearly carbon emissions data but to continue to engage and work with the Devon Carbon Plan, utilising expertise involved with that process.
- 4.8 As highlighted in 2.2 above, how this strategy sits with the emerging Recovery and Renewal plan has been refined and relevant actions which are found within the emerging Recovery and Renewal plan have been carried across into the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan where relevant.
- 4.9 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. At the time of writing this report additional 'lockdown' measure have been applied nationally and infection rates are increasing.
- 4.10 The progress on the Devon Carbon Plan has been delayed in part because of the pandemic, with consultation now expected to take place in December 2020. Furthermore, the Councils Recovery and Renewal Plan is yet to be formally adopted.

5 Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 That Council adopt the first version of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and continue to implement the adopted, amended Action Plan.

6 Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	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. Devon County Council, a Category 1 responder, declared a Climate Emergency on 21 February 2019.

Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	The Council declared a climate change and biodiversity emergency on 23rd 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.
Risk		<p>A number 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 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>

Appendix 1

Draft Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy