

Signed off by	Head of Corporate Policy, Projects & Performance
Author	Dan Woodard, Sustainability Project Officer
Telephone	276891
Email	Dan.Woodard@reigate-banstead.gov.uk
To	Executive
Date	Thursday, 18 November 2021
Executive Member	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Policy and Resources

Key Decision Required	Y
Wards Affected	(All Wards);

Subject	Environmental Sustainability Strategy: Progress Report
----------------	--

Recommendations
<p>That the Executive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Agrees the annual Environmental Sustainability progress report (Annex 1) for publication on the Council website (ii) Agrees the proposed additions to the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan (Annex 2) (iii) Reasserts its commitment to working in partnership with Surrey County Council and other Surrey districts and boroughs to achieve county-wide climate objectives
Reasons for Recommendations
To reiterate the Council's commitment to tackling climate change and sustainability issues, including in partnership with other public authorities, to enable us to provide regular progress reports and to ensure we remain proactive and agile in our response.
Executive Summary
This report provides a summary of the Council's progress in delivering its Environmental Sustainability Strategy ('the ES Strategy') and Action Plan since it was agreed (following call-in by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee) in August 2020.

Since the ES Strategy was agreed, a new Council Sustainability Team has been established and positive progress has been made on actions across all themes within the Strategy.

Recognising that this is a policy area which continues to evolve, this report (at Annex 2) also makes a number of recommendations about new actions/activities for inclusion in the ES Strategy Action Plan. These new actions are intended to evolve and enhance our approach, ensuring that we remain proactive and agile in tackling the climate crisis.

This covering report summarises key elements of our progress, challenges and next steps. It also provides an update on recent work by the County Council – in consultation with boroughs and districts - to prepare a Surrey-wide Climate Change Delivery Plan.

Executive has authority to approve the above recommendations

Statutory Powers

1. Under the Local Government Act 2000, the Council has a duty to promote the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of its area. The Council also has related statutory duties around environmental health, waste, and planning.
2. The Climate Change Act 2008 and subsequent amendments sets out much of the UK's policy response to climate change; having left the European Union, a new Environment Bill is being progressed through Parliament, which in due course will provide a new legal framework relating to environmental protection.

