

Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Georgia Hawkes, Head of Transformation and Property
Lead Officer and Report Author	James Wilderspin, Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

The Policy and Resources Committee adopted the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan on 21st October 2020. This report is an update of the status and implementation of the Action Plan, which includes:

- The annual review and update of the Action Plan itself (Appendix 1);
- The budget allocations and specific project costs for the implementation of the Action Plan 2021-2022 (Appendix 2);
- A breakdown of each action's status (Appendix 3); and
- The key indicators to monitor performance against the Action Plan (Appendix 4).

Purpose of Report

To update Committee on progress made on delivery of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Policy and Resources Committee notes the progress made towards delivery of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan, including identification of key performance indicators and allocation of budget against projects to deliver the agreed actions.
2. That the Policy and Resources Committee agrees the changes to the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan and makes a decision to allocate responsibility to review the Action Plan on an annual basis to the Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager in consultation with the Policy and Resources Committee Chairman.
3. That the Policy and Resources Committee note that further financial resources will be needed beyond 2022 to deliver the council's biodiversity and climate change ambitions.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Corporate Leadership Team	18 January 2021

Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve (i) Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure (ii) Safe, Clean and Green (iii) Homes and Communities (iv) A Thriving Place.	Head of Transformation and Property
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report recommendations support the achievement of the Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability and supports respected cross cutting issues including respecting nature and heritage, reducing inequalities through engagement and public wellbeing through access to open and green spaces, and ensuring Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected.	Head of Transformation and Property
Risk Management	Please refer to paragraph 5.1 of the report.	Head of Transformation and Property
Financial	£1million funding has already been allocated to the implementation of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan and this report updates on the allocations of the budget and requests further funding be allocated to ensure the Action Plan can continue to be implemented beyond 2022. Additional bids for external funding to help achieve the aims of the strategy will also be sought at every opportunity.	Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	[Head of Service]
Legal	There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations set out in the report which is to note the update on the action plan and not for decision. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 by virtue of Section 40 places a duty on local authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising their functions. The	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)

	duty is an integral part of policy and decision making in relation to all the council functions, services and actions of the Council.	
Privacy and Data Protection	There are no impacts on Privacy and Data Protection identified as a result of the report and recommendation.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	A high-level Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the Action Plan and further assessments and inclusive measures will be made for relevant projects and will be intrinsic to the Biodiversity and Climate Engagement Strategy.	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	We recognise that implementing the biodiversity and climate change action plan will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	[Public Health Officer]
Crime and Disorder	There are no Crime and Disorder issues to Note.	[Head of Service or Manager]
Procurement	There will be significant ongoing procurement implications arising from implementation of the Action Plan to upgrade and decarbonise the MBC estate and fleet, seek renewable energy projects and enhance woodland and wetland areas of the borough. Biodiversity and climate change will also be a procurement consideration for all future procurement activities to decrease and support decarbonisation of all MBC contractors and suppliers.	[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]
Biodiversity and Climate Change	This report strengthens the council's position, through a review/update, budget allocation, and commencement of projects set out in the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan to achieve Net Zero in keeping with the Council's commitment by 2030 and increase and sustain biodiversity across the Borough.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee adopted the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan on 21st October 2020. This report provides a progress update of the implementation of the Action Plan as of the end of 2021 and highlights the updates and minor changes from the first annual review of the Action Plan itself (**Appendix 1**). This report also sets out the budget allocations for the implementation of the Action Plan so far (**Appendix 2**) and provides a breakdown of each action status to give a more detailed update on progress per action (**Appendix 3**). Finally, this report outlines the primary key performance indicators to monitor progress of the action plans implementation (**Appendix 4**).

Action Plan Annual Review

- 2.2 The Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan is set to be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that new policies, national Government initiatives, and changes in technologies and practices are updated in tandem with its implementation. This will both help the council to review, and if necessary, update its priorities and performance indicators towards achieving Net Zero by 2030, and also to ensure the council can seek new opportunities, funds and initiatives and incorporate innovation into the Action Plan implementation.
- 2.3 Maidstone Borough Council's Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy and [Action Plan](#) scored a 72% or joint 25th place in UK out of 325 councils who have declared a climate emergency according to Climate Emergency UK's [campaign](#). Recognition of MBC's commitment and the robustness of the Action Plan is valuable, as it raises MBC's profile on these important topics and shows the council to be a strategic leader. It is vital to continually review and update the Action Plan and to ensure Actions are tangible and deliverable.
- 2.4 A detailed review of the Action Plan has been carried out on all nine key themes and corresponding actions. The reviewed and updated Action Plan has not made any major changes and the plan retains all the same key themes, structure, and actions, with the addition of supplementary information and minor wording changes only. Some additions have been made to the Action Plan to ensure it meets soon to be standardised criteria and comparable objectives for local authorities across the UK. Additions to the Action Plan include key information and definitions of 'Net Zero', 'Climate Adaptation and Resilience', detailed targets per year on carbon reductions, and updates to the status of each action.
- 2.5 A table detailing all change and updated to the Action Plan can be found in Appendix 1 attached with this report. With Policy and Resources Committee noting, the minor changes and updates to the Action Plan will be made to the council's website and the public facing action plan will be uploaded.

