

Environment and Climate Change Action Plans: 2021 Update

Report number:	CAB/WS/21/032	
Report to and date:	Cabinet	20 July 2021
Cabinet member:	Councillor John Griffiths Leader of the Council Tel: 01284 757136 Email: john.griffiths@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Jill Korwin Strategic Director Tel: 01284 757252 Email: jill.korwin@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: The decision made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: All

Recommendation: It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1. Reviews progress against the Environment and Climate Change action plans and makes recommendations for any change to the proposed actions and activities, as set out in Appendix A to Report number CAB/WS/21/032.**
- 2. Agrees that future progress updates be provided as part of the Annual**

Environmental Statement which forms part of the Council's Annual Report.

- 3. Approves the full Environmental Statement for the Council's 2020/21 performance, included as Appendix B to Report number CAB/WS/21/032.**
- 4. Endorses the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, included as Appendix C to Report Number CAB/WS/21/032.**

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 In September 2019, West Suffolk Council declared a climate emergency, having already established the Environment and Climate Change Taskforce (the Taskforce). The aim of the Taskforce was to make recommendations on the Council's future role in protecting and enhancing the environment, both in the way in which it carries out its operations and through specific initiatives.
- 1.2 Following the Taskforce's extensive evidence gathering, engagement and analysis work, they presented recommendations to Cabinet. On 21 July 2020 Cabinet agreed an action plan, designed to implement the recommendations of the Taskforce, and to be taken forward by officers and overseen by Cabinet. Cabinet also agreed to a review of progress against the actions.
- 1.3 The recommendations to Cabinet covered two separate papers. The first as a list of recommendations on climate change issues; the second, a report setting out recommendations for environmental and biodiversity issues. The second paper also recommended that the Council's Climate Emergency declaration be updated to specifically state 'Climate and Environment Emergency', which was duly agreed by Cabinet.
- 1.4 This report updates Cabinet on progress in implementing the agreed actions from both reports and summarises some of the wider developments that have affects upon the Council's work in lowering carbon emissions and improving environmental impacts across the organisation. It also includes the full Environmental Statement, an annual summary of the Council's performance in regard to the environment and climate change. (A summary of this statement is included in the Annual Report). Finally, it references the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan that has been approved by Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders.
- 1.5 It should be noted that to accelerate delivery further, investment into specific schemes and projects will be required, and this will be the matter of separate business cases.

2. Progress against actions

- 2.1 The updated action plan attached at Appendix A shows the progress made in implementing the actions since July 2020.
- 2.2 As this is a long-term plan to achieve Net-Zero Carbon that will require substantial activity until at least 2030, it is recommended that further updates be contained within the annual Environment Statement, with Cabinet specifically updated upon request or when approval is required for any future major projects.

- 2.3 The effects of COVID-19 have inevitably had an impact on the actions taken by the council and environmental outcomes. In part this is due to new working practices or changes the public have made. Services have continued, with specific effort given to the delivery of the council's climate change and environment aims. However, understandably there have been some delays in certain areas.
- 2.4 The Environmental Statement (Appendix B) shows strong progress against our emissions targets for 20/21, delivered primarily through the changes to working practices that had to be made in response to Covid 19. It is intended to build on those new practices (less travel, flexible and agile working practices) moving forward so we do not see a return to 19/20 emissions levels from our business activity. Key highlights include:
- a. West Suffolk Council emissions down 18.8% compared to last year, (28.6% reduction including Abbeycroft Leisure emissions),
 - b. Renewable energy generated up 11% compared to last year,
 - c. Total fleet/council fuel use down 11% compared to last year,
 - d. West Suffolk Council business travel down 67% compared to last year,
 - e. Total office waste is down 52% compared to last year, the recycling rate is 75.5%, which is up 39% compared to last year.
- 2.5 The Carbon Budget agreed at Cabinet in 2020 is included in the Environment Statement. The net zero plan which formed part of the 2020 report illustrates potential routes to net zero by 2030. This is broken down into potential workstreams, such as reducing emissions from existing buildings, investing in renewable generation projects, and moving fleet to electric/hydrogen solutions. These are reflected in the strategic action plan (Appendix A).
- 2.6 The proposed carbon budget periods were:
- a. April 2020 – Mar 2024 – steady annual emission rate of 4,675 tCO₂e/year
 - b. April 2024 – Mar 2028 – steady annual emission rate of 2,484 tCO₂e/year
 - c. April 2028 – Mar 2030 – steady annual emission rate of 840 tCO₂e/year
 - d. Zero emissions in 2030/31.

For year 2020/21, the council is within the carbon budget, with emissions standing at 4,093 tCO₂e against the budgets allowed rate of 4,675 tCO₂e.

2.7 Role of the Environment Management Group (EMG)

The Environment Management Group (EMG) was initially formed in 2015 as a group for officers seeking to champion internal and external environmental performance and sustainability issues across West Suffolk Council.

- 2.7.1 Since the conclusion of the Taskforce, the role of the EMG has been augmented as the main monitoring and implementation body for environment and climate change issues across the Council.
- 2.7.2 The membership of the EMG includes the Strategic Director as Chair, the council's Energy Advisor as deputy Chair, as well as all the lead officers involved in the Taskforce and other representatives ensuring that all relevant teams within the council are represented.
- 2.7.3 The recommendations from the Taskforce were set out in three groups:
 - a. Short-term actions that can be completed by 2022 that do not require an additional resource commitment from the Council,
 - b. Longer Term actions necessary that would enable the Council to set an ambition to become Net Zero-Emissions Council by 2030,
 - c. Wider activity to support the improvement in emissions across Suffolk.
- 2.7.4 For practical reasons, the EMG has restructured the action plan set out by the taskforce into:
 - a. Strategic Actions – larger or longer-term actions that represent key strategic objectives
 - b. Tasks – smaller actions that represent the building blocks of the strategic actions
 - c. Community or external engagement – tasks that are external to the council or focused on communications.

The updated action plan, addressing both climate change and environment and biodiversity issues (Appendix A) reflects these changes, and a summary of key achievements is included at 2.9.

2.8 County Wide Work

Council officers and members of Cabinet have been part of a Suffolk wide approach to tackle climate change. The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders' group (SPSL) allocated funding to support work across the County to

improve environmental performance. An evidence report commissioned in 2020 set out the baseline of environmental performance across Suffolk and made initial suggestions for what would be necessary for Suffolk as a place to achieve net zero emissions by 2030.

- 2.8.1 As part of the COVID-19 recovery plan for Suffolk, and responding to the evidence report, the opportunity to build on the measurable environmental benefits has been progressed through the development of the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan (SCEP) (Appendix C) which was approved by SPSL last month. That plan does not seek to duplicate what individual partners are doing, but rather take the opportunity to bring together activities where collective action can deliver further results and engage, support, and encourage the wider Suffolk community to play their part to enable Suffolk as a whole to work towards achieving Carbon Net- Zero. The Suffolk Climate Change, Environment and Energy Board (SCCEEB), which is comprised from officer representatives from all public sector organisations in Suffolk, and chaired by West Suffolk's Strategic Director, has steered the development of the SCEP, and provides county wide co-ordination of environment and climate change activity.
- 2.8.2 The EMG will continue to monitor Suffolk-wide actions and other external opportunities that may influence or benefit West Suffolk's activities as they arise.

2.9 **Early Successes**

West Suffolk Council has successfully secured £1.4m of government funding (Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund) to support a programme of works to decarbonise the Council's estate. The programme of works built upon the plan developed to support the Net Zero Emissions target and includes glazing, solar PV installations and air source heat pumps at a number of Council buildings. In addition, it will support the installation of new electrical infrastructure and a battery energy storage system to provide benefits to West Suffolk House in the short term and then support the energy provision for the new Western Way Development.

- 2.9.1 These projects alone are expected to deliver energy cost savings and income generation in the region of £70,000 - £100,000 per year once fully installed (final design and operation will inform actual savings).
- 2.9.2 In December 2020, a Suffolk consortium led by West Suffolk Council was awarded over £1 million from the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy. The Green Homes Grants are for five projects to be started by 31 March 2021. In February this grant was increased by an extra £3 million.
- 2.9.3 For the West Suffolk project alone, the work from the first phase of the Green Homes Grants has resulted in:

- 36 park home properties with external wall insulation (EWI) installations complete.
- 4 owner occupiers with completed finance checks ready to have the EWI works commence
- 4 people in private rented properties awaiting landlord confirmations to have the works commence

2.9.5 For the next phase, 97 resident expressions of interest were received for having EWI installed, and a series of property surveys were undertaken by the installer to understand how many of these can progress with an installation. Savings for off gas grid properties are in the region of £235 a year in energy bills and reduce their carbon footprint by 960kgCO₂ a year as per.