Background

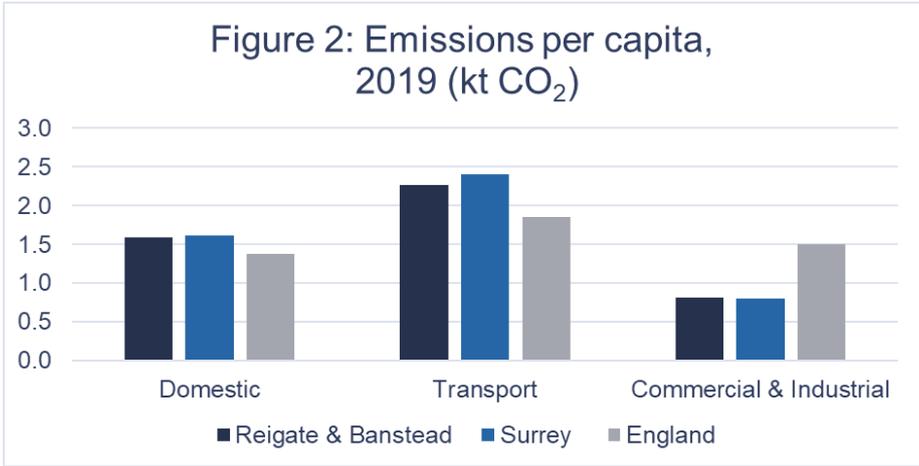
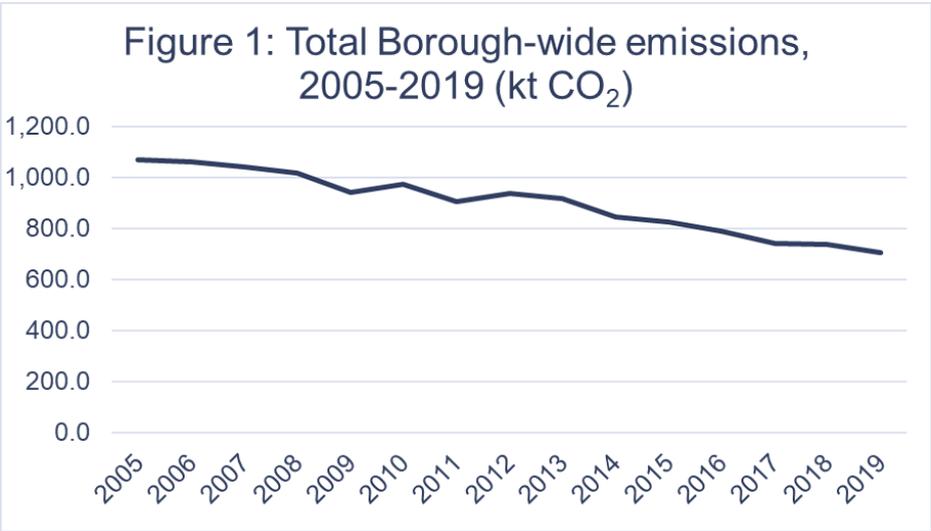
3. In response to the growing climate challenge, the Government has set increasingly challenging targets to reduce greenhouse gases over the coming years, cumulating in a target for the country to become net-zero by 2050.
4. Our own corporate plan, Reigate & Banstead 2025¹, commits the Council to reducing its own environmental impact, and supporting residents and businesses to do the same.
5. Following on from this commitment, in Summer 2020, the Executive agreed a new Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ES Strategy), with accompanying Action Plan and Performance Indicators². This trio of documents sets out a range of measures to deliver a greater degree of sustainability within the Council and the Borough, and outlines that the Council itself will aim to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030³
6. While the Council has the most direct control over its own operational emissions, these amount to around 0.2% of emissions within the borough; it is therefore important that we also support residents and businesses to take steps to tackle climate change and sustainability issues, and work with partner organisations to make progress.

¹ www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/rbbc2025

² www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/sustainability

³ Based on scope 1 and scope 2 emissions, with a focus on achieving carbon neutrality including scope 3 emissions as soon as possible thereafter

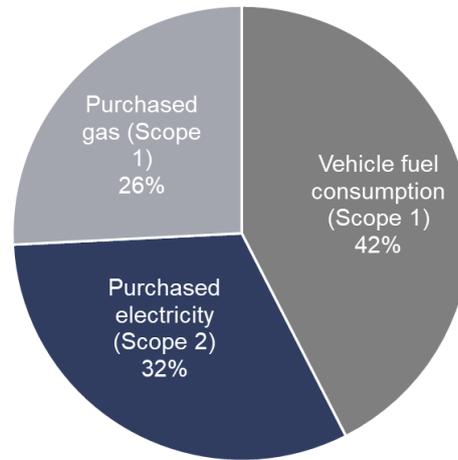
7. Data from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) indicates that progress is being made on reducing emissions within the borough (figure 1); however also that domestic and transport emissions per head are higher in Reigate & Banstead than the national average (figure 2).



8. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of the Council’s operational emissions⁴. Data on CO₂ emissions for the year 2020/21 is still in the process of being collated, and will be published once available. It should be noted that changes in the way the Council has operated as a result of the pandemic will have impacted on organisational CO₂ emissions for this period.

