

Report to: **Council**

Date: **24 September 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**
Adam Williams **Climate Change Specialist**

Contact: Drew.powell@swdevon.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group RECOMMEND to Council that:

- 1. the progress on the development of the Draft Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy be noted and that in doing so it is recognised that the Strategy will continue to evolve and develop overtime;**
- 2. the feedback from the Climate Change Working Group sessions with Consultees undertaken on 27 August 2020 and the commitment for ongoing dialogue with these Consultees be noted;**
- 3. the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group be requested to compile the first version of the Strategy and Action Plan to bring back for adoption at the Council meeting to be held on 17 December 2020;**
- 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.

5. A Climate Change and Biodiversity Community Board, or similar, is established in line with 4.5 below and an initial meeting be held before the final draft Strategy and Action Plan are presented to Council on 17 December 2020.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council declared a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency on 25 July 2019 and committed to develop an Action Plan ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The draft Plan was subsequently adopted on December 19th 2019 and the Council resolved to develop a Strategy Framework and consult on the Plan.
- 1.3 The Draft Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy was developed and presented to the council on 16th July 2020.
- 1.4 This report provides an update to members and sets out progress to date, including the outcome of the Climate Change Working Group session with consultees which took place on 27th August 2020

2. Background

- 2.1 At Full Council on 16 July 2020, Members considered a Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy, containing both a framework and action plan.
- 2.2 A key part of the resolution arising from the meeting was to invite consultees or their representatives to address the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group (CC&BWG) by means of a remote meeting within the next six weeks of the 16th July Council meeting. This took place on the 27th August.
- 2.3 In addition, the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group were requested to update the Strategy and Action Plan in light of the consultation responses and report back to the Council meeting on 24 September 2020.
- 2.4 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Member Working Group met on 27th August for a special session with consultees. The Working Group met again on 10th September to consider the outcomes of that special session.
- 2.5 Whilst progress has continued to be made, officer and Member resources continue to be focussed on the Council's response phase and the provision of support to residents and businesses.
- 2.6 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 with a view to bringing a finalised version to full Council in December.

- 2.7 It is again highlighted that a correlation exists between the Council's emerging Recovery and Renewal Plans and the draft 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 draft strategic approach to work towards its adopted aims in light of its declaration of a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency.

4. Outcomes from the Working Group Session with Consultees

- 4.1 A total of 7 speakers attended the meeting on 27th August where members heard from a variety of people ranging from interested individuals and representatives from a parish council, Extinction Rebellion and a Community Energy Group.
- 4.2 A key action arising from that meeting was for attendees to summarise their position on a single side of A4 and submit their top 5 key priorities for the Council.
- 4.3 Whilst these summaries have not, to date, been forthcoming, just in advance of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group meeting on 10 September, a letter was received from a group, newly formed from the participants of the meeting of the 27th August, called the South Hams Climate Action Network.
- 4.4 The letter, which arrived too late to be considered in full either at the meeting or in this report, set out a range of proposed next steps which will be considered in due course by the CC&BWG.
- 4.5 Notwithstanding the above, the need for ongoing dialogue is clear. In recognition of this, the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy has been updated within section 6 to commit to a quarterly engagement exercise through the development of a Community Board, or similar. The methodology and format has yet to be finalised, but it is proposed to be officer led with the first session to take place before the next full Council meeting in December.

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 1 is the second draft of the South Hams District Council Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy. Since 16th July, the actions

have been refined following discussions with officers across the council and the CC&BWG.

- 5.3 As highlighted in 2.7 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.
- 5.4 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' measures have been applied nationally and infection rates are increasing.
- 5.5 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. Furthermore, the Councils Recovery and Renewal Plan is yet to be formally adopted.
- 5.6 With that in mind, it is proposed that the first version of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy is presented for adoption in December 2020. Members will understand that the nature of the subject means that the Strategy will continue to evolve and develop overtime. Therefore, as part of the recommendation to Council in December 2020, the report will also be seeking approval to update the Council's Delegation Scheme to enable the Director of Governance and Assurance to be able to update the adopted Action Plan.

6 Proposed Way Forward

- 6.1 That the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group be requested to refine the Strategy and Action Plan to bring back the first version for adoption at the next full Council session in December.
- 6.2 That Officers establish a Community Board, or similar, and hold an initial meeting before the Full Council meeting on 17 December 2020.

7 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 25 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 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 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 SHDC Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy