

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

UPDATE ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval for the proposed Corporate Environmental Policy.
2. To update the Committee on progress with the Corporate Environment Strategy and seek approval for the proposed key strategic ambitions.

Information

Context

3. In 2018 the UK Government introduced its 25 Year Environment Plan to protect and enhance the environment by improving air quality, creating richer habitats for wildlife and reducing plastic waste. As part of this plan, the first Environment Bill in 20 years was introduced to parliament in October 2019, setting out the action the Government plans to take to protect landscapes, enhance wildlife, reform farming and tackle plastic waste.
4. In 2019 the Government committed the UK to achieving a legally binding target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
5. Nottinghamshire County Council as a local authority, major employer, service provider, community leader, partner and local authority plays a leading role in protecting and improving the environment for Nottinghamshire residents. The development of a Corporate Environmental Policy and Strategy is instrumental to fulfilling that role.

Background

6. At its meeting on 16 May 2019, the County Council resolved to welcome plans to bring proposals for a new Corporate Environment Strategy to a future meeting of Policy Committee.
7. On 18 September 2019, Policy Committee approved the proposals and key activities to be covered in developing this strategy. The strategy, alongside an overarching environmental policy, would cover the key activities of the Council that interact with the environment and seek to improve the environmental impacts of those activities. This included:
 - a. Use of fuel, energy and water in our vehicles and our buildings;
 - b. Generation, treatment and disposal of waste from our buildings and our activities;
 - c. The management of the Council's land;
 - d. New developments and projects;

- e. Procurement of goods and services;
- f. Use of goods and materials and their impact on the environment;
- g. Council projects, strategies and policies.

Progress to Date

8. The development of the Corporate Environment Strategy will build on current good environmental practice and achievements to date including;
 - a. A reduction in electricity consumption in street lighting by 36% since 2012/13 thanks to investment in LED technology.
 - b. A reduction in CO₂ emissions from our buildings and street lighting by 69% since 2010/11 due to targeted investment across our estate.
 - c. A 133% increase in renewable power, from 321,071 kWh to 749,413 kWh, produced by solar photovoltaic panels (PVs) installed on Council sites since 2014/2015. Currently 39 Council buildings have PVs installed.
 - d. Landfill for waste disposal down to less than 5%.
 - e. Reduction of single use plastics with the removal of plastic cups and the offering of reusable coffee cups in Council buildings.
 - f. Provision for 6 electric buses used for public transport, with 2 buses currently operational and 4 planned to become operational in 2020.
 - g. The investment of £2m of funding by Go Ultra Low Nottingham from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles Go Ultra Low City Fund to provide a public network of 230 electric vehicle charge points in the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire local authority areas. Currently there are 20 publicly accessible sites in Nottinghamshire, including County Hall.
 - h. A Cycle to Work scheme and a Nottinghamshire Carshare scheme, with over 400 members in the Council's car sharing group.
 - i. The Council hosting the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group Partnership, one of the largest local biodiversity partnerships in the country with nearly 50 partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors.
 - j. Working through the County's Health and Wellbeing Board to develop a Nottinghamshire Air Quality Strategy, which sets out the intention for multiagency action tackling emissions from development, transport, domestic and industrial sources.

9. The Council is a lead member of the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership and supports the delivery of its Energy Strategy 2019 – 20230 and its recently published draft Industrial Strategy which identified clean growth as one of its 3 central propositions. The Council is also a key partner in the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Local Authorities Energy Partnership, which works to alleviate fuel poverty, reduce carbon emissions, improve energy efficiency and promote sustainable energy generation.

10. On a regional level, the Council has recently endorsed the next steps in the Midlands Engine Development Corporation Programme. The Council proposes to take a lead role in this Corporation, and, beyond the economic benefits, the programme will be designed to protect and enhance the environment, with a strong focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving net gains in natural capital.

Approach

11. In developing the proposed policy and strategic ambitions, the Council has learnt from good practice through undertaking a desktop review of other councils' environment strategies and attendance at local conferences and workshops.

12. There has also been a programme of cross-Council engagement that has included presentations to the Leader and senior leadership teams of all departments, as well as the Central Joint Consultative and Negotiating Panel to establish awareness and support for the development and delivery of this significant step change in environmental performance for the Council.
13. Employees have been encouraged to contribute positively to the development and delivery of this environmental policy and strategy through the establishment of a Place department working group and an inter-departmental officer working group with key representatives from across the Council. In addition, senior officers have supported the establishment of an employee green initiatives group, with the first event held in January, and a lead from this group is now attending the officer working group to represent the Council's workforce in these key discussions.
14. Corporate communications colleagues have been engaged and are advising on effective communication and interaction with employees to support behaviour change to better our environmental impact. This has included promoting key strategies, such as the Energy Strategy for the County Offices, and sharing information on the employee green initiatives group.
15. Additionally, there are plans to seek endorsement and the involvement of the Young People's Board as part of this on-going programme of engagement and development of the Corporate Environment Strategy. An environmental briefing for the working groups and officers involved in the development of the strategy is currently being planned.

