

Climate Change Steering Group

Date and Time - **Wednesday 25 November 2020 - 10:00am**

Venue - **Remote Meeting**

Councillors appointed to the Steering Group:

Councillors S.J. Coleman, K.M. Field (Chairman), P.J. Gray, Mrs S. Hart, L.M. Langlands, P.N. Osborne and S.M. Prochak, MBE.

AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

To receive any disclosure by Members of personal and disclosable pecuniary interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Member regards the personal interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct. Members are reminded of the need to repeat their declaration immediately prior to the commencement of the item in question.

3. **ROTHER ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY 2020-2030** (Pages 1 - 18)

4. **ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL GRANTS SCHEMES - AN ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW** (Pages 19 - 30)

5. **EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION: LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**

<https://consultation.eastsussex.gov.uk/economy-transport-environment/escclcwip-2020/>

6. **PAPERLESS PLEDGE**

7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

8. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING - APRIL 2021 (TBC)**

(Please bring your diaries with you)

Malcolm Johnston
Chief Executive

Agenda Despatch Date: 19 November 2020

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**Rother District Council's aspiring to deliver
an Efficient, Flexible and Effective Council; Sustainable Economic Prosperity;
Stronger, Safer Communities; and a Quality Physical Environment.**

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Rother District Council

Report to:	Climate Change Steering Group
Date:	25 November 2020
Title:	Rother Environment Strategy 2020-2030
Report of:	Dr Kristina Sodomkova, Environment and Policy Manager
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	Update Members of the Climate Change Steering Group on the activities by the new Environment and Policy Manager since her appointment in August 2020.
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : Members of the Climate Change Steering Group are requested to note the contents of the report and consider the recommendation detailed at paragraphs 25, 26, 27 and 39.

Introduction

1. This report is the first update to the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) and covers a 3-month period from August to November 2020. A list of completed activities to date is detailed at Appendix 2. The report outlines the approach being taken to implement delivery of the new Rother Environment Strategy 2020-2030.

Background

2. On 16 September 2019, full Council passed a motion declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and made a carbon neutrality commitment for Rother District with a target date of 2030.
3. A draft Environment Strategy was subsequently produced, with the following priority areas identified:
 - Becoming a smart digital district
 - Green economy
 - Air quality and sustainable transport
 - Sustainable waste management
 - Sustainable energy
 - Protecting and enhancing biodiversity
 - Construction and existing buildings
 - Environmentally friendly council
4. At the beginning of the year, a public consultation was carried out and its responses were considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 27 July 2020 (Minute CB20/20 refers). On 21 September 2020, the draft Environment Strategy document was adopted by full Council (Minute C20/37 refers).

Vision

5. The Rother Environment Strategy's vision is set as follows:

The air will be cleaner as the need to travel will be reduced and those of us that do travel will travel by bike, public transport, electric vehicle, or on foot. The natural and built environment will be enhanced and protected for current and future communities. The Council will be a carbon neutral organisation; the district will be tackling and adapting to climate change. More energy will come from renewable or low-carbon sources, such as solar. Fewer people will live in fuel poverty. Waste will be reduced. The district will be resilient to the impacts of climate change including heatwaves, droughts and flooding. We will each use less water. Everyone will play their role in reducing their impact on the environment.

Rother Environment Strategy Priorities

6. Further work is required on the priority areas identified in the strategy document to inform the strategy's translation into action. To aid explanation, two drawings are included in Appendix 1, in recognition that the new Environment Strategy has a dual aspect: it is both internally and externally facing. Figure 1 shows how new the Environment Strategy priorities have been mapped against Rother District Council (RDC) internal functions; with RDC as an organisation having disparate levels of control and influence in these priority areas. Figure 2 shows primarily not-for-profit environmental organisations¹ operating within Rother geographical area mapped against the Environment Strategy priorities.

Different levels of control and influence

7. Firstly, it must be recognised some priority areas specified in the Rother Environment Strategy are within the control of RDC and its different functions whilst others are not. Some are within the control of the East Sussex County Council (ESCC), some depend on the Government for decisions and support e.g. investments in infrastructure and/or changes to legislation. The level of influence also differs.
8. Where there is lack of direct or limited control and limited influence, this should be marked as out of scope of the delivery of the RDC Environment Strategy. Instead, at a strategic level, RDC will proactively engage with those matters and will attempt to exert influence that will assist it in achieving these objectives.
9. Figure 1 shows that three of the priorities (Becoming a smart digital district, Air quality, and Green Economy) are very much outside of the control of the Rother Environment and Policy Manager and RDC. Where RDC has some level of control and influence, there are existing leads – either within or both in RDC and ESCC who can feed back and/or refer into their activities to the RDC Environment Strategy; e.g. the Sussex Air Partnership².

¹ Types: primarily voluntary groups, registered charities, CICs.

² Website: <https://sussex-air.net/>

Linkages to existing RDC activities and gaps

10. As shown in Figure 1, some existing RDC staff and functions are already delivering on aspects within the identified strategy priority areas. Notably, operational staff within Housing and Community Services/ Neighbourhood Services whose remit falls within the priority areas of waste management, biodiversity, coastal management, and housing; Major Projects officers leading on new housing developments on behalf of RDC; Environmental Health, Licensing and Community Services responsible for environmental health and who sit on the Sussex Air Partnership; and at a strategic level Planning Policy with its policies for new builds that encompass a wide range of topics from renewable energy, air quality, to transport and green spaces. It is important to understand these linkages, to clarify responsibilities and boundaries, and to ensure that any work delivered under the RDC Environment Strategy is not in conflict but positively adds to and supports existing efforts. Clear links between the Environment Strategy and any relevant internal policy and guidance documents will be made as part of its delivery efforts; bearing in mind this will take time and resource.

11. The priority area with most direct control and influence is entitled within the RDC Environment Strategy document as “environmentally friendly council”. As shown in the Figure 1, it touches on numerous aspects that are managed by different RDC functions, departments and teams:
 - 1 RDC assets/ buildings, primarily commercial and operational: managed Economic Development within Acquisition, Transformation and Regeneration Service; Neighbourhood Services; and a maintenance team within the Housing and Community Services; and Major Projects officers who again sit within Acquisition, Transformation and Regeneration Service.
 - 2 Finance who through procurement engage with supply chains.
 - 3 HR who engage with RDC employees.
 - 4 Democratic Services who engage with Councillors and administer democratic service processes.

Rother’s new Environment and Policy Manager is not the primary lead on any of those four above aspects; but these elements are of relevance to the aims of RDC Environment Strategy. Engagement and discussions with these RDC functions will clarify how their own approaches and objectives will align with the new Environment Strategy, with an agreement on any reporting mechanisms. Again, this will happen over time.

12. Mapping the Environment Strategy priorities against the internal RDC functions, as shown in Figure 1, is helpful, because it allows to highlight any gaps. Three significant gaps are identified in the RDC’s organisation structure, as a result of this mapping exercise. These gaps could hinder the delivery of the new Environment Strategy: they are noted in Figure 1 in yellow boxes titled “MISSING RDC LEAD”:
 1. The priority area “**active/ sustainable transport**” is bundled with “air quality” in the current version of the strategy document. This is a very pertinent issue that concerns a primarily rural district such as Rother and, rightly so, prominently features in the strategy’s vision statement. However, it is ESCC, not RDC, who is the transport authority;

subsequently, RDC has no dedicated officer to lead on the topic of “active/ sustainable transport”.

2. **Strategic lead for green and blue infrastructure.** Other local authorities have teams and strategic roles within this area – for example, Hastings Borough Council has an Environment and Natural Resources Manager and a team of officers. RDC has no such strategic role nor a dedicated team for management of green and blue infrastructure and assets. The closest equivalent is the new RDC Environment and Policy Manager. RDC only have a limited number of operational staff whose focus is day to day contract management of the grounds maintenance contract. The last time a comprehensive audit of green spaces in Rother was carried out was in year 2006-2007.³
3. **A dedicated energy efficiency/ carbon reduction specialist** to lead on the carbon reduction and a heat decarbonisation plan for RDC owned buildings/ assets. The role could support production of a new RDC Asset Management Plan that would include carbon reduction and a heat decarbonisation plan.

Linkages between the priorities

13. Lastly, it is important to recognise the different priority areas identified in the new Rother Environment Strategy do not stand in isolation but are related.

For example, although Becoming a smart digital district, priority area is viewed as outside of the scope of this strategy’s delivery, due to lack of direct control and influence, changes in this area can manifest themselves by impacts in other priority areas such as Protecting and enhancing biodiversity:

Digital connectivity → allows more people to work from home and thus having to travel less to work → less traffic on roads = less pollution from car exhausts → improving air quality → this may contribute to enhancing biodiversity.

Deciphering interconnectedness and casualty of elements within a system is not as straightforward. But awareness of the relationships’ existence is helpful and can be used to e.g. design successful systems interventions as part of an environment strategy’s delivery.

Current Activities

14. To ensure that well-informed and comprehensive action plan is produced, the five priority areas identified as within at least some RDC control and influence require further scrutiny. For example, the topic “biodiversity” in the current version of the strategy document excludes marine environment that is part of Rother District’s environment; any information about the recent marine conservation area designation Beachy Head East⁴ is missing nor does it mention the recent strategy document produced by the Sussex Nature

³ Link: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/leisure-and-events/open-spaces/open-spaces-sport-and-recreation-study/>

⁴ Information on government website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-conservation-zones-beachy-head-east>

Partnership⁵. Under “sustainable waste management” section there is no reference to the ESSC document East Sussex Joint Waste Strategy and its aims and targets are missing. Therefore, each of the five priority areas are being reviewed, using the following subheadings as a useful guide/template:

- Priority area – title
- References/ evidence available – internal/ external
- References/ evidence missing – internal/ external
- Targets / objectives
- Stakeholders – internal
- Stakeholders – external
- Existing projects/ activities
- Key dates/ events/ Timeline
- Key issues/ barriers
- Opportunities
- Priority scope – what is in, what is out

15. The review of the priority areas, using the headings above, is envisaged to be a continuous exercise, as references are updated, and new evidence emerges. Such a regular review exercise will be used to produce revised versions of the RDC Environment Strategy document, to ensure the Environment Strategy becomes a key go to reference document for environmental matters within the Rother District.

16. Consultation responses

Quoting from the RDC consultation report, presented at a meeting on 27 July 2020⁶: “108 responses were received from local residents through the online survey. A further seven respondents submitted their response by email along with one posted letter. This means we had a total of 116 responses from the public. 19 responses were also received from the list of identified organisations giving a total of 135 responses.”

The consultation responses are being reviewed: some consultees were approached individually to thank them for their responses and e.g. request further information.

17. Partnership working

The Rother Environment Strategy’s document sets out a commitment to working with partners to meet its goals in recognition that collaborative working is critical to the successful delivery of the new Rother Environment Strategy. The process of partnership formation considers elements such as linked interests and resources; whilst value creation depends on a degree of partnership fit⁷. Building a new relationship will take time with partners who have had no prior engagement with RDC to date. Partnership working will be ideally reflected in the governance arrangements of the strategy’s delivery.

18. In total 305 individuals were approached as part of the Environment Strategy’s consultation. The Excel spreadsheet containing this list has been

⁵ Document available on the Sussex Nature Partnership website: <http://sussexlnp.org.uk>

⁶ Link: <https://rother.moderngov.co.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=505>

⁷ E.g. Austin and Seitani (2012) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0899764012454685>

reviewed, to identify primarily not-for-profit voluntary environmental groups and registered charities operating within Rother geographical area: 71 of such entities have been identified and these represent one core stakeholder group for the purpose of the Environment Strategy's delivery. This core group has been mapped out against five of the Environment Strategy priority areas in Figure 2 in Appendix 1. Mapping the stakeholders in this way is useful as again, it helps to identify also gaps where there may be opportunities to create new groups and partnerships e.g. especially if one is to compare Figure 2 (external stakeholders) with Figure 1 (internal RDC functions).

19. The other core group are the 29 parishes and two towns within the Rother District. The key partner for engaging with this group is Rother Association of Local Councils (RALC).

20. Parishes and towns have own volunteer "environmental officers" – in the form of Tree Wardens (administered by the Tree Council); Local Footpath Wardens/Secretaries (administered by Ramblers, in this case Sussex Ramblers); and Flood Wardens with an Environment Agency's link. These three volunteer groups are another key stakeholder for the purpose of the Rother's Environment Strategy's activities.

21. A new webpage

The Rother Environment Strategy's document, version September 2020, is now available for download from a dedicated webpage on the RDC website: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/strategies-policies-and-plans/environment-strategy/>

A new generic email is available to which enquiries about the Rother environment strategy can be directed to environmentstrategy@rother.gov.uk

A link to the new Environment Strategy webpage is available via the RDC homepage <https://www.rother.gov.uk/>.

22. Members' environmental engagement review

Engagement with Councillors, who are one of the key Rother audiences, is an important aspect for the successful delivery of the Environment Strategy given the leadership role play in leading.

To help inform effective engagement with this group, a review was carried out. It analysed two data sets: 1) Rother Councillors declared interests and 2) past issues of the monthly Rother's Members' Bulletin. Information was also sought on the type of environmental training RDC offers to its Councillors. The review will feed into a new communication and engagement plan as part of the Strategy's deliver; in discussion with RDC Member Development Task Group.

23. RDC Grants Schemes – an Environmental Review

A review was completed of one of the RDC funding mechanisms as one of the activities under the new Rother Environment Strategy, adopted in September 2020 (see Agenda Item 4). This is in recognition that RDC can directly influence positive environmental change within the district through its funding

mechanisms. Moreover, collaborative working with partners can be aided by having well-designed funding mechanisms in place.

24. The funding mechanism examined was the RDC Community Grants Scheme (CGS) and the awards made through this scheme over a 12-year period.

Summary of findings:

- Number of grants by cause: environmental cause ranked fourth out of 10 broad causes categories identified – with sport type of proposals receiving most grants, followed by construction and equipment bids.
- In total there were 10 grants for environmental causes awarded over the 12-year funding period of 2009 to 2021⁸. In contrast, 59 grants were awarded in sport and 37 in construction categories respectively.
- 10 grants for environmental causes awarded were given to 10 different entities: seven of these were parish councils or groups associated with parish councils. Only three recipients are voluntary groups. One of these 10 projects was delivered in a form of a partnership between multiple groups.
- Grants for environmental causes received only 7% of the £1,216,418.92 awarded within that period of 2009 to 2021 – worth £79,633.50.
- In contrast, 49% = £596,645.92 were awarded to projects in sport category and 26% = £316,754.14 to projects in construction category.
- Only one grant within the 12-year period was awarded to a tree planting project that materialised: made in September 2020 to the Bexhill Environmental Group.

Recommendations

25. If the recommendations are agreed by Cabinet as a first step it is critical to discuss how RDC CIL funding is allocated in alignment with the commitment set out in the Environment Strategy.
26. As a second immediate step, whilst such a comprehensive review of all RDC funding mechanisms is instigated, it is proposed that concurrently, as a temporary measure, changes are made now to the RDC CGS, as explicated in Recommendations/ Section 10, so they can take place from the new financial year, starting in April 2021. If not, the opportunity will be lost for another 12 months for the RDC CGS to reflect RDC's commitments made in RDC's 2019 declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' and articulated within the new Rother Environment Strategy, adopted in September this year. The proposed changes will have to be submitted through Cabinet at one of the year 2021 meetings: 8 February; 1 March or 29 March.
27. Thirdly, a wide RDC support is sought for a comprehensive review of all RDC funding schemes and their criteria, in consultation with other funders and neighbouring local authorities. With the outlook to commence such a review very soon in the new year 2021.

