

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022-2025

REPORT OF: ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: Yes
Report to: Council
27 April 2022

Purpose of Report

1. At its meeting on 22 March 2022, the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance and Performance considered the draft Mid Sussex Sustainable Economy Strategy 2022-2025 (the draft SES) and the draft District Profile. Scrutiny Committee recommended, subject to amendments to the documents, that the draft SES and District Profile be approved by Council.
2. The purpose of this report is to ask Council to consider and approve the draft SES (attached as Appendix 1) and the District Profile (attached as Appendix 2) and to note the next steps regarding delivery of the Action Plan.

Summary

3. This Report:
 - Summarises the purposes of preparing the Sustainable Economy Strategy which will replace the approved Economic Development Strategy (2018-2023) and the Sustainability Strategy (2018-2023);
 - Describes the process of preparing the draft SES, including preparation of the evidence base; stakeholder engagement; and the work of the cross-party SES Member Working Group;
 - Sets out the changes proposed and agreed by Scrutiny Committee; and
 - Sets out the next steps in terms of delivery of the Action Plan.

Recommendations

4. That the Council:
 - (i) Approves the draft Sustainable Economy Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025 and the District Profile;
 - (ii) Notes the next steps regarding delivery of the Sustainable Economy Strategy Action Plan and
 - (iii) Delegates approval for any minor updates (including updates to evidence base datapoints or third-party strategy names) to officers in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Net Zero.
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Background

5. On 30 September 2020, the Council approved a revised Corporate Plan which outlined the Council's response to and early plans for recovery from the Covid19 pandemic. The Plan included a way forward for the continued delivery and evolution of the Council's Sustainability Strategy, and, in light of the impacts of the Covid19 pandemic, committed to revise and merge the Council's Sustainability and Economic Development Strategies with the aim of driving a Green Recovery for the District.
6. On 2 March 2022, the Council approved the Corporate Plan and Budget for 2022-2023 which included a commitment to deliver a new Sustainable Economy Strategy.
7. The outline roadmap for the development of a new Strategy was presented to Members of the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance and Performance on 2 March 2021 which also agreed to establish a cross party Member Working Group to advise on the development of the Strategy. In line with the recommendations of Scrutiny Committee a member working group was established and a total of 8 member working group meetings were held to advise on the development of the Sustainable Economy Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025 (the draft SES) (attached as Appendix 1) and the District Profile (attached as Appendix 2).
8. On 22 March 2022 the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance & Performance considered the draft SES and Action Plan 2022-2025 and Profile and agreed to recommend the Strategy to Council for its approval subject to the following amendments:
 - Changes to the Measure of Success of Objective 3 to increase hourly female earnings from 95% to 100% of male hourly pay amongst workers of Mid Sussex by the end of the Strategy period;
 - Changes to Objective 8 to add text and actions regarding Nature Recovery and Biodiversity Net Gain including the need for the Council to allocate resources and the appointment of a consultant to undertake natural capital mapping;
 - Changes to Objective 10 to add text to make clear the Council will monitor and where appropriate support other sustainable low carbon dioxide vehicle technologies;
 - Some minor changes to include additional info graphics and a range of factual and typographical amendments, including the need to reflect the change in name by WSCC of the West Sussex Economic Reset Plan to the West Sussex Economic Plan and updating references to the closure of Central Sussex College.
9. These changes have been made.

