

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	21 November 2022
Title:	Progress on the Environment Strategy (2020)
Report of:	Ben Hook, Director – Place and Climate Change
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To update Members on progress of implementation of the Council's Environment Strategy.
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the progress made against the Environment Strategy (2020) be noted.

Introduction

1. On 16 September 2019, full Council passed a motion declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and made a carbon neutrality commitment for Rother District Council (RDC) with a target date of 2030. The Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) has been established by Cabinet to develop, plan, and initiate the steps that the Council will need to take to meet this highly ambitious target. The Environment Strategy (ES) was developed in 2019 and subsequently adopted on 21 September 2020. The ES and its action plan are delivered across all the Council's service areas.
2. This report is intended to update Members on progress made since the last report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 April 2022.

Overview of last 6 months activities

Staff resources

3. Since the previous report, two new staff members have joined to lead our work on carbon reduction and the ES. Elize Manning joined us in April 2022 as Projects Officer – Environment; her role is to develop and deliver projects that aim to reduce the carbon footprint of both the Council and the wider district.
4. Lucie Bolton joined us in October as the Environment Strategy Officer and is responsible for reviewing and updating our strategic approach to carbon reduction and the environment.

Projects

Baselining and Monitoring our Annual Emissions

5. We have adopted the LGA Green House Gas (GHG) Accounting Tool for Local Authorities to track our annual emission of tonnes of Carbon dioxide (tCO₂e) and other GHGs, starting from a baseline year of April 2019 – March 2020.

6. The tool categorises emissions into three distinct Scopes;
 - Scope 1: Emissions released as a direct result of organisational activity.
This includes our consumption of gas for heating and fuel consumed by our fleet vehicles.
 - Scope 2: Emissions released as an indirect consumption of an energy commodity.
This includes our purchased grid electricity.
 - Scope 3: All other indirect emissions other than electricity, as well as emissions from operations that have been outsourced.
This includes water supply and waste, staff business travel and commuting, and all emissions by providers of our statutory services. Work is ongoing to identify our Scope 3 emission sources and implement methods to capture the required data. It is estimated Scope 3 emissions make up 60% - 80% of a Local Authority's total emissions.
7. Our Scope 1 and 2 emissions since 2019/20 are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Rother District Council annual GHG emissions

Scope	Type	2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
		Emissions (tCO2e)	Percentage of Total	Emissions (tCO2e)	Percentage of Total	Emissions (tCO2e)	Percentage of Total
Scope 1	Heating	57.61	21.6%	66.68	33.6%	74.97	34.29%
	Fleet	9.55	3.6%	8.71	4.4%	8.77	4.01%
Scope 2	Electricity	199.42	74.8%	123.07	62%	134.92	61.70%
Total		266.58	100%	198.46	100%	218.66	100%

8. Emissions generated by the Town Hall made up 39% of total emissions in the baseline year 2019/20.
9. Going forward, it is intended our annual emissions will be routinely published in line with the developing Climate Action Communications and Engagement Plan.

Village Halls Energy Project

10. The Village Halls Energy Project, led by the Projects Officer – Environment, aims to reduce the carbon footprints of Village and Community Halls across Rother through energy efficiency measures, switching to low carbon energy systems and installing renewables. £500k of project funding was approved by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) panel in July 2022 from the Climate Emergency Bonus fund.
11. 40 halls have expressed an interest in taking part, which will begin with a bespoke Net Zero plan developed for each site to identify appropriate measures and estimate costs. A prioritisation process will follow to allocate funds to the proposals that will have the greatest impact on emissions. The intended project completion date is May 2024.

Electric vehicle charging points in Council owned car parks

12. On 28 March 2022, Council approved procurement of a provider to complete feasibility studies to install charging points at nil capital cost to the Council. Site surveys have since been undertaken by the provider and we are awaiting the

outcome of detailed feasibility studies, to include details of infrastructure capability from UKPN. Once the feasibility studies are complete, an application for the funding of equipment and installations will be made.

13. Subject to favourable feasibility reports and successful funding, the provider is confident that installation at the priority car parks of De La Warr Bexhill, Bedford Place Rye and Mount Street Battle will be complete by spring 2023.

