

## Environment Strategy Progress Report - Quarter 2 2022/23

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The council's Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Response Plan sets out the commitment to become London's most sustainable borough. The Climate Emergency Response Plan is updated annually via a report to the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee. The latest update was approved and published in October 2022.
- 1.2. This report provides a summary of progress during the period July - September 2022 (quarter 2 2022/23). Previous reports are available on the [council's website](#).
- 1.3. Key highlights include: the launch of dockless e-bikes, the opening of a Sutton Library of Things, two new Sutton Repair cafes. Other work includes an application to the Government's levelling up fund to improve train services, the award of seven green flags to borough parks and £157,000 of funding to deliver greening improvements to Sutton town centre.

## **2. Cleaner Air**

### *Sustainable Transport*

- 2.1. The council lobbies for improvements to the frequency and coverage of bus services in the borough, including demand-responsive services. Last quarter it was reported that following a public consultation, TfL are introducing measures which are estimated to result in an additional £1 million investment in local bus services in Sutton and Croydon. These changes are expected to take place in December 2022 or as soon as route contracts are renewed after this date.
- 2.2. Phase 2 of the Government's levelling up fund was announced in the 2022 Spring Statement. The council prepared and submitted an application to the fund for improvements between Sutton and Belmont train line to improve the frequency of services which will support staff and visitors to the London Cancer Hub.
- 2.3. The council continues to experience the impact of ongoing issues relating to future funding deals between the Government's Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport for London (TfL). A short term funding arrangement was in place from TfL to the council until June 2022, however, no further agreements have been announced.

### *Cycling*

- 2.4. In September, the council launched its partnership with dockless e-bike provider [Human Forest](#). Providing users with 10 minutes of free cycling per day, 120 bikes will be available to hire across the boroughs of Sutton and Kingston. There are no unlocking charges to use the bike, meaning a resident could cycle for 10 minutes free of charge, so long as they leave their bike in the right place at the end of their ride. There is a free app to help find, hire and return a bike. As the scheme operates in a number of different boroughs across London, residents can cycle from one place to another, without having to return the bike to Sutton.
- 2.5. Due to the ongoing TfL funding issues, there has been no further allocation of money towards cycle training, However, 293 children and 33 adults have been trained during 2022/23. This is a slight increase upon quarter 1 figures.

## **3. A Greener Borough**

### *Parks and open spaces*

- 3.1. Sutton has more than 90 parks and green spaces which cover nearly 500 hectares and land. The [Parks and Open Spaces Strategy](#) sets out a vision for the boroughs parks

and open spaces and trees to be well-maintained; support good public health, local culture, social activities and biodiversity and where possible opportunities will be taken to improve access to open spaces, facilities and activities.

- 3.2. In order to maximise the maintenance of parks, the council prepares and updates management plans for the boroughs parks. There are currently 11 plans covering more than 25% of the borough parks, with a further three in draft stage.
- 3.3. The [Green Flag Award](#) is an international accreditation programme which recognises and rewards excellence and good practice in the management and development of parks and open spaces. Originating in 1996, over 2,000 parks around the world have now achieved the standard. In Sutton, seven parks were granted green flags this year - Oaks Parks, Beddington Park and the Grange, Rosehill Park (East and West), Manor Park, Carshalton Park, Grove Park and the new addition of Cheam Park and Recreation Ground.
- 3.4. The Volunteer Coordinator continues to work with friends groups, tree wardens and others to enable volunteering across the boroughs parks and open spaces. Activities undertaken during quarter 2 include event planning, littering pick, gardening and hosting scout groups and corporate tasks. In total, 770 hours were donated, equating to an in-kind contribution of £6,229.

