

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

REPORT TO: STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
Date: 3 August 2020
TOPIC: ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY 2020
REPORT BY: LEAD MEMBERS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT AND HEAD OF PLACE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents Strategy and Resources Committee with a draft Environmental Policy, to provide the cornerstone of the Council's work on the environment and climate change, both within the organisation and in its wider leadership role in the community. The policy was developed by the Climate Action Team member working party and has been endorsed by the Policy Development Committee.
- 1.2 The Council's [Corporate Plan](#) was adopted at the full Council meeting on 24 September 2019. The four Corporate Priorities are:
1. Financial Security
 2. Focus on delivering the best for the customer
 3. Cherishing and protecting the environment
 4. Planning for North Devon's future
- The proposed policy will be key to delivering against the 3rd corporate priority but also contribute to 1 and 4.
- 1.3 The objective of the environmental policy is to support members and staff from across all services in the organisation in taking a consistent and standard approach when considering the environmental impact of their actions. It also recognises the importance of all stakeholders, both internally and externally, in working to a common set of principles and the policy sets out clearly to partners the Council's approach.
- 1.4 The environment priority is broad-based but inevitably includes one of the key foci of our current work: responding to the Climate Emergency as stated in the Council's Declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency.
- 1.5 Approaches to recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic have widely recognised the opportunity to make step changes in our approach to the environment, community and economy, captured by the idea of building back better, as the Council's draft recovery plan suggests, stronger, fairer, greener.

- 1.6 Key amongst the objectives set in the environmental policy are:
- For the Council to become carbon neutral as an organisation by 2025,
 - To support a district wide programme to make the area of North Devon carbon neutral by 2030,
 - For the district to be significantly carbon negative by 2045.
 - For the Council to increase biodiversity in their natural environment
 - For the Council to adhere to the principles of the waste hierarchy

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That members agree that:

- 1) The North Devon Council Environmental Policy 2020 (attached as Appendix A) be approved for consultation and engagement purposes.
- 2) The Environmental Policy be brought back to Strategy and Resources Committee for adoption after a six week consultation period and subject to any amendments that result.
- 3) That the temporary post of Environment/Climate Change Officer is created to support the implementation of the Environmental Policy 2020 and development and delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan, including Climate Action Plan.
- 4) Should recommendations 1 to 3 be approved that all Council services identify representatives to sit on an Environmental Project Team.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To underpin the Council's corporate priority for the environment and meet the Council's responsibilities under the Climate and Biodiversity Declaration.

4 REPORT

4.1 Why an Environmental Policy?

4.2 Environmental policy is defined as "any action deliberately taken to manage human activities with a view to prevent, reduce, or mitigate harmful effects on nature and natural resources, and ensuring that man-made changes to the environment do not have harmful effects on humans or the environment," (McCormick 2001)¹. It generally covers air and water pollution, waste management, ecosystem management, biodiversity protection, and the protection of natural resources.

4.3 The District Council has land and property that it directly manages or for which it is a landlord, and it provides a wide range of services. An environmental policy underpins the actions necessary to reduce carbon emissions resulting from the

¹ McCormick, John. "Environmental Policy in the European Union." *The European Series*, 2001: 21.

Council's assets and services and to improve biodiversity; this should also result in health, social and economic benefits.

4.4 North Devon Council Environmental Policy

4.5 A member working group called the Climate Action Team (CAT) has been established to advise the Council on what it needs to do to respond to the Climate Emergency.

4.6 The CAT has produced an Environmental Policy for which they sought and gained approval from Policy Development Committee (16 July 2020) with a request to make a set of recommendations to Strategy and Resources Committee. This report is in response to that recommendation.

4.7 Key amongst the objectives set in the environmental policy are:

- For the Council to become carbon neutral as an organisation by 2025,
- To support a district wide programme to make the area of North Devon carbon neutral by 2030,
- For the district to be significantly carbon negative by 2045.
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4.8 The [Climate Change Act 2008](#) introduced the UK's first legally binding target for 2050 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% compared to 1990 levels. On 27 June 2019 the UK government [amended the Climate Change Act](#) and set a legally binding target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from across the UK economy by 2050. In response to the latest report from the UN's [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC), local authorities and other organisations in Devon have [declared climate emergencies](#) that aim to decarbonise the County by 2050 at the latest. Work is currently underway to substantiate the most appropriate Devon wide net zero deadline, which is likely to be somewhere between 2030 and 2050.