⁸ The awarding period runs per financial, not calendar year. Hence the last award made, included in this review, is for period 2020/2021.

28. The Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund

An RDC application for the Government's Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF)⁹ has been prepared for several RDC-owned assets/ buildings to improve their energy efficiency and reduce their carbon emissions. The application relied on provision of information from four different functions within RDC.

Planned Activities

As well as the ongoing activities above, the following activities are planned for the coming months, as outlined in Gantt Chart in paragraph 40.

29. Communication and Engagement Plan

To aid the delivery of the strategy, a clearly defined communication and engagement plan is required. There are lot of activities happening with the environmental sphere in the Rother District; but, as observed by the new Environment and Policy Manager, these efforts are fragmented and often not widely known. A well-planned communication around the Rother Environment Strategy is key to promoting effectively the work and activities of core stakeholders and driving the environmental agenda. Aims:

- Raise awareness of the natural beauty, natural environment and green spaces in the Rother district.
- Inspire, share knowledge, raise awareness of innovative environmental initiatives and technology introduced across the Rother district.
- Connect people by raising awareness of environmental groups and their activities across the Rother district.

30. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The development of this framework is linked to the matter of governance. It will be informed externally by partnership working arrangements developed over time with external partners (work in progress) and internally through further understanding of the organisation's culture, structure, and its priorities.

31. Corporate Plan 2021-2017

The current RDC plan 2014-2021¹⁰ is due for a review. It is an opportunity to review on what has been delivered e.g. under its core aim of A quality physical environment and ensure that clear linkages between the emerging strategy and the new Rother Environment Strategy are forged.

32. Local Plan Review

Some of the environmental evidence that underpins the Environment Strategy sits within RDC Planning Policy¹¹. The tentative timetable for Local Plan production in 2021 relates to evidence gathering and informal targeted engagement up until and including Autumn 2021; after which a public consultation will take place. A dialogue with Planning Policy colleagues will aim to develop robust linkages between the environment strategy and the environmental evidence underpinning the new Local Plan.

⁹ Website: https://www.salixfinance.co.uk/public_sector_low_carbon_skills_fund

¹⁰ Link: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/strategies-policies-and-plans/corporate-plan-2014-2021/>

¹¹ Link: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/>

33. Council reports/ Environmental and sustainability implications

RDC report's template used to draft reports for Councillors' meeting, which this document is using, has a section called Implications. Two of these are called Environmental and Sustainability Implications. A discussion with Democratic Services and senior managers will be initiated in order to develop a clear guidance for staff with respect to these sections of the report template and identify a consultation or a reporting mechanism, to ensure that all proposals being put forward do align with the RDC's climate emergency commitments and the visions and aims articulated within the new Rother Environment Strategy.

34. Green Spaces Management Review

Improved green spaces and conservation and heritage are specified as outcomes under the current RDC corporate plan. The importance of quality green spaces to people's health and wellbeing; as well as their proximity and accessibility to communities; have been brought to the fore by the COVID-19 pandemic. The true value and the benefits that RDC's green spaces and assets provide must be fully recognised – again, in alignment with RDC's commitment; the new Rother Environment Strategy and its key priorities.

Whilst the RDC waste collection contract receives regular attention and scrutiny, also outside of its own Joint Waste and Recycling Committee¹², the last time the Grounds Maintenance Contract was subject to a public scrutiny was six years ago, during an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 24 November 2014. No RDC Member committee exists to review this contract and management of green spaces in general.

The RDC ground maintenance 10-year contract with an external contractor is due to expire in year 2022. This represents a window of opportunity to review not only the effectiveness of this long-term contract from a financial point of view; but also, the evidence available and management practice for each individual green space owned or managed by RDC, with the outlook to identify opportunities for environmental enhancements as well as cost saving measures (e.g. less grass cutting, more wildflower meadows). It is an opportunity to introduce vision and strategic direction for the future within an area of RDC that appears to have been neglected for a considerable time.

Conclusion

35. In order to produce a well-informed and comprehensive list of activities going forward, several tasks must be undertaken first. Responses to the original public consultation that ran early in the year must be reviewed and acknowledged, as a matter of courtesy. In recognition that the new Environment Strategy has a dual aspect, i.e. is both internally and externally facing, a comprehensive mapping of internal and external stakeholders, as shown in Figures 1 and 2 in Appendix 1 aids understanding of the complex landscape and informs the right approach for engaging the core stakeholder groups.

¹² Link: <https://rother.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=151&Year=0>

36. Mapping of the internal RDC landscape has brought to light three significant gaps in resource within the organisation that have the potential to hinder delivery of the Rother's new Environment Strategy. Notably, RDC has no staff to lead on these areas: active/sustainable transport; strategically green and blue infrastructure; and energy efficiency/ carbon reduction.
37. Partnership working is at the heart of Rother Environment's Strategy. To implement this approach a list of core stakeholders has been compiled and mapped against the Rother's new Environment Strategy' priority area, as shown in Figure 2, Appendix 1. A communication/ engagement plan is key to enabling to an effective engagement with stakeholders.
38. A review of one of the RDC grant schemes, the RDC CGS and the awards made through this scheme over a 12-year period, was carried out. The findings are then extrapolated to thinking about RDC grant schemes and three recommendations are made to the CCSG to take forward: articulated in paragraphs 26, 27 and 28 of this document.
39. Recommendation: Given that the RDC ground maintenance 10-year contract is nearing its end, the CCSG is urged to make a recommendation to Cabinet to set-up a Steering Group or Task and Finish Group to, use this opportunity to holistically review management of green spaces within Rother. Membership of this new review group/ panel will include representatives of environmental organisations operating across Rother who have the relevant environmental expertise that is required to successfully guide such a comprehensive review and make robust recommendations for the benefit of the Rother's natural environment and its communities.
40. Planned activities:

The planned activities are outlined in in the Gantt chart overleaf.

GANTT CHART – PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Date	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar2021	April 2021
Revised Rother Environment Strategy priorities: scoping/ review of evidence	Continuous activity					
Consultation responses - acknowledgements						
RDC Environment Strategy: Communication and engagement plan year 2021						
RDC Environment Strategy: Monitoring and evaluation framework						
Council reports/ Environmental and sustainability implications						
The Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) – RDC application submission						
Partnerships: joint working, governance, planned activities	Continuous activity					
Parish visits	Covid19 lockdown					
RDC Grounds maintenance review/ green spaces management review						
Local Plan review - evidence gathering and informal targeted engagement						
Next update meeting						

Implications

Financial Implications

41. The Environment and Policy Manger is awaiting to have access to the RDC financial system to allow management of budget.

Human Resources Implications

42. An additional resource may be sought to help deliver the Rother Environment Strategy, either though Apprenticeship Levy or the current government Kickstart scheme that offers short term placements for young people.

Consultation

43. RDC ran a public consultation from 25 February until 18 May 2020, seeking views on the draft Rother Environment Strategy.

Risk implications

44. The following primary risks which may influence the progression of the RDC Environment Strategy's delivery, and their categorisation have been identified (see Tables 1 and 2); based on risk probability and consequences in Table 3.

Table 1: Potential risks and their category.

