

Report for: Environment Policy Development Group

Date of Meeting:	12 March 2024
Subject:	Climate and Sustainability Update
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Natasha Bradshaw - Cabinet Member for Climate Change.
Responsible Officer:	Jason Ball - Climate and Sustainability Specialist. Paul Deal - Corporate Manager for Finance, Property and Climate Change.
Exempt:	None which are Exempt from publication under paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
Wards Affected:	All.
Enclosures:	None.

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To receive an update on the Climate and Sustainability Programme and the Climate Action Plan (CAP).

Recommendation(s):

- 1. That the Environment Policy Development Group (PDG) notes and accepts this report as an update on the Council's Climate and Sustainability Programme, and progress on its response to the Climate Emergency including the Climate Action Plan (CAP).**
- 2. That the Environment PDG notes that the Council's Planning Policy Advisory Group will be engaged with ongoing work for the new Local Plan for Mid Devon throughout the plan making programme.**

3. That the Environment PDG notes the Cabinet report and the requirements on the Council to act in relation to the Biodiversity Duty.

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan places a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability matters woven into all aspects of its work, from procurement to promoting nature recovery. The Climate and Sustainability (C&S) Specialist leads development of the Council's Climate and Sustainability Programme, working inclusively with all colleagues and Councillors, particularly the Corporate Manager for Finance, Property and Climate Change; and the Cabinet Member for Climate Change.

1.2 The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and aims to be climate neutral by 2030. The term 'climate neutrality' describes a balance achieved, for any given period, for carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released into or removed from the atmosphere; related to the actions taken by organisations, businesses or individuals. The goal of climate neutrality is to achieve a net zero climate impact.

1.3 The Council's work to address the climate change crisis aligns with the climate emergency declaration across Devon, and the Devon Carbon Plan. Council actions with regard to **climate mitigation** (reducing greenhouse emissions) and **climate adaptation** (resilience to climate change risks) can be split into two work streams:

- an internal organisational / corporate focus for the Council;
- efforts to enable and facilitate actions across Mid Devon communities.

1.4 Therefore this report is divided into **corporate** and **community** items (some overlap is possible). Clearly the Council can monitor and manage matters related to our own assets and operations to a significant degree. For the wider agenda linked to the whole Mid Devon area, we will work as a partner with local businesses, organisations, community groups and residents.

1.5 This report emphasises activity and progress updates for brevity. For background details, please refer to previous reports, all [available online](#).

2.0 Performance

2.1 Aims, Priorities and Performance Indicators

2.1.1 Progress on Corporate Plan Performance Indicators (PI) is provided separately in [Performance reports to Audit Committee available online](#). Progress notes on our overall Corporate Plan aims and Climate Change priorities are also [available online](#). (<https://sustainablemiddevon.org.uk/our-plan/#aims-priorities>)

2.2 The Council's Carbon Footprint

2.2.1 Annual [carbon footprint reports](#) (greenhouse gas accounting) are published on the Council's [Sustainable Mid Devon](#) website.

3.0 Community and partnership activities

3.1 Community engagement.

3.1.1 To promote achievements such as conservation management areas, Community Orchards and tree planting, we have published an article about how the Council is [Boosting Nature in Green Spaces](#).

3.1.2 Mid Devon Housing (MDH) will compile factsheets for tenants to increase environmental awareness. One example would be to explain HRA grounds maintenance practices such as avoiding hedge cutting during bird nesting seasons and how cutting the grass only 7 times per year helps biodiversity (compared with more frequent cuts elsewhere / previously). MDH will also do more to promote their environmental improvement budget. Working with the Tiverton Tree Team and Property Services, MDH plans to plant more trees at Westexe, followed by fruit trees in Uplowman, with local community support. Looking ahead MDH will seek to add a biodiversity section to web pages and also on Let's Talk Mid Devon.

3.1.3 The Council is encouraging Mid Devon residents to book bulky waste collections using the Council's new portal, [My Mid Devon](#), but also promotes upcycling and reuse with the message: "If you have any items that are still in a decent working condition, please think about ways of re-using or donating your items to local charities and reuse organisations."

3.1.4 Since the Council's Bin-It-123 waste collection cycles were launched in October 2022 the average recycling rate has increased by approximately 5%, and the tonnage of residual collected has reduced on average by over 100 tonnes per month. The projection for 2023/24 is each household will produce 315kg of residual waste, down from 364.5kg in 2021/22.

3.1.5 A series of measures have been taken by Officers to raise awareness of the public regarding the future tightening of restrictions regarding side waste and the need to use the appropriate containers and caddies for recycling. From 26 February, full compliance with the scheme is now expected from residents to help further improve performance.

3.2 Sustainability in the Local Economy, Planning and Development.

3.2.1 The Economy team has launched a new hub work space in Tiverton. The former Market Centre building has the potential to be converted into a work hub for freelancers, home-based businesses and remote professionals to use as an affordable collaborative workspace. Businesses were invited to a

drop-in event on Friday 23 February to find out more about a potential new work hub coming to Tiverton and identify their needs from a co-working space.

3.3 Sustainability in Local Housing.

3.3.1 Zed Pods are now in use at St Andrews, Cullompton. A further eight units are in their final delivery stage for Shapland Place, Tiverton, with an expectation of them being inhabited before the end of the financial year.

3.3.2 MDH continues work to monitor, assess and address health issues such as damp and mould with improvements that also reduce social tenant household bills and greenhouse gas emissions. A potential university project is being explored.

3.4 Partnership work.

3.4.1 Private sector housing. The Council has proactively established support for [energy efficiency grants and advice](#) and the [ECO4](#) grant schemes. To date 43 properties have benefited from the grant with a range of energy efficiency measures being installed. Properties often receive more than one measure so the numbers of measures installed are greater than the number of homes improved. So far the scheme has provided:

- 31 Air source heat pumps
- 18 loft/roof insulation
- 17 Cavity wall insulation
- 30 Solar PV
- And a range of other measures such as flat roof insulation, mains gas boiler, night storage heating, external solid wall insulation, smart heating controls and internal solid wall insulation.
- [Any updates, please?]

3.4.2 The private sector housing team also actively enforces the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard Regulations in domestic properties to ensure that private rented homes have an EPC of E and above.

3.4.3 Alongside this the team also inspect and assess homes for excess cold under the Housing Act 2004 and have served 9 notices requiring heating and insulation measures to be installed in the last year.

- 3.4.4 Loans are also available through our low cost loan provider Lendology CIC. Three loans specifically for renewable energy and energy efficiency measures have been approved this year.
- 3.4.5 We have shared [Trading Standards South West advice](#) with colleagues and residents to help avoid sub-standard retrofit traders. Also energysavingdevon.org.uk free guidance and resources.
- 3.4.6 The C&S Specialist has advised an emerging local energy fund.
- 3.5 Promoting local events, exemplars and projects.
- 3.5.1 Online promotion continues via social media channels, the [Let's Talk Mid Devon](#) engagement platform and the [Sustainable Mid Devon](#) website (e.g. grant pots).

4.0 Corporate activities

- 4.1 Sustainability in Corporate Culture and Operations
- 4.2 The C&S Specialist, Director of Place and Cabinet Member for Climate Change have begun work to build a Biodiversity Duty policy framework and action plan. This PDG received a [report](#) on the Biodiversity Duty and a briefing paper has been shared with colleagues and other PDGs.
- 4.3 The C&S Specialist has:
- Delivered 3 introductory workshops on Carbon Literacy for 21 Elected Members and 2 staff - full certification will be available to those who wish to complete the course. Staff training dates to be announced.
 - Coordinated teamwork to deliver the first electric vehicle charge points in the Council's pay and display car parks. The first of 6 rapid chargers (50kW+) will go live in April. Managed by the owner-operator Wenea, these will run on renewable electricity supplies.
 - Engaged ecology and soil carbon assessments to inform land management decisions.
 - Coordinated energy data problem solving, monitoring and energy saving workshops for Property Services staff.
 - Held monthly calls for all operations managers to support climate action.
 - Fielded potential bids to the South West Net Zero Hub's [Local Net Zero Fund](#) in coordination with colleagues.
 - Supported the Licensing Team's [draft Taxi policy consultation](#) events.
- 4.4 Further work is being done to facilitate policy development and to identify and register local 'biodiversity banks' to deliver [Biodiversity Net Gain](#) (BNG). Additional staff training was delivered as legislation came into force.

Financial Implications. The financial implications associated with this report are the overall costs of the Climate and Sustainability Programme, budgets linked specifically to the Council's Corporate Plan, Climate Strategy and CAP.

Legal Implications. The Council's environmental sustainability duties are underpinned by legislation e.g. [Environment Act 2021](#). All local authorities have obligations under the [Climate Change Act 2008](#) with regard to climate change adaptation (resilience) and mitigation (emission reductions). [Full Council declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019](#).

Risk Assessment. Progress on Performance Indicators (PI) provided separately by Performance and Risk Reports. There are 2 main risks (to the Council): 1) that the Council does not take sufficient actions to enable it to meet its Climate Emergency declaration ambitions; and 2) that the financial implications of Climate Change are not adequately measured and reflected in the Council's decision making.

Impact on Climate Change. The role of the Climate and Sustainability (C&S) Specialist in support of the corporate officer team is central to the Council's Climate and Sustainability Programme by actions such as the development of strategic positions and delivery of projects through internal, community and partnership work.

Equalities Impact Assessment. There are no equality impacts associated with this report. Specific projects and policies are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. (Assessing the equality impacts of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is not only a legal requirement, but also a positive opportunity for authorities to make better decisions based on robust evidence.)

Relationship to Corporate Plan. Please refer to Section 2, paragraphs 2.1 - 2.2.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off / mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett
Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151.
Date: 27 February 2024

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leburne
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer.
Date: 27 February 2024

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford
Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director.
Date: 29 February 2024

Performance and risk: Dr Steve Carr
Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager.
Date: 27 February 2024

Cabinet member notified: Yes.

Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. No.

Appendix: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. No.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Jason Ball, Climate and Sustainability Specialist: Email: JBall@MidDevon.gov.uk Tel: 01884 255255.

Background papers: The previous report was provided to the [Environment Policy Development Group](#) on [23 January 2024](#).