

Report to Cabinet

Monday 24 May 2021

Subject:	Recommendations from Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board in response to Climate Change Implementation
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Resources and Core Services – Councillor Ali
Director:	Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer Surjit Tour
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Trisha Newton, Senior Democratic Services Trisha_Newton@sandwell.gov.uk







1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Cabinet considers how to embed climate change in all Council decisions to ensure that sustainable and green practices are implemented across the Council and the borough.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board has considered the significant risks that climate change presented to Sandwell residents, as well as the Council's responsibility to address the issue through its decision-making to ensure that the impacts are mitigated, and carbon neutrality targets are achieved.
- 2.2 The recommendations set out in paragraph 1 of this report were made by the Scrutiny Board at its meeting held on 25 March 2021.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

		<p>Addressing climate change is advantageous for Sandwell. Benefits include encouraging the adaptation and resilience of communities, reducing health inequalities, and building a stronger economy by attracting investments into a greener borough.</p> <p>By embedding climate change as a consideration in decision-making, it enables Sandwell Council to lead by example in tackling climate change and achieving the Corporate Plan objectives. The implications of not addressing climate change in all decisions will risk undermining the Corporate Plan.</p>
		
		

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Sandwell Council adopted the Climate Change Strategy in October 2020. The strategy outlined the targets and action plans in place for the Council to become carbon neutral by 2030, and the borough by 2041. The strategy covered six areas, including:

- Council Estate and Operations
- The Built Environment
- Transport
- Waste & Recycling
- Adaptation and Resilience
- Natural Capital

4.2 During 2020-21, the Economy Transport Skills and Environment Scrutiny Board considered several climate change matters.

The Board agreed the scope for the rewilding scrutiny inquiry. Additional focus for the inquiry included carbon capture and living walls to capture particulates, rewilding at certain heights and litter issues to increase biodiversity and mitigate climate change. An update was received on 25th June 2020, where the Board requested for rewilding arrangements to be put in place. This has since been postponed due the ongoing pandemic and is to be included on 2021/22 work programme.

The Board also considered the key themes of the community wealth building and inclusive economy action plan. The Board determined that the impacts identified would support economic recovery in Sandwell and in turn, support environmental plans. The Board recognised the progress made and invited a further report to be presented in Summer 2021.

The Board received several Reset and Recovery updates. It was acknowledged that recovery post Covid-19 would involve the Council engaging in both economic and environmental activity to build a healthier, sustainable and resilient borough.

Discussions included prioritising building a more suitable environment for cyclists and pedestrians, improving connectivity across Sandwell, creating green spaces, and implementing sustainable transport. Additionally, the Board highlighted that all future plans should be considered in light of Sandwell's Climate Change Strategy. This would support the Council in being proactive in its fight against climate change.

- 4.3 On 19th November 2020, the Board announced that a Working Group would be set up to consider the 'implementation of the Climate Change Strategy'. The Scrutiny Working Group's first meeting took place on 28th January 2021 and was attended by the Chair, Councillor Rollins, and board members Councillors M Hussain and Chidley. The Working Group's focus was to maintain an oversight of the implementation programme and the progress of delivering the wide-ranging actions developed to tackle the impacts of climate change.

During its meeting, the Working Group agreed that checks and balances were required to hold the Council to account in implementing the necessary measures to meet the 2030 target. Additionally, it was highlighted that the Council needed to focus on the arrangements and resources required to support the borough in becoming carbon neutral by 2041.

Members also acknowledged the need to enhance awareness of climate change across the Council and the borough to encourage a 'greener' mindset. The Working Group discussed developing a Council-wide programme of Carbon Literacy and attending climate change training hosted by the Local Government Association to increase the Council's understanding.

The Group agreed that the decision-making procedure was central to ensuring the success of the Climate Change Strategy and achieving the 2030 target. It was agreed that incorporating climate change as a compulsory element of decision making would demonstrate that the Council is adopting appropriate actions to embed climate change in all of its activities and practices and to normalise it as a key consideration in all decisions. The Council could then lead the borough by example to engage in meeting the 2041 target.

- 4.4 At the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board meeting held on the 25th March 2021, the Board considered the discussions of the Scrutiny Working Group.

The Board received a presentation on Climate Change Implementation from the Climate Change Programme Manager. The challenges of developing a strong corporate focus on climate change were recognised. The Board suggested that requiring the Council to explicitly consider climate change in the decision-making process will ensure it remains a priority and would encourage the Council to make sufficient progress with the 2030 target. In turn, this would allow the Council to advocate for behavioural change in the borough.

- 4.5 Arising from the discussions at the meeting, the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board felt that the Cabinet should:-

- Consider how to effectively address climate change in decisions to ensure that all activity across Sandwell is sustainable.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the Cabinet is requested to respond to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Board within two months, setting out any approved recommendations, and how they will be implemented.

6 Implications

Resources:	Cabinet would need to consider that acknowledging climate change implications in all decisions may lead to cost savings e.g. via energy efficiency measures. Furthermore, proposals such as Workplace Parking Levies, that are being considered by neighbouring local authorities, will generate income.
Legal and Governance:	In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, Cabinet is requested to respond to the recommendations of the scrutiny board within two months, setting out any approved recommendations, and how they will be implemented.
Risk:	There are no risk implications associated with this report.
Equality:	No Equality Impact Assessment is required in relation to this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>Climate change is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of several health issues. The World Health Organisation identified climate change as the number priority for public health.</p> <p>The Council, in considering climate change across all Executive decision, could contribute to improving sustainability and addressing the impacts of climate change.</p>
Social Value	Implementing climate change considerations into the decision-making process would have wide societal benefits. This includes the creation of job opportunities, food production, and ensuring that Sandwell's economy adapts and migrates towards decarbonised plans.

7. Appendices

Sandwell's Climate Change Strategy 2020-41

8. Background Papers

Minutes of 25th March 2021 of the [Economy Skills Transport Environment Scrutiny Board](#)