

<b>Council Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	6 January 2021
<b>Report Title</b>	Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cllr Tim Valentine, Cabinet Member for the Environment
<b>SMT Lead</b>	Nick Vickers, Chief Financial Officer
<b>Head of Service</b>	
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Janet Hill, Climate Change Officer
<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. To note progress

## 1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 26 June 2019, the Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency setting ourselves challenging targets to achieve net zero carbon for the council by 2025 and net zero carbon across the borough by 2030.
- 1.2 Part of the declaration requires an annual progress report to be taken to Council in January each year.
- 1.3 This is the second annual report covering the activities undertaken towards achieving our targets during 2020.
- 1.4 It is very positive to be able to report the amount of progress made despite the huge additional pressures on the Council since March from COVID19.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 Since the spring of 2019 councils across the UK have been declaring climate emergencies of varying types and ambition. To date 300/404 (74%) of District, County, Unitary & Metropolitan Councils and eight Combined Authorities/City Regions, have declared a Climate Emergency. (Source: <https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/list-of-councils/>).
- 2.2 One of the first things the newly elected council did after the May 2019 local elections was to develop a Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration motion which was passed unanimously on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019.
- 2.3 Swale has set some of the most ambitious targets nationally to achieve net zero carbon by 2025 as an organisation and by 2030 as a borough.

- 2.4 Our policies and strategies are being reviewed and changes are being made as necessary to achieve net zero carbon across the Borough by 2030. A Climate and Ecological Action Plan has been developed, as required by the declaration, and was adopted on Earth Day, 22nd April 2020.

### **3 Progress 2020**

- 3.1 A full report can be found at Appendix I.

#### ***Progress highlights***

- 3.2 A cross service area steering group of key councillors and officers meets regularly to progress actions.
- 3.3 The Carbon Trust was appointed to analyse our own estate and developed an action plan to achieve net zero carbon by 2025. Recommendations included electrification of our heat sources, installation of on-site solar PV, and the roll out of electric vehicles. The Carbon Trust made recommendations for the Swale House retrofit. The Cabinet Member for Economy and Property and the Head of Property Services are working with our consultants to finalise a business case for cabinet. A progress report was presented to Cabinet in December. A bid has been made to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant Fund to facilitate some of the carbon reduction work. Most of our fleet vehicles have been replaced with EVs with the rest to follow in 2021.
- 3.4 The Special Projects Fund has started to fund projects which help to tackle the emergency. These include the appointment of a Climate and Ecological Emergency Project Officer, continuing to fund an Air Quality Project Officer and the Fuel and Water Home Advice Service.
- 3.5 Swale's Air Quality Action Plan was approved by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). A clean air zone feasibility study has been undertaken and we are working in partnership with KCC to explore and develop in more detail a package of measures to reduce traffic, improve flow and improve the vehicle fleet along the A2. We are working with schools close to AQMAs to promote sustainable travel. Further air quality monitoring has been implemented. We have developed an air quality planning technical guide.
- 3.6 Via the Blueprint coalition we have lobbied central government for more powers and resources for local authorities to tackle the climate and ecological emergency.
- 3.7 An audit of the council's purchases of single-use plastic has been undertaken and elimination or replacement of products is underway both in Swale House and across our estate. The drinks and vending machine contracts will not be renewed. Coffee cups and crisp packets can be recycled. Biodegradable tree guards are being used when trees are planted funded by a grant from D S Smith.

- 3.8 A fuel and water advice service has been developed as a way of reaching our more vulnerable residents to help them reduce bills and carbon emissions. The service provider was appointed in February. Due to COVID19 the service roll out was delayed, but an adviser was appointed in September and the service, albeit in a way different to first planned, is starting to reach our vulnerable residents.
- 3.9 A network of EV chargers has been installed in Council car parks. Charge points are available in Sittingbourne (Swallows and Swale House car parks, and the MSCP), Faversham (Central Car Park) and Sheerness (Rose Street Car Park).
- 3.10 The Planning Committee has successfully requested more renewable energy and energy-efficiency measures to be included in new developments. All new developments are expected to achieve a 50% saving in carbon emissions over current Building Regulations. The Local Plan will bring this down to net zero emissions by 2030. A guide for developers including examples of how the required 50% reduction in carbon emissions can be achieved is available on the council's website.
- 3.11 2,500 trees were planted in our country parks 2019/20 and a baseline audit of our existing trees and potential sites for further planting identified. We have worked with local community organisations educate about and taken action on our ecology and biodiversity targets.
- 3.12 The Solar Together programme saw over 450 referrals for solar PV installations and we continue to support community solar projects, which the council is now considering as a financial investment.
- 3.13 COVID19 has accelerated the move to virtual meetings, resulting in business and commuting miles falling dramatically. However other challenges have arisen, such as the increase in household waste.

## **4 Alternative Options**

- 4.1 An alternative option would be to revert to our previous pre-Declaration way of working. This would mean our own emissions would decline more slowly than required to meet our 2025 targets as declared in the emergency. Borough wide, taking no action would have similar consequences with a failure to meet 2030 targets. We would also risk reputational damage.

This is not a valid alternative.

## **5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed**

- 5.1 The Steering Group, Cabinet member for the Environment and the Deputy Cabinet member for the Environment have all been involved in the development of this report.

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Progress on the declaration will support the delivering improved quality of life and delivering the council of tomorrow priorities
Financial, Resource and Property	This report is for noting but activities to address the declaration have financial implications and these will be addressed through Special Project Fund funding and through the revenue and capital budget processes.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage.
Environment and Sustainability	The progress made to date supports improving our environment and contributes to the development of a more sustainable council and borough.
Health and Wellbeing	Improvements to the environment and sustainability have tangible health and wellbeing benefits.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

## 7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

Appendix I: Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report

Appendix II: Carbon Trust Report

## 8 Background Papers

Motion to full council 26 June 2019

<https://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/g2156/Public%20reports%20pack%2026th-Jun-2019%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=10>