Risks to successful completion of tasks:	Overall risk category
1. Access to and adequacy of data	ALARP - as low as reasonably practicable
2. Access to people e.g. restrictions due to Covid19 pandemic	Risk as low as reasonably practicable
3. Political pressures	Unacceptable risk
4. Time management	ALARP
5. Insufficient resources	Unacceptable risk
6. Appropriate governance	Unacceptable risk
7. Partnership working	Unacceptable risk

Table 2: Risk categorisation

Probability	5					
	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
		1	2	3	4	5
Consequence rank						

Risk acceptable

Risk as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP)

Unacceptable risk

Table 3: Definition of probability / consequence categories

Probability	Descriptor	Meaning	Risk N.
1	Rare	An extremely unlikely occurrence but theoretically possible	
2	Unlikely	The event is not expected to occur.	
3	Possible	The event might occur at some time.	4
4	Likely	The event will probably occur at some time.	1
5	Almost certain	The event will probably occur at least once.	2,3, 5, 6, 7
Consequence	Descriptor	Meaning	
1	Insignificant	Delay up to one week.	1,4
2	Minor	Delay up to one month.	1, 7
3	Major	Delay up to three months	2, 3,5, 7
4	Critical	Delay up to six months.	3, 5,6,7
5	Extreme	Delay of more than six months	3,5

RISK ISSUES LOG

Issue	Detail	Priority
No dedicated Strategic lead for green and blue infrastructure	No up-to-date strategy/ policy on the management of green spaces; no tree management strategy to drive a vision for green and blue infrastructure/ assets across the district.	Medium
No RDC sustainable/ active transport lead	This is a pertinent topic in a rural district such as Rother, with limited public transport links and lack of suitable cycle paths. RDC cannot rely on ESCC to drive this agenda forward satisfactorily.	Medium
RDC estate: No RDC dedicated energy efficiency/ carbon reduction specialist staff	The Environment and Policy Manager is currently covering this gap which is unsustainable long term. A new specialist staff could support production of a new RDC Asset Management Plan that would include carbon reduction and a heat decarbonisation plan ¹³ .	High
Lack of general resource for the Environment Strategy delivery	The Environment and Policy Manager does not have a team; instead, two members of staff are supporting this role, but these staff have other responsibilities and are often ad hoc pulled away to carry other tasks. It would be helpful to clarify their work objectives and clarify what resource is always available to the Environment and Policy Manager.	High
Timing and content of the RDC Environment Strategy / managing all external and internal stakeholders' expectations	Given that the most direct control and influence RDC has is for the priority area "environmentally friendly council", ideally these internally- focused activities would commence first. Only in subsequent years would the attention turn to the wider Rother district. Because the Environment Strategy was produced as one document – with both internally and externally facing objectives – and a public consultation was carried out and the RDC Environment Strategy was widely advertised, it precludes taking such a phased approach. Instead, this now means that unless there is a dedicated resource for staff engagement, the Environment and Policy Manager now must manage the expectations of external stakeholders instead. Meaning internal staff and Member engagement and activities are put on hold.	High

¹³ RDC already have and is complying with obligations under MEEs regulations:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-domestic-private-rented-property-minimum-energy-efficiency-standard-landlord-guidance>

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	Yes
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	Yes
Sustainability	Yes	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	Yes		

Chief Executive:	Malcolm Johnston
Report Contact Officer:	Kristina Sodomkova, Environment and Policy Manager
e-mail address:	kristina.sodomkova@rother.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Stakeholder maps, Figure 1, Figure 2 Appendix 2 – Summary of Completed Activities
Relevant previous Minutes:	CB20/20 C20/37
Background Papers:	-
Reference Documents:	See footnotes 1 - 13

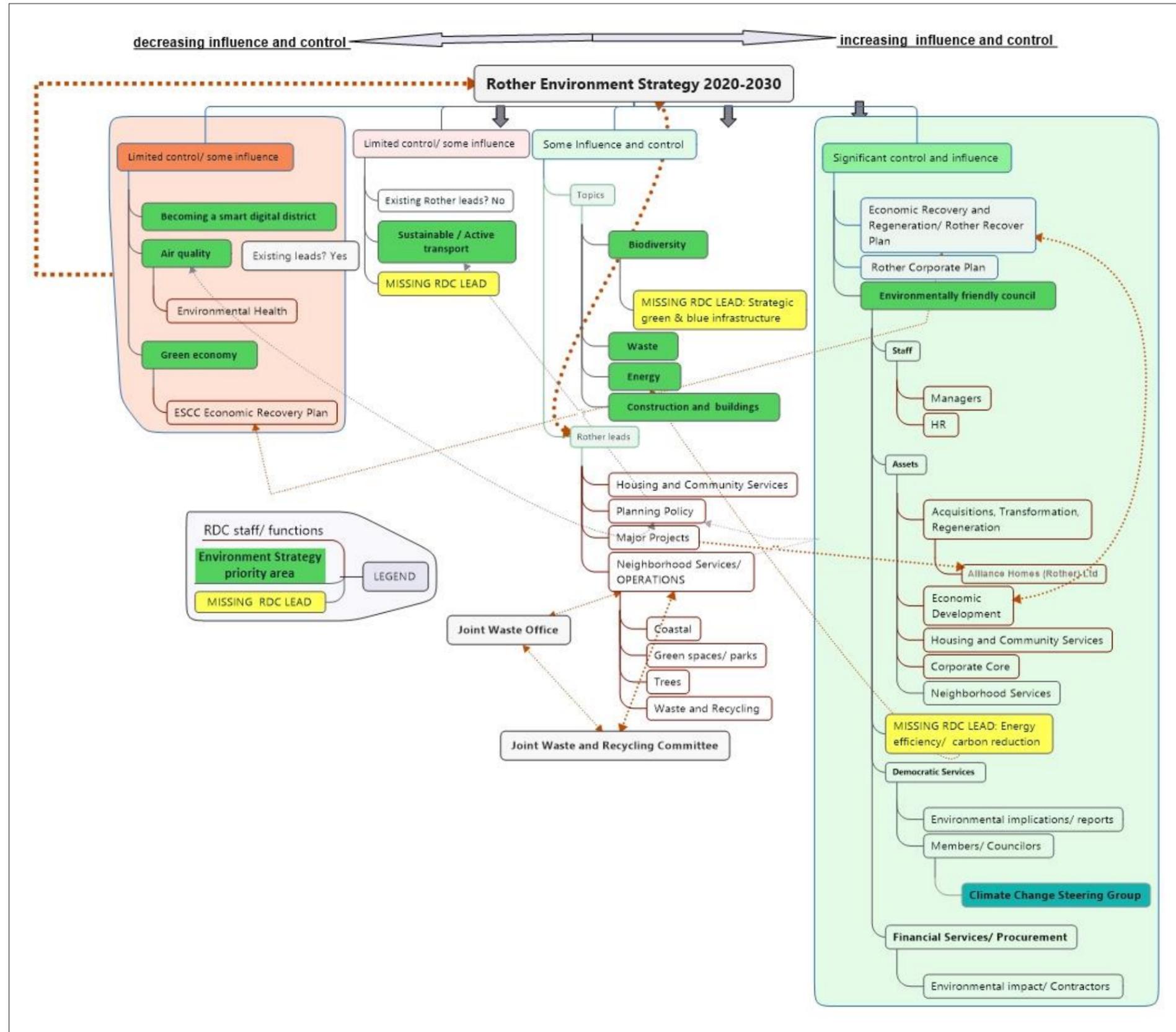


Figure 1 Rother Environment Strategy 2020-2030 (September 2020 version): priority areas by degree of control and influence and per RDC functions/staff. Gaps with missing leads are highlighted in yellow. Relationships: red lines denote strong relationships; the grey lines depict weaker relationship between components.

