



Committee report

POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR REGENERATION, HOUSING, PLANNING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Date **7 FEBRUARY 2019**

Title **ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN 2019**

Report of **COUNCILLOR JOHN HOBART, CABINET MEMBER
FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE**

SUMMARY

This paper reports on the 2018 Environmental Conference and presents a proposed Environmental Action Plan for 2019. The Policy & Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider and comment on the prioritised activities.

BACKGROUND

The council's Corporate Plan 2017-2020 identifies "Protect and nurture the environment and heritage" as a core value and specifies the following activity for Environment & Heritage:

"Work with partners and key stakeholders to deliver an environmental conference with a view to agreeing and implementing an audit of the local environment to inform delivery and monitoring of the creation of a long-term protection and improvement plan."

Environmental Conference

In June 2018 the council hosted an Environmental Conference at Cowes Yacht Haven (see Appendix 1 for agenda). The Conference brought together experts and enthusiasts to consider how the Island can secure a low carbon, resource efficient and environmentally sensitive future. The best suggestions would shape a new Environmental Action Plan which the council will develop during 2018.

The Conference heard about good practice on the Island across the public, private and voluntary sectors and launched the Chamber of Commerce's Green Impact Programme and the Island's Biosphere Reserve nomination. Secondary school students participated in table discussions and a poster competition.

The council highlighted its existing environmental activity including progress on recycling, installation of electric vehicle charge points, home insulation scheme,

Carbon Management Plan, Access Fund sustainable travel programme, Estuaries project and progress on the Plastic-free Island.

The Conference was attended by 170 delegates suggesting great enthusiasm amongst the Island community for the environmental agenda. The Twitter reach was 75,213 for the iweconf hashtag and the Facebook reach was 5,200. Articles appeared in the County Press, On the Wight, IW Radio and Island Echo.

Workshop sessions covered 15 themes (see Appendix 2), each led by an experienced and knowledgeable facilitator. Delegates could participate in 3 different themes during the day. Each workshop was asked to agree on 3 suggested activities for the forthcoming Environmental Action Plan and 1 (one) suggestion relevant to planning policy for the forthcoming Island Planning Strategy. It was made clear that each table would agree, through consensus, which 3 activities they would like to prioritise and put forward. In considering this, they were asked to be mindful of what the council and its partners would be capable of delivering, given the limited resources available.

Since the conference, the Cabinet Member for Environment & Heritage (Cllr Hobart) and Cabinet Member for Procurement, Waste Management, Special Projects and Forward Planning (Cllr Murwill) have been considering the suggestions put forward by the workshop groups and prioritising those for further consideration. In doing so, they have considered whether the council has a role in delivery, the potential impact of the activity and the likely cost of implementation, given that no new resources have been identified for delivery of environmental activities. The timescale for delivery was also considered, as Members were keen to prioritise activities that could be progressed during 2019.

Recommendations

In reviewing the suggestions, a number of themes emerged relating to (i) council procurement, (ii) public information and marketing, (iii) regeneration and (iv) council policy. The suggestions and responses for each of these are shown below:

(i) Council procurement

Theme	Suggested Action	Response
Promoting local food	Build local public sector markets (schools, hospitals and prisons)	<i>The school food contract is run independently through School Business Managers. The council food contract is largely used by leisure centres (vending machines) and residential homes. Specifications can consider local issues. Consider staff resource to provide advice and information to Commissioners on local food and social value.</i>

Theme	Suggested Action	Response
Creating green jobs	Public sector to procure at small scale (i.e. lots of small contracts rather than fewer big ones) so small local providers can provide more sustainably	<i>Procurement Strategy now includes a provision that for contracts with a whole-life value below £25,000, Island-based suppliers should be used if they offer best value. Contracts can't be artificially disaggregated to fall below procurement thresholds. Could look at using open market tenders rather than Frameworks - tends to be the case for the council anyway. Have streamlined procurement documents to help smaller suppliers e.g. can describe relevant experience rather than giving examples of previous contracts. Will always look at what additional local benefits contractors can deliver.</i>
Green business practices	Create 2nd life product market for waste items. Council to promote use of highly recyclable materials like glass over difficult to recycle materials like plastic	<i>Material and product lifecycles are sometimes considered in specifications but this is not done consistently, it tends to be left to Commissioners to decide. Consider staff resource to provide advice function to Commissioners on different options and guidance for the core list of frequently purchased items such as stationary and uniforms.</i>
Green business practices	Recognition for good environmental performance for SMEs - free marketing / rates reductions etc	<i>Social value is used extensively by the council, exceeding legal requirements. Whether it is appropriate for each tender is considered in the scoping stage. Procurement has produced guidance on social value, including some suggested questions to ask. What is offered by the bid as social value becomes a contractual obligation. Consider enhancing the environmental section in the Social Value guidance document.</i>
Circular economy	Higher environmental standards to be required in council tenders (procurement)	<i>A list of Environmental questions (e.g. ISO14001 accreditation) exists and is used in Stage 1 when it is considered to be appropriate. If it is to be used more extensively, it will require a specialist to evaluate responses. Consider staff resource to evaluate environmental responses and to introduce a KPI for supplier reporting on carbon emissions for outsourced goods and services for 'above threshold' contracts of at least 3 years duration.</i>