#### *Biodiversity*

- 3.5. Butterfly banks installed have received further management during the summer including weeding and further pugs are due to be planted in the autumn,
- 3.6. Work on the ReWild London Fund is progressing and a contractor was appointed and has now drafted interpretation boards.
- 3.7. Events held during July - September 2022 include two bat walks, a 'meadow mooch' at Sutton Common Paddock, two open days (held at Anton Crescent Wetland and Belmont Pastures), a walk and talk at Roundshaw Downs for Wallington High School for Girls, a talk to RSPB Croydon Group and the 3rd 'Roundshaw Ramble' with Inside Croydon.
- 3.8. The council continues to contribute towards London-wide and national discussions relating to Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and Nature Recovery Networks (NRN), including the Greater London Authority and Planning Advisory Service.
- 3.9. During the quarter, the council received confirmation that it has successfully received Phase one funding for the 'Greening Sutton Town Centre' project. This included £157,000 from Transport for London to improve Green Infrastructure within the Sutton High Street area.
- 3.10. The Sutton Ecology Centre continues to provide biodiversity education and events to local children and families. Data for quarter two indicates that 323 children were engaged by school groups and 500 children at events. The number of adults engaged by the same means was 79 and 298 respectively. No Wilgings Forest School activities took place during the quarter due to staff sickness. This means, Ecology Centre totals were 823 children and 377 adults. Other events run by the biodiversity team such as bat walks engaged a further 329 people, meaning the total number of people engaged this quarter was 1,529. This is a cumulative total of 4,220 for the year 2022/23.
- 3.11. Sutton Nature Conservation Volunteers provide the council with support to deliver a variety of improvements to nature conservation sites across the borough. A total of 29 task days took place during the period July - September 2022. During this time, volunteers provided 153.5 volunteer days, valued at £7,675. Education volunteers donated 20.75 days, valued at £1,037.50. This brings the total number of biodiversity

volunteers to 174.25 days at a value of £8,712.50. Combined with the quarter one figures, this is a total of 360.46 days donated during 2022/23, equating to £18,023.

- 3.12. The council undertakes a monitoring and advisory role regarding the restoration of Beddington Farmlands. Staff continue to chair and minute the Conservation Science Group. Some reed transplanting has taken place during the quarter, but this will need further work to aid appropriate establishment. Bird groups continue to be on site, recording over 1,5000 hours surveying the site since April 2022. Two site tours have taken place with the warden and bird group. Volunteering on site has started slowly, however a number of dates are already booked for quarter three. Additionally the site warden has delivered two education sessions for primary school children.
- 3.13. Sustainability comments are made on planning applications with regards to sustainability and climate change. This is part of work to deliver the Council's 2018 Technical Guidance Note on 'Building a Sustainable Sutton'. In total, 17 major residential developments have been granted planning permission since the adoption of the Local Plan in February 2018. Of these, 12 (71%) have demonstrated compliance with the council's Green Space Factor target, either through the submission of the relevant supporting information at the planning application stage or prior to the start of construction in accordance with a planning condition. Four out of these 12 developments had commenced on site as of April 2022. The remaining five major residential developments for which the GSF was not sought were mostly validated prior to February 2018 (before the policy was adopted). It should be noted that the relevant data on the extent to which major developments are complying with the Council's GSF standards is not yet available for permissions and completions during the current financial year 2022-23.

#### **4. Achieving Net Zero Carbon**

##### *Energy use in the council estate*

- 4.1. Last quarter it was reported that the council had commissioned its contractor MITIE Energy to undertake a review of the 10 highest energy consuming corporate properties. The surveys were completed in September 2022 and the report will be used to form the basis of an application to phase 3b of the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme which is expected to open in the autumn. Further surveys of properties will be undertaken during 2022/23 and 2023/24 as funding permits.
- 4.2. Work to explore the introduction of battery storage and electric vehicle charging points at the Sutton civic offices has been delayed due to the site being used as a COVID-19 testing centre. The site closed early this year, however equipment was only removed at the start of the summer. This has enabled the underground utility survey work to be undertaken in the Civic Offices as well as the Sutton Inclusion Centre and Honeywood Car Parks. The reports have been forwarded to UK Power Networks which will be used to update and confirm their quotes. Further progress is expected in quarter 3.

##### *Pathway to net zero*

- 4.3. As part of the council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions, work has started to produce a consultant to develop a pathway towards this goal. This will include both the council's own direct operations and a borough-wide pathway. The findings of the study will inform the council on how best to reduce the gap to the target of net zero. An update strategy and action plan will follow in the new financial year.

- 4.4. In addition to the point above, the South London Waste Partnership (SLWP) has commissioned a carbon management plan. This work is yet to be shared with the council, however funding opportunities have been identified and shared with SLWP to help achieve this goal.
- 4.5. Financing to achieve net zero continues to be a gap and the current fundraising approach taken by the council is through grants from BEIS and Defra (see social housing decarbonisation fund section).

#### *Sutton Decentralised Energy Network (SDEN)*

- 4.6. Sutton Decentralised Energy Network is a district heating scheme which uses waste heat from the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility to power homes in the borough. It currently serves those in the New Mill Quarter development in Hackbridge.
- 4.7. Heat network designers are currently undertaking connection surveys of existing buildings to establish potential heat loads. Other work during the quarter includes the production of draft designs of the energy centre. The final drafts for the heat network are due to be completed in October. A soft market testing event to gauge potential interests from design and build companies is planned.