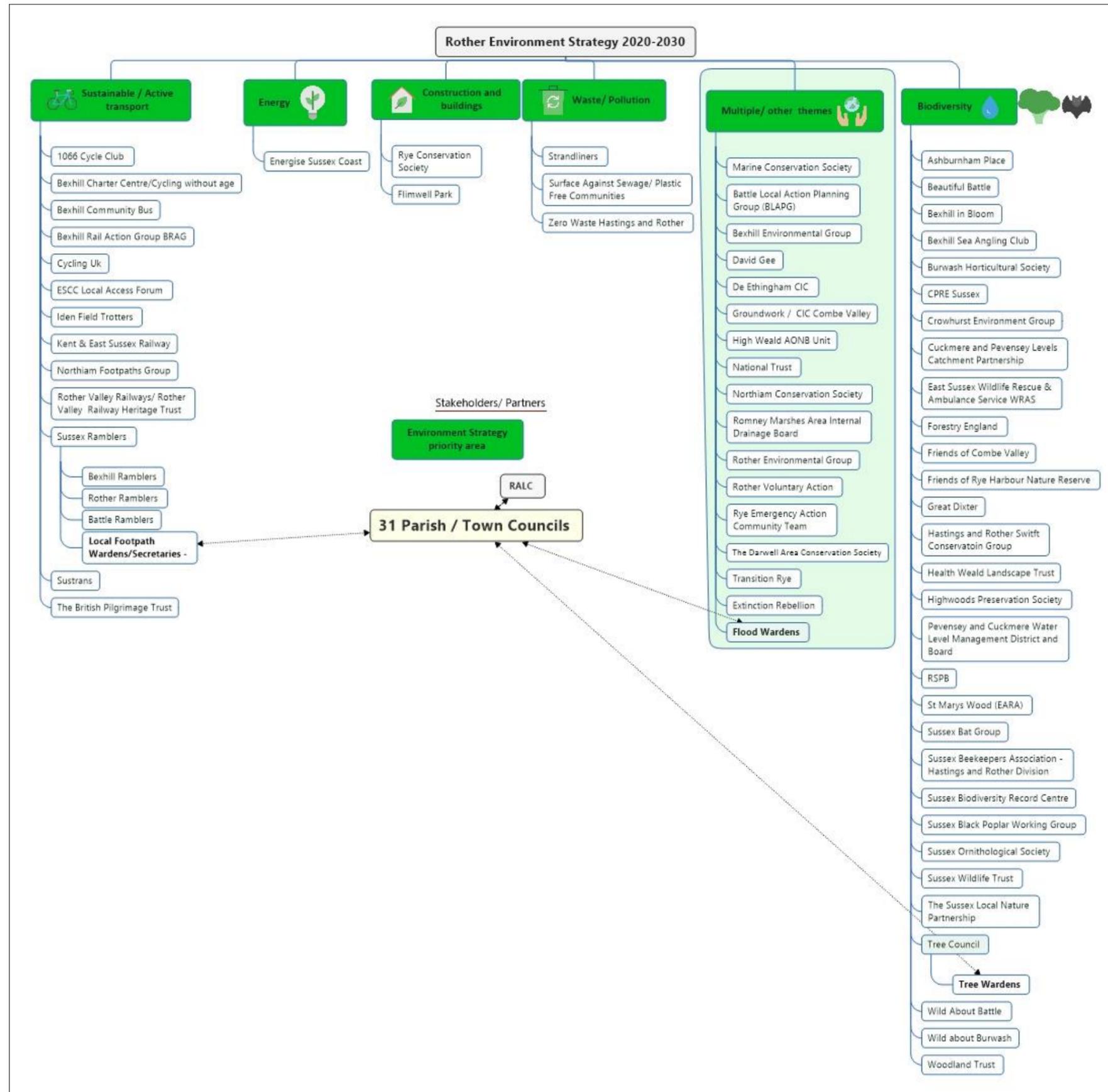


Figure 2 Rother Environment Strategy 2020-2030 (September 2020 version): key stakeholders plotted against the strategy's priority areas.

SUMMARY OF COMPLETED ACTIVITIES

Meetings and conferences attended

- 18 August Meeting Wealden Sustainability Co-ordinator/ Climate Change Officer
- 24 August 2020 Rother Economic Recovery Steering Group Meeting
- 4 September Climate change joint working - ESCC, Hastings, Wealden, Eastbourne, Lewes, and RDC officers
- 11 September a Battle walk with Cllr Field and Cllr Mrs Cook
- 21 September East Sussex Environment Board
- 24 September Forestry Commission/ TDAG online workshop: Environmental Land Management (ELM): Test and Trial
- 25 September Meeting Hastings Tackling Climate Change Programme Manager
- 29 September Hastings Borough Council online climate change workshop
- 6 October East Sussex Waste Resource Strategy Group online meeting
- 12 October Green Cities webinar: Making Places Greener - practical tools and insight / Town and Country Planning Association
- 15 October an introductory meeting: Marine Conservation Society, Strandliners, Hastings Plastic Free Communities Leader, RDC Neighbourhood Services
- Green Cities Webinar: Should communities have a right to green space? / Town and Country Planning Association
- 17 October – a tour of Winchelsea with Cllr Rev Norton
- 19 October Rural Rother Zoom community Network session/ RVA
- 20 October Hastings Country Park and Nature Reserve/ a tour by Groundwork South
- 21 October Rother Parish Conference CLIMATE CHANGE: What can local councils do?/ RALC
- 23 October Rother Joint Waste and Recycling Committee
- 29 October: Meeting Hastings Environment and Natural Resources Manager
- 3 November, meeting with Jason Lavender, High Weald AONB Director
- 6 November Climate change joint working - ESCC, Hastings, Wealden, Eastbourne, Lewes, and RDC officers

Site visits

- 16 September Highwoods SSI/ Highwoods Preservation Society
- 22 September Rye/ Rother Environmental Group
- 26 September cycle from Battle to Combe Valley Countryside Park/ 1066 Cycle Club
- 27 September community tree planting sites in Bexhill/ Bexhill Environment Group
- 29 September Camber Sands/ Strandlines
- 4 October Battle bridleways / cycle with 1066 Cycle Club
- 10 October ground preparation Bexhill Down/ Bexhill Environment Group

Parish visits

- Ashburnham & Penhurst Parish Council – 2 October 2020 walk/ car share
- Beckley Parish Council - 27 October 2020 car share
- Brightling Parish Council – 5 November 2020 / car share
- Dallington Parish Council – 26 October 2020 / car share
- Mountfield Parish Council – 26 October 2020 / car share
- Peasmarsch Parish Council – 29 September 2020 / train, walk, car share
- Salehurst & Robertsbridge Parish Council – 16 October 2020 / by train
- Sedlescombe Parish Council – 28 October 2020 / walk, car share

Consultation responses and reviews

- Combe Valley Countryside Park Community Interest Company: 5 year 'activation' and fundraising plan 2020-2025
- BIFFA service improvement plan (Contract Year 2) – presented at Joint Waste and Recycling Committee - Friday 23 October 2020 10.00 am
- Surfers Against Sewage: Plastic Free Communities schemes in East Sussex
- Rother Community grants review and recommendations: environmental projects
- Increasing garden waste subscribers in Rother – a document by Neighbourhood Services
- Rother Councillors/Members environmental engagement: a review and recommendations

Funding applications

- LGA Net Zero Innovation Programme – general waste collection in Bexhill town centre. Application submitted, unsuccessful.
- DEFRA Green Recovery Challenge Fund: commenting on a draft application by Groundwork South and The Friends of Combe Valley for delivering improvements at Combe Valley Countryside Park.
- The Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) – an application prepared on behalf of RDC, for its buildings/ estate. Coordination and information gathering on behalf of multiple RDC functions.

Rother District Council

Report to: Climate Change Steering Group

Date: 25 November 2020

Title: Rother District Council Grants Schemes – an Environmental Review

Report of: Dr Kristina Sodomkova, Environment and Policy Manager

Ward(s): All

Purpose of Report: Review how one Rother District Council’s (RDC) funding mechanism aligns with RDC’s declaration of a ‘Climate Emergency’ and its carbon neutrality commitment for Rother District by the target date of 2030; and the RDC Environment Strategy’s priorities.

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED:** That Members of the Climate Change Steering Group are requested to note the contents of the report and consider the recommendations as detailed at paragraphs 12 and 13 and in the Conclusions section.

1. A review was completed of one of the Rother District Council (RDC) funding mechanisms as one of the activities under the new Rother Environment Strategy, adopted in September 2020¹. This is in recognition that RDC can directly influence positive environmental change within the district through its funding mechanisms.
2. The Rother Environment Strategy sets out a commitment to working with partners to meet its goals. Such collaborative working with partners can be aided by having well-designed funding mechanisms in place.
3. The funding mechanism examined was the RDC Community Grants Scheme (CGS) and the awards made through this scheme over a 12-year period. The purpose of the RDC CGS is currently specified as to support: 1) the development of community facilities, 2) community activities and 3) “sustainable local action”². The word “sustainable”, according to a PDF guidance document (undated, unknown internal RDC version), is defined as “i.e. can operate in the longer term”; therefore, not explicitly meaning environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, the PDF guidance document for the scheme lists, under Section 2 Type of Projects, as those proposals eligible: Environmental improvements in towns or villages; community transport; and acquisition of public open spaces or woodland for conservation - as explicit examples of activities that meet criteria.