(ii) Public information and marketing

The council's Communications Team will support campaigns of appropriate sizes and using a variety of media during 2019 for:

- Promotion of electric vehicles
- Promotion of the Green Impact Programme
- Water awareness and conservation (in partnership with Southern Water and the Footprint Trust)
- Internal promotion of the Cycle to Work Scheme

(iii) Regeneration and the environment

The council's Regeneration agenda was presented at the conference and a number of suggestions related specifically to these plans:

Theme	Suggested Action	Response
Conserving our water supplies	Rainwater harvesting to be implemented on IWC regeneration sites	<i>The regeneration programme will always seek to deliver, or influence the delivery of, sustainable utility solutions for all sites.</i>
Regeneration & the Environment	Design and good architecture to enhance green environment	<i>The council will remain committed to ensuring high quality design is integral to any developments it both seeks to deliver and where we are acting as the Local Planning Authority. This will include ensuring schemes work with and for the environment and not against it.</i>
Regeneration & the Environment	Improving net gains for biodiversity on sites	<i>The draft Island Planning Strategy includes the requirement for development proposals to demonstrate 'how a net gain for biodiversity will be achieved'. The council will showcase the best examples of net gain for biodiversity.</i>
Regeneration & the Environment	We should be taking environmental/sustainability factors into account during the tendering process	<i>This will be done for development projects led by the council.</i>
Creating green jobs	Support services for those setting up self-employed or small business to facilitate part of transition to sustainability	<i>This is underway through the Green Impact Programme being delivered by the Chamber of Commerce and supported by the council.</i>
Creating green jobs	Skill up young people on key design, engineering, digital capabilities by establishing a maker space or fab lab educating young people on localised production and sustainability	<i>The Higher Education strand of the Regeneration Strategy will consider opportunities in environmental technologies.</i>

(iv) Council policy

Numerous suggestions were received on areas where council policy could be developed or enhanced to improve environmental standards. These were:

- Plastic-free policy
- Fracking and drilling
- EV charge points
- Business travel
- Environmental standards for tenders
- Rights of Way – maximising use for cyclists and horse riders
- Verge management

Whilst policy development can be a lengthy and time-consuming process, it is clear that a robust policy framework can have a positive impact above and beyond individual projects or activities which can be time-limited and dependent on funding. It is still unclear whether the council can produce a separate policy on fracking and drilling given the need to maintain an impartial role as the Local Planning Authority, but there is now evidence that other Planning Authorities are making statements on their opposition to fracking and incorporating this into planning policy. The council will observe these developments. With this exception, the council will endeavour to develop two specific policies per year, starting with an internal policy promoting sustainable business travel (a Green Travel Plan) and an internal plastic-free policy.

Planning Policy

Suggestions relating to the development of the Island Planning Strategy were also sought and these, along with responses from the team leading development of the Strategy, are shown below:

Suggested Policy Approach	Response
Consider introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy	<i>The council has previously investigated CIL and found that due to viability considerations it would not be suitable for the Island. The Council is constantly reviewing this position, and notes with interest the Government's proposals to change elements of how developer contributions can be used.</i>
Island sustainability goal to be better broadcast to incentivise education of residents and businesses	<i>Whilst it is recognised that there is a link to work being undertaken on the draft Island Planning Strategy, this is a wider issue that is considered to sit outside of planning process.</i>
Need for a dynamic local approach to support appropriate structural change, which is inevitable, delivering community benefit	<i>Through the Island Planning Strategy process aspects of this are being embedded. However, as per the point above, this is wider than planning policy and planning processes.</i>
Pre-application advise is key to the planning process and should be free	<i>It is agreed that pre-app is key to the planning process. However, this is not a statutory requirement.</i>
IOWC development plan to prioritise and develop Green Businesses via Planning	<i>Support is given to growing our economy in the draft Island Planning Strategy. This could include "green businesses".</i>
The need for an audit of green space to anticipate future change and inform decisions	<i>The council has a 2010 Open Space Audit, which does this. However, as this is nearly ten years old the council has commissioned a new piece of work to update it.</i>

