

Environment Strategy Progress Report - Quarter 3 2020/21

Contents

Introduction	2
Cleaner air	2
Safer Active Greener Streets	2
A greener borough	2
Parks and open spaces	2
Tree planting	3
Biodiversity	3
Achieving net zero carbon	3
Energy use in the council estate	3
Greener Homes Grant - household vouchers	4
Public Sector Decarbonisation Funding	4
Housing - new builds	4
Fuel poverty and energy efficiency	4
Local Committees	5
Creating a Circular Economy	5
Reducing waste and increasing recycling	5
Tackling Climate Change	6
Flood Action	6
SuDS in Sutton Schools	6
Communications	6
Working with partners and beyond our boundary	7
Sutton Housing Partnership (SHP)	7
Businesses	7
Future green skills	7
Sutton Plan partners	7
Sutton and Cheam Rotary Club	7
Opportunities for partnerships	8
Cross-London working	8
Providing input and evidence	8

Introduction

- 1.1. The updated Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Response Plan were agreed unanimously by committee on 1 October 2020. This progress report provides a summary of delivery of the Environment Strategy between September and December 2020.
- 1.2. Inevitably the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on what it has been possible to deliver during 2020/21, however work has focused on providing support for residents most at risk of fuel poverty, securing funding to deliver projects such as retrofitting to Sutton Housing Partnership properties and funding for projects. Other work includes the publication of a boroughwide reuse map and the provision of biodiversity education sessions for 866 children. Due to the pandemic work on areas such as a reduction in use of single use plastics has been paused.

Cleaner air

Safer Active Greener Streets

- 1.3. The council has implemented five trial low-traffic neighbourhoods and 13 school streets, helping to make it easier for residents to experiment with alternative modes of transport. Low-traffic neighbourhoods include improvements such as widening pavements in town and district centres to make them clear and safe for people walking as well as creating new, temporary cycle lanes to make getting around by bike easier. The school streets are timed road closures at the beginning and end of the school day, make it easier to walk, cycle or scoot on the school run as well as the installation of pavement imagery with environmental stencils for children to spot on the way to school. Modelling is currently being undertaken to understand the impact of the programme in terms of changes in air quality, with recommendations on further work being presented to E&ST in January.

A greener borough

Parks and open spaces

- 1.4. Implementation of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy has continued during 2020. Existing management plans have been reviewed as well as the development of new plans. New management plans have been published for Manor Park and Beddington Park, with a further nine management plans having been drafted. The council's efforts to manage the parks in a sustainable way were recognised in October 2020 when Grove Park in Carshalton, Manor Park in Sutton and Beddington Park & the Grange in Wallington were awarded Green Flags. This prestigious award recognises the three parks as amongst the best in the country.
- 1.5. In December 2020 the council adopted the Windsor Road Pocket Park in Worcester Park. The council plans to continue the maintenance of the community space with the support of volunteers. A further site, the Hackbridge Pocket Park (which is Thames Water owned) has been included in the 'Plant Up Hackbridge' project, a joint initiative between the Hackbridge and Beddington Corner Neighbourhood Development Group, the council and its parks maintenance contractor, Idverde.

Tree planting

- 1.6. As part of the commitment to plant 2,000 trees per year, the council has facilitated a number of COVID-secure community planting days. Trees planted include 400 whips at Corrigan Avenue, 150 at Dale Park and 10 fruit trees which are due to be planted with Friends of Rosehill Park in the coming months. More than £45,000 has been committed by Local Committee public realm funds to deliver street tree planting during winter 2020/21.
- 1.7. The council is working with local community groups 'the Tree Musketeers' to plant trees across the borough. Trees have been supplied from a number of sources including the Woodland Trust. The volunteer Tree Wardens at Beddington Park will soon be planting whips as well as helping to maintain newly planted trees to ensure they flourish.
- 1.8. In December 2020 the council published a [Trees List for Developers](#), providing guidance to assist the planting of the right tree in the right place. It provides developers and residents who want to plant trees with suggested species for a range of environments and size of space.