Development of the Strategy

10. Consultants (Marshall Regen and Ricardo) were appointed to support the development of the draft Sustainable Economy Strategy (the draft SES). These consultants bring industry expertise, best practice and benchmarking principles to the project.
11. In preparing the draft SES account was taken of previously commissioned work, progress against existing strategies and actions plans and, an extensive review was undertaken of current and anticipated policy at local, regional and national levels. The following additional evidence was also commissioned:

- (i) A carbon baseline and emissions pathways at a District level
 - (ii) A carbon baseline and emissions pathways at a Council level
 - (iii) Employment land need
 - (iv) Town centre health checks and retail needs
12. The background evidence is summarised in the Mid Sussex District Profile which is attached as Appendix 2.
13. The Council engaged with partners and stakeholders from the public, private and community / voluntary sector as well as directly with residents. This included a residents' survey, meetings with different sectors including individual businesses, the District's three Business Associations (Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath), the Mid Sussex Partnership, a variety of fora hosted by Mid Sussex Voluntary Action and sustainability networks including the Sussex Nature Partnership. In addition, meetings were held with delivery partners who will help secure the delivery of the Action Plan. These conversations will continue and be built upon as the Strategy is delivered over the coming months and years.

Draft SES and Action Plan 2022-2025

14. The draft SES provides a framework within which to identify and prioritise areas for intervention and investment, and to assist in securing external funding. .
15. The overarching Vision of the draft SES is:
- “A vibrant District that is attractive, resilient and innovative that balances social well-being, environmental protection and sustainable economic growth.”
16. The Vision is supported by a series of objectives under the following three themes:
- People –protecting and creating better employment (particularly in the new and emerging green economies); developing skills; improving pathways to work; and reducing pay inequality.
 - Place –reducing the Council's carbon emissions; supporting businesses to reduce their carbon emissions and to both recover from the pandemic and to grow; encouraging business start-ups; promoting sustainable business practices; developing digital infrastructure; enhancing bio-diversity; providing new homes; creating quality town and village centres which meet local needs; and improving active travel connectivity.
 - Partnerships – The Council's guiding principles of working in partnership are openness, trust, honesty and mutual respect. The Council will agree and deliver shared goals, based on common values and will maintain regular and effective communication with all our partners.
17. Each Theme is underpinned by strategic objectives and performance measures, linked to the most relevant United Nations¹⁷ Sustainable Development Goals¹

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

18. The draft SES is supported by 44 actions which set out how the Objectives will be delivered, detailing broad timescales and organisations that will lead on and participate in its delivery. Many of the objectives in the strategy cannot be directly delivered by the Council alone. The draft SES recognises that effective change can only be delivered by working in partnership with residents, other Council stakeholders, other organisations, and businesses.
19. The draft SES and Action Plan is attached as Appendix 1 to this Report.

Next Steps

20. The Council has established a cross departmental SES Programme Delivery Team which will oversee the delivery of the draft SES and Action Plan following a positive resolution of the Council.
21. Scrutiny Committee considered the need for the draft SES to be agile given the fast-moving nature of the workstream and acknowledged that it would be very likely that the draft SES, Action Plan and Evidence Base would need to be periodically updated. Significant changes to Actions or Measures of Success will be presented to the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance & Performance for consideration and comment prior to approval by the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Net Zero. Approval for any minor updates (including updates to evidence base datapoints or third-party strategy names) will be delegated to officers in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Net Zero.

Risk Management Implications

22. There are no risk management implications associated directly with this report.

Equalities Implications

23. There are no direct equality implications contained within this report. Equality impact assessments (EIAs) are undertaken within individual services and projects contained within the action plan as required. An overarching EIA has been undertaken for the strategy as a whole and is provided as Appendix 3.

Sustainability Implications

24. The Sustainable Economy Strategy has been informed by the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These aim to mitigate climate change, eradicate poverty, reduce gender and social inequality and improve economic and health conditions. They are a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". Whilst they are broad and inter-dependent, they are underpinned by specific targets and measures.

Financial Implications

25. A reserve of £100k was established to support the Council's work in this area. There is a remaining budget of £60k which will be used to deliver the sustainability measures in the Strategy.

Background Papers

1. [SES and Action Plan Report](#) to Scrutiny Committee of Leader, Finance and Performance: 22 March 2022
2. [Minutes](#) of Scrutiny Committee of Leader, Finance and Performance: 22 March 2022