

## **Cabinet**

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**Date of Meeting:** 10 September 2019

**Report Title:** Environmental Strategy

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Nick Mannion, Environment and Regeneration

**Senior Officer:** Frank Jordan, Executive Director Place

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### **1. Report Summary**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the draft Environmental Strategy for 2019-24.
- 1.2. A Notice of Motion was proposed and unanimously carried by Council on 22 May 2019 requesting that a Cheshire East Environment Strategy is brought forward as a matter of urgency and that the Council commits to being carbon neutral by 2025.
- 1.3. The Council has developed its first Environmental Strategy to take action to respond to the global threat of climate change and protect and improve the health and resilience of the environment within our borough.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. That Cabinet:
  - 2.1.1. Approve the draft Environmental Strategy.
  - 2.1.2. Authorise the Executive Director Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to undertake a public consultation seeking views on the draft Environmental Strategy.
  - 2.1.3. Note that, following the outcome of the consultation and any resultant changes, the Strategy will be presented to Cabinet for adoption.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1. The Council has developed its first Environmental Strategy to set out the strategic goals and priority actions the Council will take to respond to the global challenge of climate change and protect and enhance our local environment.

- 3.2. A Notice of Motion was proposed and unanimously carried by Council on 22 May 2019 requesting that a Cheshire East Environmental Strategy is brought forward as a matter of urgency and that the Council commits to being carbon neutral by 2025. The Notice of Motion also proposed that the Council will work to encourage all businesses, residents and organisations in Cheshire East to reduce their carbon footprint by reducing energy consumption and promoting healthy lifestyles. It will ensure that the Council provides strong environmental leadership and stewardship.
- 3.3. The goals of the draft Environmental Strategy are that:
- 3.3.1. Cheshire East will be a Carbon Neutral Council by 2025
  - 3.3.2. Waste and pollution will be reduced
  - 3.3.3. Air quality will improve
  - 3.3.4. The availability and use of sustainable transport and travel will increase
  - 3.3.5. New development will be sensitive and sustainable
  - 3.3.6. We will manage the environment to restore nature, conserve heritage and enhance the beauty of landscapes
- 3.4. This Environmental Strategy complements the Cheshire East Economic Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy. An attractive and sustainable natural environment is inextricably linked to quality of place and supports a healthy economy. High quality and accessible green spaces support and enable people to access outdoor space for the mental and physical health benefits.
- 3.5. The strategy will ensure that the Council provides strong environmental leadership and stewardship. The strategy also provides a policy framework for the Council to evaluate and connect policies, projects and service delivery to consider the environmental and climate change impact and how they can contribute positively to the goals of this strategy. Everything we do as a council should consider the implications on climate change and the natural environment.
- 3.6. Alongside the direct impact the council will have through the way we operate, the services and projects we deliver, and the investments we make, we will also seek to educate and encourage businesses, residents, visitors and organisations across Cheshire East to commit to do things differently in order to reduce their carbon footprint and to protect and enhance our natural environment. We will also promote access to our natural environments and inspire more people to use green spaces for the mental and physical health benefits.
- 3.7. Following consideration of the consultation response, the final Environmental Strategy will be presented to Cabinet to approve and adopt.

#### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1. The Council could do nothing, but that would mean that the Council will take no action to protect, sustain and improve the environment in support of local, national and global priorities.
- 4.2. The Council could focus on climate change and issue a Climate Emergency declaration. Many local authorities have issued a Climate Emergency declaration to galvanise support for the climate change agenda and set a target by which the council and/or locality will be carbon neutral. Our draft Environment Strategy responds to the threat of climate change and includes an aim to be a Carbon Neutral Council and by 2024 to deliver against an Environmental Strategy action plan for the borough that will include a target for the borough to be carbon neutral. It also includes aims and actions that contribute to the Council's strategic outcomes that Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place and that People live well and for longer.

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1. The UK Government published its 25-Year Environment Plan in 2018. Central to this plan is climate change and it sets out its goals to leave our environment in a better state than we found it with cleaner air and water, thriving plants and animals, and a cleaner, greener country for us all. The Government's Plan acknowledges that it will require work across society - citizens, businesses, local councils, charities and other non-profit organisations - to make sure that responsible attitudes towards the environment become the norm to secure lasting change.
- 5.2. At the Council meeting on 22 May 2019 the Elected Members of Cheshire East Council approved the following Notice of Motion relating to Climate Change.

