



Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 28th July 2021

To the Chair and Members of the Community and Environment Scrutiny Panel

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY – UPDATE

| Relevant Member(s) | Cabinet | Wards Affected | Key Decision |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Cllr Mark Houlbrook | | All | No |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Following the declaration of the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency in September 2019, the Council has since initiated Doncaster Climate Commission, chaired by Ed Milliband MP, for which the Report on findings was published in November 2020.
2. The declaration and subsequent findings from the commission have influenced a number of decisions and activities that followed.
3. The new Environment and Sustainability Strategy was published January 2021 and the Net Zero Masterplan was published February 2021.
4. A new Sustainability Unit has been approved and is being formed with new and existing posts, to provide more focus, co-ordination and drive in areas of carbon reduction and nature recovery.
5. A £5m fund has been established to initiative projects that deliver on the Environment & Sustainability strategy action plan and there has been £26m worth of schemes and infrastructure projects announced and initiated, including an electric bus pilot, housing retrofit schemes, renewable energy investment and the target of planting 1 million trees in the next 10 years.

6. The decisions, activity and plans developed to date will lay firm foundations for delivery against the Councils' climate and environment ambitions.
7. This report shares further information in the form of an update on activity and next steps, as requested by the Community and Environment Scrutiny panel.

EXEMPT REPORT

8. The report is not exempt.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

9. Residents and businesses benefit from support, advice and grant funding the Council and partners will deliver.
10. Residents and businesses will be made to feel part of a movement, which will impact on everyone.
11. The actions set out in the Environment and Sustainability strategy will provide a wide range of cross-cutting benefits, including environment, social, economic and health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. That the Panel note and consider the information received.

BACKGROUND

13. Following the declaration of the Climate & Biodiversity Emergency, it was agreed there is an imperative that the Council organise its resources in a way that enables focus, drive and delivery. A co-ordinated approach was required, and a new Sustainability Unit would lead.
14. Further actions included the creation of the Doncaster Climate Commission and the publishing of its findings, a new Environment and Sustainability strategy and Net Zero Masterplan.
15. The Environment and Sustainability strategy (known as 'the strategy') set out a pathway for carbon reduction and nature recovery as well as adaptation to the local effects of climate change.
16. The strategy proposes the delivery of 111 actions which contribute to the short, medium and long term pathway of environmental improvement. This is not an exhaustive list, and while some actions will be achieved and replaced with new actions, some actions may develop in line with policy, legislation, financial markets, and technology.
17. 84 of the actions align with Service Plans and they have been embedded in those plans.

18. The 27 remaining actions will be prioritised based on carbon reduction value.
19. The actions are split into key themes of Natural Environment, Built Environment, Green Tech and Economy, and Sustainable Consumption, Education & Behaviour Change.
20. A new governance structure is currently in development to allow focused stakeholder engagement amongst each of these themes, which will report on progress to the Council's Renewal Board and Team Doncaster.
21. Some of the key activities and decisions to date include:

22. Built Environment

- a) £12.56m St. Leger Homes Thermal Improvement programme. Insulating the remaining 1,800 uninsulated homes.
- b) £6.3m secured for housing retrofit of 150 social and 215 private homes in 2021-22
- c) £2.4m capital funding application for Council buildings energy efficiency retrofit, including low energy lighting and solar.
- d) £1.7m government funded decarbonisation works at Askern Leisure Centre. One of only two remaining leisure centres using coal for heating fuel, Askern Leisure Centre will have heat pumps, high performing wall and roof insulation, high performing glazing and low energy lighting.
- e) Transport fleet replacement policy – 26 diesel cars and vans approved for replacement for electric of which 23 have been integrated into the fleet. A further 25 vehicles planned for 2021-2022). 34 charging bays ready for use.
- f) 40 new public electric vehicle charging bays planned for installation in Council carparks in 2021-22.
- g) Planning approval given for 20 EV charging bays at the rear of the Civic combined with 91kw solar carport. Specification of works being prepared for procurement and installation is 2021-22.
- h) £1.9m for electric bus pilot

23. Natural Environment

- a) Green Gateways & Heart – scoping phase
- b) Tree Policy review completed
- c) Mayoral commitment for 1 Million Trees
 - i. Analysis of Council assets currently being assessed to produce a shortlist of viable tree planting sites.
 - ii. Trees and Woodland Investment Officer post approved and currently going through Job Evaluation.
 - iii. Analysis of external funding options being analysed for bidding timescales / value / criteria re use of funds.
 - iv. Investigating process for awarding investors with carbon credits for offsetting.
 - v. Tiny Forest pilot at Saltersgate Juniors complete, with all other schools invited to make an EOI for a wider scheme.
- d) Signed common cause agreement with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
- e) Tiny Forests – first phase complete (School pilot complete, second

phase underway – introducing tiny forests into more schools/communities/businesses)

- f) A project is underway, led by the Sheffield City Region, to assess our natural capital assets. This includes mapping those assets and evaluating the benefits of investment, aligned with the strategy.
 - g) £245k approval granted to set up a habitat bank on a site in the Torne Valley to allow the sale of biodiversity units to developers needing to demonstrate biodiversity net gain as part of their planning applications.
 - h) Carbon Literacy training is underway and we have a growing network of Climate Champions (staff who are interested in climate and environment, now better equipped to have a conversation about climate change with others who are interested).
24. These projects alone will contribute to the delivery of 16 actions within the strategy.
25. The creation of a £5m Environment and Sustainability/Net Zero Carbon Earmarked Reserve fund was approved by Cabinet in February 2021 as part of the 20/21 Quarter 3 Finance and Performance Improvement report. It was agreed that the reserve will be drawn down based on business cases approved per the delegation. The allocation of this reserve is delegated to the Director of Economy and Environment and Assistant Director of Finance to utilise in consultation with the Mayor.
26. The fund will help initiate delivery of the strategy, though it is intended to maximise its use with external match funding wherever possible.
27. It is agreed that the approach to the use of the £5m as well as the overall approach to the delivery of the strategy will be one that is balanced in activity across the ‘built’ and ‘natural’ environment. Though there will be prioritised activity within each of the themes based on impact. Such prioritisation is presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Interventions in the Built Environment

Undertake a retrofitting of insulation, space heating, and hot water facilities in domestic homes

Referrals to Council enforcement service from health care providers for anyone presenting with cold-related health issues (housing conditions assessment).

Provide advice and guidance on energy saving measures to residents, landlords, schools, businesses, community groups.

Promote and support access to energy saving grants/loans for households and businesses.

Increase prevalence of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles – both for personal and fleet; improving infrastructure, awareness and understanding of options, and increased prioritisation in investment decisions.

Decrease the average total distance travelled per individual per year.

Increase the proportion of domestic and commercial heating supplied from fuel cell μ CHP.

Promote micro-renewable energy technologies and decentralised heat/power systems.

Maximise opportunities to purchase and consume renewable electricity and heat generated within the borough. Encourage the use of energy providers that use renewable energy sources.

Development of appropriate renewable energy infrastructure throughout the borough

Table 2

Natural Environment actions

Develop and implement a tree-planting programme, to include various sized sites from individual trees in gardens to strategic woodland creation where feasible.

Research, develop and implement a Biodiversity Net Gain approach for Doncaster.

Through active engagement, interpretation and education, ensure that the value of woodland, wood pasture, trees, and parks is understood and considered by policy makers, residents and businesses.

Ensure that open space, woodland, trees and hedgerows are adequately considered in new developments, with a presumption against developments that result in loss or deterioration of woodland/trees.

Work in partnership to engage with landowners and managers, particularly (but not exclusively) in the farming sector, to understand the challenges and opportunities for biodiversity, and explore where better outcomes can be supported for farming and wildlife.

Next Steps

28. Pragmatic approach – connect with stakeholders to put the pieces together
29. Identify the distributed leadership across the themes – natural, built etc.
30. Implement suggested governance, boards, reporting tools etc.
31. Agree roles and responsibilities for DMBC, Partners, Members etc...
32. Consult on the final version of the proposed Sustainability Unit structure.
33. Communications plan and timeline to be developed.
34. Review and agree current resource and capacity to ensure the agreed projects/actions can materialise.
35. Action plan to be drafted and to be used as a live tool to plan out the work.
36. Initiate projects funded by £5m earmarked reserve

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

37. This report is for information only.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

38. N/A

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

- 39.

| | Outcomes | Implications |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment | <p>This is a key theme for the economic recovery. Future investments will need to consider climate and environment. There will be high levels of inward investment in infrastructure, jobs and training.</p> |
| | <p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster | <p>Improvement in air quality, green spaces, zero emission transport, more comfortable and thermally efficient homes.</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage | |
| | <p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work | <p>The Sustainability Unit will cut across many themes, including education. Supporting schools with environmental learning which is both classroom and outdoor based.</p> |
| | <p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes | <p>Housing retrofit will improve the homes of our most vulnerable. Improving the warmth and comfort of homes and reducing fuel costs.</p> |
| | <p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance | <p>The Sustainability Unit will help co-ordinate the actions required to move towards net zero and help embed the climate agenda as a key principle in the Council's policy and strategy.</p> |

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

40. Not applicable.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [SRF 14/7/21]

41. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [OB 16/7/21]

42. The report provides an overview on the key actions and decisions made to date and provides details of the £5m fund that has been established for projects that deliver on the Environment & Sustainability strategy action plan. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [KJ 16/7/21]

43. There are no HR implications associated with this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [PW 14/7/21]

44. There are no specific technology implications arising from this update report to the Community and Environment Scrutiny panel. However, further engagement with Digital and ICT is needed in relation to the mapping of natural capital assets and planned spatial data sharing between local authority partners and members of the public.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [CT 15/7/21]

45. Environmental hazards increase the risk of cancer, heart disease, asthma, and many other illnesses. These hazards can be physical, such as pollution, and climate change or they can be social, such as poor housing conditions, urban sprawl, and poverty. These hazards start impacting people before birth and accumulate as we grow older. The Director of Public Health is advising a European Partnership 'Longitools' <https://longitools.org/> looking to address these issues. The Strategy and subsequent actions demonstrate the commitment that Doncaster Council has made in improving the built and natural environment for the benefit of its residents and visitors. Learning from this European work will be brought to Doncaster over time.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials RJS Date 14/7/21]

46. There are no equality implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

47. Consultation on the Environment and Sustainability Strategy has included all members and Leadership.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

48. [Environment & Sustainability Strategy](#)

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

49. N/A

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