

Council Meeting	
Meeting Date	23 February 2022
Report Title	Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report
Cabinet Member	Cllr Tim Valentine, Cabinet Member for the Climate and Ecological Emergency
SMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Janet Hill, Climate Change Officer
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To note progress

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 26 June 2019 the Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency setting ourselves challenging targets to achieve net zero carbon for the council by 2025 and net zero carbon across the borough by 2030.
- 1.2 Part of the declaration requires an annual progress report to be taken to Council in January each year.
- 1.3 This is the third annual report covering the activities undertaken towards achieving our targets during 2021.
- 1.4 It is very positive to be able to report the amount of progress made despite the pressures on the Council from COVID19.

2 Background

- 2.1 Since the spring of 2019 councils across the UK have been declaring climate emergencies of varying types and ambition.
- 2.2 One of the first things the newly elected council did after the May 2019 local elections was to develop a Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration motion which was passed unanimously on 26th June 2019.
- 2.3 Swale has set some of the most ambitious targets nationally to achieve net zero carbon by 2025 as an organisation and by 2030 as a borough.
- 2.4 Our policies and strategies are being reviewed and changes are being made as necessary to achieve net zero carbon across the Borough by 2030. A Climate

and Ecological Action Plan has been developed, as required by the declaration, and was adopted on Earth Day, 22nd April 2020.

3 Progress 2022

3.1 The full report can be found at Appendix I.

Progress highlights

3.2 A steering group of councillors and officers meet regularly to progress actions and includes coverage of all service areas across the Council.

3.3 The refurbishment of Swale House is currently out for tender and it is hoped to appoint contractors soon. A successful bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant Fund will facilitate carbon reduction work in the Master's House in Sheerness.

Most of our fleet vehicles have been replaced with EVs, this has reduced the carbon footprint of our services. Work on the new waste and street cleansing contract is looking at alternative vehicles to the current contract and the new grounds maintenance contract starting on 15 January will see new electric vehicles and power tools used for the first time on this service.

3.4 The Special Projects Fund has funded projects which help to tackle the emergency. These include the appointment of a Climate and Ecological Emergency Project Officer, and the Fuel and Water Home Advice Service. The Improvement and Resilience Fund has funded a Business Event in November. It will be used in 2022 to fund LED lighting, tree planting, a car club, EV charging points and air quality measures.

3.5 We are working in partnership with KCC to explore and develop in more detail a package of measures to reduce traffic, improve flow and improve the vehicle fleet along the A2 to establish a clean air zone. We are working with schools close to AQMAs to promote sustainable travel and a schools education programme will be rolled out this year. Further air quality monitoring has been implemented. We have developed an air quality planning technical guide and trained planning officers. An Anti-idling campaign has been rolled out with signage, staff training and the ability to issue fixed penalty notices for non-adherence.

3.6 This year, via the 'Blueprint Coalition we have lobbied central government for more powers and resources for local authorities to tackle the climate and ecological emergency. We lobbied our local MPs on the Environment Bill. We signed up to the Race to Zero and so far are the only Kent authority to have joined UK100 – a coalition of local authorities with ambitious climate emergency plans.

3.7 The Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration stated that we would “eliminate single-use plastic from council operations wherever possible” by 2021. A cross department audit of the council's plastic use was undertaken and elimination or replacement of single use products is underway both in Swale House and across our estate/services. The drinks and vending machine contracts were not be

renewed. Coffee cups and crisp packets can be recycled. Biodegradable tree guards are being used when trees are planted. A full report is found as an appendix in the annual report.

- 3.8 A fuel and water advice service has been developed as a way of reaching our more vulnerable residents to help them reduce bills and carbon emissions. The adviser was appointed in late 2020 and started to deliver the service in January 2021, albeit in a way different to first planned. The service has advised over 800 households across the Borough on energy and water use. Late in 2021 with the backing of several members the service has also taken on tackling period poverty.
- 3.9 A network of EV chargers has been installed in Council carparks. Charge points are available in Sittingbourne (Swallows and Swale House carparks, and the MSCP), Faversham (Central Car Park) and Sheerness (Rose Street Car Park). Despite car park use falling due to COVID19, the use of EV charge points has increased. Charge points for our own fleet have been installed and we are working on more installations across the borough. We require all new developments/properties to have charge points.
- 3.10 The Planning Committee has successfully requested more renewable energy and energy-efficiency measures to be included in new developments. All new developments are encouraged to achieve a 50% saving in carbon emissions over current Building Regulations. The Local Plan will bring this down to net zero emissions by 2030. A guide for developers including examples of how the 50% reduction in carbon emissions can be achieved is available on the council's website.
- 3.11 We successfully bid for £170,000 from the Forestry Commission via KCC for Local Authority Tree Fund funding for the planting and subsequent maintenance of 11,000 whips and 250 standard trees. Sites for planting have been identified. We will plant in early 2020.
- 3.12 The Solar Together programme saw applications for over 70 solar PV installations 16 of these opted to also install battery storage. We continue to support community solar projects.
- 3.13 COVID19 has accelerated the move to virtual and hybrid meetings and new ways of working, resulting in business and commuting miles falling dramatically. However other challenges have arisen, such as the increase in household waste.
- 3.14 Kent Wildlife Trust approached Swale to be their only local authority partner in Kent in their Wilder Carbon project. We are working with them and local landowners to explore offsetting opportunities both for ourselves and other local organisations.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 There are no decisions to be taken from this report. However, an alternative option would be to revert to our previous pre-Declaration way of working. This would

mean our own emissions would decline more slowly than required to meet our 2025 targets as declared in the emergency. Borough wide, taking no action would have similar consequences with a failure to meet 2030 targets. We would also risk reputational damage.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The Steering Group and Cabinet member for the Climate and Ecological Emergency and the Deputy Cabinet member for the Environment have all been involved in the development of this report.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Progress on the declaration will support the delivering improved quality of life and delivering the council of tomorrow priorities
Financial, Resource and Property	This report is for noting but activities to address the declaration have financial implications and these will be addressed through Special Project Fund funding, the Improvement and Resilience Fund and through the base revenue and capital budget processes. Grants from external sources will also be sought.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage.
Environment and Sustainability	The progress made to date supports improving our environment and contributes to the development of a more sustainable council and borough.
Health and Wellbeing	Improvements to the environment and sustainability have tangible health and wellbeing benefits.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

Appendix I Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report

8 Background Papers

Motion to full council 26 June 2019

<https://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/g2156/Public%20reports%20pack%2026th-Jun-2019%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=10>