

Report Title:	Environment and Climate Strategy - End of Year Update
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No - Part I
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Stimson, Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Sustainability
Meeting and Date:	Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel – 12th April
Responsible Officer(s):	Chris Joyce – Head of Infrastructure, Sustainability and Economic Growth Andrew Durrant – Executive Director of Place Services
Wards affected:	All

REPORT SUMMARY

The Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency in June 2019 and adopted its Environment and Climate Strategy in December 2020. From that moment, the Council has been working to deliver against the objectives set out across the four themes, Energy, Natural Environmental, Transport and Circular Economy.

A key priority has been increasing the size of the officer team delivering this work, conducting feasibility to better understand the Council's estate, setting up the Climate Partnership and securing external funding to accelerate our plans.

The end of year update attached to this report provides detailed progress against the action plan. Overall there has been a reduction in the Council's emissions as well as the Borough's emissions although the data available for the Borough is two years delayed and therefore it is difficult to draw conclusions from.

The Council has also made strong progress on embedding sustainability into all it does with the Corporate Plan highlighting action on climate change and the environment as one of three priorities in the adopted Corporate Plan as well as 10 of the 50 goals in the plan.

DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION: That Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel notes the report and end of year update.

1. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Options

Table 1: Options arising from this report

Option	Comments
Note the report and comment This is the recommended option	None

- 1.1 The report recommends noting the content and seeks members views and questions arising from it.

2. KEY IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The Council has committed to delivering the Environment and Climate Strategy. In addition, the Corporate Plan makes tackling climate change a priority for the Council with 6 goals in the plan directly related to the strategy and a number of others that are related to climate change and the environment.
- 2.2 The actions set out in the Strategy will not only reduce the Council's environmental impact but it will also reduce the Council's energy spend to ensure we can deliver best value to residents.
- 2.3 The strategy also focuses on wider actions in the Borough such as supporting homes to reduce their emissions and reversing biodiversity decline by implementing a new Biodiversity Action Plan. These actions will directly support the Council's ambition to create a sustainable borough of opportunity and innovation.

Table 2: Key Implications

Outcome	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date of delivery
50% reduction in Council emissions by 2025	Less than a 50% reduction.	50% reduction	A 50% reduction earlier than 2025.	A greater than 50% reduction by 2025.	31 st March 2026.
50% reduction in Borough emissions by 2025	Less than a 50% reduction.	50% reduction	A 50% reduction earlier than 2025.	A greater than 50% reduction by 2025.	31 st March 2026.

3. KEY OUTCOMES

Resourcing

- 3.1 The Council has put in place strong foundations for future delivery of its ambitious Strategy. It has significantly grown its Sustainability and Climate Change team to increase its capacity. The team is now made up of 8 officers covering the Council's energy contracts, carbon reduction programme, natural environment service, Lead Local Flood Authority duties and circular economy theme.
- 3.2 The Sustainability and Climate Change Team have utilised the Council's new RBWMTTogether platform to create pages across all themes of the strategy and better engage residents with the work being undertaken.

Energy/Carbon Reduction

- 3.3 It has also undertaken feasibility work across 45 of its buildings to identify where the best carbon savings can be achieved so that funding can be invested in a targeted way.
- 3.4 The Council itself has seen a reduction in its carbon emissions of 15% 2020/21 compared to the 2018/19 baseline. This is despite the winter being particularly cold and increased ventilation being encouraged due to COVID-19.
- 3.5 In 2019, carbon emissions in the Borough decreased by 6.1% when compared to 2017. Due to government data, these are the most up to date figures we have and therefore they will not reflect any of the recent work undertaken in this area since the declaration of a climate emergency.
- 3.6 The Borough clearly needs to accelerate carbon reductions, and this is a driving force behind the creation of the Borough's Climate Partnership which the Council has committed to funding for the next three years. The Council has committed £250,000 annually for the next three years to ensure the Partnership has the resources it requires to achieve its objectives.

Circular Economy

- 3.7 Recycling rates have increased to 50%, the target set for 2025 which is broadly very good news. There is further work to ensure that we see an overall decrease in the amount of waste being generated.
- 3.8 Work to implement the Single Use Action Plan has begun with a focus on ensuring large events such as the Platinum Jubilee celebrations minimise the waste they generate.
- 3.9 The Council provided financial support to the Maidenhead Repair Café which has been successful launched by members of the community. This project is growing and increasing the amount of items being diverted from waste streams.

