


Report to:	Environment and Neighbourhood Committee	Date:	07 March 2019
Report title:	Approval of Environment Strategy		
Report from:	David Moore, (Interim) Strategic Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration.		
Ward/Areas affected:	Borough Wide		
Chair of Committee/Lead Member:	Councillor Manuel Abellan		
Author(s)/Contact Number(s):	Jennifer Sibley, Acting Head of Environment Strategy, 0208 770 5678		
Corporate Plan Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being Active • Making Informed Choices • Living Well Independently • Keeping People Safe 		
Open/Exempt:	Open		
Signed:		Date:	19 February 2019

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the approach taken to review the current sustainability strategy, the outcome of consultation with stakeholders and seeks the committee's approval for a new environment strategy for the borough.

2. Recommendations

The Environment and Neighbourhood Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree the council's new environment strategy.

3. Background

- 3.1 In its 2005 Environmental Sustainability Strategy the council set an ambitious target to achieve One Planet Living. Developed by Bioregional, One Planet Living is a framework which aims to enable people to live happy and healthy lives within their fair share of the earth's resources. In December 2008, Sutton was named the UK's first One Planet Borough. The council launched its first One Planet Action Plan in December 2009. The second action plan was published in

2010-11. A revised set of over 70 targets across five core themes was adopted in 2013 to align with Bioregional's Common International Targets (the standard required for accreditation). The targets identified ambitions for 2017, 2025 and 2050. A review of the targets took place in 2015 as part of a sustainability service review. This identified a core set of 34 priority targets to streamline annual reporting. The remaining targets would only be reported on during milestone years (2017, 2025 and 2050). Having reached the first milestone year in June 2017, this committee agreed to a review of the council's existing sustainability strategy ("One Planet Sutton").

- 3.2 Key achievements delivered through One Planet Sutton to date include a 36.2 per cent reduction in borough CO₂ emissions (2007 - 2016) and a 30.8 per cent reduction in council CO₂ emissions (2009/10 - 2016/17). The borough's 2017/18 recycling rate has increased to 50 per cent (equal second highest in London and 2nd most improved borough nationally) and waste at council offices has reduced by over 45 per cent (2009/10 - 2016/17). A Sutton Food Forum has been established and the borough achieved "sustainable food city" status, one of only eight boroughs in London to have received this accreditation. In 2016, the council was awarded the 'most improved borough' at the Good Food for London awards, in recognition of its work to improve access to food across the borough.

4. Issues

- 4.1 A cross party task and finish group was established in the summer of 2017 to oversee a review of the sustainability strategy. It met four times during the review. The councillors involved were Councillors Zuchowska, Whitehead, Abellan and Marston (prior to the May 2018 elections) and Councillors Zuchowska, Whitehead, Abellan, Mirhashem, Shields and Green (after the May 2018 elections). They reviewed the existing strategy, agreed the scope and level of ambition for the new strategy, agreed the communications and engagement plan for the strategy review, and reviewed the outcome of the benchmarking and policy review undertaken by officers. They also reviewed the strategy prior to consultation, agreed the vision and reviewed the strategy after consultation.
- 4.2 In autumn 2017 a benchmarking activity was undertaken to ascertain what would make Sutton a leader in sustainability. This looked at cities, regions and boroughs with a reputation for delivering environmental sustainability work including Manchester, Bristol, Islington and Coventry. A variety of approaches were taken by the local authorities; some delivered their work through one central ambition e.g. zero carbon with no overall environmental sustainability strategy, whilst others such as Brighton and Hove operated a city wide sustainability policy. The lesson learnt from this work is that there is no consistent approach to sustainability across local authorities, and implementation of an externally accredited system such as One Planet Living is not intrinsically linked to being a leader in sustainability.
- 4.3 The benchmarking review was supported by a research project delivered by Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the USA which identified that the One Planet Sutton strategy was very ambitious, but unrealistic for the local authority to deliver on its own. A review of local, regional, national and EU policy was undertaken to identify areas for delivery in the new strategy.

- 4.4 The council commissioned IBEX Earth (a not for profit sustainability consultancy) to explore funding and financing options for the new strategy. This highlighted a number of European, national and London funding schemes, as well as examples of 'invest to save' and third party finance models, such as 'rent a roof'. A circular economy scan undertaken by AECOM for south London in 2016-17 (which identified a shortlist of 14 opportunities to pilot circular economy approaches) was also reviewed.
- 4.5 In autumn 2017, the Mayor of London consulted on a new Environment Strategy. The final strategy, published in May 2018, sets a vision for London to be 'greener, cleaner and ready for the future' with six high-level aims for 2050, including London being a zero waste city and more than half of London being green. The London Environment Strategy and the Mayoral targets were reviewed for their suitability for Sutton, and where appropriate, have been included in the proposed environment strategy.
- 4.6 During February and March 2018, residents and businesses were invited to take part in a survey which helped to identify priorities. In February 2018, council staff who are currently involved in delivering sustainability and staff who could potentially be involved were invited to a workshop to review the successes and challenges of One Planet Sutton and contribute their ideas for the new strategy. Focus groups were held in June and July 2018 with council colleagues as well as organisations such as Sutton Housing Partnership and SES Water to discuss each chapter, its action plan and determine who would be responsible for delivering actions. A further workshop was held to review the consultation feedback and the changes made in November 2018.
- 4.7 An online public consultation ran for 8 weeks from 3 August to 30 September 2018. Community Action Sutton were commissioned to engage with "hard to reach" groups through a series of "face to face" meetings and events. The strategy was amended to reflect the comments and feedback provided from both aspects of the consultation.

Consultation feedback

- 4.8 Between February and March 2018, 569 people completed a survey giving their priorities for sustainability in the borough. This feedback was used to inform early drafts of the strategy. In summer 2018, the council's consultation on the draft strategy received 293 online responses. In addition, Community Action Sutton, the representative body for the borough's community and voluntary sector, were commissioned to undertake face to face engagement events. These included young people, older people, people from an ethnic minority background and faith communities. They also undertook face to face engagement with the general public at various district town centres. 590 people were engaged in total by Community Action Sutton.
- 4.9 Overall, a majority of people consulted supported the vision set out in the strategy, as well as the targets and actions. Feedback from Community Action Sutton's work included recognition that the council cannot bring about change on its own - and that residents, businesses and communities need to be involved in partnership. There is limited awareness about what the council is currently doing on sustainability, and people commented that different groups need to

be engaged in different ways. There was also challenge about whether some of the actions and targets were deliverable and how much of a priority sustainability was for the council.

- 4.10 From the online consultation responses, 85 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed vision. The main feedback from the online responses related to the Energy Recovery Facility and how this aligned with the vision for air quality. Common themes were the level of development and whether it was possible to increase green space in the borough; the role of educating children and adults in changing behaviour relating to the environment; and whether people could be provided with more incentives, for example discounts or cashback for replacing old boilers. Both support and concern about tree planting were raised by respondents.

Executive summary

- 4.11 The proposed environment strategy sets out a vision for Sutton to be London's most sustainable borough by 2025. The strategy has five chapters.

Cleaner air	This chapter is about improving air quality in the borough by encouraging greater use of public transport and walking and cycling.
A greener borough	This chapter is about protecting the amount of existing green space in the borough and where possible increasing it.
Using less energy	This chapter is about helping people use less energy, and further reductions in both the borough's and the council's carbon emissions.
Creating a circular economy	A circular economy keeps products and materials in use at their highest value for as long as possible; for example returning items for repair when broken or at the end of their useful life. This chapter is about making the most of circular economy opportunities in Sutton, and continuing to reduce waste and increase recycling.
Tackling climate change	This chapter is about better understanding the risk to the borough from climate change, and taking action to reduce the risk to vulnerable people.

- 4.12 Each chapter has a short number of measurable targets; or focus areas where it is not possible to measure progress qualitatively.

- **The cleaner air chapter** focuses on tackling air pollution from road traffic, with targets to increase the number of people walking, cycling and using public transport in the borough, as well as continued reduction in air pollutants. The action plan for this chapter is the statutory air quality action plan.

- **The greener borough chapter** sets a target to maintain the existing amount of green space and increase biodiversity in the borough. The action plan for the chapter includes working with communities to develop green space plans, using planning powers to continue to secure green space improvements, raising awareness and behaviour change campaigns about flood risk and wildlife gardening, and planting new trees.
- **The using less energy chapter** focuses on ensuring that an increasing population does not lead to an increase in carbon emissions. Targets include a reduction in both the council's and the borough's carbon emissions, switching to a wholly renewable energy tariff, and a focus on tackling fuel poverty. Actions include continued street lighting replacement with energy efficient bulbs; a continued boiler replacement scheme in Sutton Housing Partnership properties, together with other energy efficiency works; promotion of energy efficiency and local energy generation schemes; and use of district heating networks to extend low carbon energy access.
- **The creating a circular economy chapter** will deliver a series of circular economy pilots based on opportunities identified in the AECOM study (paragraph 4.2). The council will amend its sustainable procurement policy to extend sustainability into the supply chain, and target an increase in recycling, a reduction in avoidable food waste, and a reduction in residual waste. Actions include community reuse initiatives, implementing the full council motion on single use plastics, and working with schools to introduce food waste collections.
- **The tackling climate change chapter** focuses on mitigating and addressing the impacts of extreme weather, including heatwaves, flooding, drought and extreme cold, and reducing the carbon impact of our food by supporting locally grown food. Targets include helping people reduce their water use. Actions include a number of flood risk management projects, retaining Sustainable Food City status, and promoting water efficiency.

4.13 The environment strategy sets the council's overarching approach to reducing its environmental impact, beneath which other strategies will sit, for example fuel poverty, waste minimisation and parks and open spaces. Each action plan is for the first four years of the strategy, to 2023, but will be updated annually to make the most of new opportunities. The action plans identify who the council will work with to deliver the actions, such as residents, community groups, business groups and partners, as well as timescales and indicative costs. All four of the council's priorities are supported through the action plans.

Significant changes from One Planet Sutton

- 4.14 The new strategy reduces the number of targets from over 70 to 16 targets, plus five focus areas. These focus areas are:
- Maintain and enhance the biodiversity value of the borough.
 - Take action to tackle fuel poverty.
 - Undertake circular economy pilot projects.
 - Maximise opportunities to procure goods and services sustainably.
 - Increase Sutton's resilience to the effects of climate change.

- 4.15 One Planet Sutton had ten workstreams, but the new strategy has five chapters, aligning with the Mayor of London's Environment Strategy. As the council is already undertaking significant work on public health and culture and heritage, these areas have not been included in the new strategy to avoid duplication. Care has been taken to avoid setting targets that are undeliverable and instead set ambitious targets that the council considers it will be possible to achieve within the resources available. This has been possible by developing our own strategy in conjunction with stakeholders and partners rather than relying on an accredited framework.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 There are alternative approaches available to the council in relation to sustainability. The recommended option is that this committee adopts the new environment strategy attached to this report. Alternatives include:
- The council could continue to use One Planet Sutton as its sustainability approach. This involves the production of an annual review and includes a cost for accreditation. The expectations from government and the Mayor of London have changed and no longer align as well with the One Planet Sutton targets. Some of the targets are no longer possible to achieve with the level of resourcing available.
 - The council could choose to not have a sustainability approach. This would be rare amongst local authorities and would not align with the council's corporate policies or values as it has a responsibility to address issues such as air quality and fuel poverty.
 - The council could use another 'off the shelf' sustainability approach. This would not be Sutton-specific and would likely come with additional cost. The council has previously followed this approach, implementing the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) from 1996 to 2015. This council chose to withdraw from this in 2015, at which time the associated budget was £42,000. Due to inflation, the costs would now likely be between £50,000 - £60,000.

6. Impacts and Implications

Financial

- 6.1 At present the One Planet Sutton strategy is delivered by one dedicated officer as well as through the work of a number of related teams, including regulatory services, highways, economic development, planning, waste and street cleansing and parks and open spaces. Involving officers from across the Council continues to be the approach under the new strategy and will therefore be covered from existing resources in terms of staffing.
- 6.2 The spend on One Planet Sutton accreditation has varied across the lifetime of the approach from £7.5k-£15k. The cost for accreditation in 2018/19 was £7.5k. This budget will now be used towards delivery of the Sutton Environment Strategy. Estimated non-staffing delivery costs for the strategy are £41,000 across four years for commissioning activities, including feasibility studies.

- 6.3 Not all of the elements of the proposed strategy are fully costed yet and therefore may require additional funding that is currently not budgeted for. This may be secured through external funding or might require growth bids from the council through the normal budget process. The value of these growth bids is not quantifiable at this stage. If the funding cannot be secured, some elements of the strategy will not be delivered. This information will be included as part of the annual report on progress of the strategy.
- 6.4 The strategy itself indicates areas where external funding in the form of bids for grant funding/partner funding will be sought. Specific opportunities are not known at this stage, but funding is likely to mirror the priorities set out in the Mayor's Transport Strategy and London Environment Strategy. The government may also issue funding opportunities that align with its Resources and Waste Strategy and other environmental initiatives. The implementation chapter of the strategy includes information about what it is envisaged will be easier to secure funding for, and what will be harder. To bid for funding, the council may be required to provide match funding; each funding source will be assessed on a case by case basis as to whether the council can offer this. At this stage the availability of these opportunities is unknown. Decisions about whether to apply will be decided by the Environment Strategy Board, a group of Assistant Directors from across the council with responsibility for overseeing implementation of the environment strategy. If external funding cannot be secured, some elements of the strategy will not be delivered. This information will be included as part of the annual report on progress of the strategy.
- 6.5 Whilst the new strategy may meet the authority's environmental objectives, further work will need to be done to cost and prioritise the individual elements of the strategy. This will allow decisions to be made as to which elements are affordable/desirable on a case by case basis, depending on the funding available.

Legal

- 6.6 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Other impacts and implications

- 6.7 The environment strategy is expected to have a positive impact on the borough's environment.

7. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendix letter	Title
A	Sutton's Environment Strategy
B	Sustainability Strategy Consultation Report
C	Equalities Impact Assessment

Background documents
IBEX Earth - How to Deliver Green Financing in Sutton
Circular South London, a study by AECOM
Mayor of London's Environment Strategy
Community Action Sutton - Sustainability Strategy Consultation Report

Audit Trail		
Version	Final	19 February 2019
Consultation with other officers		
Finance	Yes	Steven Watts
Legal	Yes	David Fellows, SLLP
Equality Impact Assessment required?	Yes	Completed (see appendix C)