#### *Sutton Housing Partnership (SHP)*

- 4.8. Sutton Housing Partnership is the arms length management organisation responsible for the maintenance of the council's social housing properties in the borough. To deliver on our net zero carbon emissions target, all homes managed by SHP will need to be retrofitted to a net zero carbon standard.
- 4.9. Together with the council, SHP is implementing a project to upgrade 75 homes as part of wave 1 of the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. Over £1.7m has been allocated to deliver improvements such as loft insulation, cavity or external wall insulation and replacement of windows and doors. The measures installed will be dependent upon the housing archetype, however all work aims to increase the energy efficiency rating of the property to an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C. This approach is targeting the fabric of the houses first before switching to onsite renewable energy. The works are due to be completed in Spring 2023.
- 4.10. The Asset Management Strategy and Action Plan will be reviewed at the council's Housing, Economy and Business Committee meeting in October 2022. As part of this work, SHP has committed to developing an Emergency Efficiency strategy by March 2023. This will enable a further analysis of the SHP housing stock needs and relevant funding streams. SHP is using a specialist software tool (Portfolio) to undertake a more rigorous analysis of investment needs to achieve an improved energy efficiency rating.

#### *Housing - council new builds and regeneration*

- 4.11. Planning permission has now been obtained for the council's first new build PassivHaus housing development. The project will go out to tender during quarter 3 2022/23 and the project costs received are expected to show the financial benefit of achieving zero carbon developments in comparison to carbon offset charges.
- 4.12. Viability remains an ongoing challenge across the council newbuild and estate regeneration programmes which is being further impacted by the increase in building costs while complying with the relevant regulations including those relating to sustainability and health and safety.

### *Fuel poverty and energy efficiency*

- 4.13. The council has developed a [Warm Spaces](#) initiative to support residents affected by the cost-of-living crisis. With household energy set to increase by 70% this autumn, the effects are being felt throughout the community. Working with local partners Community Action Sutton and the Volunteer Centre Sutton, the council has created four Warm Spaces in borough libraries. Staffed by trained volunteers, residents can visit the warm spaces to obtain free, impartial and confidential advice while staying warm. Advice includes saving energy and referring to the council's fuel poverty support service as well as money, housing, food and a range of wellbeing support. Opening hours are available on the [Cost of Living](#) webpage.

### *Planning*

- 4.14. Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2018, carbon offset contributions have been included in the Section 106 agreements for 12 major residential developments approved within the Borough, totalling £655,780 (as of 31 December 2021). These developments are therefore on track to deliver the 'zero carbon' standard in line with Policy 31 and the London Plan 2021 by funding appropriate carbon reduction measures offsite such as the Council's LED lighting upgrade programme. Of the 12 developments, two carbon offset contributions totalling £26,563 and offsetting 14.8 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum have already been collected by the Council. The remaining 10 developments could potentially generate an additional sum of £655,780 should they all be built out. In total, 195 out of the 249 new-build dwellings completed in 2020-21 (78.3%) achieved at least a 35% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compared to Part L of the Building Regulations 2013. This is a significant increase from 22% in 2019-20. The average reduction in emissions achieved by each completed dwelling was 44.4%, (from 29.3% in 2019-20). Compliance with the zero carbon target is reviewed annually for inclusion in the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) and the figures reported above describe the situation as of March 2022 as reported in the most recently published AMR 2020-21.
- 4.15. A review of the Sutton Local Plan is now underway with initial evidence gathering and the sustainability appraisal work in progress. The council intends to use the process to strengthen planning policies (or Design Codes as appropriate) relating to all aspects of sustainable design and construction, including the promotion of net zero carbon standards, in support of the commitments of the Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Response Plan.
- 4.16. As part of the sustainability appraisal process, detailed policy and technical research is being undertaken to assess the existing legislative and policy context around delivering net zero carbon together with a review of current best practice. It is intended to consult on the sustainability appraisal scoping report with a range of internal and external stakeholders in early 2023.
- 4.17. The council has joined a group of 18 London Boroughs to commission a 'Towards Net Zero Carbon Study' from Etude Consultants. The study will evaluate the technical and commercial feasibility/viability of achieving different levels of on-site CO<sub>2</sub> reduction compared to the Part L Building Standards 2021 baseline for each of the the main development types. It will also look into the carbon offset pricing and various mechanisms for securing carbon offset funding.