Biodiversity

- 1.9. In total, 866 children have attended biodiversity education events with 817 adults also attending sessions. This was achieved through a variety of events including pre-booked events in August and September as well as pre-school events in the autumn and third-party hosted forest schools. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the delivery of biodiversity education during 2020. For example, school group sessions were unable to take place and social distancing measures resulted in smaller sessions for those which did take place.
- 1.10. The biodiversity team continues to support the Sutton Nature Conservation Volunteers, providing task day activities as well as volunteer Biodiversity Assistant opportunities. There was a marked reduction in volunteer numbers during spring 2020, however this increased in the summer and autumn. In total, volunteers have provided 558.57 days of time, equating to over £38,000 of in-kind support.

Achieving net zero carbon

Energy use in the council estate

- 1.11. The council installed solar arrays at the council's Civic Offices, the Quad Youth Centre and a raised canopy on the top level of the Gibson Road multi storey car park over the period 2017-2019. In total, these three sites continue to generate around 180,000 kWh of electricity per year, saving the council approximately £21,000 a year and reducing carbon emissions by over 97,000 kg of CO₂ per year.
- 1.12. In April 2021 we will commence our switch to 100% renewable electricity across the council estate. This has been procured for all of the corporate buildings (such as Civic Offices and Denmark Road) while the remaining sites (such as cemeteries, park pavilions) will switch between April and October 2021 (the exact date is dependent upon the end of their existing energy contracts).
- 1.13. The council published its new Asset Strategy in October 2020 which reflects the Environment Strategy and climate emergency declarations. In particular, the Assets Strategy commits to deliver investment grade audits for the operational estate which

will be used to develop an energy strategy for each asset. These plans will identify how to deliver the outcomes of the Environment Strategy and zero carbon, timescales and costs. The initial focus will be on the highest energy consuming assets, with the remaining sites being audited over an 18 month period. The council will also ensure that all facilities management contractors align with these commitments, in particular regarding their use of sustainable travel and electric/hybrid fleets.

Greener Homes Grant - household vouchers

- 1.14. In September 2020 we encouraged local traders to get the necessary accreditation to qualify for undertaking works as part of the government's voucher scheme for households. We wrote to 11 businesses directly and promoted the scheme to small businesses and households through social media, as well as articles in the Sutton Scene resident e-newsletter.

Public Sector Decarbonisation Funding

- 1.15. In December 2020 we submitted a bid to the Low Carbon Skills Fund to develop an action plan to decarbonise the council's top 10 energy-using sites. Due to high demand, this bid was unsuccessful, however we are working with the GLA Retrofit Accelerator Programme to develop a retrofit plan for the council's estate. The outcome of this work will be used to bid for future rounds of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

Housing - new builds

- 1.16. The council is progressing with phase 2 of its new build council homes programme. Funded via the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), planning permission has been secured for the development of 28 properties across five sites in the borough. They are all expected to achieve a saving of 53-56% carbon emissions when compared with Part L of the Building Regulations under SAP 10 (the requirement at the time of seeking planning permission). The next phase, which is currently going through the feasibility and development brief stage, will assess the cost of moving from a reduced carbon to net zero carbon. This will enable the council to identify suitable funding sources to build to this standard.

Fuel poverty and energy efficiency

- 1.17. The council has continued to participate in the South London Energy Efficiency Partnership, a group of London boroughs working together to provide a support service to residents at risk of fuel poverty. The council's contractor Thinking Works have provided a telephone assessment support service which includes the distribution of small energy efficiency measures in a COVID-secure way, as well as supporting people to apply for grants for energy efficiency interventions where applicable, to reduce their energy costs. During 2020, support was provided to 178 residents with an average saving of £236 per household. Further work is taking place to procure a boroughwide support service to significantly increase the number of residents supported during 2021/22 - 2022/23.

- 1.18. The council also commissions Citizens Advice Sutton to provide advice on a range of issues including energy and fuel poverty to households, and opportunities have been identified to build further on this work.
- 1.19. A review of the existing fuel poverty support has been undertaken including a series of recommendations to improve processes and create new referral routes between council teams and partners to maximise the support offered to residents vulnerable to fuel poverty.

Local Committees

- 1.20. Local Committees play an important role in furthering local environmental improvements. So far in 2020/21, Local Committees have funded 56 trees through public realm and neighbourhood grants. Improvements to 'green' the borough have included funding over 200 hanging baskets, 97 barrier baskets, 13 planters and 2 flower towers, helping provide habitats for wildlife such as bees as well as improving the look of district town centres.

