

Environment Strategy Progress Report - Quarter 4 2021/22

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The council adopted its ambitious Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Response Plan in October 2020. 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. The report to the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee included a summary of delivery during year 2 of the Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Response Plan, covering the Period October 2020 - September 2021.
- 1.2. This quarterly report provides a summary of progress during the period January - March 2022. Where available, this report includes some annual data too as it reports on the final quarter of 2021/22. Previous reports are available on the [council's website](#).
- 1.3. Key highlights include securing funding to deliver a £1.7million retrofit project to 75 Sutton Housing Partnership properties, over 3,000 new trees planted during the year and over £200k funding secured for more tree planting in the year ahead. The council has also started work to support 60 businesses who have pledged to take action to tackle the climate emergency.

2. Cleaner Air

Sustainable Transport

- 2.1. The [Sustainable Transport Strategy](#) 2020-2025 sets out the council's aim to increase opportunities for greater use of walking, cycling and public transport in the borough. In addition to providing more choice for those who live, work or visit the borough, the strategy also seeks to improve road safety, reduce air pollution and make transport more accessible, particularly for those children, families, older people and other people who are vulnerable.
- 2.2. The London-wide Low Carbon Transport Programme working group continues to lead on active and sustainable transport solutions across London Boroughs. Sutton Council is represented on this group and is working with other London Boroughs to support the group's ambition of halving petrol and diesel road journeys, through combined measures that can restrict polluting journeys & incentivise sustainable/active travel options between 2020-2030.

Staff travel

- 2.3. In 2022/23 the council plans to review and update its current staff travel plan. The new plan is expected to reflect the council's move to a hybrid working model, whereby staff are undertaking a combination of working from home and in the office. The plan will also consider electric vehicles, car clubs, use of personal vehicles and mileage.
- 2.4. The council has a small fleet, which has reduced since the switch to hybrid working. The council plans to tender its next fleet contract to start in April 2024. In preparation for this, satellite sites such as the Inclusion Centre, Sutton Life Centre, Sutton Lodge and Honeyword have been surveyed to assess the feasibility of electric vehicle charging points. The fleet manager is also trialling electric vans to help inform the tender documents. The current expectation is that the council will switch to electric vehicles or a low carbon alternative.

School streets

- 2.5. In June 2021, the council approved the installation of a programme of school streets across the borough. The 10 schemes, which launched at the end of 2021, aim to provide

safe spaces for school children and their parents, caregivers or guardians as they travel to and from school. School streets also seek to improve the air quality in the vicinity of the schools through the closure of the highway to traffic during the start and end of the school day. Monitoring traffic and behaviour across all 10 schemes is underway and an evaluation will take place in 2022/23.

Cycling

- 2.6. Using funding from Transport for London (TfL), the council provides cycle safety training. Despite significant funding reductions in 2021/22, the council has delivered bikeability cycle training to 743 children and 100 adults during the year.
- 2.7. The borough has been investing in new cycling infrastructure, with a key focus on the North-South Morden to Sutton route, however ongoing funding uncertainty has meant that there are elements still to be completed, such as, a new toucan crossing outside St Helier Hospital, which will provide an additional link on the Morden to Sutton cycle route and the completion of the route into Sutton Town Centre.

3. A Greener Borough

Parks and open spaces

- 3.1. This council continues to implement the [Parks and Open Spaces Strategy](#). This includes a full range of projects, installing facilities and equipment to meet the council's objectives to increase physical activity. Equipment installed includes: new cricket facilities; netball and tennis ball courts; and play facilities. A Volunteer Coordinator has been appointed to work with Friends groups to increase participation and volunteering in the boroughs green spaces.
- 3.2. The Council launched its GreenSpaces project at the start of 2021/22, aiming to create or enhance access to green space in the borough. Funded via the Council's Ambitious for Sutton Transformation Programme, the scheme uses data such as climate vulnerabilities, flood risk and current access to green spaces to identify seven priority areas within the borough. The project is expected to be completed in March 2023.
- 3.3. Planning for the Sutton in Bloom 2022 competition took place during quarter 4. The competition launched on 11 April 2022 and celebrates the green-fingered enthusiasts who help to brighten the borough. The judging of the competition includes scoring based on good practice including adding additional marks where there is evidence of sustainability practice, such as steps taken to preserve natural resources (examples include mulching; water conservation; reduction of the use of peat/pesticides/herbicides; waste management; recycling and composting).
- 3.4. There are currently 35 allotments in the borough, providing 2,430 plots which cover 38.6 hectares of land. There are currently 93 vacant plots, a reduction of 45 compared with 2021. The number of residents on the waiting list increased by 289 people this year.

