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# Environment Strategy Annual Progress Report

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Executive
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	3 November 2022
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter
<b>Report Author:</b>	Jenny Graham
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX4242

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## 1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to present the annual progress report on the Environment Strategy covering the second year of the delivery of the Strategy from July 2021 to July 2022.

## 2 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive note the Annual Progress Report on the Environment Strategy (as included in Appendix A) which is published on the Council's website.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	There are no direct funding implications as a result of this report. Projects and actions already underway have existing budgets. Teams across the Council will use the budget setting process to plan for future programmes and secure funding for them.
<b>Human Resource:</b>	There are no direct HR implications as a result of this report.
<b>Legal:</b>	There are no direct Legal implications as a result of this report.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	A high-level risk register has been developed for the Environment Strategy. This is kept up to date and the

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	Environment Delivery Project Board is used to keep it under review.			
<b>Property:</b>	There are no direct property implications as a result of this report.			
<b>Policy:</b>	This annual report aims to demonstrate how the Environment Strategy is being delivered and will play a part in informing and shaping relevant Council policies and plans across the organisation. This is already happening and with relevant training of staff and Members this influence and understanding will become more effective.			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		No impact directly as a result of the annual report and more widely this will need to be dealt with on a project by project basis through the PMM process to ensure delivery does not have a negative impact on equalities.
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		No impact directly as a result of the annual report and more widely this will need to be dealt with on a project by project basis through the PMM process to ensure delivery does not have a negative impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics.

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<b>Environmental Impact:</b>	X			The purpose of the annual report is to demonstrate the delivery of the Environment Strategy which seeks to have a positive impact on the environment in numerous ways. It has a primary target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 and has a vision which can be found in section 4 of the <a href="#">Environment Strategy</a> . As the projects within the Delivery Plan are implemented there will be consideration in the detailed planning stages as to whether there are unintended negative environmental impacts that require mitigation.
<b>Health Impact:</b>	X			The projects and activities within the Delivery Plan that have been delivered and have a focus on carbon reduction will have health benefits from a reduction in air pollution. Some projects delivered to date are not purely focused on outcomes that reduce carbon and also seek to improve health and wellbeing as a key benefit.
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		X		There is not a significant ICT impact.
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		X		There is not a significant impact on Digital Services.

<p><b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b></p>	<p>X</p>			<p>The main Council Priority to which the projects and actions within the Delivery Plan contribute is <b>maintain a green district</b>. They do this in so many ways but will have a key focus on reducing carbon.</p> <p>Other priorities from the Council Strategy that the Environment Strategy helps to deliver are:</p> <p><b>Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire.</b> Projects within the Delivery Plan seek to support businesses to be more efficient (especially impacting on energy and waste) and to develop in a green and sustainable way.</p> <p><b>Develop local infrastructure, including housing, to support and grow the local economy.</b> The Delivery Plan includes active travel infrastructure, green and blue infrastructure and influencing the environmental standards of other infrastructure, including housing.</p>
<p><b>Core Business:</b></p>	<p>X</p>			<p>As a result of projects delivered the Council will see some of its core business processes improved as the Environment Strategy starts to have an impact.</p> <p>For example, the implementation of the Social Value Policy that includes environmental factors is having a positive impact on our procurement outcomes and how they can align with the Environment Strategy and bring environmental benefits.</p>
<p><b>Data Impact:</b></p>		<p>X</p>		<p>It is not envisaged that there will be any data impacts.</p>

<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	<p>Environment Board have had the opportunity to consider the draft Annual Progress Report and are kept up to date with projects throughout the year.</p> <p>Various teams have been consulted within the Council and specifically officers who attend the Environment Delivery Project Board.</p> <p>Members on the Environment Advisory Group have also considered the draft Annual Progress Report.</p>
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## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Annual Progress Report for the Environment Strategy. It specifically covers the period from July 2021 through to July 2022. It is, however, part of the continuous story of how the Council is addressing climate change and environmental issues in West Berkshire.
- 4.2 The Annual Progress Report is included in Appendix A and sets out actions and achievements under each strategic objective of the Environment Strategy including case studies. The report also demonstrates how the Council has listened to feedback it has received throughout the year in a 'You asked, we did' section.
- 4.3 An important part of the report is to provide an update on the Council's carbon footprint and also to report on the carbon emission data for the District. The Council's carbon footprint has been reduced by 25% over the last 2 years following the baseline being established in 2019/20. The emission data for the District as a whole shows that over the last 2 years of reporting the reduction in impact has been 18% for the factors where there is most local influence.
- 4.4 There has been significant activity as reported in Appendix A. An important part of this process of reporting is not just to provide highlights of the previous year but to also look forward to scenarios for our progress on the path to net zero and consider what this means for future actions and investment decisions. The progress report this year starts to do this and will be developed in future years as our data collection and scenario planning continue to be improved.

