

Environment Strategy

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Purpose of the Report

To update Members on the development of the Environment Strategy following last month's Scrutiny workshop and to ask for any final comments before it is taken to District Executive for approval.

Actions Required

To consider the Environment Strategy and identified intermediate actions and next steps, and to provide any final comments before it is presented to District Executive on Thursday 3rd October 2019. Assuming it is approved at District Executive, the strategy will go forward for adoption at Full Council on 17th October 2019.

Background

In May 2019, a Full Council resolution was agreed to develop a Strategy that sets ambitious targets to protect the environment and ecology; to reduce Carbon Emissions; and for a) South Somerset District and b) the Council to become carbon neutral. The Council agreed to deliver this strategy by the autumn.

The strategy's development has been led by our Environment Community of Practice (CoP) which comprises internal experts and those with strategic and /or operational responsibility in the areas identified. We have also drawn heavily on the views of a sample of various stakeholders, from within South Somerset and beyond, with whom we have engaged fairly extensively.

Members will recall that a draft of the Environment Strategy was presented to Scrutiny Members at a workshop in August. Comments raised were discussed in full at a workshop with District Executive Members later the same week.

The Strategy has been further shaped and since then shared with a number of the stakeholders we had previously engaged with (as mentioned above) to seek their comments. They were invited to attend a workshop on the 17th September to discuss their views and following this some further changes have been made to the strategy.

Report

The Environment Strategy sets out the Council's ambition to be an exemplar local authority in both caring for, and enhancing, our environment. Adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change means changing the way we do things. The Environment Strategy outlines the first phase of our commitments and future direction of travel for the Council, but it is by no means the end of work. The strategy acknowledges that this is only the beginning of the journey and further work is required to

develop the optimum portfolio of activity in the future, ensuring a thorough assessment of return on investment (either monetary or environmental or other benefits) and the opportunity cost of the financial commitment has been completed.

The appropriate relevance checks have been undertaken and determined that no equality impact assessment is required. Form attached.

Financial Implications

A sum of money has been identified in order to support our future delivery plans, but it is important that we know where to prioritise our efforts. This requires a stage beyond assessment criteria, to understanding the opportunity cost of pursuing one outcome over another and to understand the full life cycle of any decision we make, and some of the possible interventions will require far more detailed business cases to be put together.

Council Plan Implications

Our current Council Plan (2019-20) identifies the environment as one of our five key areas of focus. It specifically details that 'we wish to be a leading Council in developing and adopting a Green Agenda to promote sustainable environment, economy and communities'

Background papers

SSDC Full Council Minutes, May 2019
