

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **20 January 2022**

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

Portfolio Areas: **Cllr Tom Holway**

Wards Affected: **All**

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

Author: **Adam Williams** Role: **Climate Change Specialist**

Contact: **Email: adam.williams@swdevon.gov.uk**

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the update on the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and an updated Action Plan were developed and presented to the Council on 17th December 2020. These were then adopted at this meeting. At the same meeting, it was agreed that updates on the progress of the action plan would be provided on 6 monthly intervals.
- 1.2 The first 6 monthly update was provided to the Overview and Scrutiny committee on 1st July 2021. It was resolved that a Task and Finish Group be set up to consider the report of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 1.3 The Group was tasked to report back with any recommendations to the meeting of the Panel which was held on Thursday 4 November 2021 and these recommendations were agreed and made to the Executive.

- 1.4 Proposals for one of the Task and Finish Group recommendations were deliberated and agreed at the meeting of the Executive on 2 December 2021.
- 1.5 The other recommendations will be considered by the Executive on 27th January 2022.
- 1.6 This report provides an update on progress on the action plan since 1st July 2021.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan was adopted on 17th December 2020 by the Council. It was noted that the Action Plan will be a continually evolving document and that delegated authority be granted to the Director of Governance and Assurance, in consultation with the lead Executive Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity, to make revisions to the Plan as and when deemed necessary
- 2.2 In addition, it was resolved on the 17th December 2020 that performance against the Action Plan should be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a six-monthly basis.
- 2.3 The first update was provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1st July 2021. In view of the complexity and scale of the Action Plan it was proposed, and agreed at that meeting, to set up a Task and Finish Group to undertake a review and then present its conclusions back to a future Committee meeting.
- 2.4 The Task and Finish Group met on four occasions and reported back to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday 4 November 2021 and recommendations made to the Executive (minute O&S.37/21 refers).
- 2.5 A report has since been taken to the Executive to progress one of the recommendations (minute E.71/21 refers) and this is covered in **section 3** of this report.
- 2.6 The update on progress against the Councils Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan, since the last update in July 2021, is covered in **section 4** of this report and an updated, reformatted version of the Plan can be found at Appendix 1.

3. Task and Finish Group Recommendation update

- 3.1 At the meeting on 2 December 2021, the Executive considered a proposal for a reviewed funding model to accelerate one of the

Task and Finish Group Recommendations, specifically recommendation c) as follows;

- c) The Action Plan should continue to acknowledge that the Council has an important facilitation and coordination role in the community it serves and that it is uniquely placed to be actively bringing key local organisations together, working with them to resolve issues where it has the relevant powers and/or influence, helping to access funds as the need arises, helping to create a common understanding of goals and timescales and working with groups to achieve them. In light of this, a review of the adopted funding mechanism will take place with a view to ensuring that, within available budgets, support is available to enable community groups to undertake specific tasks, such as community engagement, as required by the Council's adopted CC&B strategy.
- 3.2 The Executive resolved to set aside £100,000 of the £200,000 originally dedicated to Crowdfunder and the small direct cash grants scheme, to fund projects targeted to accelerate the delivery of the Council's adopted Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan as set out in the report (minute E.71/21 refers).
 - 3.3 Officers are working on the methodology and process for the new scheme which is planned to go live in February 2022.
 - 3.4 The Executive requested additional time to consider the other five detailed recommendations that had been generated by the Task and Finish Group. These recommendations will be considered further at the Executive meeting on 27th January 2022.

4. South Hams District Council Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Progress Update

- 4.1 A proposed revised action plan structure was presented to the Task and Finish Group which is found at Appendix 1, this revision of the action plan provides details on the latest position on each individual action as well as providing an estimate on action impact level as well as providing detail on the organisation responsible as well as key partners. This revised action plan now includes operational actions to bring together all the work related to the climate emergency into one place, as well as data sources to monitor progress on key metrics, such as carbon emissions, EV registrations, financial and grant funding expenditure. It is expected that a redesign and a refresh of the strategy will be conducted upon the adoption of the Devon Carbon Plan, expected in August 2022.

- 4.2 Key progress has been made in the following areas since June 2021;
- a. The Council benefitted from a funding opportunity to either initiate or enhance their enforcement procedures in association with the minimum energy efficiency standard (MEES) regulations. The Council's application to the PRS MEES Compliance and Enforcement Competition was successful and we (SHDC and WDBC combined) received a grant allocation of £44,331. The work will involve gathering all the available information and data on the rental market, so that we can target the relevant landlords and promote compliance. Improving properties in private rental sector will help the council's climate change agenda. Recruitment of an officer to carry out the work failed – no suitable applications were received– so we are now talking to local energy groups to do the required work and for energy groups to provide advice to landlords. The Council will retain the enforcement responsibility.
 - b. The Council continues to hold funding under the Government's Green Homes Grant (GHG) scheme and continues to work towards the delivery of the scheme. The grant will be used to deliver energy saving measures for eligible households and will be delivered during 2021/22. However, due to major supply chain difficulties nationally a review of the process has been needed and we have now secured a locally approach to delivering these grants. Since then we have now approved grants with an average grant allocation of £11080 so far with most applicants using a local installer based in Plymouth.
 - i. Currently there are ten grants currently approved in South Hams totalling £96k (including 6 air source heat pumps) out of a total budget of £900k. There are more surveys being booked and planned, so further requests for approvals are expected.
 - ii. Applications are still being accepted and all existing applicants have been written to just before Christmas, encouraging them to take up the revised offer. Further communication will be sent in January encourage residents to apply.
 - iii. We are working with partners in Community Energy to support the leads we have generated. Discussions are also being had with BEIS for an initial (possibly more) 4 week extension from the end of April 2022 to complete the project, we are confident the grant allocation we have will remain secured and spent on measures across the district.

