



COUNCIL MEETING

23 May 2024

Climate Emergency Update; Environmental Policy Update; and Biodiversity Duty

Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Following the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019 (Appendix 1), the adoption of the Climate Action Plan for council operations in 2021 and the adoption of the Climate Strategy for Gateshead in 2022 progress is being made to both mitigate the impacts of climate change by reducing emissions and to protect our communities by making them more resilient to the impacts of climate change.
2. The Council must, as part of their strategic assessment of their functions, have regard to any relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs), Species Conservation Strategies and Protected Site Strategies (introduced in the Environment Act).
3. Local authorities and local planning authorities must write and publish a biodiversity report. The end date of our first reporting period should be no later than 1 January 2026. After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period.
4. The Environmental policy for the Council was approved in February 2021. Following a review of the policy there is a proposal to make some amendments to better align the policy to the declaration of a climate emergency and the Climate Action plan (2021) and Climate Strategy (2022).
5. Following the Climate Emergency Declaration made by Full Council on 23 May 2019, Cabinet agreed that officers should commence an environmental audit of the Council's activities. The first audit was carried out in 2020 and the 3rd annual review has been undertaken by consultancy firm Genee which concluded that the Council was still achieving silver level accreditation.
6. To align with best practice and get ready for new legislative requirements, the Council procured 'SmartCarbon' for carbon reporting in 2022. This tool measures both direct and indirect emissions which allows the Council to more effectively meet its commitments to reducing carbon and assess whether interventions are effective in reducing carbon emissions.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- i. Approve the amended wording to the Council's Environmental Policy.