## **5. Creating a Circular Economy**

### *Reducing waste and increasing recycling*

- 5.1. Implementation of the council's waste minimisation strategy is monitored through the Reduction and Recycling Plan. This was last updated in January 2022 and the report detailing progress has been published on the [London Data Store](#). Work commenced at the end of quarter 2 to update the plan and develop a Reduction and Recycling Plan for 2022 to 2023 which is due to be completed by March 2023.
- 5.2. The Refill Sutton scheme continues to operate across the borough, providing people with access to free water bottle refills while out or on the go. During the quarter, the council continued to reach out to businesses and organisations to increase the number of places that people can access water. Approximately 280 businesses have been contacted and plans are in place to promote the scheme to residents next quarter.
- 5.3. To help inform waste and recycling campaigns and communications, a waste composition analysis of resident's waste took place in the summer. The baseline data is currently being analysed and results are expected during quarter 3 (September - December 2022). Intervention plans can then be put in place, targeting the materials which are most commonly disposed of and are contaminating waste and recycling streams.
- 5.4. A trial of the on the go recycling facilities continues to take place across the borough. Scoping work is also taking place to expand the facilities. The trial includes the provision of solar powered big belly waste and recycling bins which compact the contents, resulting in fewer trips by staff to empty them. Other bins have been fitted with a sensor to inform the contract when the bin is nearly full and a collection is needed.
- 5.5. The council has started work to review its waste and recycling services ahead of the existing contract renewal date approaching. A waste services transformation board has been created and is looking at all waste and street cleansing services, reviewing the potential changes arising from the Resource and Waste Strategy (RWS) including deposit return schemes, extended producer responsibility. This board will work together to ensure services will meet the requirements of the RWS and look for improvements to existing services using feedback from residents and Councillors. These changes will commence in 2025 in line with requirements for RWS and the review of the existing waste collections and street cleansing contract and the Household Reuse and Recycling Contract. Further work to trial different collections methods and alternative materials is being investigated to inform future collection contracts. Resident surveys and committee working groups have commenced to inform future services.

### *Library of Things*

- 5.6. In July 2022 the council opened its first [Library of Things](#) in Sutton Central Library. The lending library helps people to save money and reduce waste by renting items that take up space and home and are often infrequently used. Items include a drill, sewing machine and garden tools.
- 5.7. During the period July - September 2022 more than 100 'things' have been borrowed. The borrows collectively saved residents approximately £2,500, saving 1.4t CO2 and diverting 0.7tonnes of waste.

### *Business Engagement*

- 5.8. Using funding from the Mayor of London's High Streets for All fund, the council has created a Green Enterprise Partnership. This is a scheme that brings together local

businesses and organisations interested in testing net zero business models and responding to the climate emergency. Work has taken place during the quarter to arrange the launch of the GEP which is due to take place on 2 November 2022, with a TEDx talk taking place on 17 November. This will coincide with the 27th UN Conference of Parties (COP27).

## **6. Tackling Climate Change**

### *Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)*

- 6.1. The last report (quarter 1 2022/23) provided a summary of the SuDS in Sutton Schools Project. The project involves the implementation of measures to reduce the risk of flooding in areas located near schools. A variety of measures may be installed such as rain gardens or swales which act to slow the rush of surface water run-off (e.g. rainwater) into the drains which in turn reduces the flood risk. The SuDS in Sutton Schools project has been delayed to 2023/24 at the request of the Environment Agency, the main stakeholder. Like many physical improvement projects, we are reviewing the impact rising costs are having on the project and will seek to minimise this where possible while still delivering the aim of reducing flood risk. The project is expected to deliver a scheme at St Helier Open Space, close to Tweeddale Primary School and Tweeddale Children's Centre (subject to planning permission).

### *River Wandle*

- 6.2. The council works closely with local environmental charity the South East Rivers Trust to support the delivery of improvements to the River Wandle and Beverley Brook as per the dedicated Catchment Plan. This work has been identified to support the aim of achieving the water framework directive targets for these waterways.
- 6.3. Previous reports have referred to restoration work due to take place at Goat Bridge in 2022. This is still dependent upon the demolition of the business park located on the western bank on the river. There has been no progress with this to date and as such, the restoration work has been delayed. Meanwhile the river restoration work at Richmond Green in Beddington has continued and the Shepley Mill (SES Water led project) is moving into its feasibility study stage. More information will be available in future reports.

### *Emergency Planning*

- 6.4. The council has a statutory role in emergency planning and supporting residents when emergencies do take place. During Summer 2022 there were multiple heatwaves which required additional measures to be put in place to support the boroughs most vulnerable residents and to help keep everyone safe. This work included delivering communications, both to warn and inform residents of the latest alerts as well as circulating welfare advice. The council also contacted any organisations holding events in the borough, providing them with advice to support attendees and staff. Communications reminded people of sustainable ways to tackle the heatwave including using the Sutton Refill scheme (which provides people with access to free water bottle refills) as well as switching off hose pipes and reducing waste consumption other than for drinking.