Environmental Policy

16. **Appendix A** is the proposed Corporate Environmental Policy, outlining the key principles, scope and approach to improving the Council's environmental performance and delivering the proposed key strategic ambitions set out further below.

Environment Strategy

17. Many environmental programmes and activities also have positive benefits on other Council objectives, such as improvements in efficiency and reductions in cost and benefits to health.
18. The strategy will provide a key opportunity to maximise positive outcomes for the health and wellbeing and residents in line with the Council's statutory responsibility for improving the health of the local population. Working with partners to create a healthier and more sustainable environment in Nottinghamshire can have an impact on physical activity and diet related diseases and obesity, respiratory diseases, employment rates, substance misuse, mental wellbeing, warmer and safer homes, the resilience of communities and other co-benefits, as identified in Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy. These benefits have been incorporated into the themes of the strategy.
19. The themes proposed to be included in the strategy are:
 - a. **Natural Environment** – including the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, landscapes, Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves; compliance with environmental legislation, flood risk management and adaptations to a changing climate.
 - b. **Built Environment** – including the use and management of buildings, construction projects and protection of heritage in Nottinghamshire.

- c. **Production and Consumption of Resources** – including the consumption of energy and water in Council offices; the generation, treatment and disposal of waste from our buildings; the production of renewable energy and greenhouse gas emissions from Council operations.
- d. **Travel and Transport** – including the Council’s work-related travel and fleet provision as well as public transport provision for the County.
- e. **Community Leadership, Health and the Economy** – including the Council’s procurement & commissioning practice; supporting clean growth and a circular economy in Nottinghamshire; maximising environmental benefits of a healthier and active lifestyle and supporting our partners and communities to improve their own environmental performance.

Strategic Ambitions

20. Whilst the environment strategy is specifically for the activities undertaken by the Council rather than a strategy for Nottinghamshire as a whole, it will seek to embrace how the Council can influence everyone who lives in, works in, or visits the County through its role as a service provider, community leader and partner. Additionally, it will seek to protect the most vulnerable residents in Nottinghamshire as it is acknowledged that changes in the climate will disproportionately impact those living in disadvantaged communities.
21. **Appendix B** is a proposal for the current key strategic ambitions of the Environment Strategy and captures good environmental practice as well as ambitions for the future. This is a work in progress and details proposals for Council and County-wide aspirations from on-going discussions with services and illustrates the desired direction for the strategy. These ambitions will be further developed as part of on-going work on the strategy and will need costing and final approval, as well as consultation with our key partners, such as Via and Arc. Below highlights several key strategic ambitions, with the full list outlined in **Appendix B**.

Natural Environment

- a. Plant ¼ million trees in the next 7 years through woodland regeneration and woodland planting on Council land.
- b. Achieve net gains in biodiversity on Council land and highway verges, supporting the delivery of Nottinghamshire’s Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
- c. Designate a new tranche of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) that are of significant value for wildlife and people from the Council’s Green Spaces portfolio, in addition to the 7 LNRs currently under Council management.
- d. Work with local communities to develop the proposed new ‘national forest’ in Sherwood, part of the Government’s 25-year Environment Plan.
- e. Develop and implement a Greener Highways Plan covering the management of trees, green corridors and road verges with targets to increase tree and wildflower planting on the highways network.

Built Environment

- f. Achieve excellent BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) rating for the new office accommodation at Top Wighay and West Bridgford, with the ambition for the West Bridgford campus to become carbon neutral.
- g. Design environmental guidelines on achieving good to excellent BREEAM rating (or an equivalent environmental standard) for the design, construction and operation of all new builds by the Council.
- h. Increase the production of renewable energy generated on the Council’s estate.

Production and Consumption of Resources

- i. Improve the recycling performance in the County to above the current rate of 43%, aspiring to achieve 52% by 2025.
- j. Maintain landfill diversion to above 95%, aspiring to achieve 100% diversion from landfill for Nottinghamshire's waste.
- k. Develop and implement a carbon reduction plan for the Council to achieve the UK target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050, aspiring to deliver carbon neutrality at the earliest possible opportunity.

Travel and Transport

- l. Implement initiatives to encourage the use of public transport and orchestrate the move towards greener modes of public and community transport.
- m. Develop and implement a strategy to green all the Council's vehicles by 2030.
- n. Develop and implement an Employee Travel Plan & Parking Management Strategy for County Offices to encourage employees to use 'greener' modes of transport.