Natural Environment

- 3.10 The Council has worked closely with the local 'Wild' groups and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust to jointly develop a Biodiversity Action Plan for the Borough which will be presented to Cabinet in April 2022. Whilst this is later than was planned in the Strategy, it was decided that it was important to get the document right rather than rush something together.
- 3.11 13,400 trees have been planted over the last 18 months at the Ockwells Nature Reserve by corporate volunteers, community groups and a public planting day.
- 3.12 1200 school children have undertaken environmental education at the Braywick Nature Centre, led by Council officers and our partners Groundwork South.

Transport

- 3.13 The Council has made good progress on the development of its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan along with publishing its Bus Service Improvement Plan. This will be important drivers for low carbon travel in the future.

Key Projects for delivery in the next 12 months

- 3.14 Collective Solar Purchasing Scheme – The Council has committed to increasing the amount of renewable energy generation in the Borough. A key technology to achieve this is solar photovoltaic panels. To help residents overcome some of the barriers to installing solar, the Council has been working with Solar Together to launch a collective solar purchasing scheme in May 2022. The aim is to use collective purchasing to ensure a competitive price whilst also providing residents with confidence that they are using a supplier that has gone through certain checks.
- 3.15 Residential Energy Efficiency / Fuel Poverty – Energy costs have increased significantly and further rises are expected for the Autumn. This has and will continue to put residents finances under pressure, making the issue of fuel poverty more acute. The Council has secured large grants from central government to assist residents on low incomes and in inefficient homes to make upgrades to their property to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions. Ensuring uptake of this support will be a key focus over the next year to ensure support is available to those in the Borough that need it.
- 3.16 Local Nature Recovery Strategy – A key requirement of the Environment Act 2021 is for local responsible bodies to publish a local nature recovery strategy. Building on the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan, the Council will look to work with partners and neighbouring authorities to develop a LNRS over the next year.
- 3.17 Climate Partnership - The Council has acknowledged that to achieve the targets it has set out, there will need to be a broad partnership of residents, community groups and organisations involved. As part of its 2022/23 budget, £250,000 has been allocated to form an independent Climate Partnership for the Borough. By utilising the knowledge and expertise of organisations across the borough, the partnership will better support delivery of the outcomes set out in the strategy as well as supporting the council to deliver on its own actions and commitments. This first meeting of the Climate Partnership will be during Spring 2022.

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications of this report.
- 4.2 In relation to the delivery of the Environment and Climate Strategy, the Council has secured over £3.5 million of external funding to support projects in the Borough.
- 4.3 £1.56 million was awarded to the Council from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to deliver low carbon heating upgrades along with insulation and solar panels at 5 schools during 2022/23.
- 4.4 £383,000 was awarded to the Council from the Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 2 to fund energy efficiency improvements in residents' homes in the Borough during Spring 2022.

- 4.5 £1.3 million was awarded to the Council from the Sustainable Warmth scheme to fund energy efficiency improvements in resident’s homes in the Borough during 2022/23.
- 4.6 £128,000 was awarded to the Council from the Low Carbon Skills Fund Phase 2 to deliver heat decarbonisation plans across 31 Council buildings. This work is now complete.
- 4.7 £205,000 was awarded to the Council from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 1 to deliver lighting upgrades across 14 Council buildings/schools. This work is now complete.
- 4.8 Approximately £70,000 was awarded to the Council from the Heat Network Delivery Unit and the EU City Facility Fund to undertake heat demand/supply mapping across the Borough. This work is currently underway.
- 4.9 Approximately £20,000 was awarded to the Council by Defra to supporting work on biodiversity net gain implementation.

5. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- 5.1 Equalities. Equality Impact Assessments are published on the [council’s website](#). This is not a new document or decision therefore the original EQIA is still relevant.
- 5.2 Climate change/sustainability. Delivery of the Environment and Climate Strategy is fundamental to the Council’s ambitions across sustainability and climate change.
- 5.3 Data Protection/GDPR. – No data protection implications

6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

6.1 This report is supported by 1 background documents:

- Environment and Climate Strategy - End of Year Update

7. CONSULTATION

Confirmation relevant Cabinet Member(s) consulted	Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Sustainability	Yes
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REPORT HISTORY

Decision type:	Urgency item?	To follow item?
For information	No	No

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