### *Local Plan Review*

- 6.5. The Local Plan review continues with zero carbon, urban greening, biodiversity net gain, flood risk management and other climate change adaptation measures likely to be core



strategic objectives. As part of the initial sustainability appraisal work, a comprehensive review of all relevant national, London-wide and local policies relating to climate change and environmental sustainability issues is being carried out together with a review of current best practice in other local planning authorities. The outcome of this work will culminate in the production of an Scoping Report on the Local Plan for internal and external consultation with key stakeholders in early 2023. This early 'scoping' work will take account of Resources from London Councils on how to revise a Local Plan for climate.

- 6.6. Key Local Plan issues to be addressed in the context of the Climate Emergency Plan will be discussed and debated across all relevant Council departments at scheduled Climate Action Community of Practice meetings in October and November 2022. As detailed in previous sections, the Council has joined a group of 18 London Boroughs to commission the Towards Net Zero Carbon study update to examine the technical and commercial feasibility of setting different CO<sub>2</sub> reduction standards for a range of development types and also carbon pricing for the purpose of the carbon offset fund.

#### *Partnership work*

- 6.7. The council is involved in and supports a number of pan-London working groups established by London Councils to deliver change in response to the London Councils joint climate change mission. The mission covers seven key areas - Retrofit London, Low Carbon Development, Low Carbon Transport, Renewable Power for London, One World Living, Building the Green Economy and Creating a Green and Resilient London. Action Plans have been published for each area and London Councils are working with the groups to develop next steps including funding and resourcing the plans.
- 6.8. Sutton is also a member of the South London Partnership formed of boroughs Sutton, Merton, Kingston, Richmond and Croydon. The group is working regionally to identify best practice and deliver regional responses to the climate emergency. The group has bid for funding to deliver domestic retrofit advice for residents.

## **7. Communications**

### *Council communications*

- 7.1. Projects and events are promoted regularly via the council's communications channels to raise awareness of the climate emergency and encourage behaviours which support the ambition to become a net zero borough. Channels used include the staff e-newsletter, resident e-newsletter and social media channels such as twitter and facebook.
- 7.2. During the quarter the council promoted a range of events and activities, including but not limited to:
- The launch of two new repair cafes in the borough - [Ruskin Road Repair Cafe](#) and the [Sutton Repair Cafe](#).
  - The launch of new [dockless e-bikes](#) on Car Free Day in September.
  - Cost of living advice and support including referrals to the [Sutton Healthy Homes Advice Service](#) which includes energy efficiency support.
  - Great Big Green Week - celebrating various initiatives across the borough.
  - Sutton Community Uniform Shop, providing second hand uniforms at low cost.
  - The launch of [Sutton Library of Things](#).
  - [Carshalton Eco-Fair](#) which included a joint stall with the Community Environment Champions.

- [Community Reuse Shop](#) located at the Kimpton Household Reuse and Recycling Centre.

#### *Climate Action Community of Practice*

- 7.3. The quarter 1 report referred to a Climate Action Community of Practice (CACoP) which launched at the end of June 2022. The group is made up of managers from across the council who are responsible for delivering climate action. Meeting monthly, the group shares best practice, seeks feedback and input into projects and initiatives as well as identifying joint funding opportunities. The August meeting focused on the council's approach to installing resident electric vehicle charging points, identifying how various services could support this. Autumn meetings are expected to include a review of the sustainability commitments in the local plan, and feeding into the review of the Sutton Local Plan.
- 7.4. Work is also underway to Mainstream a climate impact guidance and assessment which has been developed. This is being trialled through the cancer hub and a butterfly project. These examples will now be shared with the next round of officer dissemination (managers network etc) and the council report template will include a sustainability section with a summary of findings from assessment to be included as appropriate.

#### *Community Environment Champions*

- 7.5. The Sutton Community Environment Champions continue to work together to take action to tackle the climate emergency as well as raising awareness to encourage behaviour change. Together with the council, the champions had a stall at the Carshalton Eco-Fair on August Bank holiday monday. The stall provided a number of small measures to help people take action as well as providing advice and support to tackle climate change. Food caddy liners and small water saving devices were distributed with many people enquiring about how to install solar panels to help reduce rising energy bills.

If you would like more information or have any questions please take a look online at [www.sutton.gov.uk/climate](http://www.sutton.gov.uk/climate) or email [sustainability@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:sustainability@sutton.gov.uk)