"This Council notes that on 1 May Parliament declared an environment and climate emergency and

  - a) Requests that a Cheshire East Environmental Strategy is brought forward as a matter of urgency;
  - b) Commits to the target of Cheshire East Council being carbon neutral by 2025 and asks that details of how to meet this commitment are included in the Environmental Strategy;
  - c) Will work to encourage all businesses, residents and organisations in Cheshire East to reduce their carbon footprint by reducing energy consumptions and promoting healthy lifestyles."
- 5.3. This report presents the draft Cheshire East Environmental Strategy in response to the notice of motion.

## **6. Implications of the Recommendations**

### **6.1. Legal Implications**

6.1.1. There is no legal obligation to publish an Environmental Strategy, but doing so resonates with the approach taken by government in respect of its 25 Year Plan and the draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill 2018. It ensures the Council is well positioned in respect of the direction of travel at national and international level.

6.1.2. There are no direct implications from consulting on the Environmental Strategy, as its purpose is to guide the formulation of other strategies and plans with a focus on environmental matters. There may well be legal implications that arise from the formulation or implementation of those other strategies and plans, but those will be addressed on a case by case basis.

### **6.2. Finance Implications**

6.2.1. There are no direct financial implications on the current Medium Term Financial Strategy from undertaking a public consultation on the draft strategy. Any costs associated with undertaking the consultation will be funded by the Place Directorate budget.

6.2.2. There will be financial implications from adopting the strategy and implementing the resulting actions. These will be addressed through the 2020/21 Medium Term Financial Strategy planning process.

### **6.3. Policy Implications**

6.3.1. The Environmental Strategy sets out priorities and actions that will contribute to priorities at a borough, national and global level. The strategy contributes to two of the Council's strategic outcomes: that Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place and that People live well and for longer.

6.3.2. The Government published its 25 Year Environment Plan in 2018 calling for action across society – citizens, businesses, local authorities, charities and other non-profit organisations – to secure lasting change for our country and for our planet. The strategy sets out how the Council will contribute to the national policy.

### **6.4. Equality Implications**

6.4.1. A draft Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted and concluded that there are no direct equality implications. The assessment will be reviewed following the consultation.

## **6.5. Human Resources Implications**

- 6.5.1. There are no direct implications for human resources from the strategy. Any projects that are initiated as a result of this strategy will assess HR implications in their business case.

## **6.6. Risk Management Implications**

- 6.6.1. The Environment Strategy has been developed to help mitigate the risk of further harm to our environment.
- 6.6.2. The key risk to the delivery of the strategy will be competing priorities within the council that prevent or delay the delivery of the action plan.

## **6.7. Rural Communities Implications**

- 6.7.1. The Environment Strategy will help to protect and enhance the character of our rural areas and support rural communities.

## **6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children**

- 6.8.1. Improving our environment benefits all people, but taking action on climate change will help to leave the environment in a better state for the next generation. Young people in many parts of the world have been actively protesting that their environment is being destroyed and calling on governments to take urgent action on climate change. This has led to the UK Government to announcing that a group of young people will advise the government on priorities for environmental action.

## **6.9. Public Health Implications**

- 6.9.1. Spending time in the natural environment improves mental health and feelings of wellbeing. The Environmental Strategy seeks to protect, develop and enhance our green spaces and in so doing help people of all ages access and benefit from their use.
- 6.9.2. The strategy also recognises the impact air quality can have on public health and reinforces our commitment to improve the air quality environment in Cheshire East.

## **6.10. Climate Change Implications**

- 6.10.1. The key purpose of the Environmental Strategy to set out the strategic goals and priority actions the Council will take to respond to the global challenge of climate change. It includes the commitment that Cheshire East Council will be carbon neutral by 2025.

## **7. Ward Members Affected**

- 7.1. All wards.

## **8. Consultation & Engagement**

- 8.1. Subject to Cabinet agreement, the draft Environmental Strategy will be published for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks. The consultation will seek feedback from residents, businesses, public service partners and other non-government agencies on the following themes:

- Agreement / disagreement with the aims identified in the Environmental Strategy;
- Views on the proposed priority actions;
- Views on how progress against the strategic goals should be measured and what targets should be included;
- Whether respondents think the Environmental Strategy should be cost neutral to the council or whether it should be subsidised from local taxation;
- How respondents can support the Council in the delivery of the strategy.

- 8.2. The outcomes of the consultation and any resultant changes to the Strategy will be reported to Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **9. Access to Information**

- 9.1. The Council's draft Environment Strategy is provided as an appendix to this report.

- 9.2. Government's 25 Year Environment Plan is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

## **10. Contact Information**

- 10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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