

Environment Strategy Progress Report Quarter 2 2021/22

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Response Plan was published in October 2020. In October 2021, the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee approved the annual update to the Climate Emergency Response Plan. This included a summary of progress delivered during year 2 of the Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Response Plan, covering the Period October 2020 - September 2021.
- 1.2. This report provides a summary of delivery of the Environment Strategy between July and September 2021. Previous reports are available on the council's website.
- 1.3. Key highlights of the quarter include piloting a low carbon road maintenance scheme, £23,437 of in-kind support donated by biodiversity volunteers and the implementation of triple glazing to Sutton Housing Partnership properties to improve energy efficiency as part of a government funded scheme.

2. Cleaner Air

Sustainable Transport

- 2.1. The [Sustainable Transport Strategy](#) 2020-2025 was agreed by the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee on 6 October 2021. The strategy aims 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. In October 2020 Transport for London (TfL) undertook a consultation, seeking views on proposed changes to bus routes in Sutton and Croydon. A [final report](#) was published in September 2021 and changes are expected to be implemented in Autumn 2022. The changes include route changes as well as the introduction of three new routes in the borough. This work recognises the increased demand for services to and from the London Cancer Hub site and the new secondary school.
- 2.3. In June, the council submitted a £29.5 million bid to the Government's Levelling Up Fund. The outcome of this application is still not known, however if successful, the funding will be used to install twin tracks on the railway between Sutton and Belmont as well as rebuilding Belmont Station. In addition to supporting the Mayor of London's strategic case for Metroisation in South London, the improvements will provide increased accessibility to the Royal Marsden, London Cancer Hub and the new emergency care hospital due to open in 2025.
- 2.4. On 22 September 2021 the council marked international Car Free day with an event in Sutton town centre. This included Dr Bike cycle maintenance checks and four schools in the borough also participated in a range of car free day promotions to pupils, parents and staff.
- 2.5. The London-wide Low Carbon Transport Programme working group has now commenced. Sutton will be part of this group and will work 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.

School streets

- 2.6. In June 2021 the council approved the installation of a programme of school streets across the borough. Due to launch in early November 2021, school streets 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. The majority of the school streets will be enforced by ANPR cameras.

Road maintenance

- 2.7. Road surfacing materials often have a high carbon impact due to the materials used. The council is committed to reducing this impact and trialled the use of Warm Mix Asphalt (WMA) on the Woodmansterne Lane resurfacing scheme in August 2021. The use of WMA is expected to reduce CO2 emissions associated with asphalt production. Other benefits include improving productivity and reducing public disruption due to the time taken to cool to suitable traffic temperatures. The council will review the scheme in 12 months to assess the suitability of implementation to further schemes.

Cycling

- 2.8. Covid-secure cycling training recommenced in the borough during quarter 1 2021/22. This includes provision for beginners as well as those who have cycling experience. The council has applied to Transport for London for further funding to support cycle maintenance and cycle safety training in 2021/22. The outcome of this application is expected shortly.

3. A Greener Borough

Parks and open spaces

- 3.1. The Council launched its GreenSpaces project in quarter 1, aiming to create or enhance access to green space in the borough. Funded through the Council's Ambitious for Sutton Transformation Programme, the scheme used data such as climate vulnerabilities, flood risk and current access to green spaces to identify seven priority areas in the borough. A public consultation was undertaken during August - September 2021 and identified Sutton and Wallington town centres as the areas with most support. The data from the survey will be used to create draft designs for these two areas. Further engagement sessions will take place later in the year to feedback on the designs.
- 3.2. The Sutton in Bloom competition was held over summer 2021, recognising top green-fingered enthusiasts who help to brighten the borough. The competition included six categories: best front garden, best community garden, best business frontage, best allotment garden, best school garden and best container garden. The winners and runners up were announced in September 2021, each of whom were gifted a garden voucher by Beeches Tree Care. A full list of the [2021 Sutton in Bloom winners and runners up](#) is available on the council's website.

Tree Planting

- 3.3. As reported in quarter 2, tree planting activities take place annually during the planting season, October to March. Work out of season has continued to focus on applying for funding to support the council's tree planting ambitions. Work is also underway to plan for the 2021/22 planting season. Last quarter, it was reported that applications had been made to the council's My Neighbourhood Fund (Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy), the government Forestry Commission's Urban Tree Challenge and

the Local Authority Treescapes Fund. The outcome of these applications has not yet been announced.

- 3.4. The council has continued its work with the Beddington Tree Wardens and various Friends of Parks Groups to identify opportunities for future tree planting projects. Park management plans are also used to identify planting locations and suitable trees, ensuring the right tree is planted in the right location.

Biodiversity

- 3.5. Sutton Ecology Centre provides biodiversity education to local children. In total, 384 school children and 92 adults were engaged in biodiversity education during the period July - September 2021. In addition to this, 260 children and 186 adults attended biodiversity events. Wildings forest school, birthday parties, grounds hire and workshops engaged a further 184 children and 198 adults. In total, 828 children and 276 adults were engaged at Sutton Ecology Centre during July - September 2021. Bat walks and wildlife cycle rides were attended by 115 people, bringing the total number of people engaged this quarter to 1,419 and 3,143 people since April 2021.
- 3.6. Volunteers continue to support the delivery of a range of biodiversity improvements across the borough. The council has held 36.75 task days, involving 41.25 staff days and providing a total of 158 volunteer days. This is calculated to be an in kind contribution of £7,900 for the period July - September 2021. A new volunteer Biodiversity Assistant joined the team in July and has donated 52.5 days. This is valued at £4,350 of in kind support, which is a combination of 'skilled' and 'unskilled' volunteering tasks. Education service volunteers have also donated 17.25 days, equating to £862. The Sutton Nature Conservation Volunteers have donated one volunteer day through volunteer led events. In total, 228.75 volunteer days have been donated during the last three months equating to £13,112 of in kind support. This is a cumulative donation of 422.75 volunteer days and £23,437 of in kind support since March 2021.
- 3.7. The council continues to implement a validation checklist which requires all green spaces of 100m² or more to be assessed for impacts on biodiversity. This builds upon the previous requirement for all major planning applications to be accompanied by a green space factor assessment and to ensure that a score of at least +0.2 continues to be enforced for 100% of all qualifying developments.
- 3.8. The council continues to monitor and advise on the restoration of Beddington Farmlands. Work has progressed this quarter, with four hectares of new wet grassland now under development. The bulk of earthworks have been largely completed, with outstanding works such as hydrological infrastructure, fencing and grassland establishment taking place in due course. Farm machinery has been purchased and used to commence the management of 14 hectares of meadowlands. Regular maintenance of meadow/grass areas is now possible and long term management can be planned and predicted. Pathway construction around the site has also begun with stock piles in place to continue works as soon as practicable.

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 were undertaken in August 2021

and the outcome is expected imminently. This information will be used to inform bids to relevant funding authorities including future rounds of the public sector decarbonisation scheme.

- 4.2. In September, UK Power Networks undertook a survey of the council Civic Offices to assess the feasibility of implementing electric vehicle charging stations. The council is currently awaiting the final survey report and quote which will be used to determine the feasibility of this work and next steps. If positive, this will provide the business case for the necessary infrastructure to support the council and its contractors to switch its fleet to electric vehicles.
- 4.3. In 2020/21 it was announced that the council's Denmark Road offices in Carshalton would close with staff being relocated to the Civic Offices in Sutton. This work is now underway and the council's Workwell project is supporting teams across the council to implement approaches to flexible working. Where possible, staff continue to undertake elements of working from home, enabling a reduction in travel use as well as office space requirements. The project team is reusing as much furniture, stationery and other fittings as possible, rather than disposing of, taking a circular approach. Where this equipment is no longer required by the council, this is being made available to local charities, staff and other local organisations. The aim is to keep the items in use as long as possible, with end of life objects being sent for recycling rather than disposal.
- 4.4. A project has commenced to create a technical standards guide for council developments, refurbishments and general facilities management. The guide, once created will support all council maintenance and development to support the aim to achieve net zero carbon emissions. Further work is expected to take place in quarters 3 and 4 of 2021/22.
- 4.5. Other work includes using our capital maintenance programme to identify possibilities to support the council's maintained schools to deliver energy efficiency and carbon reduction measures. We are also undertaking work to support all schools to access the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. More information will be provided in future reports.

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

- 4.6. In August 2020 Sutton was successful in securing funding from the first round of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LAD). The fund required local authorities to deliver retrofit improvements to low income, energy inefficient households. In Sutton, this has been used to install triple glazing to a selection of Sutton Housing Partnership Properties. The work was completed for 13 homes in September 2021 and the energy performance of a number of homes has improved.
- 4.7. Work has continued during the quarter to identify properties within the borough that may be eligible to access the £557,000 of government funding allocated to Sutton for LAD 2. The funding is available to undertake retrofit measures to poor performing, low income homes in the borough. The programme has experienced a number of delays as the council has awaited legal documents and appointment of contractors via the Greater South East Energy Hub who are overseeing delivery of this scheme in London and the South East.
- 4.8. In Spring 2021, the Government announced its new Sustainable Warmth programme - a combination of LAD 3 and the Home Update Grant. Similar to previous rounds of LAD, the programme is aimed at retrofitting low income private properties which have an EPC

below E. The council has submitted an application to this fund via a GLA led consortium. The outcome of this fund is expected during quarter 3 of 2021/22.

Sutton Housing Partnership (SHP)

- 4.9. A stock condition survey was completed earlier this year, providing an assessment of the current condition of all SHP properties. The results are now being used to inform plans for energy efficiency work and retrofit, supporting the borough's plans to become net zero carbon. This intelligence has been used to inform an application to the government's £160 million Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. Similar to Sustainable Warmth, the scheme focuses on retrofitting social housing to increase the energy efficiency and ability to heat the properties.
- 4.10. Additional resources have been secured by Sutton Housing Partnership to develop a programme for the retrofit of their properties. This will build upon the stock condition survey and ensure we are in a position to take a proactive response to funding opportunities as they become available.
- 4.11. Work continues to deliver Energiesprong, a project to pilot whole house retrofit to a zero carbon standard. Work is now completed at the first five properties and is being used to inform a larger retrofit project which is now underway. This is expected to retrofit an additional 75 properties to a zero carbon standard.

Housing - council new builds and regeneration

- 4.12. The council has undertaken work to assess the feasibility of moving from a low carbon to net zero carbon build for its own housing new builds. These are properties which when complete, will be used as social housing and managed by Sutton Housing Partnership. The initial costs indicated a potential increase of 5-8 per cent to achieve zero carbon. The first zero carbon housing project has been submitted to the planning department as part of the formal pre application stage. It is anticipated that a full application will be submitted by the end of 2021. The ongoing calculations on cost implications will become more robust as this process is undertaken and delivery is currently feasible within the existing budget. The Regeneration of Beech Tree Plan in Sutton is also being designed to deliver zero carbon dwellings within the proposed budget.

Fuel poverty and energy efficiency

- 4.13. The council continues to work with its contractor, Thinking Works, to deliver the Sutton Healthy Homes service. Funded by the Council, 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 help to switch energy tariffs. Where relevant the service also supports residents to apply for funding to deliver larger energy efficiency measures, therefore improving the energy efficiency of their property and reducing CO₂ emissions. The majority of support is expected to be undertaken in autumn / winter when people start considering their fuel bills. Letters have been prepared and will be sent out to promote the service during the coming weeks. These are targeted to those considered at risk of the effects of fuel poverty.
- 4.14. Fuel prices are expected to increase for a number of residents this autumn. To help overcome this, we are preparing for additional demand on the Healthy Homes service. The council has also undertaken a series of communications, providing advice on

residents regarding how to obtain the best energy tariff and ways in which they can save money e.g. via energy efficiency measures and requesting a smart meter.

Solar Together

- 4.15. In early 2021, the council secured funding from the GLA to participate in a fourth round of the Solar Together Scheme. Operating as a collective purchasing scheme, Solar Together provided residents with the opportunity to purchase solar panels or battery storage for their homes. In total, nearly 1,000 residents registered for the scheme (the highest number to date) with the average cost of the panels being 33% lower than market price. A total of 91 residents accepted the offer and proceeded with the installation of solar panels on their roofs.
- 4.16. A fifth round of the Solar Together scheme is expected to be announced shortly by the GLA. The council will seek to apply to the scheme, providing a route for more residents to purchase solar panels for this home.

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 on the [GLA website](#). The plan is used as the action plan for delivering the council's Waste Minimisation Strategy which is also undergoing a review.
- 5.2. The council's cultural services team continues to deliver its series of clothes based circular economy events, including clothes swaps. Events are planned for October 2021 in the lead up to COP26.
- 5.3. The [Community Food Shop](#) has opened in St Helier to provide support to residents in the local area. Delivered by Sutton Housing Partnership and Community Action Sutton, the shop provides access to affordable food and targeted support. Food is supplied by the Felix Project as well as regular donations from local supermarkets. The shop redistributes surplus and donated food to those most in need, helping local people to save money and reduce food waste.
- 5.4. Working with the London Borough of Lewisham, the council is currently recommissioning its textiles banks. The neighbourhood banks are sited at a variety of locations across the borough and provide residents with a route for recycling any unwanted items of clothing, shoes, textiles etc.
- 5.5. 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 recycling point is available in Sutton Central Library and residents are encouraged to save up their plastic wrappers from non-savoury biscuit packs, crackers and cake bars and place them in the bin located in the library's main reception area. Work is also underway to identify the potential for the recycling of other 'hard to recycle' items, including coffee pods.

6. Tackling Climate Change

Flood Action

- 6.1. Last quarter, it was reported that an outline business case for a flood alleviation scheme in Worcester Park was ready for submission to National Project Assurance Service for final approval. The feedback has been positive and is now awaiting approval from the Environment Agency. If successful, the scheme will proceed to the detailed design, engagement and construction phase. A proposal is also being reviewed to present

options for a Sustainable Drainage Scheme for Beddington Gardens / Wallington Station and South Beddington areas.

- 6.2. The application to the Mayor of London's Green and Resilience Spaces fund (mentioned in the Greener Borough section) included a £0.5 million flood alleviation scheme, which if successful, will be delivered in Rosehill Park West, reducing ongoing flood issues in the park.

SuDS

- 6.3. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are a way of reducing flood risk in an area. A variety of measures may be installed such as rain gardens or swales and act to slow the rush of surface water run-off (e.g. rainwater) into our drains which in turn reduces the flood risk.
- 6.4. The new Sustainable Transport Strategy (see Cleaner Air section above) introduced a new objective for all transport schemes to incorporate SuDS measures. Recent examples include the Beddington Lane improvement programme, a project to improve the highway for all users. As well as improving the draigning of the scheme this has also helped to reduce flood risk in the area. t

School meals

- 6.5. As part of the school meals contract, the council also supplies and maintains the catering equipment including ovens. Funded by the council, a trial commenced last quarter to pilot replacing gas ovens with electric in line with the councils ambitions to reduce carbon emissions. Two further gas ovens have been removed and replaced with electric ovens during quarter 2. Monitoring will take place to ascertain the environmental impact of this, however it is expected to contribute towards a reduction in CO₂ emissions.

Partnership work

- 6.6. Sutton is part of the Renewable Power for London working group, one of the seven climate change priority programmes adopted by the London Councils and facilitated by the London Environment Directors Network. The group will seek to progress renewable power and identify where action is required for change to support this agenda.

7. Communications

Staff Environment champions

- 7.1. The council has launched a staff environment champions network in July 2021, bringing together staff with a passion for improving the environment. The network met twice monthly, focusing on different monthly themes. As of September 2021, there are 40 members of the network. A further recruitment drive will take place in December 2021.

COP26

- 7.2. In November 2021, the UK will host the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26). The council will undertake a series of communications and engagement activities in the run up to and during the COP26 period (31 October to 12 November 2021). Promotional activity includes weekly case studies demonstrating action taken locally to tackle the climate emergency and online A-Z of sustainability published daily on social media. Events include an environment themed public speaking competition for secondary schools, a three part environment panel discussions series,

with representatives from local and regional businesses and organisations. A Community Environment Champions network will also launch during this time.

- 7.3. A 'Letters to the Earth' exhibition launched in quarter 2 and is being delivered by the Councils Cultural Services. This brings together a series of letters and artwork designed by local residents and students to communicate their feelings about the climate crisis. The outcome of this work will be published in an exhibition later in the year.

If you want more information or have any questions please visit www.sutton.gov.uk/climate or email sustainability@sutton.gov.uk