Creating a Circular Economy

Reducing waste and increasing recycling

- 1.21. Recycle Week 2020 was held during 21-27 September. Promotion this year focused on thanking people for continuing to recycle throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and highlighting key areas of contamination in recycling bins. The social media posts reached more than 22,000 people and visits to the recycling webpages increased by more than 50% compared with the previous week. Information was also included in the Council's staff newsletter about recycling at work, as improvements have been made to the facilities in the Council offices to reduce contamination.
- 1.22. The first London Repair Week was held in October 2020. Our participation included highlighting #LocalRepairHereos and showcasing some of the repair businesses in the borough. Using the council's social media accounts, we promoted repair tips and videos. Social media posts reached more than 10,500 people and the articles in Sutton Scene and Insight had click-to-open rates of more than 4%. The COVID pandemic prevented us from hosting face to face workshops, but we attended a pan-London workshop giving examples of how to develop a repair community, with plans to expand this in the coming year.
- 1.23. In October 2020 we published a [boroughwide reuse map](#) on the council's website, making it easier for residents to find out how to purchase reused items as well as passing on items for reuse. Plans to expand this further in 2021 include incorporating a repair directory.
- 1.24. Sutton Library has been chosen as a suitable location for a 'Library of Things', a lending library which once open, will allow people to hire items that they may have otherwise purchased and used 'once a year' or less frequently e.g sewing machines or drills. This is a demonstrator project for the circular economy, as it helps to reduce the amount of natural resources consumed by buying new products, and ensures items are used to their maximum benefit. The cost has been funded from the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Fund and the library is expected to open in 2021/22.
- 1.25. Phase 1 of a flats recycling project was rolled out to 100 households on estates in Lancaster Way and Culvers Retreat in December 2020. The project is focused on

delivering improvements to the communal waste and recycling areas (mainly located at blocks of flats) within the borough. The primary objectives of the project are to reduce contamination (wrong items going into the recycling bins); implement long-term improvements for communal recycling & waste collections; help to increase the efficiency of collections and work collaboratively with partners and housing providers. Phase two of the project will commence in February 2021 which will include a further 140 households.

- 1.26. We contributed to the development of a London-wide protocol for local authorities undertaking waste composition analysis. This will be used to ensure councils get robust and reliable data to help inform waste and recycling communications for residents. As well as commenting on the draft protocol, we are the first London council to use it, piloting it and enabling our experience to inform future versions. The full waste composition analysis will be undertaken in 2021/22 with a focus on targeted kerbside collection rounds to undertake ward level and boroughwide data on the residual and recycling waste schemes. This will be used to deliver targeted communications in the appropriate locations to improve reuse and recycling rates.

Tackling Climate Change

Flood Action

- 1.27. In November 2020 we supported the Environment Agency's annual flood action campaign. We highlighted that the climate emergency was leading to more intense and regular periods of rainfall, which increased the likelihood of flooding in Sutton, and shared tips and information on how to reduce personal flood risk. The content was well received, with engagement rates of 5.4% and 3.7% on Facebook and Twitter respectively, as well as a click-to-open rate of 3.7% for our resident e-newsletter Sutton Scene.

SuDS in Sutton Schools

- 1.28. The council continues to work with the South East Rivers Trust to deliver SuDS in Sutton Schools (SiSS), a flood alleviation project which aims to reduce flood risk to properties within the Hackbridge Critical Drainage Area (CDA) 33. Phase four of the project (planned for 2020) has been postponed due to COVID-19 impacts until 2021, however raised rain garden planters have been installed at a number of school sites.

Communications

- 1.29. Throughout the year council staff have been encouraged to reduce their environmental impact. With the majority of staff working from home, this has focused on home-based suggestions that help save money too. This has included how to keep warm this winter and protect the environment at the same time, how to have a green Christmas, and tips for reducing waste food and saving money. Similar information has also been included in Sutton Scene, the council's e-newsletter.
- 1.30. The council's sustainability website pages have been updated throughout the year and now includes information and advice on actions individuals can take to reduce their impact on the environment as well as more energy advice and fuel poverty support. This section will soon be expanded to include advice for businesses, landlords and organisations.

