

## PROGRESS TO THE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2018-23

REPORT OF: HEAD OF CORPORATE RESOURCES  
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Wards Affected: All  
Key Decision: No  
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Resources and Economic Growth  
Date of meeting 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019

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### Purpose of Report

1. This report provides Members with an update on progress to the Council's Sustainability Strategy and indicates the main areas for development in the year ahead.

### Recommendation

2. ***The Committee is recommended to note progress with the implementation of the Council's Sustainability Strategy 2018-2023.***

### Background

3. Sustainability balances economic, environmental and social considerations. It is about creating opportunities for all residents in Mid Sussex to prosper whilst at the same time ensuring that services, infrastructure and communities are resilient both now and in the future. It is also about ensuring that limited resources are used efficiently and not wasted.
4. The Council's Sustainability Strategy 2018 – 23 was adopted by Council on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2018, following consideration by this Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2018. It was agreed that arrangement for monitoring progress with the Strategy would include an annual progress report to this Committee.

### Progress to the Sustainability Strategy 2018-23

5. The Sustainability Strategy included an Action Plan, which is attached at Appendix 1. This has been reviewed with a column added to indicate progress against each action, split under the Strategy's three themes of:
  - Sustainable Council
  - Sustainable Environment
  - Sustainable Communities.

This section of the report highlights the main areas of progress under each of these themes.

6. The **Sustainable Council** theme focuses on the areas where the Council can improve its own performance to reduce environmental impacts through the managements of buildings and public spaces and the Council's procurement. The main areas of progress over the last year include :

**Corporate Energy Management** – A corporate energy group has been set up and is meeting quarterly. This has enabled better focus and coordination of activities relating to energy improvements, use of controls, monitoring, opportunities and promotion.

**Single-Use Plastic Reduction** – Proposals to reduce, replace and promote are currently being implemented. Alternatives to single-use plastic have been promoted at the Council and sustainable alternatives to existing plastic materials have been sourced in the first phase of proposals.

As part of these proposals the Council signed up to the national **Refill Scheme** which aims to reduce the use of plastic bottles. This has been promoted widely through traditional and social media channels in addition to engagement with the local food and drink sector. To date over 50 outlets have signed up to the scheme.

**Corporate Sustainable Travel** – 44% of the 130 staff responding said they would use an electric bike share scheme during the course of work. In addition to the Secure Bike Storage lockers this has helped to promote staff cycling and several staff have purchased electric bicycles as a result.

Two fast charging electric vehicle points were installed on Campus in 2017. Usage of the points has increased from 1 vehicle in 2017 to 4 in 2018.

7. **Sustainable Environment** looks at areas where the Council can promote sustainable development and economic growth, mainly through Planning Policy and the District Plan. The main areas of progress in the last year include:

**Green Flag Awards** – The Green Flag Award scheme recognizes best practice in parks and green spaces. As well as maintaining the existing standard in Beech Hurst, an additional award has been attained at St Johns Park in Burgess Hill.

**Electric Vehicle Charging Points** – Extensive work has been undertaken through the corporate EV Project Group including; a survey to 190 residents, the identification of potential issues in rolling out charging points across the District, access to an electric vehicle procurement framework, identification of relevant funding streams and feasibility carried out on all potential charging point sites.

**District Plan** – The District Plan was adopted in March 2018 and incorporates important policy areas relating to sustainability. The Council has approved a Masterplan for the Northern Arc development which sets out a number of significant sustainable development principles and in addition has secured over £20 million worth of Local Growth and other funding for sustainable transport development in Burgess Hill under the **Place and Connectivity** Programme.

**Cycle Routes and Infrastructure** – Feasibility has been carried forward on a number of routes including Burgess Hill to Haywards Heath and Hurstpierpoint to Keymer. In addition other routes and opportunities are being identified with the intention of developing **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans** so evidence-based and viable routes are prepared in advance of funding opportunities.

8. **Sustainable Communities** refers to addressing sustainability issues by working with the community to change people's behaviour and raise awareness. The main areas of progress in the last year include:

**Waste Minimisation and Recycling** - The **British Heart Foundation Textile Collection Pilot** resulted in 46 tonnes of clothing being collected in the trial period and the **Green Waste Collection** continues to expand with 19,300 residents signed up in 2018/19. A number of successful engagement activities have been carried out including talks, workshops and a **Swishing Event** incorporating a clothes swap, waste prevention messages and children's activities.

**Cycling Activities** – The **Mid Sussex Cycling Forum** includes Members and representatives from cycling interest groups across the District and meets quarterly. The Forum aims to promote cycling and explore opportunities for funding and route development. £15,000 has been secured from the Sussex Business Rates Pool to support group activities and £25,000 is assigned to carrying out feasibility on routes not identified through other avenues. The Chair of the group attends the West Sussex Cycle Forum.

