



## **North Devon Council**

Report Date: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Topic: Environmental Policy Consultation

Report by: Sustainability and Climate Officer

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1. In June 2021 the Council were audited on their Climate Change Governance by Devon Audit Partnership.

1.2. The draft report was received on 29<sup>th</sup> July. The Audit Opinion is that there is limited assurance on our Climate Change Governance. It highlighted several areas requiring improvement, including the Council's Environmental Policy.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1. Members are asked to endorse the revised Environmental Policy.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1. The revised Environmental Policy addresses the auditor's concerns, and his recommendation that "The Environmental Policy be extended to cover key policy elements."

3.2. The vast majority of the Policy has already been agreed by Council, most of the revisions are simplification or clarification. The inclusion of sustainable procurement is based on recommendations arising from an audit of procurement carried out in 2021.

### **4. REPORT**

4.1. The audit report on Climate Change Governance states that "The Environmental Policy includes some elements of strategy but misses many key elements. As a policy it is also incomplete, lacking clear recognition of roles and responsibilities among other things."

4.2. Cllr Lofthouse and the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer have drafted a revision to our Environmental Policy, see Appendix A.

4.3. In drafting the Policy they had regard to British Standard EN ISO 14001's requirements of an Environmental Policy:

"Top Management shall define the organisation's environmental policy and ensure that, within the defined scope of its environmental management system it

- a) Is appropriate to the nature, scale and environmental impacts of its activities, products and services
- b) Includes a commitment to continual improvement and prevention of pollution

- c) Includes a commitment to comply with applicable legal requirements and with other requirements to which the organisation subscribes which relate to its environmental impacts
- d) Provides the framework for setting and reviewing environmental objectives and targets
- e) Is documented, implemented and maintained
- f) Is communicated to all persons working for or on behalf of the organisation
- g) Is available to the public.”

4.4. In drafting the Policy they tried to address the comments made by the Auditor, whilst trying to keep the document to two pages to maintain clear and quick understanding of the Council’s ambitions.

4.5. The revised policy has been agreed by the Climate Action Team.

## 5. NEXT STEPS

5.1. Following adoption of the revised Environmental Policy, the Sustainability and Climate Officer will work with HR and with the Comms team to ensure new and existing staff are made aware of the changes.

5.2. the Sustainability and Climate Officer will work with the Head of Programme Management and Performance to develop KPIs through the Corporate Risk Register. Data capture and reporting will be delivered through a simple Environmental Management System.

5.3. A revised Action Plan for the Council will be developed, based on that agreed in November 2019 and on the Torridge carbon plan, as well as other strategies and plans that North Devon Council have agreed, eg) Plastic Free North Devon Consortium Strategy, One Northern Devon 10 year Quality of Life Strategy etc.

## 6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1. There are no additional resource implications arising from the revised Policy.

## 7. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

7.1. There are not considered to be any negative equality impacts arising from the nature recovery plan.

## 8. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

8.1. Article of Part 3 Annexe 1 (1):

8.2. Delegated power.



## 9. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

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

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1. The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: North Devon Council Environment Policy, December 2020 (The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

## 11. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

11.1. The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers.

Executive member: Cllr Graham Lofthouse

Author: Donna Sibley (Environment and Climate Officer) 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021

## North Devon Council Environmental Policy 2021

The purpose of this Policy is to establish North Devon District Council's environmental commitment for the next 10 years. It covers all the Council's activities and estate. North Devon District Council is a large employer and a significant resource user and we recognise that our operations and service delivery have an impact on our environment.

Our flagship commitment is to reduce carbon emissions from our own estate and operations to net zero by 2030 at the latest, and to work with partners to develop and implement a plan to reduce Devon's carbon emissions to net zero by 2050. We will aim to reach a negative carbon emissions position for North Devon beyond this date.

This Environmental Policy sets out the Council's commitment to continual environmental improvement. Associated Action Plan(s) will set out the work the Council will undertake to implement this policy.

We will provide appropriate resources to deliver this Policy. Our Climate Action working group will work through our Strategy & Resources Committee to develop suitable plans, projects and initiatives. Our Senior Management Team and Heads of Service will be responsible for ensuring delivery of agreed actions within the Council.

In everything we do, North Devon Council is committed to:

### **Reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero carbon by 2030**

We will adopt technologies and practices which "Avoid Reduce Replace Offset" emissions of greenhouse gases from our estate and operations, including our property and fleet and employee travel.

### **Adapting to climate change**

We will plan and adapt North Devon to build resilience to both the current effects of climate change and predicted future impacts. We will support the most disadvantaged in our community to respond to the challenges of climate change.

### **Using water efficiently in the Council's buildings and operations**

We will save water by reducing demand, harvesting rainwater and improving efficiency in existing and new buildings, and in our operations.



### **Reducing waste**

We will minimise the production of waste from our own activities and end our consumption of single use plastics. We will support our communities to reduce waste.

### **Preventing pollution**

We will improve our performance to prevent pollution, whether in the; air, land or water.

### **Protecting the natural and built environment**

We will protect, conserve and enhance the environmental value of our District's high quality natural environment, biodiversity and heritage.

### **Ensuring that the Council's purchasing power is used positively**

We will ensure that the environmental impact of the goods and services we purchase is considered within our procurement decisions, including through circular procurement.

### **Ensuring all staff and contractors implement our Environment Policy**

We will communicate this Policy to all employees and contractors working on behalf of the Council. We will raise awareness and train our employees and those working on our behalf to ensure that all staff have the knowledge, skills and understanding to implement our Environmental Policy.

In order to achieve the objectives of this policy, we will:

**Set Objectives** to improve our environmental performance and regularly reviewing and reporting our progress.

**Comply with Legislation**, Council policies and other commitments and aim to deliver best practice.

**Operate an Environmental Management System** that will be integrated into the corporate management framework.

**Work in partnership** with employees, other organisations, businesses and our communities, where appropriate, to further the aims of this Policy.

**Review this Policy** every two years (or more often if urgent changes occur) to take account of changes at local, national and international level.