¹ View the published document on RDC’s website: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/strategies-policies-and-plans/environment-strategy/>

² Website info: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/benefits-grants-and-funding/community-grants-scheme/>

4. Summary of Findings

- Number of grants by cause: environmental cause ranked fourth out of 10 broad causes categories identified – with sport type of proposals receiving most grants, followed by construction and equipment bids.
- In total there were 10 grants for environmental causes awarded over the 12-year funding period of 2009 to 2021³. In contrast, 59 grants were awarded in sport and 37 in construction categories respectively.
- 10 grants for environmental causes awarded were given to 10 different entities: seven of these were parish councils or groups associated with parish councils. Only three recipients are voluntary groups. One of these 10 projects was delivered in a form of a partnership between multiple groups.
- Grants for environmental causes received only 7% of the £1,216,418.92 awarded within that period of 2009 to 2021 – worth £79,633.50.
- In contrast, 49% = £596,645.92 were awarded to projects in sport category and 26% = £316,754.14 to projects in construction category.
- Only one grant within the 12-year period was awarded to a tree planting project that materialised: made in September 2020 to the Bexhill Environmental Group.

Review

5. The analysis scrutinised grants awarded in the period of 2009 to 2021 as part of the RDC CGS activities. The information originally held by RDC does not include a category/ cause information. This information was added in, as part of the analysis, where all grants awarded within the set period were reviewed and then assigned to 10 broad causes/ categories; each project to a single category. Projects with at least partially perceived environmental cause were categorised as “environmental” cause. The categorisation was done by one RDC officer and then reviewed by further two RDC officers, to ensure its robustness whilst recognising subjectivity of the exercise.
6. **Table 1 shows how many grants were awarded by a cause: environmental cause ranked fourth out of 10 broad causes categories identified** – with sport type of proposals receiving most grants, followed by construction and equipment bids.

Table 1: RDC CGS awards 2009-2021: an overview.

N	Grant cause	No. of Grants awarded	Amount awarded in £
1	Sport	59	596,645.92
2	Construction	37	316,754.14
3	Equipment	11	30,612.00
4	Environmental	10	79,633.50
5	Activities	10	46,798.00
6	Transport	9	21,770.00
7	Arts	8	75,307.00
8	Events	8	41,145.36
9	Furnishings/ Furniture	5	7,254.00

³ The awarding period runs per financial, not calendar year. Hence the last award made, included in this review, is for period 2020/2021.

10	Young Pioneers	1	499.00
		Total	1,216,418.92

7. Some projects fall into multiple categories. For example, the Battle Health Pathway project is about: providing connectivity and improving access to the recreation ground for the residents of Battle (active/ sustainable transport); creating nature gardens (biodiversity); and a cycle skills area provision (sport).⁴ Subsequently, the project is included in the “environmental” category and not included in the other categories, for the purpose of this review.

8. Note that although there were nine transport-related grants; these accounted for relatively small awards in £ in proportion to the number of bids – only one award each was for £10, £5k, and £2.5ks respectively; with the remaining six awards below £2.5k. None of the projects awarded under this category were explicitly about promoting active travel – walking and cycling - e.g. by improving an existing or building a new pathway or cycleway and/ or active travel facilities. The awards went towards: a purchase of a second hand vehicle (3 awards), printing leaflets (2 awards), a purchase of a minibus (1 award), purchase of a trailer (1 award), a bus shelter installation (1 award), installing traffic calming gateway (1 award). Upon a review of the awards under this category, showing none had an overt environmental driver and without knowing the environmental credentials of the goods purchased, the decision was made to keep these projects in a separate “transport” category and not to report these awards as part of the “environmental cause” category.

9. Figure 1 shows the percentage of the money awarded in RDC CGS to environmental causes within the awarding period 2009 to 2021. **Grants for environmental causes received only 7% of the £1,216,418.92 awarded within that period – worth £79,633.50.** The environmental cause ranked third out of 10 broad categories: with sport category receiving nearly half of all the funding handed out (49%); followed by construction type of projects (26%).

⁴ Project’s website <http://battlehealthpathway.co.uk/>

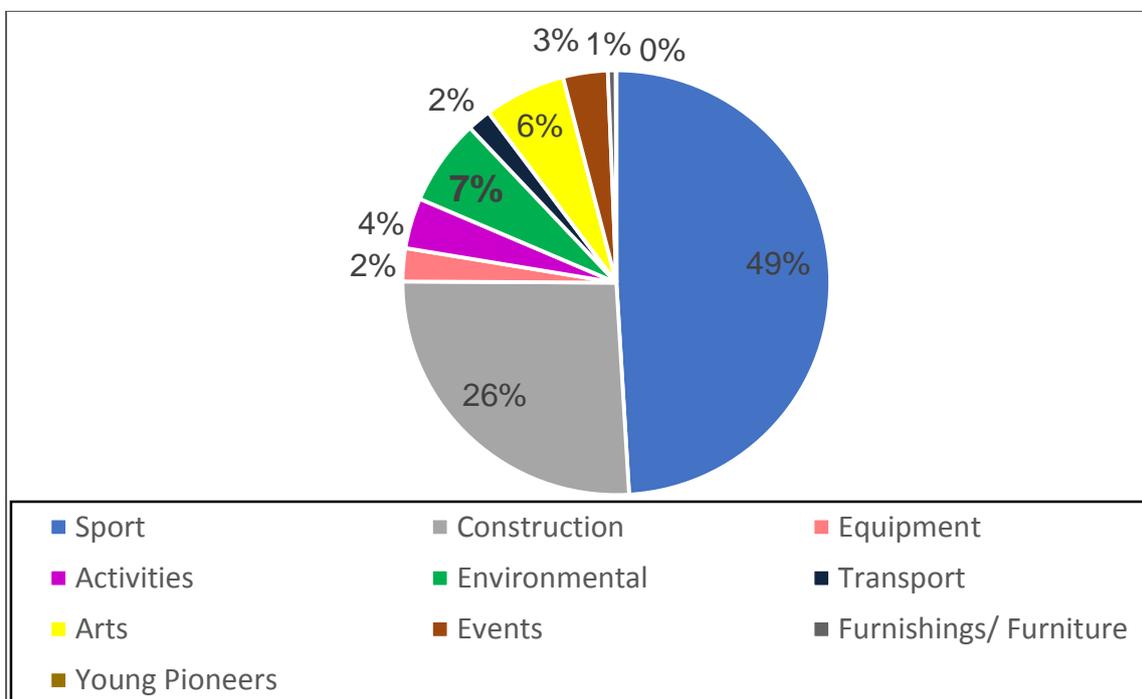


Figure 1: RDC CGS awards 2009-2021: Awards per different causes in %.

10. In total there were 10 grants for environmental causes awarded over the 12-year awarding period of 2009 to 2021. Three largest bids for environmental causes are shown in Table 2 – there were none in the first 6-year period 2009 to 2015.

Table 2: RDC CGS awards for environmental causes 2009-2021: 3 of the largest awards in £.

YEAR	APPLICANT	DESCRIPTION	AREA	AWARD AMOUNT IN £
2015/16	Camber Parish Council	Enhance existing Jubilee Green by redeveloping/redesigning into community garden space	CAMBER	30,000.00
2018/19	Battle Local Action Planning Group	Pump-prime healthy walk/cycle pathway at Battle Recreation Ground	BATTLE	30,000.00
2013/14	Brightling Village Hall Management Committee	Insulation and heating for elderly and very young	BRIGHTLING	5,000.00

11. Table 3 shows the **applicants** for the 10 awarded environmental grants over the 12-year awarding period of 2009 to 2021. Seven of the grant recipients were parish councils or groups associated with parish councils. Only three recipients are voluntary groups within the Rother district; awarded only in the last two years. Only one project was delivered as a partnership between multiple groups.

Table 3: RDC CGS awards 2009-2021: detailed information about awards for environmental causes. Recipients = voluntary groups highlighted in green colour. P = denotes a partnership project.

Year	Grant Scheme	Applicant	Project Description	Date confirmed	Amount awarded
2009/10	Medium	Pett Parish Council	Community allotments	30.03.10	2,784.00
2009/10	Medium	Robertsbridge Community Association	Community allotments	17.03.10	1,000.00
2013/14	Medium	Brightling Village Hall Management Committee	Insulation and heating for elderly and very young	10.09.13	5,000.00
2015/16	Large	Camber Parish Council	Enhance existing Jubilee Green by redeveloping/redesigning into community garden space	17.03.16	30,000.00
2015/16	Medium	Hurst Green Village Hall	Replace original single glazed windows causing loss of heating	17.03.16	3,500.00
2015/16	Medium	Whatlington Village Hall	Solar panel installations	13.08.15	4,850.00
2018/19	Large	Battle Local Action Planning Group P	Pump-prime healthy walk/cycle pathway at Battle Recreation Ground	25.03.19	30,000.00
2019/20	Small	Peasmarsh Memorial Hall Management Committee	Upgrade and enhance hot water capabilities at the hall	24.04.19	500.00
2019/20	Small	St Mary's Wood (EARA) Ltd	Purchase of power scythe	08.10.19	499.50
2020/21	Medium	Bexhill Environmental Group	Tree planting on Bexhill Downs	15.09.20	1,500.00

Recommendations

12. Based on the review carried out of one RDC grant scheme and its results, the following recommendations are being put forward for consideration:
- 1) **Instigate a comprehensive review all funding schemes within the Rother District and their criteria; in consultation with other funders and neighbouring local authorities.**

Has the review of the RDC CGS awards given us the confidence that the scheme reflects RDC's commitments to carbon neutrality for Rother District by the target date of 2030 and the vision set out in the new Rother Environment Strategy?

The answer is: no, it has not. The RDC CGS has not been very successful to date in driving the environmental agenda. Its support has been marginal, with only 7% of the total £1,216,418.92 awarded to environmental enhancements in a 12-year period. E.g. the awards partially supported only one small tree planting project that is progressing and only one new active travel/cycleway within one parish/town in the district in those 12 years.

It could be argued this is because RDC CGS is aimed at community groups; it is not a funding mechanism set up to have specifically a strong environmental focus.

This may have been the case 12 years ago, when RDC CGS was originally set up. Times have moved on; it is now widely accepted that an urgent action is required by all to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it. In recognition of the gravity of the situation. RDC has now declared a 'Climate Emergency' and set its carbon neutrality commitment for Rother District by the target date of 2030; and adopted a new environment Strategy's with a vision and key priority areas. It is paramount that these commitments are now reflected in all RDC activities. Recalibrating RDC funding mechanisms accordingly is critical, given this is one of the few areas where RDC has a direct control and influence on what materialises within the district.

To make an informed decision about whether the RDC CGS ought to be applied in the future as a key funding mechanism through which funding for environmental projects within Rother is channelled, all existing funding mechanisms RDC and their criteria will have to be re-examined, including the RDC Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL - see Section 2, below). For example, it could be argued that sport related activities should be awarded through other means, e.g. via Active Rother; not via the RDC CGS route.

A comprehensive review would ideally consult other funders (e.g. Lund Trust⁵) on how to best proceed, to achieve maximum environmental impact and wide-ranging benefits. Discussions would be initiated with neighbouring local authorities and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and the Environment East Sussex Board e.g. to examine funding for schemes crossing boundaries; such as district boundaries. Furthermore, whether county-wide funding could be made available for larger schemes, as part of the Environment Strategy for East Sussex⁶ commitments.

Being mindful of projected and continued budgetary constraints, new funding avenues may be explored as part of the review: e.g. setting up a local lottery scheme like the one in Eastbourne⁷. Such an all-encompassing review will rely on input from grant making expertise.

RDC could follow the example of other authorities, such as the Cornwall Council that has introduced other funding mechanisms to support the environmental agenda: Carbon Neutral Cornwall Fund⁸ (up to £4k for communities, not-for-profit and for-profit organisations to reduce carbon administered through the fundraising platform Crowdfunder); Town and Parish Council and Community Group Fund (up to £2k for councils, communities, and partnerships to develop

⁵ Link: <https://lundtrust.org.uk/>

⁶ Link: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/priorities/whatawearedoing/>

⁷ Link: <https://www.eastbournelocalottery.co.uk/>

⁸ Link: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/funds/carbon-neutral-cornwall>

plans, feasibility studies and baseline surveys)⁹; Forest for Cornwall Fund (up to £5k for non-for-profit group to increase canopy cover across Cornwall)¹⁰. Examples from other local authorities and their funding mechanisms for environmental causes could be researched as part of a comprehensive review that is put forward as an action in this report.

2) **Instigate discussions with the RDC CIL Steering Group**

The RDC Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a form of a developer contribution which can be levied by local authorities on new development in their area; to provide infrastructure to support the development and mitigate the impact of development. RDC CIL is thus another funding mechanism RDC has in place and another avenue for directly influencing activities within the district.

CIL monies are to be spent on identified strategic infrastructure needs. It would be helpful to clarify how are the strategic infrastructure needs within Rother district nominated and how the RDC CIL funding allocation reflect RDC's commitments to carbon neutrality for Rother District by the target date of 2030, made in RDC's declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' and articulated within the new Rother Environment Strategy.

For example, using the Cornwall Council example again, the local authority has changed the CIL criteria to be focused solely on climate change, with £500,000 now available for projects: "The money awarded from the CIL Fund is for infrastructure projects that will help communities achieve low carbon living."¹¹

Whilst looking at the proposed allocation of the strategic portion of CIL discussed during the RDC CIL Steering Group meeting on 5 October, the environmental emphasis appears less prominent, quoting from the meeting notes: ¹²

1. *CIL funds be used primarily to provide infrastructure improvements to directly offset the impact of adjacent development and improve the overall infrastructure of the District.*
2. *To prioritise improvement or long-term maintenance of existing strategic Rother District Council (RDC) owned public realm assets. To prioritise high speed and ultra-fast broadband in towns, villages and rural areas prioritising areas with current speeds below 20Mbs download. To prioritise traffic calming and speed reduction in*

⁹ Link: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news-room/media-releases/news-from-2020/news-from-september-2020/council-teams-up-with-crowdfunder-to-launch-climate-emergency-community-funds/>

¹⁰ Link: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/funds/forest-for-cornwall>

¹¹ Source: LGA bulletin November 2020. Info on Cornwall Council website info: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/adopted-plans/community-infrastructure-levy-cil/cil-fund/>

¹² 5th October 2020 meeting minutes: Link: <https://rother.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=251&MId=576&Ver=4>

villages and the use of cycle and walking infrastructure in both towns and villages.

The RDC CIL Steering Group.¹³ should not make decisions on suitable infrastructure and funding allocation in isolation. It must consider RDC's commitments to carbon neutrality for Rother District by the target date of 2030, made in RDC's declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' and articulated within the new Rother Environment Strategy. It must seek expertise from outside of the group, e.g. grant making expertise, and consult wider RDC and the RDC Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) on any proposals.

13. If a further review concludes that the RDC CGS still ought to be used in the future as a funding mechanism for funding environmental enhancements in Rother District, make the following changes to the current scheme:

3) **Purpose and measurable targets:** The purposes of the RDC CGS will be reviewed, in recognition of RDC's commitment to the climate emergency agenda and in alignment with its new Environment Strategy adopted in September 2020.