⁴ Based on information set out in the Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Figure 3: Council operational emissions



Key Information

Progress

9. Detailed information about the progress that has been made on initiatives outlined in the Action Plan for the year 2020/21 is set out in Annex 1. Some examples are provided below, structured around the four themes within the ES Strategy.
10. **Effective implementation:** This section of the Strategy covers 'cross cutting issues such as resourcing, communications, planning and partnership working. Progress has included:
 - a. Establishing a new sustainability team at the Council
 - b. A wide range of communication-related activity, including comprehensively updated webpages, articles in Borough News, and social media posts about what we are doing as a Council, and how residents and businesses can get involved
 - c. A new Sustainable Construction and Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document
 - d. A new Sustainable Business Network, and engagement with a wide range of partner organisations including Surrey County Council, the Town and Parish Council, local businesses and community groups.
11. **Energy & carbon:** This section covers energy efficiency and renewable energy, and low carbon transport. Progress has included:
 - a. The energy the Council purchases is now carbon neutral, through a combination of renewable energy tariffs and offsetting
 - b. 10% of the Council's vehicle fleet now electric or hybrid vehicles
 - c. New electric vehicle charging points installed in Horley with plans to install more charging points in Banstead by the end of the year

- d. Successful joint (Surrey-wide) bids for funding from the Government's Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery fund which has benefitted 81 of the most energy inefficient homes in the borough so far
 - e. Successful promotion of the Solar Together scheme, with over 800 residents expressing an interest and 273 panels installed so far
 - f. Support for Raven Housing Trust to progress its net-zero plans, via our waiver of up to £1m of clawback and
 - g. Submission of a bid to the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to upgrade 66 Accent Housing properties and 28 Raven Housing Trust properties
12. **Low impact consumption:** This section covers waste reduction, water efficiency and responsible sourcing. Progress has included:
- a. Resuming our flats recycling programme after it was paused due to Covid
 - b. Collecting greater volumes of household waste & recycling, and running campaigns in relation to littering and flytipping
 - c. Switching our procured stationery so it is more environmentally friendly
 - d. Providing advice on low impact consumption for residents and businesses via our website
13. **Natural environment:** This section covers tree planting, supporting biodiversity and reducing pollution. Progress has included:
- a. Planting more trees on our own land, improving areas of soft landscaping and planting native and pollinator species
 - b. Successful joint (Surrey-wide) bid for funding from Defra's Treescapes Fund to delivery 61 new trees in the borough
 - c. Publishing a community tree planting guide and running workshop sessions to support residents and community groups to plant in their local areas
14. These are tangible examples of some of the progress that has been made. Alongside this work, the Sustainability Team has supported managers and officers across the Council to understand sustainability and climate change and identify opportunities to make a difference, and to establish processes to assist with reporting. This is work that will continue to ensure that sustainable ways of working become embedded within the Council.

Challenges

15. The months before and after the publication of the ES Strategy have been far from typical, and the Covid-19 pandemic has inevitably had an impact on our ability to make progress on some activities within the action plan. This is due to a number of factors, including:
- a. reduced capacity for some teams (either directly as a result of Covid-19 or due to staff redeployment)
 - b. additional workload generated by the Council's response efforts, meaning that team capacity to support sustainability actions has been reduced; and
 - c. impact of restrictions imposed by central Government including lockdowns, meaning that it has not been possible or appropriate to progress some actions.

The detail around these impacts is included in Annex 1. Work is now underway to progress delayed activity and will be reported in due course.

Next Steps

16. As well as setting out progress on, and challenges associated with, 2020/21 actions, Annex 1 explains the next steps in relation to these actions. Work is also underway to delivery the objectives outlined in the Action Plan for 2021/22 (progress on which will be reported in the next annual report).
17. In addition, a number of additional activities have been identified since the publication of the ES Strategy. These are proposed for agreement in Annex 2. Also proposed is an 'umbrella' action to replace a number of completed actions. It is intended that the Action Plan continue to be kept under review and updates published annually to ensure that progress is reflected and that the Council remains agile and is able to adapt to the constantly shifting landscape of sustainability and climate change mitigation/adaptation.

