

Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan update

| Timetable | |
|--|-----------------|
| Meeting | Date |
| Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee | 1 October 2024 |
| Cabinet | 30 October 2024 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Will this be a Key Decision? | No |
| Urgency | Not Applicable |
| Final Decision-Maker | CABINET |
| Lead Director | Angela Woodhouse Director of Strategy, Communications and Governance |
| Lead Officer and Report Author | Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities, and Governance |
| Classification | Public |
| Wards affected | All |

Executive Summary

This is a report on the implementation of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan. The last update report was published in February 2024.

An annual review of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan was planned for September 2024 but this has been postponed till March 2025 alongside a review of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy. This is to ensure alignment with the new strategic plan and budget following the change in administration.

Purpose of Report

Noting

This report make the following recommendation to the Cabinet: That

1. The progress on the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action plan be noted.
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Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

| Issue | Implications | Sign-off |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Impact on Corporate Priorities | <p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve all its priorities.</p> | Anna Collier, Head of Insight, Communities and Governance |
| Cross Cutting Objectives | <p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>Delivering the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan supports the achievement of the objective 'Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability. It also supports cross cutting objectives of Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced and Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved, as delivery of actions have the opportunity to improve the health of residents in the longer term and reduce residents' energy costs.</p> | Anna Collier, Head of Insight, Communities and Governance |
| Risk Management | Already covered in the risk section | Anna Collier, Head of Insight, Communities and Governance |
| Financial | The specific costed proposals will be funded from within existing budgets. Future changes to policies and strategies will need to be assessed to understand the impact to ensure they remain affordable during the year and in | [Section 151 Officer & Finance Team] |

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|-------------------------------|--|---|
| | future years as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy | |
| Staffing | We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing. | Anna Collier, Head of Insight Communities and Governance |
| Legal | Local authorities have a duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 in exercising their functions to have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Council's Biodiversity and Climate Action Plan demonstrates compliance with the statutory duty. | [Legal Team] |
| Information Governance | The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes. | Anna Collier, Head of Insight Communities and Governance |
| Equalities | The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment | Anna Collier, Head of Insight Communities and Governance |
| Public Health | We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals. | Anna Collier, Head of Insight Communities and Governance |
| Crime and Disorder | There are no implications to Crime and Disorder | Anna Collier, Head of Insight Communities and Governance |
| Procurement | No Implications | Anna Collier, Head of Insight Communities and Governance |

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| Biodiversity and Climate Change | The updates in this report and recommendations will support the continued implementation of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan. | Anna Collier, Head of Insight Communities and Governance |
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee adopted the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan on 21st October 2020. The last update was in February 2024, this report presents a further update seven months on.
- 2.2 An annual review of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan was planned for September 2024 but this has been postponed till March 2025 alongside a review of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy. This is to ensure alignment with the new strategic plan and budget following the change in administration.
- 2.3 Since the last update report, the former Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager has resigned to pursue another opportunity. An appointment has been made for their replacement and they will take their position in late November.
- 2.4 The current action plan at appendix A has been realigned to the new portfolios and cabinet members were consulted on the 19 September to get feedback on this alignment.
- 2.5 A summary of status of the 38 actions are shown in the table below.

| Status | Number of Actions |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Action not yet due | 2 |
| Delayed | 2 |
| Being Investigated | 7 |
| Planning and Development | |
| Being Implemented | 27 |
| Complete and being monitored | |

- 2.6 Two actions are delayed. The first Action 7.3 is the purchase of 100% renewable energy for our buildings and operations where we control the supply (market dependant with maximum 10% offset) and investigate Public Energy Partnership Power Purchase Agreement (PEPPPA). This action is delayed because it is cost prohibitive to purchase. It is likely that this action will be revised in the future.
- 2.7 Second Action 9.3 to deliver a Policy that ensures sustainability criteria is used for all Maidstone Borough Council construction of new buildings (offices, housing, leisure facilities) and sustainability criteria is part of decision-making process for all Maidstone Borough Council building acquisitions, to ensure buildings owned by the council are sustainable, future proofed, and align with our net zero commitment. This action has

been delayed due to the resignation of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager. Once the new appointee takes their post work will resume.