Options:

- a) Assign a clear measurable target of what percentage is to be awarded each year to projects with explicitly environmental causes; or
- b) Assign a clear measurable target of how much monies in £ are to be awarded each year to projects with explicitly environmental cause; or
- c) Specify how many projects with explicitly environmental causes are to be awarded each year; or
- d) Change the scheme into an environmental only RDC CGS.

4) **Revise the eligibility criteria.** The current eligibility criteria are skewed toward awarding one-off activities and one of capital funding investments. "Funding to continue projects and services already established" is not eligible under the RDC CGS; nor are "feasibility studies", without any definition offered. Whilst the success of many environmental schemes relies on continuous upkeep and maintenance – and these are currently excluded under the RDC CGS. Feasibility studies and baseline surveys are often a critical starting point for environmental projects; whilst recurrent surveys and monitoring allow to assess progress over time. Such activities are currently excluded as ineligible under the RDC CGS. To promote collaborative working, the eligibility criteria are to **explicitly encourage partnerships** to apply for funding, where at least one partner meets the eligibility criteria.

5) Where an application is made for the RDC CGS that is not for an explicitly an environmental cause but, for example, for a new heating system or furnishing – **an environmental impact assessment** will be required, showing how for the items being purchased minimising

¹³ Link: <https://rother.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=251&Year=0>

environmental impact has been considered: e.g. opting for energy or water efficient products; or installation of permeable, as opposed to impermeable surfacing to slow run-off and reduce risk of flooding; or using a locally sourced product; prioritising using recycled materials or a reused second-hand product e.g. furniture.

- 6) **Awarding panel to include environmental experts** in a position to make informed decisions about technical aspects of the proposals submitted: to evaluate the planned approach and any purported environmental benefits; review any environmental impact assessments submitted; and evaluate the benefits delivered after the scheme's completion. This measure will act as a safeguard, to ensure that unsuitable and/or poorly scoped and planned proposals are not awarded funding, thus causing potentially more environmental harm than benefit long-term.
- 7) The RDC CGS could play an active role in raising environmental awareness with communities who may wish to carry out environmental projects but have no or only limited knowledge and experience; through **a partner mentor scheme**. Requesting that applicants for environmental projects have a nominated mentor, a partner organisation that will act as their sounding board and provide advice on a successful design and implementation of a scheme. The mentor's input could be costed into the project. Such emphasis on joint learning, knowledge sharing and capacity building fits with the partnership approach advocated in the new RDC Environment Strategy. Such approach has the potential to avoid unnecessary pitfalls and deliver projects on time and cost-effectively.
- 8) After the purpose of the RDC CGS is revised: **update all guidance material**. For example, the current PDF guidance document (undated, unknown version) states "We especially welcome applications that support the broad objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan". References to the new RDC Environment Strategy and climate emergency declarations are missing – also on the scheme's RDC webpage: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/benefits-grants-and-funding/community-grants-scheme/when-can-i-apply/types-of-eligible-projects/before-you-start/the-grants-assessment-process/> The update will include a glossary e.g. a definition of what constitutes "an environmental cause" and what does not.
- 9) **Promoting the RDC CGS specifically to environmental groups within Rother District** to expand the range of applicants, given to date only three out of 10 recipients of funding for environmental projects are voluntary groups. Review how the scheme is currently advertised to both parishes and local voluntary and environmental groups; identify any barriers to entry; and what support these groups require to submit a proposal and deliver a scheme on the ground, as part of capacity building. This suggestion fits within the Rother Environment Strategy's commitment to working with partners.

Conclusion

14. It is paramount that the commitments to carbon neutrality for Rother District by the target date of 2030, made in RDC's 2019 declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' and articulated within the new Rother Environment Strategy, adopted in September this year, permeate all the council's activities. Through its funding mechanisms, RDC has the authority to drive and influence positive environmental change within the district. Therefore, it is important the opportunity is harnessed to its full potential by reviewing these funding arrangements now. A review of all the RDC grant making schemes is timely; it may lead to cost-saving opportunities identified e.g. with regards to administration of different schemes as well as ensuring that any funding mechanisms in place align with the RDC's corporate objectives and are designed to be fit for purpose.
15. The Rother Environment Strategy sets out a commitment to working with partners to meet its goals in recognition that collaborative working is critical to the successful delivery of the new Rother Environment Strategy. The funding mechanisms in place both by the RDC and within RDC district are instrumental for capacity building: nurturing and growing such collaborative approach with partners.
16. As a first step, it is critical for the CCSG to initiate a dialogue with the RDC CIL Steering Group as soon as possible and influence how RDC CIL funding is allocated, in alignment with RDC's commitments set out within its Environment Strategy.¹⁴ The next meeting of the CIL Steering Group is currently scheduled for 8 February 2020 and it looks as a draft Infrastructure Funding Statement¹⁵ will be discussed, which could include the RDC CIL spending protocol, setting out the process that the Council will undertake for allocating CIL receipts.¹⁶ RDC Democratic Services confirm that any suggestions for change would need to be made through Cabinet at a meeting on 11 January 2021 and then by Cabinet onto CIL Steering Group – there is no formal way for the CCSG to talk direct to the RDC CIL Steering Group.
17. As a second immediate step, whilst such a comprehensive review of all RDC funding mechanisms is instigated, it is proposed that concurrently, as a temporary measure, changes are made now to the RDC CGS, as explicated in Recommendations/ Section 10, so they can take place from the new financial year, starting in April 2021. If not, the opportunity will be lost for another 12 months for the RDC CGS to reflect RDC's commitments made in RDC's 2019 declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' and articulated within the new Rother Environment Strategy, adopted in September this year. The proposed changes will have to be submitted through Cabinet at one of these year 2021 meetings: 8 February; 1 March or 29 March.

¹⁴ Link to the RDC Environment Strategy document: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/strategies-policies-and-plans/environment-strategy/>

¹⁵ 5th October 2020 meeting minutes:

<https://rother.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=251&MId=576&Ver=4>

¹⁶ Another form of developer contribution is S106 – it would be useful at some point in the future to understand how this funding has contributed to the delivery of priorities set out within the RDC Environment Strategy.

18. Thirdly, a wide RDC support is sought for a comprehensive review of all RDC funding schemes and their criteria, in consultation with other funders and neighbouring local authorities. With the outlook to commence such a review very soon in the new year 2021.

Implications

Financial Implications

19. The CCSG will consider any financial implications associated with proposed changes to the RDC CGS. The RDC CIL Steering Group will consider any financial implications associated with changes that may be required to the Community Infrastructure Levy's funding allocation. RDC will consider any financial implications to changes to all its funding mechanisms.

Legal Implications

20. If required, Legal Services will be consulted on any proposed changes to the RDC CGS and other RDC funding schemes.

Human Resources Implications

21. A comprehensive review of all funding schemes within the Rother District and their criteria will rely on input from grant making expertise that will have to be sourced externally if RDC does not have such expertise in-house. A decision will have to be made who leads on such a comprehensive review. An initial discussion with other local authorities and partners would be helpful to have, to establish the right approach.

Other Implications

- Environmental:
22. There is a real potential to make a difference and drive the climate emergency and climate change agenda, through RDC's funding mechanisms. This review has been prepared, to ensure the opportunity is fully recognised and harnessed, aiding RDC and Rother district achieve their goals, specified within the new RDC Environment Strategy.
23. Think of the environment and of reducing your environmental impact: Please do not print documents unless necessary.
24. The RDC Environmental and Policy Manager pledges not to have any Member meetings and papers printed.
- Consultation:
25. This report posits that a dialogue ensues between the CCSG and the RDC CIL Steering Group specifically on how the RDC climate emergency commitments are reflected in the identified strategic infrastructure needs and RDC CIL funding allocation. A consultative approach to a thorough review of all RDC's funding mechanisms is recommended.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	Yes
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	-	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	-		

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Appendices:	-
Relevant previous Minutes:	-
Background Papers:	-
Reference Documents:	See footnotes 1- 16