Tree Planting

- 3.5. The council maintains the borough's many parks and street trees. During 2021/22 the council has used various amounts of funding to plant over 3,000 new trees. In addition to this, officers have secured funding for future years. The Forestry Commission has awarded the council £102,900 as part of the Local Authority Treescape Project. A bid to the Urban Tree Challenge has also been successful with £112,000 secured to plant 111 trees during the 2022 and 2023 tree planting seasons.

- 3.6. Tree planting has been carried out with Rosehill Park Friends group, as well as Community groups at Corrigan Avenue Recreation Ground, Lenham Road Community Garden, Queen Mary's Woodland, Belmont Pastures, Sutton Ecology Centre and Mellows Park. Five sponsored trees have also been planted during the quarter.

Biodiversity

- 3.7. Previous reports referred to butterfly banks which have been created using funding from London Wildlife Trust and Section 106 planning money. The banks were seeded and planted in quarter 3 of 2021/22 and are now subject to ongoing management and some additional overseeding to boost butterfly numbers. The council has also applied to the ReWild London Fund and secured £50,000 to create more butterfly banks which will link chalk grassland Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) across the borough.
- 3.8. Other work undertaken includes working in partnership with private landowners and seeking to utilise waste calcium carbonate material from the sugar production industry, rather than virgin chalk to maintain the area.
- 3.9. Meadow creation work is scheduled to take place in two locations within Beddington Park during autumn 2022. This will provide new habitats for biodiversity in the borough.
- 3.10. Throughout the year Sutton Ecology Centre provides biodiversity education to local children. During the final quarter of 2021/22 (January-March) a total of 310 children and 58 adults were engaged in biodiversity education. Wildlings Forest School, Birthday Parties, grounds hire and other workshops engaged a further 264 children and 287 adults. Outreach events run during the same period include a brown hairstreak egg hunt, a guided walk on Roundshaw Downs and a presentation to the Friends of Beddington Park, reaching another 29 people. This brings the total number of people engaged in 2021/22 to 6,825 people of which 3,948 were school aged children. This is a significant increase upon 2020/21 figures of 2,305 people of which 1,378 were children. The 2019/20 (pre-covid) figures were slightly higher as 8,399 people attended events of which 5,324 were children.
- 3.11. Volunteers are key to the delivery of a range of biodiversity improvements in the borough. During the quarter, Sutton Nature Conservation Volunteers hosted 36 task days in which 176 volunteer days were donated. This is calculated to be an 'in-kind' contribution of £8,800. The volunteer Biodiversity Assistant donated 62 days during the same period, valued at £3,425 of 'in-kind' support involving a mixture of skilled and unskilled tasks. The Education Service volunteers also donated 6.08 days, valued at £304. These figures combined with previous quarters mean Biodiversity volunteers have donated 829.79 days during the year, equating to a value of £45,639 of in-kind support. This is a slight increase upon 2020/21 figures of 708.57 days.
- 3.12. The council monitors and advises on the restoration of Beddington Farmlands. Fencing around phase three of wet grassland has now commenced. The Reserve Warden has also started inducting volunteers, allowing them access to the site to undertake habitat management work. Support has also been provided to enable Beddington Farmlands Bird Group to become reconstituted and re-inducted, allowing them access to the nature reserve. The group has secured money from the Community Fund for a Lone-Working System, allowing 'out-of-hours' access to the farmlands.
- 3.13. Spring works planned for Beddington Farmlands include mowing the meadows, control of goat's-rue and continual preparation of the acid grassland area to create a stale seedbed, ready for autumnal seeding. The first site tours in nearly four years were held

to celebrate World Wetlands Day, and all 25 spaces were fully booked. Approximately 50 bird boxes across the site have been revamped and the Sand Martin Bank has been repaired following a period of no maintenance.

- 3.14. Sustainability comments continue to be made on planning applications with regards to policy 26c (Biodiversity) in line with the Council's Technical Guidance Note on 'Building a Sustainable Sutton' (June 2018). Approximately 86% of major residential and non-residential developments granted planning permission since 2019-20 have demonstrated compliance with the council's requirement to meet a minimal green space factor target of +0.2. This has been demonstrated 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.