Suggested Policy Approach	Response
s106 contributions - environmental outcomes including sustainable transport	<i>The council already seeks S106 contributions towards sustainable transport, when the national tests for seeking contributions have been met.</i>
The Island plan to have a clear statement that all activities on the Island should be minimising water use	<i>The draft Island Planning Strategy includes policy HQE10 - Managing Our Water Resources, which seeks to limit water use to 100 litres per person per day. This has been established working in partnership with Southern Water.</i>
New partnership between utilities and Council to influence developers at the planning stage to reduce water use, including a demonstration grey water reuse scheme for a large housing scheme	<i>See previous response.</i>
Design and good architecture to enhance green environment	<i>Through the draft Island Planning Strategy the council is proposing to increase the design quality and finish of new development, which could enhance 'the green environment'.</i>
Improving net gains for biodiversity on sites	<i>The draft Island Planning Strategy includes policy HQE2 - Ecological Assets and Opportunities for Enhancement, which includes the requirement for development proposals to demonstrate 'how a net gain for biodiversity will be achieved'.</i>
Create opportunities for farming businesses to develop processing facilities (needs planning permission!)	<i>The draft Island Planning Strategy includes policy SGOE4 - Supporting the Rural Economy. This policy approach has been prepared having worked with the IOW branch of the NFU.</i>
Real net gain embedded in all planning applications with a mechanism for an IoW administered fund for net gain projects funded by developers.	<i>Please see previous response.</i>

Action Plan 2019

Aside from these themes, a long list of suggested activities which Members felt could be delivered was drawn up and this is shown, together with commentary, in Appendix 3. From this, a short list of activities, which it is felt could be progressed in 2019 with existing resources, is shown below:

Proposed Environmental Action Plan 2019		
Ref	Topic	Action
1	Future Energy System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1(a) Deliver the Innovate UK-funded Smart Local Energy Systems Concept and Design study called "Energy Autonomous Community (Isle of Wight)" project, working in collaboration with the University of Portsmouth. • 1(b) Contact the local HE sector, principally Portsmouth & Southampton Universities, to discuss opportunities for

Proposed Environmental Action Plan 2019		
Ref	Topic	Action
		<p>undergraduate and postgraduate projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1(c) Consider a formal agreement with the network operator (Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks) to collaborate on designing a network that meets the Island's ambitions and to approach the Regulator together if regulatory change is required. • 1(d) Reinvigorate the PTEC tidal energy project off the South Coast
2	Sustainable Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Visit Isle of Wight to produce a vision for Sustainable Tourism
3	Promoting the Biosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the Biosphere Nomination is successful, develop a Biosphere Action Plan
4	Promoting Electric Vehicles and Low Carbon Fuels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4(a) Council to purchase 4 electric vehicles • 4(b) Extend the EV charge point network in public car parks • 4(c) Offer 12 months free parking (All-Island Car Park Permit) in council car parks for new plug-in zero emission electric vehicles registered to an Island address between 01.04.19 – 31.03.20 • 4(d) Offer free parking for EV owners in dedicated bays whilst vehicle is charging
5	Conserving our water supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan a new public education campaign with Southern Water for delivery in 2020
6	Farming & Rural Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a Rural Summit in partnership with Natural Enterprise to consider environmental issues in the context of Brexit and DEFRA's "public money for public goods" agenda
7	Involving the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore new methods of verge management to encourage wildlife and biodiverse habitats
8	Reducing travel impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8(a) Encourage higher priority for active travel (walking, cycling) in new road schemes and developments • 8(b) Promote designation of quiet lanes (20mph) to link bridleway and footpath network • 8(c) Promoting greater awareness of safe walking routes to schools
9	Green Business Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and promote the Green Impact Programme
10	Circular Economy (waste and recycling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the voluntary sector to organise the distribution of surplus food

Proposed Environmental Action Plan 2019		
Ref	Topic	Action
11	Plastic-free Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to identify funding for an innovation programme to encourage business start-ups utilising local waste materials.

Governance

The council's Plastic & Environment Forum will monitor delivery of the Action Plan. The Principal Officer (Low Carbon Projects) will prepare regular reports on progress.

Next Steps

Policy & Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the proposed Environmental Action Plan for 2019 and to comment on the content and delivery of these activities. Cabinet Members recognise that there is considerable environmental expertise within the Committee and outside in the wider community and are keen to tap into this expertise to reach the most productive outcome. There is much ambition to progress environmental issues but, under the current financial constraints, it is recognised that this can only be done with existing resources or, where necessary, by securing external funding.

The council is also aware of the Green City Charter recently launched by Southampton City Council which is designed to move Southampton towards a low carbon city, cleaner economy, and greener landscape. The council will study this Charter in detail to see whether any of the proposals could be incorporated into future plans.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

- [1. Conference agenda](#)
- [2. Workshop topics](#)
- [3. Environmental Action Plan – long list](#)

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