

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Executive Member for Customer Engagement and Climate Change Champion

To: Cabinet – 19th October 2020

Author: Greg Pearson, Senior Policy Advisor

Subject: Update on the Breckland Sustainability Strategy

Purpose: To provide a written update on the progress to date in developing the Breckland Sustainability Strategy and to set out the next steps.

Recommendation:

- 1) That Cabinet note the contents of this report.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In September 2019 the council declared a climate emergency and agreed to work towards developing a Breckland Sustainability Strategy and an associated programme of work. It is fundamental that any such strategy and work programme is built on a strong factual evidence base. Therefore, the council has taken a measured approach to the development of its strategy and has not rushed into making commitments that in reality it might not be able to deliver within its resources or timescales.
- 1.2 The coronavirus pandemic has significantly impacted on the council's original timeframes for delivering this piece of work as rightly the council was required to redirect resources to its emergency response activities.
- 1.3 However, since June 2020 we have been making steady progress in bringing forward the strategy and have delivered a number of actions to support the climate change agenda. They are as follows: -
 - a. The Council has now switched tariff within its existing energy contract with Total Gas and Power to one that provides energy generated by wind/solar/hydro which are all seen as zero carbon sources. Our provider has estimated that the switch will save the council and estimated 357.55 tCO₂/year.
 - b. The Council has appointed an organisation called Eunomia to conduct its carbon audit and develop a high level emissions reduction plan. This will enable the council to fully understand its own impact and the work it will need to undertake to become carbon neutral. Once this work is complete it will enable the Council to set an achievable date to become carbon neutral.
 - c. The council has set aside a modest budget of £24,000 for the Portfolio Holder for Customer Engagement and lead officers to commission work to help gather an evidence base to inform the developing strategy. A proportion of this has been used to fund the carbon audit above.

- d. A fixed-term Environment and Climate Change Officer has been created by the Council to provide additional resource to help support and take this agenda forward. The recruitment for this post will be live at the time of this meeting.
- e. The Council has utilised the University of East Anglia's Internship programme to bring in a post graduate student between June and September to assist with research and identifying best practice examples to inform the development of the Council's emerging strategy.
- f. The council is actively working with all the other district councils in Norfolk, Norfolk County Council and the Broads Authority as part of the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership to identify opportunities where joint working would deliver economies of scales and better outcomes for the whole county.
- g. Breckland Training Services have developed a training package around carbon literacy for both elected members and officers. Which we will be looking to test with a small group in the next month before rolling out more widely.

1.4 The next steps the Council will be taking are as follows: -

- a. All elected members will be invited to a member's forum on 9th November 2020 which will set out the proposed themes of the Breckland Sustainability Strategy and set out a proposed programme of work. The purpose of this session will to invite feedback and ideas from members.
- b. A draft strategy and action plan will be taken to Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 3rd December 2020 for consultation.
- c. Subject to feedback from Overview and Scrutiny final sign off will be sort from Council on 21st January 2021.

2.0 **OPTIONS**

2.1 That Cabinet note the contents of this report.

2.2 Do Nothing.

3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 This report is to provide an update to cabinet on progress to date.

4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 The work to date and the next steps set out in this report will enable the creation of a Breckland Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy with an associated work programme which will set out how the council will look to address its own environmental impact, use the powers that it has to influence others across the district to lessen their impact and work with communities across the district to make changes.

5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Data Protection;

Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.1 **Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues**

5.1.1 The Breckland Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy will when delivered set out how the Council will look to address its own environmental impact, use the powers that it has to influence others across the district to lessen their impact and work with communities across the district to make changes.

5.2 **Corporate Priorities**

5.2.1 This directly links to the delivery of the following critical activity set out under the 'Our Place' strategic theme "We will develop an Environmental and Climate Strategy that sets out how as an organisation we will respond to climate change but also identifies how we will empower our communities to take action for themselves"

5.3 **Reputation**

5.3.1 Climate Change is a matter that is important to many of our residents and it is important that any strategy and related work programme is carefully considered to ensure that it achievable as failure to deliver against this would have significant reputational damage to the council.

5.4 **Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales**

5.4.1 As set out in this report an all members forum has been arranged for 9th November to seek their input into the key themes and proposals that have been developed so far.

6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 All

7.0 **ACRONYMS**

7.1 NA

Background papers: -

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Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Mandatory Service and Discretionary Service