4. Achieving Net Zero Carbon

Energy use in the council estate

- 4.1. In support of the Council's ambition to become a net zero carbon borough, the council commissioned its contractor MITIE Energy to undertake a review of the 10 highest energy consuming corporate properties. The surveys included commercial premises and are currently being reviewed.
- 4.2. Work is now underway to develop a plan to survey the rest of the council estate and develop a plan for decarbonising them. The results of the survey work will be used to bid for funding to deliver the required measures.
- 4.3. In 2021 UK Power Networks undertook a survey of the council Civic Offices to assess the feasibility of implementing electric vehicle charging stations. An underground utility survey is now required which will be used to produce a quote for the work. Depending upon the costs, it is anticipated that phase one could include a new supply from Gibson Road car park including six dual 22kW electric vehicle charging points and one 80kW rapid charge point.
- 4.4. The Harris Academy in Sutton continues to receive awards for its zero carbon status. The passivhaus school which opened in 2019 was a project managed by the council, ensuring it was built to high sustainability standards. In recognition of this and other work across the borough, the council was shortlisted for the UK Real Estate and Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) awards in the category of net zero place of the year.

Greener Homes Grant - Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LAD) and Sustainable Warmth

- 4.5. The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme is funding available from the government to deliver energy retrofit measures to increase the energy efficiency and cost to heat homes identified as inefficient and with residents on a low income. Originally launched in Summer 2020, the schemes have been used to support a green recovery while also tackling climate change.
- 4.6. In Spring 2021, the Government announced its Sustainable Warmth programme - a combination of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery 3 and the Home Update Grant. Similar to previous rounds of the Local Authority Delivery scheme, the programme is aimed at retrofitting energy inefficient properties with residents in receipt of a low income. Sutton has secured funding of up to £2 million for residents meeting the criteria. £20,000 of funding has also been allocated to promote the scheme to residents which the council will undertake during summer 2022.

- 4.7. Supplier and material demand is an ongoing issue with regards to the construction sector. Therefore it is anticipated that some of the £20,000 of funding will be used to engage potential suppliers in the market. The council and its partners continue to give feedback to the government on this issue.

Sutton Housing Partnership (SHP)

- 4.8. A stock condition survey was completed earlier in 2021, providing an assessment of the current condition of all SHP properties. The results were used to inform a bid to the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, a scheme aimed at retrofitting energy inefficient social housing. The council applied together with Sutton Housing Partnership to deliver a £1.7m scheme to retrofit 75 homes. The improvements will be delivered during 2022/23 and measures include external or cavity wall insulation, loft insulation and triple glazing. The aim is to increase the energy efficiency of the property, aiming for an energy performance certificate rating of C.

Housing - council new builds and regeneration

- 4.9. Previous reports have referred to the council undertaking work to assess the feasibility of moving from a low carbon to net zero carbon build for its own housing new builds. The cost estimates currently received for this are showing an uplift of approximately 17% on previous projects, however a large proportion of this is expected to be due to inflation. More accurate costs will be known when the works are tendered in 2022/23. The team continues to seek funds to allow projects to meet a zero carbon standard.

Fuel poverty and energy efficiency

- 4.10. The council commissions Thinking Works to deliver the Sutton Healthy Homes service. The service builds upon existing services funded by the GLA and provides support to residents at risk of fuel poverty. This includes providing them with a range of energy efficiency measures, advice and has previously provided support to switch energy tariffs. Due to changes to the energy price cap, this service is experiencing higher than usual demand. This is expected to continue during 2022/23 as fuel prices are expected to increase further in the autumn.
- 4.11. Additional funding was allocated at the start of 2022 to provide residents in fuel crisis with access to fuel vouchers as well as other support from the service. Thinking Works supports residents to apply for funding to deliver larger energy efficiency measures, therefore improving the energy efficiency of their property and reducing CO2 emissions.

Solar Together

- 4.12. In January 2022, the council secured £6,000 of funding from the Mayor of London to promote the fifth round of Solar Together. The scheme operates as a collective purchasing opportunity, providing residents with a route to purchase solar panels and/or battery storage for their home. In total, nearly 1,000 residents registered for the scheme, of which 49 registered for battery storage, with the remaining being for solar PV. Further details regarding the number of residents opting to proceed with installation will be reported in 2022/23 reports.

Smart Energy

- 4.13. The Council is working with the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and Smart Energy GB to develop and deliver a joint campaign to promote the

uptake of smart meters across the Sutton business community. A soft launch is planned for late spring with a full campaign expected to go live in the Autumn. The campaign will focus on engaging small and medium sized businesses, highlighting to them the cost and environmental benefit of switching to a smart meter. The council will work with BEIS and Smart Energy GB to produce case studies demonstrating the results. It is expected that this will be used locally and nationally to support the roll out of smart meters within businesses.