Budget Allocations of Implementing the Action Plan

- 2.6 A £1million budget is currently assigned to the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan. Numerous projects have commenced and/or have been

scoped to meet the objectives of the Action Plan. A detailed overview of the costs already incurred and the remaining budget allocations for projects being implemented in 2022 can be found in Appendix 2 attached with this report. Each project corresponds to particular actions and commitments made by the council, with budget allocations to implement the action.

- 2.7 Please note that additional adequate capital funding is allocated as part of the Budget Report to allow the Council to continue to implement the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan beyond 2022. Local authorities are in a key position to influence behaviour change, lead by example and support communities and business reach the UK's Net Zero and biodiversity commitments. Adequate funding and urgency is needed not only to make savings in the long term through transitioning away from fossil fuels and investment in renewables, but also to ensure the council's actions are proportionate to the biodiversity and climate emergency the council declared in April 2019.
- 2.8 In the wake of COP26 in November 2021, proportionate allocation of additional budget will demonstrate Maidstone Borough Council's ongoing commitment in urgently preparing for and mitigating the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. As Biodiversity and Climate Change are cross cutting issues, adequate funding and commitment from the council will also ensure that economic, environmental, social and cultural prosperity increase in keeping with Maidstone's vision and Strategic Plan.

Status of Actions

- 2.9 Appendix 3 attached with this report, gives a detailed status of each action in the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan by theme. In summary:
- Five (5) actions have been completed (Green);
 - Fifty-seven (57) actions are ongoing, being implemented, or are not yet due to commence (Green);
 - Five (5) actions have been delayed, primarily due to setbacks caused by COVID19 (Amber); and
 - One (1) action cannot be completed as stated, this being Action 1.9 regarding new taxi licensing policy to reduce the number of taxis using fossil fuels, which is unable to be completed due to licensing committee not agreeing to pass the policy based on concerns raised by the taxi trade (red).
- 2.10 Strong working relationships have been formed, or strengthened, with departments within the council as well as delivery partners to enable the council to monitor and deliver the action plan and take advantage of opportunities presented by external funding, technology and national policy. The Status of the actions will continue to be monitored in line with newly established Key Performance Indicators and through a regular review process from the staff member responsible and the Biodiversity and Climate Change Manger. The status of the actions will continue to be presented to P&R Committee on a biannual basis, and key achievements will be highlighted throughout the year.