## 5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 It has been another busy year of action building on previous work and progressing some significant projects. The highlights of the period for which we are reporting (July 2021 – July 2022) can be found in Figure 1 within the Annual Progress Report (Appendix A): *Environment Strategy Highlights July 2021- July 2022*.
- 5.2 There are two key strands of action:
  - 1) reducing the Council's own carbon emissions with actions from across the organisation contributing to this (along with those of our major contracting partners),

- 2) engaging with key stakeholders and encouraging and facilitating action in local communities, with businesses and amongst individuals to help reduce carbon emissions within the District.
- 5.3 Internally, we have further expanded the Environment Delivery Team which has helped to raise the profile of the Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan and enabled greater cross-team working with various areas of the Council. We have recruited a number of Eco-Champions across all Directorates to help staff fully understand what part they and their teams can play in reducing the Council's impact. The plans to deliver a solar farm have progressed well and updates will be available through our [dedicated webpage](#). Carbon-neutral road surfacing projects were delivered in Beedon, Burghfield and Thatcham and the A4 Western Avenue Active Travel scheme has been delivered to support more sustainable travel in Newbury. To help build our resilience to climate change, planning permission was sought and granted for two further flood alleviation schemes in Thatcham.
- 5.4 Externally, carbon reduction in the District is being addressed by continuing to build relationships with local residents, community groups, schools and businesses. The West Berkshire Parish Climate Forum continues and has covered a range of topic areas to help encourage and inform communities regarding actions they could take. A number of initiatives have taken place linking with businesses aimed at promoting green business and also providing funding for local businesses to reduce their carbon impact. We have linked with organisations across West Berkshire with an interest in our natural environment and developed an informal 'West Berkshire Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership'. This has linked with local land owners and will continue to develop to bring together work that can support biodiversity improvements and natural carbon reduction projects.
- 5.5 The reported actions and projects within the annual report are making a difference and this is confirmed in the reduction of the carbon impact both for the Council's activities and that for the District as a whole. There has been a reduction of approximately 3,000 tonnes of carbon emissions from the Council's activities from the baseline in 2019/20 to the latest reporting period of 2021/22. This 25% reduction in 2 years shows good progress. The progress for the District is monitored through data supplied by BEIS (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) on a calendar year basis. There is always a lag in the figures being reported meaning that the latest figures are for 2020. The progress over 2 years from 2018 to 2020 shows an 18% reduction in impact for the District when considering elements where there is most opportunity for local influence (e.g. not including the impact of the A34 and M4 strategic roads).

## 6 Other options considered

- 6.1 There is a commitment to report on an annual basis on progress delivering the Environment Strategy. The pattern of reporting is to look at achievements and actions from July one year through to the end of June the following year. This aligns with the approval of the Environment Strategy in July 2020. Within this the actual carbon footprint data is captured for each financial year with the most relevant period being reported in the Annual Progress Report. The District's data which comes from BEIS is based on a calendar year and, again, the most up to date published position is included in the APR. It is an option to look at different approaches to the timing of reporting but

there seems to be some logic in having a baseline that corresponds to the initial approval of the Environment Strategy.

- 6.2 It is not an option not to report on such an important area as carbon reduction. The Council is seeking to always improve on how it reports information. In line with this continuous improvement, a project to assess the carbon impacts of each relevant action or project in the Delivery Plan has been progressed this year. Further work needs to be done on how this can be incorporated into the presentation of results and a forecast of impacts going forward. Each year as our understanding of impacts and data improves we will endeavour to improve the quality and accuracy of our reporting.

## 7 Looking to the future

- 7.1 Whilst this annual report includes initiatives and achievements up to July 2022, work continues at pace and there have been further significant achievements since then that will of course be featured in our next annual progress report. For example, planning permission was granted for a solar farm near Grazeley in August 2022. We will be progressing with this project in the coming year. Also, the Executive approved support for electric / hybrid taxis at their meeting in September 2022 by agreeing a series of measures to help the taxi trade 'go green' including subsidies.
- 7.2 The impact of the Environment Act and related secondary legislation will be watched closely to see how this will influence our work in West Berkshire. We are also progressing some significant work through the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership which we will seek to share the next time we report.
- 7.3 There have been a few years now of gathering data to report on the Council's carbon footprint. As our collected data grows, we can start to plot our progress and look at possible future scenarios of our pathway to achieving net zero carbon by 2030. Figure 3 in the report starts this process and is a tool we will develop as our knowledge of impacts from our projects and actions grows and as our plans for future investment are further developed.

## 8 Conclusion

- 8.1 The annual report demonstrates the actions that have taken place to progress our work on delivering the Environment Strategy over the last year. It is part of the ongoing story of how the Council is responding to the challenges of climate change and protecting our environment.
- 8.2 The Council's carbon emissions and those recorded for the District are decreasing. Good progress is being made with 25% reduction over the last 2 years for the Council's activities and 18% reduction for the District as a whole.
- 8.3 Actions will continue to be delivered through focusing on the Environment Strategy Delivery Plan which is kept up to date throughout the year and published on the [Council's website](#).

## 9 Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix A – Annual Progress Report on the Environment Strategy

**Background Papers:**

The Environment Strategy was approved by the Executive in July 2020 – the papers relating to that decision can be found [here](#) and the [published strategy](#) is on the website.

A stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment and Data Protection Assessment have both been carried out in relation to this work. This information is available on request.

**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes:  No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council’s position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

**Wards affected:** The Environment Strategy has impacts across the District

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(July 2021- July 2022)**