2.8 Key Highlights from the Action Plan are summarised below.

Maidstone House Decarbonisation Project

2.9 The Maidstone House Decarbonisation Project is well under way utilising the Salix PSDS 3c grant of £3.1 awarded in early 2024. The final stages of preliminary design & development has been reached and the Salix PSDS grant of £3.1m is on track to be spent in full by 31st March 2025. The full scope of the project has been realised and costs have increased to incorporate other compulsory repairs and maintenance that were identified. Once completed circa September 2025 the project aims to reduce the Council's total carbon by approximately 361.8 tCO₂e per year equivalent to a fifth of the Council's total emissions. Further examined calculations of direct and indirect carbon savings and other product recycling at end-of-life calculations are underway.

2.10 It was raised at the Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee and Cabinet in July 2024 that full information of the materials lifespan, particularly in the case of Solar Photovoltaic Panels should be made available and considered as part of the full initiative. These facts will be produced as well as details regarding ethical considerations in respect of Modern Slavery.

2.11 During detailed project planning, a decision was reached to expand the Decarbonisation Project into a Decarbonisation Programme incorporating four other projects.

- Project 2- Installation of Solar PV & Green Roof Renewal at The Link,
- Project 3- Maidstone House 4th Floor Refit,
- Project 4- Decant of Occupants at Maidstone House & The Link,
- Project 5- LED and car park upgrade at Maidstone House.

Recycling Maidstone Offices

2.12 Currently only Paper/Card is recycled in the Council offices. Officers are also investigating contract terms for recycling at Maidstone House, with plans to conduct a waste audit, survey for staff, and communications to start recycling at the office.

Solar Projects

2.13 Three large scale Solar Projects on Council sites were approved to go forward by Cabinet 24-8-24. The proposed projects encompass the Lockmeadow Entertainment Complex, the Parkwood Depot, and Mote Park and the Leisure Centre. Collectively, these projects represent a total potential investment of £960,000. The combined solar PV capacity of these installations could reach up to 945 kWp, with the potential to offset between 108 tCO₂e annually. The projects offer significant financial benefits, with

estimated annual savings of £110,000 and payback in an average of 7.6 years average over all three projects.

Other work

2.14 Work has begun on scoping an Integrated Sustainable Transport Strategy

2.15 Offsite Provision for Biodiversity Net Gain report went to Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee on the 8 July 2024, and more information was sought by members. The report will go back to PAC once wider aspects of off-site BNG, and an examination of current MBC landholdings of mature woodland condition.

2.16 Work is underway planning the Council's next Eco Hub. This year there will be a greater focus on business and employment alongside the usual activities, running green information sessions for a range of business, advice on grants and working with Mid Kent College to provide advice on green careers.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 The Cabinet to continue to receive update every six months to ensure ongoing progress towards tackling net zero borough wide.

3.2 The Cabinet could ask to receive an update more or less frequently. However, this is not recommended as less frequently wouldn't offer the oversight and more regular updates wouldn't allow sufficient time for substantial work to be undertaken.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 That Cabinet continue to receive these updates every six months and are recommended to note updates on implementation to ensure ongoing progress towards tackling net zero borough wide.

5. RISK

5.1 Responding to the climate emergency is a key corporate risk. Ongoing monitoring of the delivery of the Action plan is a key mitigation as the annual review of the action plan ensures continued accountability. Understanding the costs associated with achieving net-zero and allocate resources effectively, prioritise initiatives, putting appropriate capacity to seek funding, and set realistic targets and timelines.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 The Policy and Resources Committee adopted the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan on 21 October 2020 following development by a cross-party working group.

6.2 The Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee on 1 October 2024 supported the recommendation to note the report.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 Work will continue on delivery of the action plan, once the strategic plan is further developed, officers will begin to engage with Cabinet on the review and development of a new Strategy and Action Plan towards 2030.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix 1: Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Implementation Status
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A