

## **Annex 4 – Engagement Report**

### **Environmental Sustainability Strategy**

#### **2023 Review**

#### **Engagement Summary**

## **1 Introduction**

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council (R&BBC) published its first Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ES Strategy) in 2020 with a commitment to review it going forward to continue to take account of local progress, the latest evidence, policy and technological advancements.

In 2023 it was agreed that a light-touch review should be undertaken. The Review process was carried out by the Environmental Sustainability team (ES team) between September and December 2023 in order to deliver a revised ES Strategy document and Action Plan for approval by the Council in early 2024. As part of the Review, an engagement process was developed.

The original Strategy vision, themes, priority areas and net zero targets were not within scope of the review. The objectives were reviewed to ensure the wording is clear and there are no duplicates or omissions.

The key focus of the review was to develop new measurable actions to deliver the objectives in the shorter term, with some less specific actions for the medium and long term. Performance indicators were reviewed to ensure they remain fit for purpose, data is easily obtainable and that they relate to the new actions.

The ES Strategy itself was reviewed and updated, with some additional sections to clarify the scope of the review, the scope of the carbon footprint and to include climate adaptation and resilience as a new theme. Short sections on plans to tackle scope 3 (supplier) carbon emissions and offsetting, as well as challenges and opportunities were also added.

## **2 Stakeholder Mapping**

To develop a suitable engagement process, taking into account the need to ensure adequate feedback whilst recognising resource and time constraints, a stakeholder map was created. Using a matrix of Interest in the Topic against Power and Influence to make change in relation to the topic, stakeholders were located on the matrix as follows:

- Low to Medium Interest, Low to Medium Influence – Monitor sentiment
- Medium to High Interest, Low to Medium Influence – Communicate
- Low to Medium Interest, Medium to High Influence – Keep satisfied
- Medium to High Interest, Medium to High Influence – Key stakeholders – bespoke approach

The resulting matrix is presented in Appendix 1.

From this exercise the method of engagement was chosen for each type of stakeholder grouping, based on knowledge of the stakeholder, opportunities to use existing engagement methods, and time and resource constraints (for the ES team and for stakeholders).

## **3 Engagement Activities**

### **3.1 Monitor sentiment - Prioritising the objectives**

Prioritising the ES Strategy objectives, to give a steer as to where efforts should be focused, formed the main part of our engagement with the 'monitor sentiment' group. This involved stakeholders seeing a list of the objectives, having an opportunity to discuss them, and then indicating those they felt should have highest priority. This was mainly done using printed objectives with attendees adding stickers to their priorities, however the exercise was also successfully undertaken using a Teams Whiteboard for online engagement sessions. Unless indicated in the stakeholder summaries below, the number of objectives the attendees could choose was not limited.

This was a quick and easy engagement exercise, that also allowed discussion, however, with over 20 objectives there was a tendency for people to focus on those that were first in their line of sight and the possibility that they didn't read every objective.

### **3.2 Communicate**

For this group of stakeholders we used the objectives prioritisation exercise (see 3.1) but prefaced it with presentations about the ES Strategy review, and opportunities for discussion, to provide further information and feedback opportunities.

### **3.3 Keep satisfied**

This group of stakeholders were kept informed of the ES Strategy review.

### **3.4 Key stakeholders – bespoke**

These stakeholders were invited to bespoke sessions to provide them with information about the ES Strategy review, but also to gain input from them, over and above that obtained for the other three stakeholder groups. The engagement exercises for the stakeholders in this group are explained further in the stakeholder summaries in Section 4 below.

### **3.5 Constraints**

Engagement exercises were subject to constraints of time and resources.

The engagement sessions were informal and were to gauge views rather than perform a rigorous analysis of responses. This document summarises the engagement sessions held and offers summaries of the responses received. As explained in Section 6 below, all responses have been reviewed by the ES team, although for presentational purposes they have been summarised and grouped in this report.

## **4 Engagement Exercises – Council**

### **4.1 Members – key stakeholders**

#### **4.1.1 Cross-Party Member Sustainability Group**

As an informal Group, established as a consultative forum of councillors from across the political spectrum, this group were identified as key stakeholders. The Group formed in 2020 to review and feedback on implementation of the ES Strategy and was reconvened for the ES Strategy Review and to oversee ongoing implementation of the ES Strategy.

As key stakeholders, two bespoke sessions took place.

Session 1 started with a presentation reviewing the current ES Strategy and outlining the Review process. Group members were then asked to consider where the focus of the ES Strategy should be, in terms of control and influence – things within our direct control (typically our activities, buildings and vehicles), things where we have an indirect impact (procurement, planning) and things that we have an influence over (working with others, communications).

There was a good discussion with some of the points raised including:

- The Council can show what we have done and identify what residents can do at home
- There are influences on borough activities from outside the borough (eg traffic, aircraft)
- The Council needs to do everything it can, and be an exemplar
- With limited resources, it is important to focus on areas under direct control, then areas with the most effect (eg partnership working)

The second exercise was to consider what three priority areas the Council should focus on. The top and joint second priority objectives were:

1. Generate renewable energy
2. Partnership working; Planning

Session 2 enabled the Group to consider the emerging Action Plan. The session comprised a presentation providing a progress update on the review, the engagement activities undertaken and the addition of a new theme of climate change adaptation and resilience. There was then a discussion of the key actions identified within the emerging Action Plan. There was general support for the key actions and the addition of the new theme. The main points from the discussion included:

- Ensure renewable energy schemes requiring planning permission clearly explain the benefits and that information about return on investment is included in business cases.
- Council activity should be high quality, 'exemplar' and leading by example.
- Ensure the priority in the energy and carbon section is on reduction rather than changing tariffs
- Effective implementation actions will help formalise culture change throughout the Council
- There is a need for integrated plans for Council building assets (eg solar PV, battery storage and EV charging). This should include considering more innovative solutions
- The Council should consider how to support residents across a range of different housing tenures, including private rent
- Recognising we can use planning policies to incentivise 'green' changes such as EV charging and green walls. The existing Planning SPDs contain sustainability themes, particularly covering climate adaptation
- The Council should explore opportunities at its buildings to reduce water use (eg greywater use, further opportunities for water reuse in Greenspaces activities).
- Support for promoting a reduction in overall consumption and supporting more opportunities for reuse (eg the Refill scheme).
- Recognition that some challenges (eg water company pollution incidents) fall outside our control but we can work with partners to lobby and mitigate these
- Some actions are more visible and have added value for the ability to influence change

Members supported the potential benefits of offsetting locally, recognising that working in partnership provided opportunities. It was noted that the offsetting strategy would likely need to evolve over time given the different timescales associated with different opportunities.

In relation to Scope 3 (supplier) carbon emissions discussion points included:

- Preventative maintenance, repair and refurbishment can reduce the need to buy new products
- All processes need to be considered including service delivery

In relation to the challenges and opportunities that will arise while delivering the Strategy, discussion points included:

- Feedback from shops and businesses is that grid connections are difficult for EV charging points
- Need government support and legislation to support these activities
- The Local Plan can help delivery

#### **4.1.2 All Members**

Members may have a range of interest in environmental sustainability and therefore a bespoke approach was delivered.

One workshop session was held, that was open for all members to attend. The session had two interactive elements. The first asked members to prioritise the objectives. The five objectives that received the most votes were identified as:

- Reduce operational energy
- Generate renewable energy
- Low and zero emission vehicles
- Reduce waste
- Improve tree cover

Key points from the discussion included:

- Hard to prioritise – all the objectives have merit
- Doing is important but so is messaging:
  - case studies
  - positive opportunities – actions that save money
- need to start programming carbon reduction into budget setting
- food production and consumption is missing

Members were then asked to identify actions that would deliver those top five objectives. Many actions were identified and all recorded; a selection that best represent the responses are presented below:

Reduce operational energy:

- Install renewables and insulation and spend the savings from reduced energy bills on other schemes
- Lower room temperatures
- Identify buildings using gas and switch to renewables, and those that need insulation

Generate renewable energy:

- Solar / wind on Council buildings
- Set up a local authority electricity provider (from 100% renewable sources)
- Encourage residents to consider use of solar

Low and Zero Emission Vehicles:

- EV messaging on Council fleet vehicles
- EV chargepoints

- Commit to transitioning entire Council fleet by 2030

Reduce waste:

- Encourage residents to use shops that provide refillable products
- Community composting
- Brown and grey water to be used in Council sites

Improve tree cover:

- Encourage ponds
- Plant evergreen trees to create shelter and reduce heat
- Replant trees where there has been loss

To give all Members the opportunity to contribute, a follow-up survey was distributed by email to which a further nine responses were received, with the following objectives identified as first and joint second priority objectives:

1. Behaviour change to reduce energy
2. Reduce operational energy; Reduce waste; Improve recycling; Planning; Procurement

As part of the survey Members were offered the opportunity to suggest actions to achieve one or more of their identified top objectives. Comments included:

- Stick to measurable and sensible actions ... to improve our environmental credentials whilst maintaining levels of service
- Sustainable energy generation
- Retrofit social housing stock within the borough
- Focus efforts on what we can actually deliver ourselves
- Borough businesses are critical to enabling the transition to a low carbon economy – Council can offer financial incentives to businesses that invest in sustainable technologies or practices.
- Make it easier for offices to recycle
- Install more EV fast-charging points
- Clear delivery plan for carbon reduction within the Council's control (buildings and fleet)

In addition to the above, all members were invited to provide further ideas and feedback to the team via email.

## **4.2 Officer Sustainability Steering Group – key stakeholders**

The Sustainability Steering Group (SSG) is a small group of mainly senior officers from service areas responsible for the main areas of delivery of the ES Strategy. Two bespoke engagement sessions were planned with this Group.

The first session reviewed each of the existing objectives to confirm that they were still fit for purpose, clearly worded and whether any could be combined. The resulting wording was used for the majority of the subsequent engagement sessions.

The session also considered whether any new objectives were needed to fill specific gaps identified in the three years since the original ES Strategy was drafted. It was recognised that climate change adaptation and resilience was missing from the 2020 list of objectives, and minor amendments to wording and consolidation of a couple of objectives were agreed.

The second session reviewed the Action Plan that was developed from each Service Area workshop and the member workshop/survey, to ensure the identified actions would deliver the

objectives, were achievable and that actions from different service areas didn't conflict with each other in terms of timing. Discussion points included:

- Risks associated with the use of new or emerging technology and the need to consider these via business cases.
- Procurement is key – in terms of the products/services procured, the credentials of suppliers, and enabling data collection.
- Important to consider the Council's role as a developer as well as a planning authority and the opportunities for environmental standards in new builds.
- Information about local geographic risk arising from a changing climate will be important to communicate carefully.
- Whether any particular actions should be prioritised based on eg cost/benefit assessment
- Resourcing and information requirements associated with bidding for external funding

The SSG members all endorsed the Action Plan for it to be taken forward for Member consideration.

### 4.3 Officers from Service Areas – key stakeholders

A number of the service areas were identified as having a particular ability to effect change and were therefore key stakeholders requiring a bespoke approach.

To simplify the exercise, the same format was used for engagement across service areas. Where appropriate, service areas were grouped together into ten workshop sessions. Service leads were invited to attend, and there was a request that another team member, interested in environmental issues, came too to cover ideas from across the service area.

Each workshop followed the same structure of a presentation, a review of the objectives to see which were relevant to the service area, and then a discussion to identify actions which the service area could undertake to deliver the identified objectives. Although following the same structure, each session was bespoke with a tailored presentation followed by flexible discussions to suit the topics under discussion.

The following workshops were held:

<b>Workshop Title</b>	<b>Service Areas</b>
PROPERTY WORKSHOP	Property, Community Partnerships, Leisure
ORGANISATION WORKSHOP	Comms, Customer Contact, Data & Insight, Corporate Policy, Projects & Performance, HR & Organisational Development, Legal & Governance, Finance, IT
COMMUNITY FACING WORKSHOP	Leisure & intervention, Community Partnerships, Housing
GREENSPACES (NATURE THEME) WORKSHOP	Greenspaces, Engineering
WASTE AND RECYCLING (LOW IMPACT CONSUMPTION THEME) WORKSHOP	Cleansing, Waste, Recycling
NEIGHBOURHOOD OPS WORKSHOP	Parking, Environmental Health, Licensing
INFLUENCING THE BOROUGH WORKSHOP	Economic Prosperity, Place Delivery, Planning
TRANSPORT WORKSHOP	Transport, Facilities
ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE WORKSHOP	Emergency Planning, ES team

From these sessions, over 200 actions were identified, along with any outstanding from the 2020 Action Plan. Some service areas proposed actions for other service areas, so once the full list was collated, the ES team discussed those actions with the nominated service area to determine feasibility for inclusion in the plan.

