

Report on	Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan
Date of Meeting	16th April 2024
Reporting Officer	Mark McAdoo, Assistant Director: Environmental Services
Contact Officer	Karl McGowan, Waste & Sustainable Development Manager

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek approval for a Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan for the period 2024 to 2028.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>The Climate Change Act (N Ireland) 2022 received Royal Assent in June 2022. It sets emissions reduction targets that Northern Ireland must comply with legally, including achieving Net Zero by 2050. Other key requirements of the Act include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The setting of 2030 and 2040 emissions reduction targets; • Producing five-year Climate Action Plans to set out the policies and proposals that Northern Ireland departments will implement to meet a carbon budget; • Establishing a Just Transition Commission for Northern Ireland and an office for a Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner; • Implementing a system of reporting against targets and carbon budgets and setting regulations with regard to Climate Change reporting duties.
2.2	<p>The Council currently has a Corporate Improvement Objective (CIP1) that “<i>seeks to reduce the environmental impacts of our own activities and contribute to the improvement of the wider environment through local action</i>”. Up until this point, CIP1 has been the only mechanism used to capture and report the sustainability and climate change related activities carried out by the Council. CIP1 has been in place since 2020/21 with the Assistant Director: Environmental Services as SRO, and has expanded to now include some 27 actions for 2023/24 being delivered across various departments (progress on which is reported on a quarterly basis).</p>
2.3	<p>Some examples of activities already completed under CIP1 include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planted over 33,000 trees at three closed landfill sites offsetting about 4,000 tonnes CO2 emissions

<p>2.4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved a recycling rate of almost 60% saving at least 35,000 tonnes CO2 emissions. • Secured 100% registration of local schools on the Eco Schools Programme with over two thirds achieving Green Flag Award • Introduced more electric-powered vans into the Council fleet • Coordinated and facilitated several climate awareness events including On the Road to Net Zero information/networking session as part of the Mid Ulster Enterprise Week • Successfully gained funding from Innovate UK Fast Followers Scheme as a partner Council in the Driving Net Zero Transformation in Mid-South West Region Project. • Supported the development of a Mid Ulster collaborative decarbonisation cluster, involving four leading local companies, facilitated by the Centre for Competitiveness. <p>Within the Climate Change Bill there is provision for DAERA to impose specified climate change reporting duties on public bodies. This will require Council to prepare reports including a statement of the authority’s proposals and policies for adapting to, or mitigating the effects of, climate change in the exercise of its functions and an assessment of the progress of the authority towards implementing these proposals and policies. It is therefore planned that the Council will meet these requirements through the delivery of a Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan and associated performance reporting framework.</p>
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Main Report</p>
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p>	<p>Last year Council engaged Sustainable Northern Ireland (SNI) to assist with the development of a Sustainability Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advising on establishing baseline carbon emissions for the Council • assisting with responding to consultations on the Climate Change Reporting Requirements and Interim 2030 & 2040 Emission Reduction Targets and related Carbon Budgets for Northern Ireland • obtaining cross departmental engagement through facilitation of workshops <p>The outputs from the cross departmental workshops were developed into a draft Sustainability Strategy & Climate Action Plan for 2024 to 2028 (to align with the period of the Corporate Plan). This draft plan was presented to the Council’s Climate Change Working Group on 14th December 2023. In the three months since a series of further internal consultations have been held with the various departments to refine and finalised the proposed actions detailed in the plan.</p> <p>This latest version of the Sustainability Strategy & Climate Change Action Plan is attached as an appendix for members’ consideration. Subject to approval, a twelve week public consultation will be required to be undertaken on the plan.</p> <p>The stated vision in the plan is <i>"Leading our community to create a sustainable and resilient future where environmentally friendly practices and collective efforts ensure a thriving rural community for generations to come."</i> and the Council is committed to achieving this by 2050 through the following goals:</p>

- Reducing the Council's operational emissions to Net Zero with an interim target of a 20% reduction by 2028
- Leading the way to a Net Zero District and supporting the local community in its journey to Net Zero
- Council staff and members becoming climate and sustainability literate
- Planning and developing sustainable and resilient assets
- Replacing the Council's vehicles and heating systems with zero / low-emissions versions

3.5 The Council's ambition for net zero will be to reduce emissions by mitigation first. To support this, after establishing a baseline of Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, we will aim for at least a 90% reduction in operational and supply chain emissions by 2050 (the remaining 10% of residual emissions must be neutralised / off-set by the same year) with an interim target of a 20% reduction in emissions by 2028.

3.6 The Sustainability Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan includes:

- The calculated baseline carbon footprint for Mid Ulster District Council.
- A breakdown of these emissions by Council operations and wider Mid Ulster District emissions by sector.
- 42 proposed actions across 5 key action areas and each Directorate.

3.7 The 5 key action areas are as listed below:

- Community Leadership
- Resource Efficiency
- Sustainable Transport
- Natural Environment
- Green Growth

3.8 Some examples of the 42 actions detailed within the 5 key action areas are:

- Form a cross-departmental team to deliver the Sustainability & Climate Action Plan and to disseminate information throughout the Council
- Provide / promote climate awareness sessions/training for staff / Councillors / community groups
- Promote and increase educational initiatives on sustainability, resource efficiency, biodiversity and sustainable food production among Council staff and the local community
- Provide support to businesses to begin their journey to net zero
- Develop a Carbon Management Plan, setting new ambitious annual reduction targets for energy consumption and improving the energy performance of council facilities
- Commit to the sustainable consumption of resources across the Council estate
- Develop infrastructure to support the replacement of the Council's fleet with alternative fuel vehicles (HVO initially) and the use of electric vehicles

3.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and implement the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan to protect our biodiversity. • Protect and enhance open spaces / parks to increase biodiversity, tree coverage and area of wetlands, allotments, community gardens, community orchards. • Introduce a sustainability screening tool for all capital projects to promote the highest standards of energy performance and encourage the use of sustainable building methods in Council new builds / renovations. • Identify opportunities for the installation of renewable energy where possible across the Council estate. <p>The responsible Directorates will continually monitor the progress of their respective actions within the Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan. This monitoring will be reported biannually to the Climate Change Working Group.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>The Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan does not provide costings for each individual action as this is not possible without further specific assessments and studies in relation to areas such as building condition, energy efficiency, land use and renewable energy projects. However it is anticipated that the cost for delivering some of the actions e.g. alternative HVO fuel trial, will be met from the Climate Change/Transformation allocation within the Council Capital Programme.</p>
	<p>Human:</p> <p>The Council does not currently have a full-time dedicated staffing resource for Climate Change & Sustainability delivery or related functions e.g. Energy Officer. These responsibilities currently form part of other officer roles which, whilst workable up until now, will not be adequate if the ambitions in the Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan are to be achieved over the next four years.</p>
	<p>Risk Management:</p> <p>Not having a Sustainability Strategy & Climate Change Action Plan in place will mean the Council will fail to comply with the current statutory Sustainable Development Duty as well as the forthcoming Climate Change Regulations.</p>

4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: None
	Rural Needs Implications: None
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members are asked to approve the Sustainability Strategy & Climate Action Plan, and agree to undertake a twelve week consultation exercise on the document.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Sustainability Strategy & Climate Action Plan