

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- FC23/066

Committee:-	Finance and Governance Committee
Date:-	24 th January 2024
Author:-	Martin Hammond, Clerk
Report Title:-	Climate Change Policies
Wards Affected:-	All

1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval to amend the corporate plan to reflect more clearly how the Council is addressing its duties under the 2021 Environment Act.

2. Recommendations

That the attached description of our policies and actions be approved for inclusion in the corporate plan.

3. Information

- 3.1. Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Government guidance published on 17 May 2023 clarifies that town and parish councils must:
 - consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
 - agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
 - act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.
- 3.2. Town and parish councils are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but should have considered their plans by the end of 2023 and agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this, with a reconsideration at least every five years.
- 3.3. To comply with the guidance, town and parish councils need to regularly consider potential bio-diversity actions, and review their policies and practices, capture what they are doing in their published policies and agree action plans. As a minimum

local councils could ensure they address biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications.

- 3.4. Given the Council's established policy position, none of this is onerous and we can demonstrate we have been complying with the law. However, it would be helpful to provide a single overview of our policies and activity, so it can be referenced and made available on request and findable on our website. It is suggested that the attached paragraphs (Appendix One) be included in the corporate plan, alongside the policy summary which is already in the corporate plan.

4. Consultation and Engagement

None carried out on this point, although the Councils policies and actions have been built on a number of consultation and engagement exercises.

5. Finance, Legal and Resource Implications

None

6. Climate change implications

As described above

7. Policy Implications

As described above. .

Background Papers

Environment Act 2021 and government guidance

APPENDIX 1 PROPOSED TEXT FOR CORPORATE PLAN

OBJECTIVES AND STANDARDS

The Council will adhere to the following objectives and standards in how it works as an organisation and together with others.

(inter alia)

Sustainability

1. The Council has approved motions declaring a climate emergency. It will continuously explore ways of encouraging and supporting sustainable habits and opportunities for local people.
2. The Council will continue to expect high sustainable standards, improved energy and water use and insulation standards when responding to planning application consultations; it will oppose applications which unsustainably reduce or do not replace natural habitat or damage water courses, or which do not seek to optimise the use of public transport, walking and cycling as means of travel.
3. The Council will, within its own remit, strive to protect, restore and enhance our local biodiversity and the natural world that surrounds us and of which we are all a part and will strive to take the most sustainable approach to the design and delivery of its own services
4. The Council will support the development of walking and cycling infrastructure and the growth of public transport.
5. It will operate a paperless office, including eliminating the use of single use plastic items.

SUSTAINABILITY

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The Council's objectives above set out its position on promoting and supporting sustainability and sustainable policies.

The Council will continue to explore ways to be more sustainable and encourage sustainable habits within the wider community. It continues to be open to developing measures which embed sustainability and which provide advice and support for local groups and localities. All committee report and Council reports address the climate change implications of the report's subject matter. The Finance and Governance Committee has the subject of climate change mitigation on every agenda.

A comprehensive set of advice on sustainable habits is available on its website, covering recycling, tree planting and bio-diversity, energy use, transportation, business and grants.

The Council's Planning Committee, when commenting on planning applications, closely examines the sustainability of the proposals being submitted and frequently proposes

improvements to those applications, or objects where it does not appear that the application is capable of demonstrating sustainability gains.

In supporting and investing in the allotments leased from the Council, the Council is encouraging and enabling more people to gain benefit for growing their own food and plants and taking exercise.

The Love Wildlife grants scheme in 2023 was an example of supporting very local projects which improve habitats and re-wilding; this will be repeated in 2024 . The Town Lottery also provided grants in 2023 for improvements to one set of allotments and to construct a hedgehog highway along the Ise valley. In 2024, the Council will sponsor seed and plant exchanges and work with the Kettering Allotment Society and with Groundwork Trust in doing so. It will work with Age UK in promoting home energy surveys for those people over 66 who were provided with winter fuel grants by the Kettering Charities for the Poor.

A small increase in the overall budget has been provided for in 2024/5.