The ES team then undertook a rationalisation exercise, to identify the actions that will deliver significant progress towards the ES Strategy objectives, are enabling actions, or help with engagement and influence. The exercise also involved combining similar actions (for example many service areas identified communications activities which could be delivered by a communications plan). Some actions falling outside the above criteria were moved to a 'long list' that we will seek to implement as part of or in addition to the formal Action Plan (where resources allow).

## **4.4 Staff**

### **4.4.1 Staff Sustainability Network - Communicate**

The Staff Sustainability Network is a group of staff interested in environmental issues and engagement with the Network took the form of a hybrid workshop. There was an initial presentation about the ES Strategy review then a detailed discussion on the objectives. Finally the Network undertook the objectives prioritisation exercise.

The objective identified as being most important to the Network was:

- improve recycling

### **4.4.2 Staff - Monitor Sentiment**

The wider body of staff have a range of interest in environmental issues, and all staff have an opportunity to join the staff network. Therefore in terms of general engagement the initial plan was to monitor sentiment via questions in the all-staff survey. This was planned for November but unfortunately it was delayed so no longer available in the engagement timeframe.

We therefore chose to adopt the same strategy as for the other engagement sessions – an exercise to prioritise the objectives.

To enable as many staff as possible to attend there was an online session open to all with a presentation about the ES Strategy review and a Teams Whiteboard to allow prioritisation of the objectives. There was also an all day in-person 'drop-in' session, where staff could speak to the ES team about the ES Strategy and prioritise the objectives using stickers.

Between the two sessions, staff prioritised the following objectives, as first, second and joint third:

1. reduce waste
2. communications
3. reduce operational energy, increase recycling, improve tree cover, improve soft landscape

## **5 Engagement Exercises - External**

### **5.1.1 Residents – monitor sentiment**

Resident interest may range from low to high, with influence varying depending on their involvement in local activities. Therefore the process was to monitor their sentiment during

existing engagement activities, such as local event days and drop-in sessions at community centres. To complement this, sentiment was also gathered at existing resident group sessions.

In total, four sessions were attended, at locations spread across the borough:

- Rivers Estate event day, Redhill
- Woodhatch Community Centre
- Merstham Hub
- Banstead Area Federation of Residents Associations (9 groups represented)

The objectives prioritisation exercise was used as the primary means of engagement with the first and joint second priorities identified by residents as:

1. Generate renewable energy
2. Improve tree cover, reduce potable water use

The general sentiment from residents was positivity towards the environmental agenda. A recurring theme from those who engaged was that sustainability was a co-benefit to the cost-of-living crisis, not something that was opposed to it. This was particularly the case in relation to energy saving advice and grants.

A short item in the Borough News (free newsletter delivered to all borough households) invited interested residents to get in touch to learn more about the ES Strategy review. This generated a limited response with the majority of respondents requesting more information and a minority expressing their opinion that there is no such thing as man-made climate change. All were sent further information about the ES Strategy and the review.

### **5.1.2 Businesses – Communicate**

Business interest may range from low to high, with influence depending on their size, local presence, ability to engage customers and involvement in local activities therefore the process was to monitor their sentiment during existing engagement activities.

Small and medium businesses (SMEs) in the borough are invited to join regular learning lunches, but there was not a meeting in the timeframe for engagement. Unfortunately, the December Sustainable Business Network (SBN) was cancelled due to a number of businesses being unable to attend. However, selected businesses were also invited to comment as part of partner organisation engagement and any responses from businesses to that are considered in Section 5.1.3 below.

The learning lunches for SMEs and the SBN are both opportunities for learning and sharing experiences, so the ES team will look to attend future meetings to share how we undertook the review and the lessons we have learnt from the process, to aid those organisations when they undertake similar exercises.

### **5.1.3 Interest Groups - bespoke**

These are local groups which focus their activities typically on one environmental issue, so required a bespoke approach.

