

## **REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on progress with the delivery of the Corporate Environment Strategy (CES).
2. To seek approval for establishment of a new post of Environment Strategy Manager within the Place Department.
3. To seek approval for the establishment of revenue and capital funding to take the Strategy forward and enable the Council to achieve its environmental ambitions.

#### **Information**

##### Background

4. In 2018, the 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 and subsequently committed the UK to achieving a legally binding target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. At the County Council meeting on 15 October 2020 the Council committed to “carbon neutrality in all its activities by 2030 or as soon as possible thereafter”.
5. In May 2019, the County Council resolved to bring forward proposals for a new Environment Strategy to support these national aspirations. These proposals were approved by Policy Committee in September 2019 and covered the key activities of the Council interacting with the environment, including:
  - *Use of fuel, energy and water in our vehicles and buildings;*
  - *Waste generation, treatment and disposal relating to our buildings and activities;*
  - *The management of the Council’s land;*
  - *New developments and projects;*
  - *Procurement of goods and services;*
  - *Use of goods and materials and their impact on the environment;*
  - *Council projects, strategies and policies.*
6. Following this, in March 2020 Policy Committee approved the new Corporate Environmental Policy as well as thirteen proposed key strategic ambitions for the environment strategy.
7. These strategic ambitions were divided into five main themes and covered the following areas:

- I. *Natural Environment*
  - a. Protect our soil, habitats and green estate from pollution, erosion and invasive non-native species.
  - b. Restore landscapes, ecosystems, biodiversity and nature recovery networks.
  - c. Limit the negative impacts of a changing climate on Nottinghamshire’s environment.
- II. *Built Environment*
  - a. Conserve and enhance Nottinghamshire’s built and archaeological heritage.
  - b. Improve the sustainability of Council owned land and property assets.
- III. *Resources*
  - a. Reduce our generation of waste.
  - b. Reduce our consumption of energy and water.
  - c. Minimise our contribution to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- IV. *Travel and Transport*
  - a. Improve the impact of our work-related travel and transport.
  - b. Increase the use of public transport and promote ‘greener’ active modes of travel.
- V. *Community Leadership, Health and Economy*
  - a. Lead on good environmental practice, encouraging our workforce and community partners to improve their environmental performance.
  - b. Maximise co-benefits for health and wellbeing by supporting initiatives encouraging healthier and active lifestyles and the development of healthy and sustainable places.
  - c. Maximise co-benefits for the economy by supporting clean growth in Nottinghamshire.

Progress

- 8. The thirteen strategic ambitions have been broken down into an Action Plan containing fifty-nine separate actions spread across the County Council.
- 9. Whilst much progress has been made with the initial delivery of the Action Plan, the Covid-19 pandemic has inevitably impacted upon on a number of these actions. The table below shows a high-level view of the progress of actions of the environment strategy. A detailed summary can be found in **Appendix A**.

Status	Number of actions	Percentage
Good Progress	13	22%
Some Progress	23	39%
Little Progress	18	31%
Data unknown currently	5	8%

Resourcing the Environment Strategy

- 10. As the Strategy has developed, it has become apparent that a more formal, established resource is required in order to ensure it is given appropriate management, oversight and momentum going forward. To date the development and co-ordination work involved has been managed by temporary resourcing and ad hoc arrangements, which are not sustainable or appropriate given the value of the Strategy in driving and pulling together the Council’s wide-ranging activities in support of its environmental ambitions and policy commitments.

11. This being the case, it is proposed that a new post of Environment Manager (1 FTE Hay Band D subject to Job Evaluation) is created within the Place Department to take responsibility for the Strategy's delivery, co-ordination, monitoring and reporting. It is proposed that a revenue budget of £60k per annum (kpa) is allocated to fund the post. In essence the role would involve the following:
- a. Finalising and proactively managing and updating the environment strategy to reflect national and international policy;
  - b. Overseeing the day-to-day fulfilment of the action plan;
  - c. Liaising with Council colleagues and partners to measure and review progress against targets;
  - d. Co-ordination of the Council's carbon reduction plan;
  - e. Act as the Council's representative on local and regional boards and partnerships relating to the environment strategy and its carbon reduction plan;
  - f. Identify ways to improve environmental performance within the Council including invest to save and self funding projects, and external funding opportunities;
  - g. Act as the primary point of liaison for the Green Investment Fund (see below).

### Governance

12. The current governance arrangements for the strategy set out in the March report involve the monitoring and reporting of progress to Policy Committee on the development and delivery of the strategy every 6 months. The Council's Environmental Policy is also due to be reviewed and updated every 2 years, with this next due in March 2022.
13. It is now further proposed that alongside Committee reporting, the Place Department Leadership Team takes operational oversight of the strategy, due to the majority of the actions sitting within the Place Department's operations.

