

## **East Herts Council Report**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date of meeting:** 3 November 2020

**Report by:** Head of Housing and Health

**Report title:** Update on Sustainability Action Plan

**Ward(s) affected: All**

### **Summary**

- This report presents to Members the latest version of the East Herts Sustainability Action Plan, which is a working document that is to be kept under review and updated as required. This action plan has been prepared in order to respond to the carbon neutrality commitments agreed in the Council's Climate Change Motion of July 2019.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

#### **COMMITTEE: That**

- a) The Committee reviews the current actions included in the initial iteration of the Sustainability Action Plan with a view to confirming that the actions developed so far meet the broad objectives of the Climate Change Motion;
- b) Officers be asked to provide written progress reports to the Committee on a twice yearly basis to add to any views members may wish to make on the monthly updated published on the council's website; and,
- c) Officers be asked to provide the Committee with an update on the reduction in carbon against target on an annual basis,

both in relation the council's activities and across the whole district.

## **1.0 Proposal(s)**

- 1.1 This report presents to Members the latest version of the East Herts Sustainability Action Plan, which is a working document that is to be kept under review and updated as required. This action plan has been prepared in order to respond to the carbon neutrality commitments agreed in the Council's Climate Change Motion of July 2019.
- 1.2 The report recommends that twice yearly update reports are provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enable the Committee to monitor progress in terms of action planning. In addition it is suggested that on an annual basis, data demonstrating the carbon reduction achieved through actions within the Plan is presented to Members to enable monitoring by the Committee to track progress to 2030.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of Council on 24 July 2019 a detailed Climate Change Motion was agreed. In summary the Motion committed the council to the following nine objectives:
  - Join with other councils in recognising and declaring formally the necessity to do everything within the authority's power to reduce its impact on the climate and moreover do everything we can in supporting the whole of East Herts District to become carbon neutral by 2030
  - Develop an ambitious sustainability strategy for reducing the council's own emissions, with an objective that the council becomes carbon neutral by 2030

- Work with national and regional partners to ensure that where at all possible we support climate friendly planning and building control regulations and seek where possible to include the very best measures into the Local Plan to minimise any negative impact on the environment
- Call on National Government for more powers and resources to make this pledge possible, and ask the council's Leader to write to the Secretary of state for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to this effect
- Continue to work with partners across the district, county and region to deliver this new goal, through all relevant strategies and plans
- Take account of climate impacts within existing decision-making processes
- Set up an Environmental and Climate Forum, in line with the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group, which were approved by this Council on 5th March, 2019
- The Environmental Forum to monitor progress regularly, and to report back
- Commit to making available the appropriate training to members and officers to promote carbon neutral policies in order to achieve these aims.

2.2 The majority of the above commitments will be achieved by way of specific actions within the Action Plan (see Appendix A). The intention is that the majority of actions will be those that seek to demonstrate a real and sustained cut in carbon emissions. The Plan aims to cross reference individual actions with each commitment.

2.3 Most actions will be carbon “accounted”. This is to help ensure that a carbon reduction trajectory to achieve the 2030 neutrality target is established and monitored using “carbon milestones”.

- 2.4 The Action Plan is further split into three main sections namely:
- actions which aim to make changes to the council's own premises, people and services;
  - actions which use our regulatory powers to promote action by others; and
  - those actions that influence and encourage others to do things.
- 2.5 The plan is a working document reviewed on a monthly basis by a corporate officer group. As the Plan develops the next phase will include further initiatives covering the wider district. Of course, such district-wide actions will be harder to achieve not least because the council will have less direct control. Instead, more reliance will need to be placed on influencing and facilitating behaviour change. It is further likely that actions will need to be ambitious and bold in order to help to achieve the district wide 2030 target.
- 2.6 The development of the Plan is being significantly aided by active community involvement. The council held an initial meeting of the East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum in January to engage interested community members in the identification of local climate issues and actions. Over 120 people attended including local residents, businesses, third sector organisations and local environmental groups.
- 2.7 Further meetings were delayed due to Covid-19 but in September a virtual meeting of the Forum was held via zoom focusing on the new draft Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document. Plans are now in place to hold meetings every two months with the next meeting on 25 November. Meetings are being scheduled for a range of times during the day and evening to facilitate maximum attendance. Each

session will be topic-based and will aim to encourage development of actions involving the community.

- 2.8 The Sustainability Action Plan has been placed on the council's website and feedback is encouraged.
- 2.9 East Herts has developed a strong role in the establishment earlier this year of the Herts Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP). This is a group of all the district authorities along with the County Council and the LEP. It comprises a high level member steering group meeting every six weeks, working on cross cutting and bigger picture carbon reduction initiatives across the county. Four theme groups have been established so far. These cover water, biodiversity, carbon assessment & reduction, and transport. Each is developing specific action plans to develop initiatives to contribute towards carbon reduction and environmental improvement across Hertfordshire. A community stakeholder conference is being planned for December to highlight the work of the HCCSP.

### **3.0 Reason(s)**

- 3.1 The purpose of developing a Sustainability Action Plan is to facilitate carbon reduction arising from both the council's own emissions as well as helping to reduce those from the wider district. This is to help meet our 2030 climate objectives.
- 3.2 The Action Plan in Appendix A to this report is the first iteration of a range of actions which will be developed and refined over time to seek to achieve the council's carbon neutrality aspirations.

## **4.0 Options**

- 4.1 Note the actions set out in the draft Sustainability Action Plan but not to receive further reports on progress. NOT RECOMMENDED as it is suggested that it will be important to continue to monitor and track progress of the council's progress to achieve its 2030 carbon neutral target for its own emissions along with seeking to do all it can to reduce carbon emissions in the wider district.
- 4.2 Receive update reports monitoring progress in development of the action plan every six months, along with an annual report presenting carbon reduction data for the council's own attributed emissions, as well as those arising from the wider district. RECOMMENDED as this will help to ensure effective monitoring of progress to achieve the delivery of the aspirations within the Climate Change Motion.

## **5.0 Risks**

- 5.1 There could be both moderate reputational and political risks should the Sustainability Action Plan not be sufficiently progressed over time to meet the objectives established in the Climate Change Motion.
- 5.2 In addition there are longer term possible cumulative climate change risks, some potentially significant in nature, should local carbon mitigation and adaptation measures not be developed over the timescales set out in the Climate Change Motion.

## **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

- 6.1 Members along with the local community have been actively participating in climate change planning through the East Herts Environment and Climate Change Forum. In addition specific consultation exercises have been undertaken such as

that related to the new draft Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document and a survey of local developers to assess issues relating to energy efficiency enhancements of new developments.

### **Community Safety**

None arising directly from this report

### **Data Protection**

None arising directly from this report

### **Equalities**

None arising directly from this report

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Yes - The entire purpose of the preparation of a sustainability action plan is to deliver carbon emission savings in order to meet the council's Climate Change Motion objectives.

### **Financial**

None at this stage, the recommendations of the report can be undertaken within existing budgets. All proposed actions will be thoroughly reviewed by individual services before implementation not only for their carbon benefits but also from a financial business case to ensure that appropriate funding and value for money is achieved.

### **Health and Safety**

None arising directly from this report

### **Human Resources**

None arising directly from this report

### **Human Rights**

None directly arising from this report

## **Legal**

None directly arising from this report

## **Specific Wards**

No

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

7.1 Appendix A - Initial Draft Sustainability Action Plan

### **Contact Member**

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