**Heat for Health** – encompasses a variety of affordable warmth work and includes the **Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP)** which runs from 2018 to 2021. The scheme offers a free Home Energy Visitor service to qualifying households as well as advice and potential funding for boilers and even gas connections.

9. **Appendix 2 Sustainability Metrics** - This includes data for key sustainability actions in the plans that are measured.

Most of the data used to determine the sustainability metrics was readily available or relatively easy to calculate and provides meaningful and appropriate data on which to measure sustainability actions.

Some readjustment to baseline data will be made to ensure measurement of sustainability actions is as robust as possible.

#### **Sustainability related legislative changes and Government initiatives**

10. There have been a number of changes to the national picture since the Strategy was adopted which have implications for the Council's future sustainability work. These include

The Government's **Resources and Waste Strategy** (December 2018) places an emphasis on the need to transition to a '**Circular Economy**' where resources are kept in use as long as possible and away from the current inefficient 'linear economy'. Specific actions on packaging, plastic pollution, resource recovery and food waste are highlighted.

The **Road to Zero strategy** (September 2018) outlines how the Government will support the transition to zero emissions road transport whilst reducing emissions from conventional vehicles. The Strategy outlines a range of funding measures and initiatives to roll promote the uptake of electric vehicles amongst other measures.

**Draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill** (December 2018) – The consultation sets out plans for environment and sustainability on departure from the European Union and is likely to form the bulk of a wider Environment Bill introduced in 2019. Elements include the introduction of a UK Environmental Protection Agency in addition to setting out the framework for environmental principles and governance.

#### **Looking forward to the year ahead**

Several sustainability actions are reflected in the selection of Flagship Activities for 2019/20.

The key sustainability initiatives that the Council will be focussing on in the year ahead under each of the themes include:

## **Sustainable Council**

A costed package of identified improvements at Oaklands will be drafted for consideration.

Completion of the first phase of single-use plastic reduction initiatives (including expanding Refill) and proposals for further reductions.

Drafting plans to reduce the use of paper and ensure supplies are as recyclable as possible.

## **Sustainable Environment**

Maintaining current accreditation and applying for a further Green Flag award in East Grinstead.

Progressing identified sustainable transport initiatives through the Place and Connectivity Programme.

Progressing the roll out of electric vehicle charging points subject to the acceptance of feasibility carried out and funding being awarded.

Air quality improvement initiatives continuing to be implemented through the Stonepound Crossroads Air Quality Steering Group. An Inter-Authority Air Quality Group has been set up with membership from all West Sussex local authorities in order to share information and provide guidance on issues of concern

## **Sustainable Communities**

Reducing residual waste collection and increasing recycling (including considering food waste) by working with the West Sussex Waste Partnership.

Continuing to promote and increase the uptake of the Council's subscription service for garden waste.

Implementing long-term proposals for the capture of textiles and small electrical items from the kerbside.

The Mid Sussex Cycle Forum promoting cycling opportunities across the district and proposing a programme of engagement activities.

The Local Energy Advice Partnership and Warmer Sussex developing and ensuring a comprehensive energy efficiency and affordable warmth offer for Mid Sussex residents.

## **Conclusions**

This report includes many examples of how the Council is addressing sustainability issues and has highlighted areas of strength and areas where more work is needed. The focus for the year ahead will be to address those actions where more work is needed such as sustainable procurement and climate adaptation assessment.

There has been a flurry of environmental initiatives, draft legislation and strategy from Government in recent months in the run-up to Brexit. A watching brief on the development of these initiatives post-Brexit will determine whether and to what extent the Sustainability Strategy needs to be revised in the light of future developments.

## **Policy Context**

11. The Sustainability Strategy is consistent with the Council's statement of main purpose and Corporate Priorities, particularly the priorities of Sustainable economic growth and Strong and resilient communities.

## **Other Options Considered**

12. The option of not having a Sustainability Action Plan was discounted because the plan draws together existing and planned activities to provide a coherent and systematic approach to implementing sustainability.

## **Financial Implications**

13. Resource implications are identified in the Strategy Action Plan, with most actions to be delivered from within existing budgets. Measures such as improving the energy efficiency of the Council's buildings will deliver savings. Resources will be supplemented by any external funding which is able to be secured.

## **Risk Management Implications**

14. The Sustainability Strategy will help to mitigate the risks of the Council not fulfilling its statutory sustainability duties.

## **Equalities and Customer Services Implications**

15. The Sustainability Strategy includes measures to benefit specific vulnerable groups including actions to assist those in fuel poverty.

## **Other Material Implications**

16. None.

## **Background Papers**

17. None.