2.9.6 Other successes include:

Theme	Early successes
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change and environment listed as core issues for the emerging Local Plan. • Around 300 properties identified as lowest energy efficiency (F / G). An improvement programme for the first 100 properties agreed with landlords.
Renewables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 residents signed up to the EDF heat pump offer. • The council has hosted live presentations on heat pumps and funding support for residents in several villages. • Council has continued to install solar PV systems on local business premises (such as Precision Marketing and Claas).
Travel & transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council has promoted the Plug in Suffolk grant scheme, which supports community groups to install EV chargers – such as Ixworth village hall. • We have now installed 46 EV chargers across 15 locations, with more in installation/planning stage.
Council consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council now uses recycled paper at print stations. • Utilising post-Brexit procurement rules to localise council’s procurement – as can now reserve contracts for local suppliers.
Waste & recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly 1000 residents signed up as volunteer litter pickers – and the councils previous litter campaign is being used as national best practice example for current funding opportunities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Food Savvy campaign has helped promote the reduction of food waste. Research undertaken with Norfolk and Suffolk Residents shows that food waste is reducing.
Environment and biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1500 trees planted across the area. • Following a trial of peat free alternatives in 2020, the council’s parks are completely peat free from 2021.

2.9.7 **Developments to the plan**

The plan has been updated with a specific reference to listed buildings. A new action is proposed to “Develop support and guidance for owners of listed properties seeking to improve their energy performance”.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

3.1 The Council has committed to work to achieve net-zero by 2030. This plan will continue to evolve as new technology and innovations develop to support this goal. At this stage no alternative options have been considered.

4. Risks associated with the proposals

5.1 There is an ongoing risk that the resources required to implement the action plan will not be available. However, this risk will be monitored by the EMG, with any opportunities for securing external resources monitored and pursued as appropriate, and Cabinet advised of any serious delays in implementation or resource requirements.

5. Implications arising from the proposals

Please note that the implications below focus on the outcomes of the action plan at present. As more detailed actions are developed (where appropriate) specific assessment will need to be undertaken to evaluate the implications of each action.

5.1 Financial - There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Where individual projects require investment, this will be a separate report.

5.2 Legal Compliance - No implications.

5.3 Personal Data Processing - No implications.

5.4 Equalities - The Taskforce expect that equality impacts should be positive

as a result of their work, however this would need to be subject to further assessment based on each action.

- 5.5 Crime and Disorder - No implications.
- 5.6 Environment or Sustainability - The recommendations will have a positive impact on the environment.
- 5.7 HR or Staffing - No implications from this report; further activity may require additional staff to support, and this will be subject to business cases or separate requests.
- 5.8 Changes to existing policies - Procurement Policy is under review.
- 5.9 External organisations (such as businesses, community groups)
The Taskforce's recommendations specifically state potential partner organisations that will need to be involved with implementing recommendations, e.g., Air Quality. Officers have made partner organisations aware of the nature of the recommendations to Cabinet and will communicate on a more formal basis after the Cabinet meeting.

6. Appendices referenced in this report

- 6.1 Appendix A – Environment and Climate Change Action Plan – Updated
- 6.2 Appendix B – West Suffolk 2020/21 Environmental Statement
- 6.3 Appendix C – [The Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan](#) (not attached to this report, but can be accessed via this link)

7. Background documents associated with this report

- 7.1 [Report number CAB/WS/20/045](#) (Cabinet: 21 July 2020)
West Suffolk Environment and Climate Change Taskforce – Final Report
- 7.2 [Report number CAB/WS/20/046](#) (Cabinet: 21 July 2020)
Report of the Environment and Climate Change Taskforce – Environment and Biodiversity Emergency
- 7.3 [The Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan](#)