

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

REPORT TO: STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Date: 7 December 2020

**TOPIC: INTERIM DEVON CLIMATE CHANGE PLAN AND
NORTH DEVON COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL
POLICY**

REPORT BY: HEAD OF PLACE

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report updates the Committee on progress on the Interim Devon Climate Change Plan and implications for the North Devon Council Environmental Policy.

1.2 The Council's Corporate Plan was adopted at the full Council meeting on 24 September 2019. The four Corporate Priorities are:

1. Financial Security
2. Focus on delivering the best for the customer
3. Cherishing and protecting the environment
4. Planning for North Devon's future

The proposed policy will be key to delivering against the 3rd corporate priority but also contribute to 1 and 4.

1.3 The objective of the environmental policy is to support members and staff from across all services in the organisation in taking a consistent and standard approach when considering the environmental impact of their actions. It also recognises the importance of all stakeholders, both internally and externally, in working to a common set of principles and the policy sets out clearly to partners the Council's approach.

1.4 The environment priority is broad-based but inevitably includes one of the key foci of our current work: responding to the Climate Emergency as stated in the Council's Declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That members agree that:

- 1) The Interim North Devon Council Environmental Policy (attached as Appendix A) be approved and recommended to Council for adoption to guide the organisation, its members and staff in taking a consistent and standard approach when considering the environmental impact of their actions.

- 2) It is noted that the Environmental Policy is interim, in recognition of the imminent consultation exercise on the Interim Devon Climate Change Plan and its subsequent adoption.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To underpin the Council's corporate priority for the environment and meet the Council's responsibilities under the Climate and Biodiversity Declaration.

4 REPORT

- 4.1 The Environmental Policy was agreed by the Strategy and Resources Committee for the purposes of consultation at its meeting on 3 August 2020. The policy is attached for ease of reference.
- 4.2 The Committee agreed the Policy subject to the date by which the Council would achieve net-zero carbon being 2030 at the latest, rather than the recommendation of 2025 from the Council's Climate Action Team.
- 4.3 For a variety of reasons the Policy has not yet been put out for public consultation. One of these reasons is that in the intervening period the early draft of the Interim Devon Climate Change Plan was received for checking by the Local Authority partners, before going out to consultation.
- 4.4 This Devon Climate Change Plan includes the advice from the Devon Net-Zero Task Force that the target dates for reaching net-zero carbon should be 2030 at the latest for organisations and 2050 for the whole of Devon, reflecting the government's current target.
- 4.5 The Net-Zero Task Force felt that with the current powers and levers available to local areas to achieve net-zero by 2050 would be challenging and that going for an earlier date would not be realistic or deliverable.
- 4.6 The Council's Climate Action Team considered the proposals within the draft Interim Devon Climate Change Plan but did not wish to amend their recommendation to Strategy and Resources Committee. However, to publish North Devon Council's Environmental Policy now would overlap with the consultation period for the Devon consultation, which commences on Monday 7 December, with the potential for confusion amongst the public in North Devon, with two different sets of target dates, and risking the challenge of a lack of joined up thinking across the climate change partners.
- 4.7 In consultation with the Lead Member for Climate Change, to avoid further delay in the Council adopting the policy, it is recommended that the Committee agree the Environmental Policy as it stands (as amended at Committee on 3 August) and recommends that Council adopts it as an interim policy. It is identified as interim in recognition of the review that will be carried out in light of the consultation response to the Interim Devon Climate Change Plan and the subsequent finalised Plan.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Internal resource will be required from all teams across the Council to contribute to the programme both in the formulation and delivery of the Plan.
- 5.2 Once adopted the targets in the Policy will require significant investment in the Council’s assets, this would be subject to consideration of business cases being put forward, and changes in the way it operates. In addition it should be noted that whilst a lot of the work required to meet the target for reaching net-zero carbon as a district are outside the direct control of the Council progress will require significant input from it.

6 EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 None from this report though it is known that climate change will further negatively impact those who are already disadvantaged and those with health problems.

7 CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Article or Appendix and paragraph	Referred or delegated power?	Key decision?
Article 7.12	Appendix 4, para 17	Yes

8 STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

- 8.1 This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:
 - NDC Corporate Plan
 - [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)
 - [Climate Change Act 2008](#)
 - [Climate change explained](#), Gov.UK
 - [Devon Climate Emergency Project](#)
 - Report of Climate Action Team to Policy Development Committee 16 July 2020

Appendix A - Draft Environmental Policy 2020
 Appendix B - Devon Climate Change Declaration

The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report.

10 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

10.1 The author confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers.

Lead Members: Councillor Caroline Leaver, Councillor Netti Pearson

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Date: 26 November 2020

Reference: