

Biodiversity and Climate Change Review

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resource Committee
Lead Director	Chief Executive
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

On 10 April 2019 Council approved a motion requesting that Policy and Resources committee undertake a review considering progress taken to address the twin threats to biodiversity and climate change. Council also requested that this review consider a target date of 2030 for the Borough to be carbon neutral and strengthen work on the protection and enhancement of habitats, species and ecosystems. The report recommends an approach to undertaking the review to achieve the request from Council.

Purpose of Report

To decide how to progress the recent motion regarding biodiversity and climate change approved at full council on 10 April 2019.

This report makes the following recommendation to this Committee:

To agree to a member-led task and finish review group to fulfil the request from Council on 10 April regarding biodiversity and climate change, with the aim to produce a report and action plan for approval by the meeting of Policy and Resources on 22 April 2020.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	26 June 2019

Biodiversity and Climate Change Review

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Council's priority of Safe, Clean and Green sets an outcome by 2045 to have a Borough that is recognised as clean and well cared for by everyone. This includes an action to improve air quality under this priority.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	A review would support the achievement of the cross cutting objective of Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Risk Management	Refer to section 5	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Financial	Accepting the recommendations will demand estimated new spending of £40,000. We plan to fund that spending through a bid to the business rates retention pilot which is included for consideration later on the agenda.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Staffing	We will need access to extra expertise to deliver a review as requested by Council.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Legal	Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers as set out in the constitution.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Privacy and Data Protection	If the review requires additional collection of personal data this will be managed in accordance with the data protection act and any recommendations that require a change to systems or procedures in relation to the processing of personal data will require a data privacy impact assessment to be completed prior to approval.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations of the review could have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone if approved. A separate equalities impact assessment will need to be completed alongside any recommendations.	Policy & Information Manager

Public Health	The recommendations of the review could have an impact on the health of the population or individuals within Maidstone. A separate health impact assessment would need to be completed for consideration alongside any recommendations.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Crime and Disorder	Crime and disorder is not within the scope of the review	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Procurement	No implications at this point in the process	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance

2. . INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 At Council on 10 April the following motion was agreed:

RESOLVED: *That this Council notes with concern the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on global climate change impacts and the recent Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reports on global species and habitat loss.*

Further to this, Council:

(1) Declares its recognition of global climate and biodiversity emergencies;

(2) Requests the Policy & Resources Committee to:

- undertake a short review of MBC governance policies and progress aimed at addressing locally these twin threats and to report on findings. This would include, inter alia, a review of the current provision of electric charging points throughout the Borough and bring forward an ambitious plan to make Maidstone Borough the friendliest place in the country for driving electric or hybrid vehicles.*
- consider a target date of 2030 for the whole of the Borough of Maidstone to be carbon neutral;*
- consider how the Council can strengthen local protection and enhancement of species, habitats and ecosystems services under available powers;*

(3) Requests the Chief Executive to (a) write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer stating the concern of the Council with respect to the above, the likely national impact on the economy and on the wellbeing of citizens, and requesting government funding be made available to implement swift appropriate actions in response and (b) include at the beginning of the proposed letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the following additional sentence:

"This Council welcomes the Chancellor's recent announcement that a "future homes standard" will mandate the end of fossil-fuel heating systems so as to "lower carbon and lower fuel bills too."

- 2.2 The Chief Executive wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer as agreed and the response is included at Appendix A for information. The letter sets out the actions that have been taken and are proposed to tackle climate change including a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.
 - 2.3 Kent County Council on 23 May agreed a commitment of net zero emissions by 2050 and Canterbury City Council has agreed to reduce carbon emissions and become carbon neutral by 2050.
 - 2.4 The Council has recently adopted a new Strategic Plan which sets an outcome to have an environmentally attractive and sustainable Borough, with a cross cutting objective that biodiversity and environmental sustainability is respected. It does not go as far as setting out that the Borough will be carbon neutral by 2030.
 - 2.5 This report sets out a proposed approach to part 2 of the motion above.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Policy and Resources Committee has a number of options open to it to address the three points made in part two of the above motion, all of which would incur resource implications unless no further action was agreed.
- 3.2 As set out in the constitution all Committees may hold inquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development. The Committee has the power to set up working groups to conduct scrutiny type reviews. The actions above could be considered by a working group and findings reported to the Committee. The nature of the subject and its ambition are such that extra resource and expertise are required in order to deliver a meaningful review, with realistic scope, objectives, timescales, risks and action plan. A bid has been made for this from the Business rates retention pilot fund at a later agenda item.
- 3.3 The Committee could request officers to carry out research and report back to a future committee meeting with proposals in relation to the three areas identified in the motion. Currently there is no staffing capacity to carry out this work, so if this option were agreed resource would need to be identified, probably of a similar level to that set out in 3.2.
- 3.4 Another option would be for the Committee to undertake an inquiry and review as part of its usual meetings and business with activities planned throughout the year to complete the review. As this is a complex subject it would be difficult to undertake a review in an in-depth fashion alongside the usual business of the committee. This approach is not therefore recommended.

- 3.5 The Committee could agree to take no further action although this would go against the request agreed at full Council to undertake a review.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is proposed that a task and finish review group is formed to undertake the review. The group would consist of 9 Councillors and would be subject to the rules of political balance, with group leaders being requested to nominate members onto the group. As the subject matter is complex and cross-cutting it is recommended that the review group report back with conclusions by the last meeting of the municipal year 22 April 2020. The Committee could agree a different deadline and may also want to include on its agenda updates from the review group as the review progresses. A different number of councillors on the review group could also be considered by the Committee as well.
- 4.2 The review group with officer support will set a scope for the review to include the proposals from full council, objectives and milestones. The review, on reaching conclusion, should propose actions to be agreed by Policy and Resources Committee. The constitution sets out that committees may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations. The review has not been allocated a budget other than the bid for staffing resource so any additional expenditure required would require approval from the Committee.
- 4.3 The benefits of a Councillor review will be the ability to call expert witnesses to give evidence, a clear dedicated resource to support and it will ensure member led policy development on this complex and cross-cutting topic.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The project risks are to be determined and the requested resource is required to determine them. However, the risk on the investment is that an appointment is made to support the delivery of the project and it is then abandoned. Given this is based on a motion agreed by full Council this is deemed to be unlikely.
- 5.2 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 As part of the review it is likely that some consultation will be undertaken and this will need to be determined in the scope for the project. Previous consultations relating to the subject matter will also need to be taken into account as well. It is likely that as part of the review expert witnesses will be called upon to give evidence. The review report and recommended actions will be submitted to Policy and Resources Committee.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 If a scrutiny type review is agreed a member working group will be appointed, meetings will be publicised and regular reports on progress can be given to this Committee.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Response from the Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation.
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