

## Report to Cabinet

**Subject:** Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan

**Date:** 10 January 2013

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### Wards Affected

Borough-wide

### Purpose

To seek Cabinet agreement for the draft Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan 2013-17, to guide the Council's future work on sustainability

### Key Decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or savings which are significant, and it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.

### Background

1. The Borough Council has been active over many years in delivering sustainability-related improvements. However, in the light of recent changes and external developments, a commitment was made in the 2012/13 Council Plan to review the Council's strategic approach to the issue and develop a new Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan.
2. Over the past six months, officers have reviewed the current position, investigated latest good practice and held informal discussions with lead members for the issue.
3. As a result, a new Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan have been developed for members' consideration and approval. A copy of the draft document is attached at **Appendix 1**. The document includes in its appendices summaries of key legislation and international agreements related to the issue.

### Proposal

4. The draft strategy and action plan aims to be a crisp, focused statement. It summarises the current position and work recently completed, then sets out an overall goal, "To facilitate the attainment of more sustainable lifestyles for Gedling residents" and a set of strategic aims to take the Council and the Borough forward, based on the Council's vision.
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5. The strategy and action plan is then built around five predominantly environmental themes: -
  - Energy
  - Transport
  - Waste
  - Biodiversity
  - Resilience and Behavioural Change
6. Of the five themes, energy is acknowledged the central theme around which the rest are anchored, given the acknowledged importance of contributing to future energy security, the impact that energy can have on climate change and adaptation and the wider economic imperatives resulting from increasing energy costs. The document incorporates the previously separate Gedling Energy Policy and Plan, and residual commitments in that document.
7. High level targets against a range of measures are included, and these in effect set out the outcomes that the Strategy and Plan seek to achieve. Finally, the proposed Action Plan sets out actions in progress or proposed for the future that will contribute towards the delivery of these outcomes, based around the strategic aims.
8. The Strategy and Action Plan is intended to be a flexible document, subject to regular review to reflect latest good practice, new technology and available resources. Many of the early actions in the Action Plan involve the investigation of options in key areas, which may spawn further actions in future.
9. Future performance will be managed through a small officer working group (the Sustainability Officer Group) recently established and comprising managers whose work is likely to be most critical to delivery of the Action Plan. The aim will be to integrate performance management with the Council's corporate performance management arrangements and to report progress through the Covalent Performance Management system. Updates in the content of the Plan will also be channelled through this group, for onward consideration by the relevant Portfolio Holder and by Cabinet through its regular performance management reports.

### **Alternative Options**

10. Alternative to the approach proposed include: -
  - Not to adopt a strategy – this would continue an ad-hoc approach to sustainability, not underpinned by a strategy. While this approach has delivered in some respects, it is felt that the advantages of a stronger strategic focus, with clear targets, agreed actions and clear officer accountability for the delivery of actions will help drive forward the Council's work more effectively in future.
  - Adopt a different strategy – such as a more detailed, theoretical strategy, drawing more heavily on national and international commitments and their implications. Some previous strategies have taken this approach, but in order to keep the issue live and current, and to gain and retain community interest in the issue, the crisper, more pragmatic approach to strategy development and action planning has been preferred.

This does not mean that wider global concerns have not been considered, nor that latest technical good practice has been ignored, though long, detailed expositions of these have not been included.

### **Financial Implications**

11. The Council has invested in a dedicated Sustainability Officer to drive forward this strategy and action plan. His role will be to lead delivery of a wide range of projects, to work with communities to progress others and to seek out funding opportunities to take forward projects for which funding is required.

12. Many projects in the Action Plan can be delivered from within existing agreed resources, but some projects may require further revenue and capital funding to be taken forward. The model to take these forward will be based on a clear business case being set out on a case-by-case basis – a recent example is investment in the installation of solar photovoltaic panels on the roofs of Council buildings, reducing ongoing energy costs and carbon emissions and increasing the proportion of renewable energy the Council uses. It is hoped that the Council will continue to look favourably on such projects for which a strong business case can be made.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Draft Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan

### **Background Papers**

None identified.

### **Recommendation**

Cabinet approves the Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan attached at **Appendix 1**.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

To set out a clear direction and measurable outcomes for the Council's future work to address sustainability.