

Environment Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	3 November 2022
Report Title	Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Janet Hill, Climate Change Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note format of report and suggest changes 2. 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 fourth annual report covering the activities undertaken towards achieving our targets during 2022.
- 1.4 The Environment Committee has requested that a draft report is seen by them for consideration ahead of full Council.
- 1.5 It is very positive to be able to report the amount of progress made despite the pressures on the Council 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.
- 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 26th 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 was developed, as required by the declaration, and was adopted on Earth Day, 22nd April 2020.

3 Progress 2022

- 3.1 The draft report can be found at Appendix I.

Progress highlights

- 3.2 A steering group of councillors and officers meets regularly to progress actions and includes coverage of all service areas across the Council.

- 3.3 The refurbishment of Swale House is currently underway. A successful bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant Fund facilitated carbon reduction work in the Master's House in Sheerness.

Most of our fleet vehicles have been replaced with EVs, this has reduced the carbon footprint of our services. Work on the new waste and street cleansing contract is looking at alternative vehicles to the current contract and the new grounds maintenance contract which started on 15 January has seen new electric vehicles and power tools used for the first time on this service.

- 3.4 The Improvement and Resilience Fund is funding projects which help to tackle the emergency including lighting, tree planting, the car club, EV charging points and air quality measures.

- 3.5 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 to establish a clean air zone. We are working with schools close to AQMAs to promote sustainable travel and a schools education programme has been rolled out this year. Further air quality monitoring has been implemented. We have developed an air quality planning technical guide and trained planning officers. An Anti-idling campaign has been rolled out with signage, staff training and the ability to issue fixed penalty notices for non-adherence.

- 3.6 This year our Climate and Ecological Action Plan was scored by Climate Emergency UK and placed in the top 20 local authorities in the UK. We continue to work with the Race to Zero and to date we are one of only two Kent authorities to have joined UK100 – a coalition of local authorities with ambitious climate emergency plans.

- 3.7 The Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration stated that we would “eliminate single-use plastic from council operations wherever possible” by 2021. A cross department audit of the council’s plastic use was undertaken and elimination or replacement of single use products is underway both in Swale House and across

our estate/services. The drinks and vending machine contracts were not renewed. Coffee cups, crisp packets, pens and blister packs can be recycled. Biodegradable tree guards are being used when trees are planted.

3.8 A fuel and water advice service was developed as a way of reaching our more vulnerable residents to help them reduce bills and carbon emissions. The adviser was appointed in late 2020 for two years and started to deliver the service in January 2021, albeit in a way different to first planned. Funding for a third year has been agreed and an assistant has been funded from an external source. The service has advised over 900 households across the Borough on energy and water use. Late in 2021 with the backing of several members the service has also taken on tackling period poverty. 366 packs have been given out

3.9 Via the Off Road Charging Scheme (ORCS) funding was secured for additional EV charging points across the borough. 10 twin chargers have been installed in three car parks and a further bid will be made in 2023

A car club was set up in Faversham in May 2022. Three hybrid cars are available in car parks across the town. To date the club has reached a utilisation rate of up to 50%. A fourth all electric vehicle will be added soon. We are working with developers to include car clubs in new developments and considering the establishment of a club in Sittingbourne

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 encouraged 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 50% reduction in carbon emissions can be achieved is available on the council's website.

3.11 In 2022 35 standard trees and 4007 whips were planted.
In the 2022/23 planting season we anticipate planting 241 standard trees and 11048 whips.

3.12 COVID19 has accelerated the move to virtual and hybrid meetings and new ways of working, resulting in business and commuting miles falling dramatically. However other challenges have arisen, such as the increase in household waste.

3.13 Kent Wildlife Trust approached Swale to be their only local authority partner in Kent in their Wilder Carbon project. We are working with them and local landowners to explore offsetting opportunities both for ourselves and other local organisations.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 There are no decisions to be taken from this report. However, 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.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The Steering Group, chair, deputy chair and opposition lead of the Environment Committee 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 the Improvement and Resilience Fund and through the base revenue and capital budget processes. Grants from external sources will also be sought.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	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.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.
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

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>