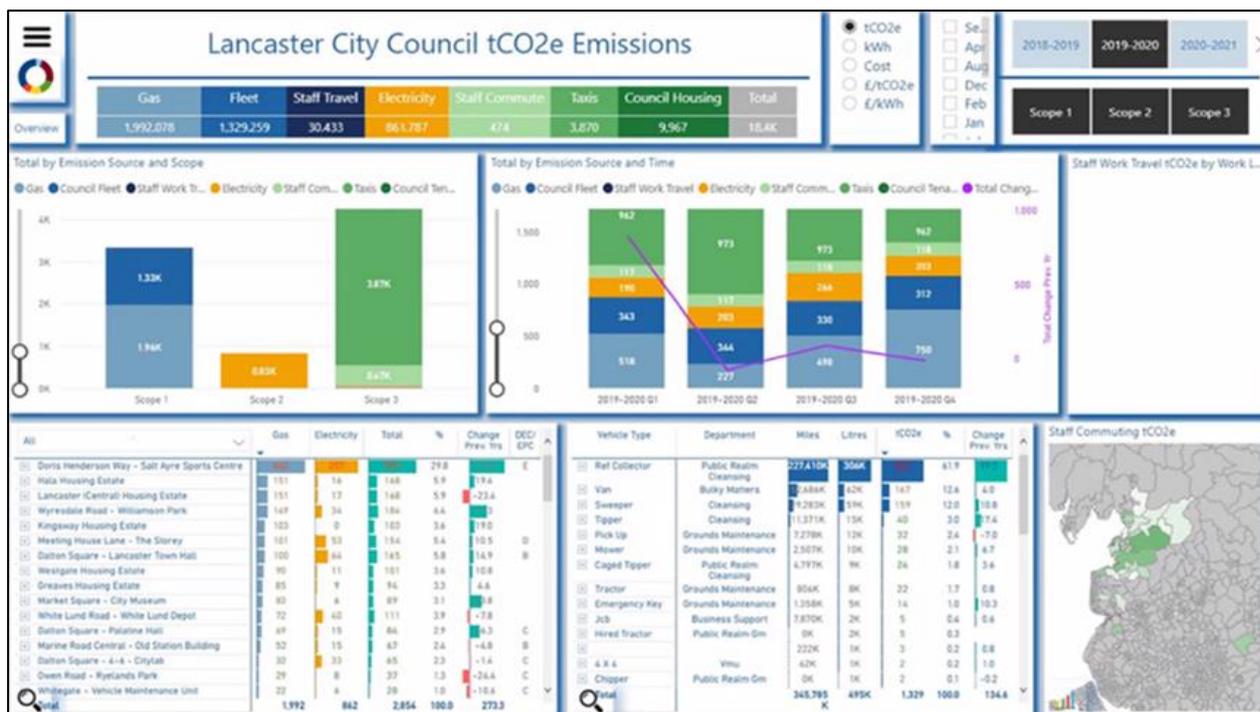
Key Performance Indicators

2.11 Performance Indicators are critical signifiers of progress toward the council's commitment to Net Zero by 2030 and Biodiversity recovery strategy. An Indicator framework has been developed for the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan that incorporated specific measures of progress for each action and aligns with Strategic Planning existing indicators. Where possible indicators have also been aligned with national Government and Kent County Council indicators. The purpose of the indicators is to provide a focus for strategic and operational improvement to the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan, create an analytical basis for decision making and prioritisation, and ensure the council is monitoring its progress toward its climate and biodiversity commitments.

2.12 There are two main overarching indicators that will be used to show MBC's overall progress, namely:

1. Reduction in Carbon Emission (tonnes of CO2 equivalent) primarily monitored from the MBC estate and fleet; and
2. Increase in Carbon Sequestration, measured in terms of number of trees planted and area of rewilding and wetlands restored.

Currently internal data improvements are required before these two overarching indicators can be accurately measured and reported. Firstly, MBC building's energy meters are in need of upgrading to give more accurate real time energy usage data – new automated meters are planned to be installed in 2022. Secondly, through improved fuel consumption data from the newly installed Fleet Telematics software. Once the data quality is improved and automated, a dashboard system will be devised based on an exemplary dashboard system established by Lancaster City Council (Figure example below). The dashboard will show MBC's current carbon emissions, annual reduction targets, number of trees planted, land allocated to natural recovery, and amount of carbon sequestered or avoided by projects being implemented. The dashboard can also be developed to be a transparent public facing tool - pending a decision by P&R committee later into its development.



2.13 A full comprehensive indicator framework has been created with 80 indicators covering every theme and action of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan. These indicators will primarily be used for internal monitoring purposes and will be reported on periodically to members and departments. Of these, eight Key Performance Indicators have been identified as priority measurements of progress that will feed into the dashboard system. Appendix 4 attached with this report, details the eight key indicators, the definitions, baseline source comparison, targets (if applicable), measures and frequency of performance checks.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Note changes and update to the Action Plan following the first annual review.
- 3.2 Make decision to delegate Annual Review Process of the Action Plan to the Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager to make changes in consultation with the Policy and Resources Committee Chairman.
- 3.3 Note the status of all the action plan actions, the Key Performance Indicators and funding that has been allocated to projects.
- 3.4 Note that additional capital funding is required to continue to implement the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 *Note changes and updates to the action plan* – The reviewed and updated Action Plan has not made any major changes and the plan retains all the

same key themes, structure, and actions, with the addition of supplementary information and minor wording changes only.

- 4.2 *Agree for delegation of the Annual Review Process to be given to the Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager in consultation with the Policy and Resources Committee Chairman – As new policies, national Government initiatives, and changes in technologies and practices arise it is important to update the MBC Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan accordingly and regularly. Delegating this task to the Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager will ensure that MBC utilise the latest information and research, seek new opportunities, funds and initiatives and incorporate innovation into carrying out the Action Plan.*
 - 4.3 *Note the status of all the action plan actions, the Key Performance Indicators and funding that has been allocated to projects – This is to ensure that the implementation, monitoring and budget allocation for the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan is proportionate and that progress is being accomplished.*
 - 4.4 *Note that additional capital funding is required to continue to implement the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan - Adequate funding and urgency is needed not only to save the council costs in the long term through transitioning away from fossil fuels and investment in renewables, but also to ensure the council's actions are proportionate to the biodiversity and climate emergency MBC declared in April 2019.*
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5. RISK

- 5.1 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 None
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 With the noting of the reviewed Action Plan, the MBC website will be updated with the latest version of the Action Plan.
 - 7.2 The Action Plan will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with the Policy and Resources Committee Chairman.
 - 7.3 The Committee will continue to be updated every six months on the status of the Action Plan, outcomes of the projects and progress against the indicators.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix 1: Table of Changes and Updates made to the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan
- Appendix 2: Budget allocations for the implementation of the Action Plan
- Appendix 3: A breakdown of each action's status
- Appendix 4: Eight Key Performance indicators to monitor performance against the Action Plan