

Council Meeting	
Meeting Date	18 January 2023
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	1. 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 It is very positive to be able to report the amount of progress made despite the pressures on the Council from pandemic and other economic pressures.

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 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.

3.4 Most of our fleet vehicles for directly delivered services have been replaced with EVs, this has reduced the carbon footprint of our services. 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. The proposed new waste and street cleaning contract will reduce carbon emissions by; re-routing rounds to reduce fuel use by 10-15%, using cleaner more fuel efficient Euro VI diesel vehicles with an electric lift for the bins and use of EVs for some supervisors and street sweeping vehicles.

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

3.6 We are working with KCC to explore in more detail measures to increase active travel, promote wider adoption of electric vehicles (e.g. on street charging), and improve the air quality especially in the Air Quality Management Areas. 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.

3.7 Swale's ambitious targets were acknowledged this year by both Climate Emergency UK and the Carbon Disclosure Project. Climate Emergency UK scored our Action Plan and placed us in the top 20 local authorities in the UK. The Carbon Disclosure Project considered our progress in delivering the Action Plan and we were rated A – one of only 123 'cities' worldwide getting this top rating.

3.8 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. Where it has not been easily possible to remove products, facilities to recycle specific plastic waste in Swale House have been introduced. For example coffee

cups, crisp packets, pens and blister packs can be recycled. Biodegradable tree guards are being used when trees are planted.

- 3.9 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. Funding for a third year has been agreed in 2022 and an assistant has been funded from an external source. The service has advised over 1000 households across the Borough on energy and water use and issued over 1400 fuel vouchers. Late in 2021 with the backing of several members from their own grants, the service has also taken on tackling period poverty. 360 packs were given out in 2022.
- 3.10 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. These new charging bays add to the existing SBC EV charging bays (4 in Faversham, 8 in Sittingbourne and 4 in Sheerness).
- 3.11 A car club was set up in Faversham in May 2022. Two hybrid cars and one electric vehicle are available in car parks across the town. To date the club has reached a utilisation rate of up to 50% which is above expectations for year 1. We are working with developers to include car clubs in new developments and considering the establishment of a club in Sittingbourne.
- 3.12 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 2013 building regulations (19% more than current regulations). The emerging 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.
- 3.13 In 2022, 205 standard trees and 6607 whips were planted at various locations. In the 2022/23 planting season we anticipate planting 20 standard trees and 11048 whips and making a further bid to Local Authority Tree Fund.
- 3.14 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 being put out by residents. We are therefore working on education campaigns to get this reduced.
- 3.15 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. It was taken to the Environment Committee in November 2022 for consideration.

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 the annual report identifies funds that have been used. 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>