Planning

- 4.14. Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2018, carbon offset contributions have been included in the Section 106 agreement 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 'net zero carbon' standard in line with planning policy. The money collected will be used to fund appropriate carbon reduction measures offsite such as the Council's costed programme to upgrade lighting at its Civic Offices.
- 4.15. Of the 12 developments, a total of two carbon offset contributions totalling £26,563 and offsetting 14.8 tonnes of CO₂ 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.
- 4.16. Of the 249 new-build dwellings completed in 2020-21, 195 (78.3%) achieved at least a 35% reduction in CO₂ emissions compared to Part L of the Building Standards 2013. This is a significant increase from 22.0% in 2019-20. The average reduction in emissions achieved by each completed dwelling was 44.4%, previously 29.3% in 2019-20.
- 4.17. A review of the existing Local Plan has commenced. The evidence gathering process has started and the review will seek to strengthen the council's planning policies (and Design Codes as appropriate) relating to all aspects of sustainable design and construction, including the promotion of 'net zero carbon' standards.

5. Creating a Circular Economy

Reducing waste and increasing recycling

- 5.1. In June 2021, the council's Reduction and Recycling Plan was updated and published online. The plan is used as the action plan for delivering the council's Waste Minimisation Strategy. The report detailing progress is available on the [London data store website](#).
- 5.2. The council continues to participate in the Terracycle biscuit and snack recycling point; a scheme which enables biscuit and cracker wrappers to be recycled. The online repair and reuse maps have been integrated to create a single zero waste map for Sutton. New locations have also been added and the council continues to promote the map and encourage businesses and community groups to register their interest in being added to the map.
- 5.3. Work to implement a [Library of Things](#) in Sutton Central Library is progressing. Heads of Terms have been agreed and a draft lease is completed, with final details, such as dates for installation, to be confirmed. It is anticipated that the lending library will be open in Summer 2022.
- 5.4. In December 2021 the council's Denmark Road offices in Carshalton closed with staff being relocated to the Civic Offices in Sutton. Working with Freegle, the council re-homed a large collection of surplus office furniture and equipment. Local residents,

community groups, businesses and schools were invited to collect items for free. Recipients included a local church, children's charity and four local schools. In total, approximately 100 large items such as desk, chairs and cupboard were rehomed as well as small items such as footrests, laptop risers, fans etc.

Business Engagement

- 5.5. In December 2021, the council issued its final round of the Additional Restrictions Grant, funding available to businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the application process, businesses were asked to make a business specific climate pledge in which they committed to taking steps to reduce their environmental impact. In total 60 businesses were awarded funding and are being supported during 2022 by the council to implement their pledge. By the end of March 2022, 72% of the businesses had engaged in this and were starting work on their pledges.
- 5.6. The council has secured £100,000 of funding from the GLA's High Streets for All programme to form a network of business partners focused on delivering action in response to the climate emergency. The aim of the partnership is to support members transitioning to a low carbon circular economy and support a green recovery of Sutton High Street. Named the 'Green Enterprise Partnership', members include, but are not limited to: Bioregional; Successful Sutton Business Improvement District and the Sound Lounge. The funding will be used to deliver work through to March 2023.

6. Tackling Climate Change

Flood Action

- 6.1. The council continues to progress with detailed designs for a flood alleviation scheme in Worcester Park with Metis Consultants. In addition to this work, concept designs and further ideas for solutions in the Beddington catchment area (South Beddington, Beddington Gardens and Wallington Station) have been produced. A catchment wide solution is needed and further details are being compiled in relation to options and costs for each location which will be presented to the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee for agreement on a wider scheme approach.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

- 6.2. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are systems implemented to reduce flood risk in an area. A variety of measures may be installed, for example rain gardens or swales which act to slow the rush of surface water run-off (e.g. rainwater) into our drains which in turn reduces the flood risk.
- 6.3. The SuDS in Sutton Schools project seeks to deliver SuDS measures in or close to flood prone areas. The council is currently awaiting approval of the Outline Business Case from the Environment Agency. Previous progress reports have referred to planning permission documents being compiled for measures in the St Helier Open Space, close to Tweeddale Primary School and Tweeddale Children's Centre. This is now submitted and progressing through the planning process.