Couch to Carbon Zero

14. We are the first local authority to commit to the Couch to Carbon Zero Sprint. All employees and Members have been invited to join the sprint, which involves receiving one email a day for ten days, featuring advice on small lifestyle changes that will have a big impact on the planet.
15. To incentivise participation, a prize draw is being offered with an opportunity to win a £150 voucher to a local green Michelin star restaurant, or one of two luxury food hampers.
16. Our sprint is running from 7 to 18 November, in line with the annual UN Climate Change conference, COP27, in Egypt. The winner of the prize draw will be announced on 25 November.
17. We are also inviting Rother Parish Councillors, residents and businesses to join us. Information has been emailed to clerks and included in the MyAlerts / My Business Alerts emails, as well as social media posts and a news article on our website. (No prize draw is being offered for external participants).

Green Team

18. The Green Team was re-launched in June 2022, chaired by the Projects Officer (Environment) and meets every 4 – 6 weeks. Membership currently comprises of 16 employees from a cross section of Council departments.
19. Projects that have been prioritised for immediate action by the Green Team include improving recycling rates at Town Hall and reducing emissions from staff commuting.

Hydro-treated Vegetable Oil (HVO) Waste collection fuel trial

20. Waste collection and street cleansing services generate carbon emissions through the operation and consequently the fuel consumption of the vehicles which are required to deliver these services. Changing the fuel used by the vehicles from diesel to hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) offers an immediate reduction in the carbon being generated and the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee has recommended that each partner council consider the implications of funding HVO in 2023/24. Minute JWRC 462022 (b) refers.
21. This recommendation follows a lengthy period of work by the Joint Waste Climate Change Working Group to consider short- and longer-term options to minimise carbon emissions. The principles for an agreement aligned with the Joint Waste Contract to enable use of HVO have been agreed with Biffa and the councils are liable to fund the cost differential between diesel and HVO fuel. While the cost per litre of both fuels' changes regularly in response to external

economic and market forces, fuel consumption can be more directly linked to distance travelled and it is estimated that circa 1million litres of fuel per annum are required across the whole partnership.

22. As a guideline, in the Rother District area, circa 336,000 litres of fuel is required to operate the existing fleet and allowing a 64.8pence differential concludes that an estimated additional annual budget of £218,000 will enable use of HVO and secure an immediate reduction in carbon emission of up to/approximately 90%.
23. It is important to be aware that a single fuel tank, located at the St Leonards depot, supplies the vehicles used to operate in both the Hastings and Rother areas. To enable the change to HVO will therefore require both Hastings and Rother Councils to accept the terms of the agreement in due course.
24. The detailed business case, including carbon reduction benefits, continues to be developed and will be considered by the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee in January 2023. It is intended for the final terms of the Agreement to secure use of HVO fuel as the alternative to diesel to be approved by the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee in January 2023, with a view to be contractually enabled and operationally implemented by April 2023.
25. A full and detailed report will be presented to Cabinet in due course for their consideration.

Strategy Review and Update

26. Climate science and climate action have progressed significantly in the last two years. The ES will be reviewed and updated considering these advancements. The revised strategy will be evidenced-based and Rother specific. As a coastal and rural community, the Strategy will reflect the unique challenges Rother faces.
27. A Climate Action Plan with measurable deliverables will be developed to support the ES, providing clear, timely direction for staff, Members and stakeholders.

Conclusion

28. Delivery of the ES and action plan has significantly improved over the last six months. There is a renewed focus within the CCSG which is now meeting monthly and driving the policy agenda of the Council's climate change ambitions. A full summary of the projects being reviewed by the Climate Change Steering Group can be found at Appendix A. The new staff resourcing has made a significant impact on the ability of the Council to deliver against its aims.
29. The current adopted ES is outdated and the strategic ambitions lack clarity of focus. As such, a full review and rewrite of the strategy is required with a view to have a fully adopted revision by December 2023.

Environmental implications

30. This report is about delivery progress against a key strategic document, Rother's Environment Strategy (2020).

Financial Implications

31. The cost of the proposals set out in paragraph 22 indicate an additional budget requirement of £218,000 per annum, which would currently be unfunded. If Members wish to accept these proposals, officers will need to identify funding from elsewhere within the base budget. This may well result in a cut in other service areas. Any such changes will need to be agreed with the Chief Finance Officer and require Member approval.

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

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Appendices:	A - CCSG Project Summary
Relevant previous Minutes:	N/A
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None