

**CABINET – 6<sup>th</sup> JULY 2018****ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's approval of the Council's Environment Strategy 2018-2030 (Appendix A) and support for the associated three year Action Plan.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that:-
  - a) The outcome of the engagement exercise be noted;
  - b) The Environment Strategy 2018-2030, attached as Appendix A to this report, be approved
  - c) The associated Environment Strategy Working High Level 3 Year Action Plan, attached as Appendix B, be supported;
  - d) The Director of Environment and Transport be authorised, following consultation with the Lead Member, to make any minor amendments to the Environment Strategy 2018-2030 that are necessary to ensure that it complies with national policies and legislation in force from time to time and accords with other County Council strategies.

**Reasons for Recommendation**

3. To ensure the Authority has an up to date statement of its environmental priorities and objectives which is aligned with its framework for action to meet the global challenge of climate change and against which its performance can be objectively assessed.
4. To enable the Strategy to be amended in line with developing Government policy and changes in legislation which may be introduced during its 12 year lifespan and to ensure that it remains relevant should there be changes to other County Council policies/strategies over this period.

**Timetable for Decision (including Scrutiny)**

5. This report was considered by the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> June and its comments will be

reported to the Cabinet.

6. If approved by the Cabinet, the new Strategy will come in to force with immediate effect, replacing the current Environment Strategy 2011-2021 and the Carbon Reduction Strategy 2014-2020.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

7. At its meeting on 28 September 2011 the County Council approved the current Environment Strategy which sets out the Council's vision and objectives on the environment for the period 2011-2021.
8. At its meeting on 15 July 2014, the Cabinet approved the Carbon Reduction Strategy (CRS) 2014-2020 and Implementation Plan which sets out the priorities and key actions for reducing carbon emissions in Leicestershire.
9. At its meeting on 6 December 2017 the County Council approved the Strategic Plan 2018–2022 and the Single Outcomes Framework.

### **Resource Implications**

10. There are no immediate resource implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Projects identified to implement and deliver the Strategy will be developed over time and resources assessed and allocated on a case by case basis. Opportunities to draw in private investment and external grant funding will be sought where appropriate.
11. Utilising an evidenced based approach the Council will continue to identify opportunities where both financial savings and improvements to the environment can be achieved. To date over £21 million has been invested in significant projects across Leicestershire which have direct and indirect environmental benefits, including the street lighting LED project, the installation of solar panels and the biomass boiler projects.
12. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

13. None.

### **Officers to contact**

Ann Carruthers - Director Environment & Transport  
 Tel: (0116) 305 7000  
 Email: [Ann.Carruthers@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Ann.Carruthers@leics.gov.uk)

Joanna Guyll - Assistant Director Environment & Waste  
 Tel: (0116) 305 8101  
 Email: [Joanna.Guyll@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Joanna.Guyll@leics.gov.uk)

## **PART B**

### **Background**

14. A review of the Council's current Environment Strategy and Carbon Reduction Strategy and Implementation Plan has been undertaken. Both strategies were due for review and it was considered opportune to review both at the same time in order to establish a more coherent and comprehensive policy position, setting out the Council's strategic approach to the environment and climate change in a single document.
15. Since the current Strategies were adopted in 2011 and 2014, there have been some significant changes, such as the signing of the Paris Agreement, the release of the Government's Clean Growth Strategy and 25 Year Environment Plan, as well as increasing pressures on the Council's resources due to ongoing public sector austerity, meaning that the current strategies were out of date and did not reflect the current context within which the Council was operating.
16. Consultants AMEC Foster Wheeler were appointed to carry out the review. This involved carrying out a policy review of the international, national and local context, an assessment of the potential changes associated with a move to a low carbon economy, a high level review of potential climate change impacts for Leicestershire and Council services and a review of other local authority Environment Strategies. This provided an evidence base to support the development of the new Environment Strategy.

### **Engagement**

17. An important part of the review was to strengthen cross departmental ownership of the new Strategy. The consultants prepared a Consultation and Engagement Plan which was split into two stages. Stage 1 consisted of three facilitated half-day workshops with internal stakeholders, while stage 2 consisted of an online survey which was sent to both internal and external stakeholders asking for their views on a working draft of the Environment Strategy. Appendix C provides a list of the external stakeholders consulted as part of the review which included the City and District Councils, local universities and organisations such as the National Forest, the Rural Community Council and the National Farmers Union.
18. A total of 29 key staff attended the stage 1 workshops, representing all departments and priority service areas relevant to the Environment Strategy. The feedback from the workshops showed that there was cross departmental support for the Council to take action on climate change and on protecting the environment. While there was recognition that there was much the Council could control within its own operations, there were concerns about how much control and influence it had across the wider County. The solution to this was acknowledged to be greater collaborative working with a range of partners both inside and outside the County.

19. While there was a desire for ambition, it was acknowledged that the ongoing budgetary constraints would inevitably restrain environmental action. The view, however, was that this could be mitigated by better joint working across service areas avoiding areas working in isolation which was not cost effective.
20. The new governance structure for the Environment Strategy (see paragraph 35) in the form of the Environment Strategy Delivery Board is designed to enable this greater joint working across service areas. The Delivery Board will also agree how best to engage and collaborate with external partners as part of implementing the Action Plan.
21. Stage 2 of the consultation presented a working draft of the proposed new Environment Strategy to both internal and external stakeholders and sought feedback on its contents.
22. A total of 35 responses were received; some of which were group responses from service areas and organisations. The key headline results of this stage of the consultation were-
  - That 64% of respondents agreed that the supporting text provided sufficient content and evidence to give them an understanding of the key drivers, benefits, purpose and scope of the Environment Strategy; and,
  - That 64% of respondents agreed that the Vision Statement adequately and clearly set out the aspirations for the Environment Strategy.
23. Stakeholders were specifically asked to comment on the draft aims, objectives, targets and indicators which had been identified. A range of useful comments were received across a number of topic areas, including adding more detail about the key drivers, expanding the range of national policy and legislative drivers, and making changes to the language and wording used. These were incorporated and expanded upon where possible in preparing the final Environment Strategy document attached.