River Wandle

- 6.4. The council continues to support the delivery of the River Wandle and Beverley Brook Catchment Plan to achieve the water framework directive targets. Tree works on the River Wandle have been funded by section 106 planning monies and will be undertaken in winter 2022/23.

- 6.5. Invasive species work also funded through section 106 has been undertaken. The invasive species floating pennywort was removed from Derek Avenue Pond with South East Rivers Trust in March 2022.
- 6.6. In previous progress reports, it was indicated that river restoration works at Goat Bridge were planned for commencement in early 2022. This work has been delayed until the neighbouring business park has been demolished which is on the western bank of the river. It is anticipated that the demolition work will be completed by summer 2022, allowing the river restoration work to commence. River restoration work at Richmond Green also continues with a communication plan in development and site contamination testing planned. Further work is expected to take place in summer 2022.

Partnership work

- 6.7. Sutton together with Richmond, Kingston-upon-Thames, Merton and Croydon form the South London Partnership (SLP). The group has come together to explore options for sub-regional partnership working in response to the climate emergency. The group meets regularly as experts in this field to share best practice as well as developing options for collaborative projects. In particular, the group is exploring retrofitting, climate literacy and green skills. A green skills academy is currently in development and the group are also exploring funding mechanisms such as the Adult Education Budget and apprenticeship levy to develop and deploy training via colleges in the borough.
- 6.8. The council continues to be represented on a number of pan-London work and forums which have been established to deliver change in response to the London Councils joint climate change mission. In addition to participating on these working groups, Sutton is also a lead for the energy advice working group, which is seeking to develop a Londonwide offer to communicate and engage residents in taking action to make their homes more energy efficient.

7. Communications

Staff Environment champions

- 7.1. A staff network of environment champions was launched in July 2021. The network has over 50 champions from across the organisation who come together with their passion to either learn more or improve the environment. The group undertook a litter picking activity in Sutton Town Centre as part of the Great British Spring Clean this spring.

London Repair Week

- 7.2. In March 2022, the council joined ReLondon to celebrate and promote London Repair Week. This included shining a spotlight on local repair businesses and encouraging residents to repair items rather than throwing items away and buying new replacements. The existing reuse and repair maps hosted on the councils website were also updated and incorporated into a single [Sutton Zero Waste Map](#). The map provides local community groups, organisations and businesses that can help residents reduce their waste.

Community Environment Champions

- 7.3. In November 2021, the council launched a network of community environment champions. The group which meets every two months, come together to learn more about the environment as well as collaborate and take action. There are currently 50

champions in the borough and the group had its first 'face-to-face' meeting in March, having initially launched virtually.

- 7.4. A small group of champions have come together (with some support from the council) to create a repair cafe in the borough. In the few short months that the group has been meeting, they have created a formal constitution and identified a potential location in the borough (Your Space in Sears Park). The group have been in contact with another group of independent volunteers who are looking to establish a repair cafe in Ruskin Road, Carshalton.

Community Awards

- 7.5. Each year the council holds Sutton Community Awards, a ceremony to recognise the work of individuals and groups in making the borough a better place to live, work and raise a family. The 2021 awards were held in February 2022 in partnership with Community Action Sutton, Sutton Housing Partnership and Volunteer Centre Sutton. A new category, the Environment Champion Award was included for the first time. The winner was local resident and environmental champion, Andrea Eckhardt-Smith.
- 7.6. Andrea is a member of the Wandle Trust, Carshalton Community allotments, and the Culvers Retreat Residents Association. She has been involved in the planting of over 150 saplings and fruit trees provided by Social Orchards and can often be seen in Beddington Park carrying out litter picks. In her video clip Andrea thanked the Council and Sutton Housing Partnership for appreciating the work of local residents. More details including a link to a recording of the ceremony can be found in the councils [community awards 2021 news article](#).

Fairtrade fortnight

- 7.7. Each year at the end of February / start of March, the Fairtrade Foundation celebrates Fairtrade Fortnight. As a fairtrade borough, the council worked in partnership with the [Sutton Fairtrade Community Group](#) to mark the event, sharing details to encourage residents, businesses and schools to get involved. The theme of this year was 'Choose the World you Want', highlighting climate justice - the idea that climate change will affect different people in different ways and we need to make this as fair as we can. The Sutton Fairtrade Community Group hosted a stall at Wallington Farmers' Market on 12 March, providing people with more information about fairtrade locally and the actions they can take.

If you would like more information or have any questions please take a look online at www.sutton.gov.uk/climate or email sustainability@sutton.gov.uk