An online workshop was held which was attended by members from four local interest groups who have activities in the borough:

- Energy Action Redhill and Reigate (EARR)
- Climate Action Redhill and Reigate (CARR)
- Communities Against Gatwick Noise Emissions (CAGNE)
- Friends of Merstham Park



An introductory presentation was to be followed by the objective prioritisation exercise. Unfortunately, the Teams Whiteboard did not work for all attendees and so a general discussion on the objectives was held with contributions including:

- For easy wins, focus on behaviour change – it costs next to nothing and saves money
- Urban greening is key
- Big opportunity for carbon sequestration on Council land
- Objectives don't have 'sequestration', 'urban greening' or 'educate' in the wording
- The tree objective should include 'increase' alongside 'improve'
- Don't cut down mature trees and replace with saplings
- Every decision should consider the climate implications

#### **5.1.4 Partner Organisations - bespoke**

Partner organisations such as charities, statutory organisations, town and parish councils, neighbouring local authorities and larger businesses delivering actions in areas covered by the ES Strategy were identified as stakeholders in delivering the objectives borough-wide and were therefore in the communicate and bespoke approaches. As such the method chosen was to conduct engagement via email.

The ES Strategy Vision and Objectives were sent to 29 partner organisations along with the following questions:

- Do you broadly support the vision and RBBC objectives? If not, what are your concerns?
- Do you think we are missing any objectives that are necessary to help us deliver our vision?
- Are you delivering any projects in the borough that will help deliver our objectives?
- Do you have any future projects in the borough that will help deliver our objectives that there may be benefits to exploring partnership working?
- Do you have any other comments on the RBBC ES Strategy vision and objectives?

Six partner organisations provided informal responses, giving a good spread from neighbouring local authorities, a housing authority and interest groups:

- Kingston and Sutton Shared Environment Service
- Transform Housing
- Campaign for the Protection of Rural England CPRE Surrey
- Surrey Climate Commission
- Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Environment and Sustainability
- Reigate and Redhill Society's Green Spaces Group

Respondents broadly supported the Vision and objectives. The key points raised were:

- public EV chargepoints could offer cheaper charging at off-peak times
- focus on domestic building retrofit, including tackling mould, damp and condensation
- Add the EPC domestic building improvement timeline
- For housing, add energy security and reduction of fuel poverty through cheaper and greener alternatives
- Noted that it wasn't clear which were Council or borough objectives
- Concern that many of the objectives are outside Council control
- Omissions include reducing noise and light pollution
- Native trees may not be the answer in a changing climate
- Planning could refer specifically to the revised local plan
- Suggest inclusion of indicative targets

- No specific mention of housing which RBBC can influence
- Omits the link between environmental and other benefits

Partner organisations also identified opportunities for joint working which will be explored once the revised Strategy has been agreed.

## **5.2 Other responses received**

Additional comments received by email or in Council meetings include:

- Important to clean our water areas and lakes in the borough
- Whether industrial-sized recycling bins can be provided for organisations
- Extend Banstead Wood across the Council-owned 'long field' to improve biodiversity, carbon capture and public accessibility

## **6 Engagement results**

Many attendees when asked to prioritise the objectives said "but they are all important". However, across the whole range of parties who undertook the objectives prioritisation exercise the most important objectives collectively were:

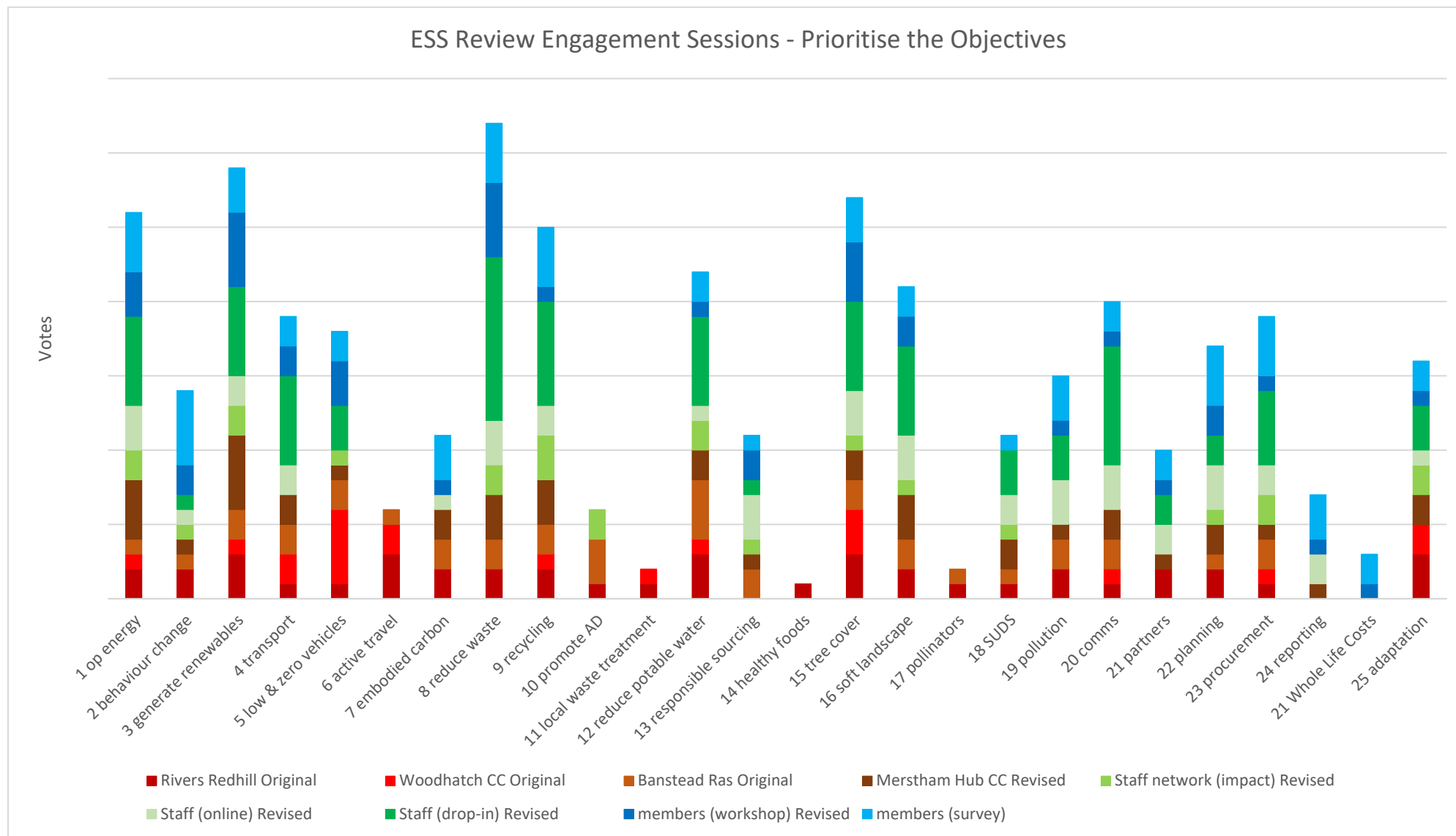
1. Reduce waste
2. Generate renewable energy
3. Improve tree cover
4. Reduce operational energy use
5. Improve recycling

The overall spread of votes is indicated in Figure 1 below. All the objectives are still considered important to deliver environmental improvements across the borough and Council activities, but consideration will be given to prioritise work on these identified objectives.

All verbal and written engagement responses have been reviewed by the ES team and added to either the Action Plan or the ES Strategy where appropriate. Specific reasons have not been included within this document to keep it concise, however reasons for not including suggestions in the final versions include that the suggestion was outside the remit of the review and / or the ES Strategy, was too detailed for the Action Plan, was too similar to actions proposed by others so has been amalgamated / incorporated, or is a task that contributes to an action in the Action Plan. Some suggestions have not been identified as specific actions, but the topic has been included within the ES Strategy document.

Where proposals that are within scope of the review have not been included in either document they have been retained by the team to explore as part of the ES team's ongoing work, subject to time and resources.

**Figure 1 Results of the engagement exercises to prioritise the ES Strategy Objectives**



NOTE: The original ES Strategy objectives were used for the Rivers Estate, Woodhatch and Banstead engagement exercises – objectives 6, 11, 14 and 17 were combined with other objectives so do not appear in the final list.

**Appendix 1 – Stakeholder Mapping exercise**