- iv. South Hams is also part of the Devon Sustainable warmth project, which is a consortium of Devon Authorities and is the next green home grant phase. South Hams has been allocated £750k and is due to start in the spring.
- c. Monthly Climate and Biodiversity Newsletters have continued to be produced and released monthly and subscriber have grown month on month from 226 in October 2020 to 614 in October 2021
- d. The next engagement campaign with Carbon Savvy, South Hams District Council, West Devon Borough Council, Torridge District Council and North Devon Council was developed and took place during the COP26 fortnight (1 November – 13 November 2021). The focus of the campaign was shopping, titled Shop4good, the campaign follows new research that shows consumer interest in sustainability has increased significantly since the pandemic, and suggests consumer buying power may be doing more to help the climate than originally thought. Since shopping makes up a big part of our carbon footprints, the campaign highlights ways to reduce this and tasks participants to consider this impact and complete a carbon emissions footprint calculator to enter a prize draw.
- e. Completed a feasibility study into the Councils role around EV charging as well as reviewing opportunities for solar and battery storage on our car parks.
- f. Completed Carbon Literacy Training for SLT and ELT in partnership with Torbay Council. The next steps will be to collate the commitments made by trainees and include this as part of a revised action plan when the Devon Carbon Plan is completed and adopted. In addition, we can now apply to become a carbon literate organisation at bronze level.
- g. Commissioned Exeter University to conduct an update of the Councils Greenhouse Gas emissions. This will then lead into a new piece of work to develop an Operational Emissions Decarbonisation Plan.
- h. Scoping work started for a 'DEV32 plus' initiative to prepare an informal planning policy/guidance document which sets out specifically how the LPAs will use the climate emergency and the Climate Emergency Declarations as a material consideration in the planning process, in addition to the implementation of the JLP and SPD.
- i. Completed a District wide survey with CoCars and CoBikes to review the scope for shared EVs and Bikes for in the area. The next steps will be to discuss the opportunities with

CoCars and CoBikes with a view to looking at potential test sites subject to feasibility/funding

- j. The Climate Change website has undergone an overhaul to include the strategy and action plan, links to funding opportunities offered by SHDC, tips for residents and businesses as well as the current newsletter.
- k. Developing a guide for Parish and Town Councils and Net Zero, a draft was presented to the Climate Change and Biodiversity Community Forum in November. This guide will be web based and will go live on our Climate Change website on 18th January.
- l. Funding secured from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund project. This project will see 300 trees planted at 15 sites in early 2022 and a further 300 will follow early in 2023 at another 15 sites.
- m. Following overwhelming support to change our Grounds Maintenance procedure as a result of our target to improve biodiversity on our land by 10% a report seeking endorsement of the proposed changes as well as to approve spending from the earmarked Climate Change and Biodiversity reserve will be taken to the Councils Executive on 27th January.

5. Plans for short term (next 6 months)

- 5.1 The Action Plan will continue to be worked on in accordance with 'Better Lives for All', the Councils new Corporate Strategy. Integrating carbon reduction and increasing biodiversity will be embedded within the strategic approach with a shift over the next year to turn our focus towards our operational carbon reduction target to reach net zero by 2030
- 5.2 Over the next 6 months we will expect to see a final version of the Devon Carbon Plan which will trigger an update of our own action plan, bringing in actions from that plan as well as its monitoring indicators.
- 5.3 The Councils Greenhouse Gas account for 20/21 will be finalised and work started on a decarbonisation plan across Scopes 1, 2 and 3.

7. Implications

Implications	Relevant to	Details and proposed measures to address
--------------	-------------	--

	proposals Y/N	
Legal/Governance	N	
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	<p>Climate Change and Biodiversity Earmarked Reserve which has a balance of £241,000 subtracting the commitments made through the Better Lives for All Corporate Strategy, which includes Crowdfunder.</p> <p>On an annual basis, the Council's auditors, issue an opinion on their Value for Money conclusion for the Council.</p> <p>As part of Grant Thornton's external audit of the Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021, they have concluded that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.</p>
Risk	N	
Supporting Corporate Strategy		Wellbeing, Homes, Climate Change and Biodiversity
Equality and Diversity		No direct implications
Safeguarding		No direct implications
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		No direct implications
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		The provision of energy efficiency measures will have a positive impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of the households.
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - South Hams Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Update