Surrey County Council's Climate Change Delivery Plan

18. Having agreed its own Climate Change Strategy in Spring 2020, Surrey County Council recently developed its first 5 year Climate Change Delivery Plan (CCDP), in consultation with the districts and boroughs in the county⁵.
19. When the Executive agreed the RBBC ES Strategy in July 2020, it also formally supported the overall approach in the SCC Climate Change Strategy and committed this Council to continue to work with SCC and other Surrey boroughs and districts to develop a jointly owned action plan and achieve shared climate change objectives.
20. The CCDP is structured around four main themes, and includes a number of workstreams that local authorities will pursue (with some being undertaken by SCC, some by individual districts and boroughs and some by all the local authorities working in partnership). These themes are:
 - a. Greener Futures Communities
 - b. One Net Zero Public Estate
 - c. Build Back Better; and
 - d. Grow Back Greener
21. It is recommended that the Executive take this opportunity to reassert the Council's commitment to joint working. In particular over the coming weeks and months this joint work will focus on confirming more detail about how the CCDP workstreams will be taken forward, collectively, by Surrey's local authorities.

Options

Recommendation 1:

22. Option (a): Agree the ES Strategy Progress Update at Annex 1. This option is recommended as it enables us to publish a formal report on progress, ensuring transparency in relation to our continuing activity to lead local action to tackle climate change and other sustainability issues.

⁵ Available at <https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/documents/s82192/Annex%20-%20Climate%20Change%20Delivery%20Plan%20Main%20Report-Cabinet%20Draft.pdf>

23. Option (b): Do not agree the ES Strategy Progress Update for publication. This option is not recommended as it is important that we publicly report our progress on a topic that is of increasing local interest.

Recommendation 2:

24. Option (a): Agree the proposed additions to the ES Action Plan at Annex 2. This option is recommended as it enables the Council to continue to evolve its activity to maximise local progress, and ensure a robust and comprehensive approach to tackling the climate crisis.
25. Option (b): Do not agree the proposed additions to the Action Plan. This option is not agreed as it would represent a missed opportunity to expand our activity into new and important areas.
26. Option (c): Agree different additions to the Action Plan. Members may wish to agree different additions to the Action Plan, however it is noted that such additions should be subject to an equality impact assessment: consideration would also need to be given to the resources available to implement any different actions.

Recommendation 3

27. Option (a): Agree the recommendation to reassert our commitment to work with other Surrey local authorities to achieve county-wide climate objectives. This option is recommended – climate change is not a local problem and requires combined action across the wider area, therefore joint working is important.
28. Option (b): Do not agree the recommendation to commit to working with other Surrey local authorities. This option is not recommended as without such joint work the ability of the Council to deliver its borough-wide climate and sustainability ambitions will be considerably constrained.

Legal Implications

29. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, however it is noted that any review of the Council's procurement strategy presents an opportunity to ensure sustainability is taken into account in future procurement activities.
30. Any statutory obligations on the Council arising from the forthcoming Environment Bill will be considered either separately or as part of a future ES Strategy annual report.

Financial Implications

31. Budgetary provision for the implementation of the ES Strategy currently comprises a small annual revenue budget of £20,000; revenue budget for one permanent Sustainability Project Officer, plus an allocated Environmental Sustainability Reserve, which is currently being used to fund a part time fixed term Sustainability Project Officer as well as contributing to the cost of other sustainability workstreams. In addition, the capital programme includes an indicative (but unallocated) £250k allocation.
32. For many of the initiatives in the Action Plan, costs will be met by the relevant Council department (for example, Fleet, Facilities etc), with the sustainability budgets serving to provide 'top up' or match funding. External funding opportunities are pursued

wherever possible, with recent success in securing funding to benefit the borough from the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Fund (BEIS) and the Local Authority Treescapes Fund (Defra).

33. Where additional funding requirements are identified, these will be pursued in the usual way. In some cases, there may be opportunities for savings and efficiencies related to investment in sustainability measures (for example energy efficiency or renewables generation), which will be reflected in relevant business cases; it can also be expected that the costs associated with a business-as-usual approach will increase over time (for example, fossil fuel prices, taxes on polluting vehicles, recovery costs associated with extreme weather events).
34. Statutory obligations may emerge for local councils via the Environment Bill or other Government interventions which may introduce additional financial burdens on the Council, however the scope and potential financial implication of such additional obligations is currently unknown.