Working with partners and beyond our boundary

Sutton Housing Partnership (SHP)

- 1.31. Two 'zero carbon housing challenge' sessions have taken place with colleagues from Sutton Housing Partnership, asset management, housing and sustainability to discuss the opportunities and challenges to achieving zero carbon housing stock. The action plan that has developed from the sessions is to use the planned stock condition survey together with data from the London 3D stock model to understand the work required to achieve zero carbon for each SHP property. In time, we hope to secure funding to be able to build a model that will give us this information for all residential properties in the borough. We continue to seek to secure funding for the retrofits.
- 1.32. SHP and the council held a Lunch & Learn session in October 2020 for staff at SHP, explaining the links between climate change and whole house retrofitting, and gave an overview of the energysprong project that SHP is delivering.
- 1.33. In August 2020, the council and Sutton Housing Partnership bid as part of a GLA consortium to the Greener Homes Grant, for works to improve the energy efficiency of 20 properties. The bid was successful and £115,000 has been secured to deliver window upgrades, improving the fabric efficiency of these homes and helping to lower residents' energy bills.

Businesses

- 1.34. We have provided regular updates in the Sutton Local Business Newsletter, newly launched in 2020. These include highlighting changes to legislation around the sale of plastic straws and stirrers; a diesel vehicle scrappage scheme offered by the Mayor of London; and videos from City to Sea that show businesses how to safely sell hot drinks in reusable cups despite COVID-19.

Future green skills

- 1.35. The council is developing a Skills and Employment Strategy for the borough in partnership with training providers and employers. This recognises that one of the areas for skills growth in the borough is more 'green skills' which will support the insulation, retrofitting and heat pump markets through an increase in trained installers and businesses operating in this market.

Sutton Plan partners

- 1.36. We have discussed with Sutton Plan partners the potential for partnership and collaboration on the climate emergency, including at the annual event held on 24 November 2020. We will continue to develop this work in 2021.

Sutton and Cheam Rotary Club

- 1.37. The council met with the Sutton and Cheam Rotary Club in July 2020 to discuss opportunities to work together. The council promoted their Young Environmental Champion competition and the Rotary club shared a survey request which the council received from the Deputy London Mayor for Energy and Environment, asking businesses of all sizes about the support needed to achieve zero carbon building stock.

Opportunities for partnerships

- 1.38. We continue to receive contact from a number of potential partners across the sustainability industry and have held a number of meetings looking at potential opportunities and partnerships.

Cross-London working

- 1.39. London Councils represents the 33 London boroughs. Officers have taken part in and contributed to working groups on consumption emissions which includes emissions from food, textiles, electronics and purchases. London Councils is developing an action plan from the working groups which we will be part of implementing in 2021. During 2020, the workshops have supported the development of targeted communications and behaviour change campaigns in Sutton.
- 1.40. We are part of the South London Partnership sustainability sub-group, which aims to ensure the five south-west London boroughs (Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond and Sutton) are aware of our respective aspirations and plans for zero carbon, and can collaborate where appropriate.

Providing input and evidence

- 1.41. We provided input to UK Power Networks in October 2020 regarding our plans for decarbonisation - including vehicles, heat and retrofitting.
- 1.42. We submitted evidence to the London Assembly Environment Committee's investigation into air quality in November 2020. This was principally about participation in the Mayor of London's Air Quality Programme and School Streets.
- 1.43. We responded to a GLA 'green skills' survey in November 2020 to help inform the skills training offer for sustainable industries in London.
- 1.44. In advance of a second round of the Green Homes Grant funding, in November 2020 we provided comments on our experience of the first round to the Greater South East Energy Hub, highlighting our suggested improvements.
- 1.45. We have contributed to the development of mapping by the GLA and London Climate Change Partnership that highlights areas where communities are most at risk from climate change, flooding and heat because of their existing vulnerabilities (for example age and economic deprivation) and lack of community resilience. Once published, these maps will work alongside those already [published from Climate Just](#) about the areas we need to focus on in terms of supporting climate adaptation.
- 1.46. We are a signatory to '[A blueprint for accelerating climate action and a green recovery at the local level](#)'.

If you have comments, questions or suggestions, you can contact the team at sustainability@sutton.gov.uk