### **The National Picture**

24. Development of the Strategy has been informed by the previously mentioned evidence base, which identified the key international, national and local drivers for action on the environment and climate change. In particular, the evidence base highlights the Paris Agreement, the Climate Change Act 2008, the Clean Growth Strategy and the Government's 25 year Environment Plan.
25. Nationally we are going through a period of change as the Government sets out its policy position on the environment and provides increasing detail on how it expects this to be delivered. In doing this, the Government is expected to clarify what the roles and responsibilities of local government will be. As a result, it has been necessary to build flexibility into the Council's proposed new 12 year Strategy so that this can be adapted to respond to any new guidance or legislation which might be introduced during this period.

26. Several environmental issues are very much in the public consciousness and there are increasing calls for action on areas such as single use plastics, local air quality, energy consumption, biodiversity, use of electric vehicles etc. The new Environment Strategy has been prepared with this in mind and will enable the Council to respond to public concerns as well as changes in national policy or legislation.

### **The new Environment Strategy - Key Points**

27. The new Environment Strategy sets out how the Strategy will contribute to meeting the outcomes set out in the Council's Strategic Plan 2018-22. It also shows how the activities of the Council impact on the environment and sets out the rationale for taking action to address this and to address wider environmental issues affecting the County and the people living within it.

28. The scope of the Strategy is:-

- the legal and statutory duties that the Council must fulfil regarding the environment and the national response to climate change;
- what the Council needs to do to embed environmental sustainability into the effective and efficient running of Council services; and,
- what the Council needs to do to fulfil its leadership role in a way that recognises and minimises its environmental impact, improves the health and wellbeing of people in the area, and contributes to the sustainable economic development of the County.

29. The vision of the Strategy is as follows:-

*'Leicestershire County Council will minimise the environmental impacts of its own activities and will contribute to the improvement of the wider environment through local action. We will continue to play a significant role in protecting and enhancing the environment of Leicestershire, meeting the challenges and opportunities of climate change, and seeking to embed environmental sustainability into both social and economic development in the county.'*

30. The Strategy consists of 15 aims set across the following themes:-

- Carbon and Climate Change Impacts;
- Resource Use and Low/Zero Carbon Energy;
- Travel and Transport;
- Biodiversity, Habitats and Local Environment;
- Community and Wellbeing; and,
- Local Economy.

31. For each aim there are a range of both internal and external objectives which provide more detail on how the aims will be delivered both within the Council and by the Council, where it has control and influence within Leicestershire. Both the aims and objectives have been written in such a way as to give the

Strategy longevity and to provide scope for the Strategy to respond to the nationally evolving position on the environment and climate change.

32. The Strategy will be supported by a live three year Action Plan (a copy of which is attached as Appendix B to this report) designed to accommodate changing policies and priorities. The Action Plan will set out the priority actions for the forthcoming period building on the evidence base produced as part of the review of the Environment Strategy and further discussions with action owners and delivery partners.
33. A suite of high-level targets have been set within the Strategy covering climate change, waste, water, energy, transportation and environmental performance. The climate change target has been informed by the Government's target to achieve an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 2050, as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008. This equates to a 38% reduction in GHG emissions from County Council operations by 2030 (compared to 2016-17 baseline). The Strategy also includes the target of 100% clean energy by 2050 following the signing of the UK 100 Pledge by the Cabinet on the 22 May 2018.
34. Further work is needed to develop all targets to 2030 and to establish all the appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs). Actions for doing this are included in the three year Action Plan. Targets will be updated as other Council strategies are revised, such as the Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the Energy Strategy. This will be done through the Environment Strategy Delivery Board (ESDB) (see below) and the action planning process. Targets will also be periodically reviewed to consider any relevant changes due to Government policy or legislation and to ensure the targets represent a continuous improvement in performance.

### **Governance and Performance Monitoring**

35. A new governance structure called the Environment Strategy Delivery Board (ESDB) will be established to oversee the implementation of the Strategy.
36. The Board will be chaired by the Assistant Director (Environment & Waste). Membership of the Delivery Board will be drawn from relevant Heads of Service, Team Managers and officers involved directly in specific projects/actions set out in the Action Plan. The Delivery Board will be able to establish Task and Finish Groups to work on particular projects as required enabling progress to be maintained.
37. Performance monitoring of the Strategy will continue to be managed through the Councils Environmental Management System and reported to Chief Officers and the Lead Member for Environment and Transport as appropriate, as well as the ESDB. An annual environmental performance summary report will also be published on the Council's website.

## **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

38. An outline Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment indicated that overall the Strategy is likely to have a positive impact. However, individual projects will be assessed for equal opportunities implications as they are developed as part of the Strategy implementation process.

## **Background Papers**

13 September 2011 – Cabinet – ‘Environment Strategy Review 2011-2021’

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=3127&Ver=4>

15 July 2014 – Cabinet – ‘The Carbon Reduction Strategy for Leicestershire County Council Carbon Reduction Strategy 2013 – 2020’

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=3992&Ver=4>

## **Appendices**

Appendix A - Environment Strategy

Appendix B - Working High Level Action Plan

Appendix C - List of External Stakeholders consulted

This page is intentionally left blank