Equalities Implications

35. We have a statutory duty to consider and demonstrate this in all of our decisions.
36. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the new actions proposed in Annex 2, and is attached as a background paper. This concludes that overall the impact of the proposed new actions on those with protected characteristics will be neutral and could be positive.
37. Opportunities for positive impact exist, specifically:
 - a. In relation to domestic retrofit, where the current focus on tackling the hardest to heat homes first will benefit vulnerable residents from protected characteristic groups living in those homes, by reducing energy bills and improving living conditions.
 - b. In relation to activity around climate change adaption. It is widely recognised that extreme weather events are likely to impact the most vulnerable in our communities to the greatest extent, so any support and advice that the Council can provide about how to adapt and stay safe will be beneficial.
38. In relation to both of these opportunities, the Equality Impact Assessment has highlighted the importance of ensuring that information is provided in a manner that is accessible to those with protected characteristics.

Communication Implications

39. A communications plan has been developed to support the Environmental Sustainability Strategy, covering both internal and external communications.
40. Annex 1 will be published as our first annual report on our website, and will be supported with some associated communications activity, summarising (for a variety of audiences) key elements of our progress so far.

Environmental Sustainability Implications

41. This is a new section that will be included in future Executive reports to provide information for members about the environmental sustainability implications of decisions.
42. Overall, implementation of the ES Strategy will have a positive environmental impact across the borough as well as contributing to global sustainability and climate objectives. New actions proposed extend the 'reach' of the Council's activity and therefore our ability to facilitate positive change. It will continue to be important that the full range of potential environmental impacts of projects within the Strategy are considered in order to avoid or mitigate any unnecessary negative environmental consequences.
43. Work will continue to improve the Council's access to appropriate data so that the direct impact of our activities can be reported.

Risk Management Considerations

44. No specific risk management considerations have been identified in relation to the content of this report.
45. The risks of individual projects within the ES Strategy action plan will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis using the Council's established project management framework. This will include considering operational risks in relation to existing Council activities, financial risks and health and safety considerations.

Other Implications

46. **Human resources:** The Council employs one permanent Sustainability Project Officer to facilitate the delivery of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. A second fixed term post is due to conclude in December. It is proposed to seek additional funding to enable the continuation of this second post to enable the Council to continue its 'twin-track' approach and focus not only on organisational sustainability but also supporting positive change across the wider borough and within our communities.

Consultation

47. The Annexes appended to this report were discussed at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 21st October. Observations and questions raised by the Committee are summarised below for consideration by Executive members⁶:
 - a. that there are four priority areas which require significant planning, financial spend and delivery to achieve carbon reduction: improving the Council's own assets and buildings, converting the Council's fleet, rolling out electric vehicle charging infrastructure and domestic retrofit
 - b. That a full range of options for the funding and installation of EV charging points on Council-owned land should be considered

⁶ The full draft minutes of the meeting are available via the Modern.Gov website

- c. That further public-facing messaging should be published to increase awareness of the work the Council is doing to combat climate change and help residents act sustainably
 - d. That options for tree planting on areas of Council-owned land should be explored
 - e. That more information on plans to improve the insulation and install alternative heating sources on Council buildings should be shared with members once available
 - f. That the Council should engage with stakeholders to encourage them to minimise the use of glyphosate.
48. Work is underway to develop an annual residents' survey about environmental sustainability, as a means of measuring progress, gaining feedback and helping us target future activities.

Policy Framework

49. This report and its recommendations align with the commitments outlined in Reigate & Banstead 2025 and the Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

Background Papers

1. Reigate & Banstead 2025 (Corporate Plan 2020 – 2025) - https://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/info/20205/plans_and_policies/280/reigate_and_banstead_2025
2. Reigate & Banstead Environmental Sustainability Strategy - https://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/downloads/download/2064/environmental_sustainability_strategy_2020
3. Reigate & Banstead Environmental Sustainability Action Plan - https://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/downloads/download/2064/environmental_sustainability_strategy_2020
4. Reigate & Banstead Environmental Sustainability Performance Indicators - https://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/downloads/download/2064/environmental_sustainability_strategy_2020