Community Leadership, Health and the Economy

- o. Develop and implement a programme to support and advise schools on actions and funding opportunities to achieve net zero carbon emissions.
 - p. Develop a Green Investment Fund to provide annual funding for projects improving the Council's environmental performance.
 - q. Implement the Council's new Procurement Strategy, ensuring the Council has a green and sustainable supply chain and secures environmental benefits and social value from its contracts.
22. The motion approved by Council in May 2019 specifically mentioned that developing the strategy would include working through the evidence base related to the world's changing climate, with the intention of making progress towards carbon neutrality. Progress has been made to collect evidence on the Council's carbon footprint.
23. The current proposal is for the Council to achieve the national target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with the ambition to deliver this at the earliest possible opportunity following detailed data analysis and carbon reduction planning. Interim target dates will be set as part of the on-going development and implementation of the Corporate Environment Strategy.
24. It is acknowledged that the County Council's own emissions form only part of the total carbon emissions in Nottinghamshire and therefore consideration shall also be given to developing a carbon reduction plan for the county area, alongside that covering the Council's operations.

Governance Arrangements

25. The proposal for governance arrangements include monitoring and reporting progress to Policy Committee on the development and delivery of the strategy every 6 months.
26. Additionally, as outlined in the environmental policy, it is proposed that the Council reviews and updates the Environmental Policy every 2 years, to consider changes in the Council's service provision as well as to the international, national and local policy context.

Timetable

27. If proposals are approved, a final strategic action plan is expected to return to Committee for approval in the autumn, with delivery and resource requests incorporated.

Other Options Considered

28. To continue to take a more ad hoc approach to ensuring the Council's environmental performance and activities are effectively captured and progressed, however this risks missing opportunities to incorporate best practice, and minimises the chances of achieving significant environmental benefits for the County.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

29. Having a clear environmental policy and strategy for the Council will ensure that environmental standards will be applied equally and effectively at a corporate level across the Council and can be embedded within both the corporate and departmental plans, and within decision making at Committee and officer level.

30. Improving the environmental performance of the Council's operations, and ensuring environmental considerations are applied transparently within decision making, will allow the Council to set a positive and leading example to partners and stakeholders, and take an active role in embedding best environmental practice across the County.

31. Enhancing environmental standards will improve the long-term viability and sustainability of the Council by future proofing both the assets that we control, and the services we provide, and allow a long – term whole life cost approach to be taken on investment decisions.

Statutory and Policy Implications

32. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

33. There are no direct financial implications included in this report.

34. There will be financial implications associated with delivery of these key strategic aspirations if approved. These will be costed and reported to future meetings of the Policy Committee, alongside a more detailed strategic action plan.

35. There will be no implications for the Nottinghamshire Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) associated with the delivery of these key strategic aspirations. The Fund's investments are subject to separate Government Regulations and LGPS Central has been commissioned to produce a climate risk analysis to enable the Pension Fund to identify its exposure to fossil fuels, understand its financial risk and to formulate and publish a Climate Strategy. Progress on the management of all financially material risk affecting the Fund's investments, including environmental risk, will be reported through the Pension Fund Committee.

Implications in relation to the NHS Constitution

36. As noted, there will be associated health benefits with the development of an environment strategy, through, for example, improved air quality and increased physical activity such as cycling and walking.

Smarter Working Implications

37. The Investing in Nottinghamshire programme is looking to achieve positive environmental outcomes, including reducing the Council's environmental impact through work to reduce the carbon footprint of the Council's estate and delivering improved work transport/access solutions for employees. In February 2020 Policy Committee approved long term proposals for the future use of the Council's major office and service buildings. This included the long-term ambition for the West Bridgford Campus to achieve carbon neutral status as part of the programme.

38. Additionally, as part of the on-going development of the strategy and ambition to support our workforce in this behavioural change, the promotion of smarter working principles will be key to reducing the Council's carbon footprint through the energy consumption of office buildings and emissions from employee business travel.

Implications for Service Users

39. The environment strategy would be expected to make a positive contribution to the Council's objective of making efficient use of resources through energy and water conservation and waste minimisation, freeing up resources for service provision.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

40. Development of an environmental policy and environment strategy and the current proposals put forward for consideration would have a positive effect both on the environmental impacts of the County Council's own activities and on the wider environment through the Council's role as a community leader and partner.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) Committee approves the proposed Corporate Environmental Policy, outlined in **Appendix A**.
 - a) Committee approves the key aspirations of the Corporate Environment Strategy outlined in **Appendix B**, with the knowledge that a final and detailed strategy shall be presented to a future meeting, with action plan, delivery and resource costs included.

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE
Leader of the County Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Mick Allen, Group Manager, Place Commissioning, Tel: 01159774684

Constitutional Comments (EP 17/02/2020)

41. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Policy Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (RWK 20/02/2020)

42. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report. Any financial implications arising out of actions proposed in the report will be the subject to future reports to Committee.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Minutes of Full Council, 16 May 2019
- Minutes of Policy Committee, 18 September 2019
- Energy Strategy for County Offices, 2019-2022
- Policy Committee Report, 12 February 2020

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All