

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **1 July 2021**

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

Portfolio Areas: **Cllr Tom Holway**

Wards Affected: **All**

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

Date next steps can be taken: **N/A**

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the progress against delivery of the adopted Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council declared a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency on 25th July 2019 and committed to develop an action plan.
- 1.2 A draft Action 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 Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and an updated Action Plan were developed, presented, and adopted at Council on 17th December 2020.
- 1.4 The first update on action plan progress was provided to South Hams District Council Executive on 3rd June 2021 where progress was noted.

2. Background

- 2.1 At Full Council on 17th December 2020, Members considered an updated Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy, containing both a framework and an action plan.
- 2.2 It was noted that the Action Plan will be a continually evolving document and that delegated authority would 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.
- 2.3 The Action Plan has been updated and includes suggestions brought forward by Members and through the Climate Change and Biodiversity Community Forum.
- 2.4 In addition, it was resolved on the 17th December 2020 that performance against the Action Plan would be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a six-monthly basis.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The report sets out progress to date on delivery of the action plan in line with the adopted strategy.

4. Progress Update

- 4.1 Appendix 1 contains a tabulated version of the Action Plan with the latest position on each individual action, new actions, and changes to actions marked in red.
- 4.2 Key progress has been made in the following areas since January;
 - a. Secured an additional £600,000 in Green Homes Grants, through Phase 1b. We are forecasting 90 installs, a combination of Air Source Heat Pumps and External Wall Insulation. The deadline for spending the previously awarded phase 1a grant has been extended from 31 March 2021 until the end of August 2021 in recognition of a range of supply chain challenges.
 - b. Increased the Member Sustainable Community Locality Fund by £3,000 each for use on local Climate Change and Biodiversity Projects. A web based application scheme has been developed with the Customer Improvement Team to make it easier for Members and the public whilst also reducing officer administration time, this went live on 15th June 2021
 - c. Climate Change and Biodiversity Newsletters have continued to be produced and released monthly.
 - d. A further two Climate Change and Biodiversity Community Forum meetings have been organised and held, focusing on housing retrofit, seeking views on our Climate Change Crowd-funder eligibility Criteria, as well as inviting a guest speaker from CoCars to discuss shared transport. At the

latest meeting, the Forum expressed interest in an area wide survey to gauge interest in shared EV's and bikes, we will be working with CoCars to arrange a survey which the Forum will promote in their networks.

- e. Our Community Forum work has recently been featured as a case study by the Local Government Association <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/developing-community-forum-help-tackle-climate-change-and-increase-biodiversity> and we were invited to present at the Sustainable Earth Conference organised by Plymouth University on 25th June 2021. Appendix 2 contains a summary of notes from all Community Forum meetings to date.
- f. Collaborated on a Carbon Foot-printing public campaign with Carbon Savvy, North Devon Council, Torrridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council called 'Lifestyle Spring Clean'. We are awaiting full figures from the campaign, but in terms of our social media engagement, our posts through South Hams District Council Facebook and Twitter posts reached 23,464 people; 394 people engaged with the posts directly.
- g. Applied for £99,000 funding from the Government's Natural Environment Investment Readiness Grant in partnership with the AONB unit (as lead bidder) and Ambios (Sharpham Estate). We will be expecting a decision on this bid in August 2021.
- h. Commissioning a feasibility study into EV charging, solar and battery storage on our car parks, and exploring the potential for direct energy feed to nearby assets as part of the scope.
- i. Recommended to Council to approve a capital expenditure programme of £170,000 to upgrade rapid charging capabilities at Totnes Depot and network upgrades at Follaton House to facilitate Fleet EV transition. This was detailed in the report to the Executive on 22nd April 2021 (Minute E.85/20).
- j. Additional funding applied for under the Off Street Residential Charging scheme for the following car parks;
 - a. North Street, Totnes
 - b. Steamer Quay, Totnes
 - c. Lower Union Road, Kingsbridge
 - d. Duncombe Park, Kingsbridge
- k. We are working on process reviews to align Climate Change ambitions across the organisation.
- l. Refined and developed the Crowdfunder platform, it is called South Hams Climate and Biodiversity Action Fund, and it was launched on 7th June 2021 alongside a facility to administer small direct cash grants through our Liberty Create Platform.
- m. Contributing to the Devon Citizens' Assembly as a member of the project team.

- n. Saved through 'agile' since January 2021 an estimated 300,000 miles of travel, leading to a saving of 106tCO₂e¹ (Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent).

5. Plans for short term (next 6 months)

- 5.1 The Action Plan will continue to be worked on alongside development of the Council's new Corporate Strategy. Integrating carbon reduction and increasing biodiversity will be embedded within the strategic approach.
- 5.2 Over the next six months we will expect to see a final version of the Devon Interim Carbon Plan which will trigger an update of our own action plan, bringing in actions from the wider Devon work as well as its performance monitoring indicators.
- 5.3 The following key pieces of work will be developed in the short term;
 - a. Grounds Maintenance Review – increasing biodiversity through our land management. Subject of a report to Executive in July 2021.
 - b. Scoping work underway on a replacement of vehicle fleet with EV and associated infrastructure (non-waste fleet).
 - c. Feasibility work on cycle schemes / active travel.
 - d. Bids under the Local Authority Treescapes Fund and Urban Tree Challenge.
 - e. Fully update the website to include a tabulated version of the Action Plan, Climate Change related reports to Council, and links to the Climate Change and Biodiversity Community Forum.
 - f. Further public engagement campaigns with Carbon Savvy (or other partners)
 - g. Undertaking an Energy Audit of our buildings to inform retrofit work and what fabric measures are needed.
 - h. Concluding Carbon Literacy training for ELT and SLT
 - i. Discussions with the Woodland Trust regarding potential investment.
 - j. A new communications strategy is now in development to increase messaging outside of the monthly e-bulletins. We plan to not only communicate our plans and policies, and the actions we are going to take to a wide audience, but also communicate any positive outcomes from all service areas and also amplify regional and national messaging and best practice to help encourage behaviour change.
 - k. Develop and produce a carbon trajectory for Council emissions as part of our ongoing operational carbon reduction plan. This will enable us to begin to understand

¹ Travel emissions including well to tank emissions

what our likely residual emissions will be and what steps we need to take each year.

6. Proposed Way Forward

- 6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the updates provided within this report and Appendix 1, and support the progress made so far with a view to being provided a further update in six months' time.

7. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	N	There are no direct legal implications arising from this report
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	<p>There is funding of £600,000 available within the Emergency Climate Change Projects Earmarked Reserve, to fund projects and initiatives within the Council's adopted Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>An amount of £400,000 was approved at Council on 13th February 2020 (Minute CM71) and a further £200,000 at Council on 11th February 2021 (Minute CM37/20).</p> <p>On an annual basis, the Council's auditors issue an opinion on their Value for Money conclusion for the Council.</p> <p>For the 2019-20 year, Grant Thornton has reported to the Council's Audit Committee, on 15th October 2020, that they have issued an unqualified opinion on the Council's Value for Money arrangements and that they have concluded that the District Council has proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.</p>
Risk	N	
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Wellbeing, Homes, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Equality and Diversity	N	No direct implications
Safeguarding	N	No direct implications
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	No direct implications
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	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 District Council's Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Update

Appendix 2 - Community Forum notes