### Green Investment Fund

14. The March Policy Committee report established the principle that the Council looks to set up a 'Green Investment Fund' to provide annual funding for projects that improve the Council's environmental performance. This would be an internally-available fund to which Council services from all departments could apply towards activities in support of the environment and delivery of the Environment Strategy objectives.
15. Since March, consultation has been carried out with services whose activities contribute to the Strategy's ambitions and actions. This has enabled calculation of an appropriate yet ambitious financial ask to enable the Council to effectively deliver its environmental aspirations. This includes funding initiatives already identified but currently lacking the necessary financial resources to be delivered, whilst also setting aside some money for new initiatives to come forward.
16. As such, it is proposed that the 'Green Investment Fund' is established with an initial capital budget of £500k for 2021/22, subject to approval through the Capital Asset Management Group (CAMG), which will support the projects already identified but which lack funding to allow them to progress as listed within the action plan in **Appendix A**. The need for further capital funding would be considered in due course, although it is expected that as environmental sustainability becomes further embedded in the Council operations and established as "business as usual" across the Council, existing budgets will be used differently, reducing the need for one off funding.

17. If the proposed Fund is approved, officers will formulate the exact mechanism by which the Fund will operate as well as the precise governance arrangements that will be put in place, however individual projects will be agreed through CAMG on a case by case basis. Needless to say, the Fund's criteria will give weighting to projects that deliver financial savings to the Council, value for money, return on investment, carbon savings, and security of estate. A report outlining the details will be taken to Policy Committee in the spring of 2021 to give Members comprehensive oversight.

### **Other Options Considered**

18. The co-ordination and development of the environment strategy could continue under the current temporary, ad hoc arrangements. This is no longer sustainable as the Strategy evolves and a more permanent, dedicated resource is required to take this forward effectively and provide a point of co-ordination for a cross-service carbon reduction plan in support of its newly agreed aspirations for carbon neutrality across its operations.

19. The Council could assign a project or programme manager to the environment strategy from within its existing Projects and Programmes team. However, due to the specialist knowledge required, the long-term nature of the strategy, as well as the natural location of many of the actions within the Place Department, it is believed that a permanent position established within this Department to drive, co-ordinate and engage across the Council is more appropriate.

20. The Council could choose to either rely totally on existing budgets to finance delivery of the strategy or contribute less money to it than that which is proposed here. In the first case, although some elements of the strategy can take place without further financial support from the Council, a number of ambitions within the Strategy, particularly regarding environmental conservation, are simply not feasible without dedicated funding being set aside. Regarding the second case, reducing funding will force a lowering of the ambitions within the Strategy at a time when environmental concerns are arguably at an all-time high.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

21. It is proposed that operational oversight of the Environment Strategy sits under the Place Leadership Team because at least 75% of the 59 actions sit within the Department as well as the contractual oversight of the Council's three ASDMs – Inspire, Via and Arc – and the long term PFI waste contract with Veolia providing important levers and relationships through which to extend the Strategy's reach. It should be noted that a Mid Term Contract Review of the PFI waste contract is currently being undertaken with a report on the scope of the review recently taken to Communities and Place Review and Development Committee.

22. Current arrangements for developing and delivering the Strategy are unsustainable. This is due to lack of capacity amongst the officers presently working on the Strategy, which is currently being undertaken alongside other daily tasks. If the Council is serious in delivering on its environmental ambitions, this work needs to be adequately resourced over the long term.

23. Members requested at the March Policy Committee that the Council investigates the setting up of a Green Investment Fund.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

24. 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**

25. It is estimated that the revenue cost of the Environment Manager would be c.£60kpa (1 FTE Hay Band D subject to Job Evaluation). Funding to support this post will need to be identified if work on the strategy is to continue at the pace requested by the County Council.
26. The £500k capital cost of the Green Investment Fund for 2021/22 will need to be approved by CAMG.
27. If approved both the revenue and capital costs will be taken forward to the annual budget setting process of the County Council in February 2021.

### **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

28. The County Council has repeatedly committed itself to improving the environmental performance of its operations and recently committed to “carbon neutrality in all its activities by 2030 or as soon as possible thereafter”.
29. Making a step change in the delivery of services will be necessary if the Council is to meet these aspirations.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That Committee:

- 1) notes the progress made to-date on the Corporate Environment Strategy;
- 2) approves the creation of a new post of Environment Manager (1 FTE Hay Band D subject to Job Evaluation) in the Place Department, subject to the appropriate HR procedures;
- 3) agrees to set aside the requested revenue and capital funding to support the above post , and establish a Green Investment Fund, the terms and governance of which will be subject to further approval by Policy Committee in spring 2021.

**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: 0115 9774684

### **Constitutional Comments (KK 09/11/2020)**

30. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Policy Committee.

## **Financial Comments (SES 11/11/2020)**

31. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 25 to 27 of the report. If approved both the revenue and capital costs will be taken forward to the annual budget setting process of the County Council in February 2021.

**HR Comments (JP 12/11/2020)** The establishment of the Environment Manager Post will be subject to the Authority's Job Evaluation procedure and Recruitment policies.

## **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.

- None

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All