4.9 Table 1 shows the targets set by councils in Devon and where North Devon would sit, should it adopt the proposed targets. The target dates for North Devon are aspirational and recognise that an emergency requires urgent action. It is recommended that the policy is reviewed at least every two years and that this would include a re-evaluation of the targets based on evidence collected against baseline data.

Council Area	Target	Scope
Teignbridge	2025	Own operations
North Devon	2025 2030	Own operations The district
Exeter City	Ahead of	Own operations

	2030	
	2030	The City
Plymouth City	2030	Own operations
	2030	The City
Torbay	2030	Own Operations
Torridge	2030	Own operations
West Devon	2030	Own operations
Mid Devon	2030	Own operations
South Hams	2030	Own operations
DCC	2030	Own operations
East Devon	2040	Own operations

Table 1

- 4.10 Members and officers are developing a draft plan as a tool to engage with partners and the community. The draft plan will capture what the Council will be doing but also be used to initiate discussion and debate as what everyone with a stake in North Devon can do to contribute to tackling climate change and improve the environment.
- 4.11 The draft plan will be reported to a future Committees and is currently organised under a number of themes, recognising that none of them are completely discrete but relate to each other.

Climate Action Plan Themes		
Overarching		
Waste, Recycling and Resource Management	Energy and Renewables	Natural Environment
Built Environment	Travel and Transport	Community and Local Economy
Awareness, Engagement and Behaviour Change		

Table 2

- 4.12 Recommendations to the report include the recruitment to the temporary post of Environment/Climate Change Officer. It is felt that having a dedicated post is going to be essential in developing the strategy and action plan that will need to follow the adoption of the Environment Policy. Evidence from other local authorities would suggest that having a clear policy backed up with dedicated resource has enabled much faster progress on meeting carbon reduction objectives. This is not only through the sheer availability of resource but due to the focus given to the priority from having a member of the team who can work across the organisation and with partners, galvanising support and action.

- 4.13 The draft environmental policy notes that the Council will implement an environmental management system (EMS) in order to delivery against objectives. WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), in its [guide to EMS](#), states that:

More and more, stakeholders and customers are expecting organisations to demonstrate their commitment to managing their impacts on the environment. This might be insurers or funders (*the community for Councils*) wanting to understand how environmental risk is managed in an organisation, or customers wanting to know that suppliers in their supply chain are taking their own environmental responsibilities seriously. Having an environmental management system (EMS) is one way for an organisation to demonstrate that it addresses and minimises its environmental impacts, manages its legal compliance and continuously improves its environmental performance.

- 4.14 In more detail an Environmental Management System (EMS) provides a framework through which its environmental performance can be monitored, improved and controlled. Some organisations have adopted the framework specified in national or international standards, which set out the requirements of an EMS, and have had their systems externally assessed and certified against these, other Councils have developed their EMS in a more informal way.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Internal resource will be required from all teams across the Council to contribute to the programme both in the formulation and delivery of the Plan.
- 5.2 Whilst this report is only seeking agreement to consult on the draft Environment Policy it should be understood that if later adopted the targets in the Policy will require very significant investment in the Council's assets and changes in the way it operates. In addition it should be noted that a lot of work required to meet the target for reaching carbon neutral as a district is outside the direct control of the Council but will likely require significant input from it.
- 5.3 The post of Environment/Climate Change Officer is not currently funded. There may be opportunity to second an officer or otherwise redirect existing resource from other, lower priority areas of the Council's work. The cost of this post will be sourced from within existing base budgets and therefore no increased cost to the already approved Council revenue budget.

6 EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1 None from this report though it is known that climate change will further negatively impact those who are already disadvantaged and those with health problems.

7 CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Article or Appendix and paragraph	Referred or delegated power?	Key decision?
Article 7.12	Appendix 4, para 17	Yes

8 STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

8.1 This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- NDC Corporate Plan
- [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)
- [Climate Change Act 2008](#)
- [Climate change explained](#), Gov.UK
- [Devon Climate Emergency Project](#)
- Report of Climate Action Team to Policy Development Committee 16 July 2020

Appendix A - Draft Environmental Policy 2020 & Devon Climate Change Declaration

Appendix B - Additional information on Climate Change

The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report.

10 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

10.1 The author confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers.

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 Date: 8 July 2020
 Reference: