

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	12 Sept 2012	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E2459
TITLE:	Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
1. Equalities Impact Assessment		
2. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy (ESCC Strategy) illustrates the community leadership role provided by the council and our partners in the Environmental Sustainability Partnership (ESP). It aims to communicate to the public the ESP's strategic approach to delivering sustainability in the district in response to local needs, plus its priorities, workstreams and its key projects.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet agrees that:

2.1 Further to adoption by the ESP Board, the Cabinet endorses the ESCC Strategy in order to support the work of the ESP and demonstrate the council's leadership.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The financial implications of producing the ESCC Strategy arise from the production and dissemination of the Strategy both internally within the Council and ESP organisations and externally to the public. The particular tasks undertaken include writing the ESCC Strategy, requesting input from other services and organisations, responding to comments made by ESP members and presenting the Strategy at meetings. Further tasks required are incorporating any final comments from Cabinet, graphic design for the finalised Strategy and the posting of the Strategy on the Council's website. This work is estimated to cost a total of around £1600 and will be funded from existing salary budgets in the Sustainability Team and the Standards and Support Team within Policy & Partnerships.
- 3.2 Delivery of the ESCC Strategy will be mainstreamed throughout the Council and also through partner agencies, businesses and community groups so will therefore not rely completely on the Council. New projects which may arise through the ESP and which could involve Council services will be subject to separate, project-specific resourcing decisions.

4 CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 This proposal will help to "Make Bath & North East Somerset an even better place to live, work and visit" by impacting on the achievement of the Council's objectives, particularly:
- a. *Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live:* Helping residents to make their areas fit for the future is an important part of creating neighbourhoods that people can be proud of. Community Enablement is one of the key strategic approaches laid out in the ESCC Strategy. It is important to communicate to residents that we are taking this approach so that they are able to take full advantage of the support being offered.
 - b. *Building a stronger economy:* As we face the twin challenges of rising energy costs and climate change, we need to ensure that our area makes the transition to a low carbon economy. By communicating the work underway to do this, the ESCC Strategy can help build momentum for this transition.
 - c. *Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone:* There are strong links between the work contained within the ESCC Strategy and the ability of people to continue to live independent and positive lives. For example, enabling people to move out of fuel poverty and to prepare themselves for a changing climate can reduce health impacts and the need for support from public services, and improve wellbeing.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 For many years the council has been working to make our area more sustainable and for several years the council has made tackling climate change a priority. This work has followed a strategic approach, the first part of which was to lead by example. The council, working with other public sector partners, initiated actions to reduce internal carbon emissions through a Carbon Management Plan and the "Our Big Energy Challenge" programme. Leading by example also entailed developing a more positive framework for action through new planning policies such as the Core Strategy.

- 5.2 Having built a firm foundation by starting to “get our own house in order”, we moved on to addressing the larger issue of district-wide carbon emissions by adding two further strategic approaches of partnership working and community enablement. The objectives of this work were laid out in the Sustainable Community Strategy (2009-2026), which made the commitment to help reduce our district’s carbon emissions 45% by 2026, and in 2010 the ESP was set up to facilitate achieving this target.
- 5.3 The ESP has matured into an effective forum for coordinating environmental sustainability work. Projects are organised into nine workstreams and monitored through a regularly updated Action Plan, which provides the ESP with a broad overview of much of the sustainability work taking place within the district. The amount of work continues to grow and is being carried out by an increasing number of partner organisations, community groups and council services.
- 5.4 The ESCC Strategy seeks to document this work and publicise our existing strategic approach. It is a short, easily digestible document to enable a broad audience to see what is already going on and where we are headed. The intention is to refresh the ESCC Strategy as often as necessary, most likely every three years or to reflect a development of the ESP’s strategic approach. For example, the signing of the Climate Local Commitment and the forging of a stronger link between the ESP and the Health & Wellbeing Board might justify a review of our approach.
- 5.5 It should be noted that the ESCC Strategy is not an exhaustive list of the work underway, since this is contained within the Action Plan. Rather, it uses key projects to illustrate our strategic approach. Nor does the ESCC Strategy contain an aspirational wish-list of projects or detailed targets. There is a collaborative process underway within each of the ESP the workstreams to agree how to tackle the gaps in our current approach and to set more detailed local targets.
- 5.6 The ESCC Strategy begins by laying out the three strategic approaches that are being taken to achieve the vision and targets:
- a. Partnership Working: Bringing together the right people to make things happen.
 - b. Community Enablement: Enabling our residents and community groups to achieve their sustainability aims.
 - c. Leading by Example: Bold action from the council and our partners in the ESP.
- 5.7 The ESCC Strategy then lays out the priority for the ESP, which is to reduce our impact on the climate and our dependency on fossil fuels. This priority was agreed in the Position Statement on Environmental Sustainability which was adopted in 2007, which stated that *“The Council...recognises that the top priority for environmental sustainability today is tackling climate change”*. The ESCC Strategy simply reiterates this priority and was approved at the ESP meeting on the 23rd of April 2012.
- 5.8 Climate change was chosen as the priority for several equally important reasons. Firstly, because unchecked climate change and rising fuel costs could impact heavily on our society, and have serious consequences for health and wellbeing in our district, particularly that of the most vulnerable residents who are in ill health or fuel poverty. Secondly, the transition to a low carbon economy presents an

opportunity for our district to maintain or increase our prosperity. Lastly, climate change presents the biggest threat to the rest of our natural environment and wildlife.

5.9 Following this, there is a summary of the ESP's workstreams, and how the strategic approach is being carried through into the workstreams, using examples of key projects. For example, the ESP's Home Energy Workstream contains the work underway to obtain maximum benefit from the Green Deal. The Green Deal will be the subject of a separate Cabinet item in the coming months.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The report author and Lead Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6.2 The risk assessment indicated that there was a greater risk reputational risk to council and its partners in the ESP of not having a document outlining its leadership and approach to sustainability and climate change. This risk increases as more individuals and organisations become engaged in this area of work.

7. EQUALITIES

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed (attached). Adverse impacts were identified and have been mitigated in the following ways:

Issues identified	Actions required	Progress milestones	Officer responsible	By when
The equalities profile of the ESP is unknown	An equality monitoring exercise will be carried out with ESP members to determine their equality profile, including an equalities questionnaire and report	Equalities questionnaire to be completed at the Autumn ESP meeting: 22 nd of Oct 2012. Report complete by the 30 th of November	Sara Grimes	30 th November 2012
The ESP has not yet had a chance to comment on this EIA	The ESP will receive a copy of this EIA for comment	Upon approval of this EIA, prior to the submission of final Cabinet report (2 nd September 2012)	Sara Grimes	2 nd September 2012
The ESCC Strategy needs to be able to be used by people with a wide range of needs and abilities	The ESCC and the EIA will be made available in a range of languages, large print, Braille, on tape, electronic and accessible formats	Upon approval of the final draft of the ESCC Strategy, prior to the submission of final Cabinet report (2 nd September 2012)	Sara Grimes	2 nd September 2012

8. RATIONALE

- 8.1 There is now a substantial body of coordinated work underway by the council, our partners and the community to address the issues of environmental sustainability and climate change. There is a need to communicate our approach and to demonstrate that there is coordination underway and a clear strategy for meeting the community's needs. The ESCC Strategy can also help the ESP to achieve a higher profile and promote the strong commitment to this work.
- 8.2 Many other local authorities have similar documents and we are frequently asked by members of the public and other organisations to provide a strategy document.

9. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 Another option would be to not have a strategy. So far, we have taken this option to enable us to prioritise making things happen. However, due to the growing body of work and the involvement of a wide range of partners and communities, there is a need for a more substantive document. To avoid taking undue time away from other work, the process of developing the strategy was not unduly onerous and the strategy document itself is being kept short.

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The ESCC Strategy was discussed at the ESP Board and ESP partners have co-written and commented on the Strategy. This includes Ward Councillors from each political party, Cabinet members and representatives from the Parish Councils, community interest groups and other public sector bodies.

11. ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1 *Customer Focus; Sustainability*

12. ADVICE SOUGHT

- 12.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	