

Environment Strategy Progress Report - Quarter 4 2020/21

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1. 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 January to March 2021 as well as reflecting on delivery during the year 2020/21.
- 1.2. As per the [quarter 3 report](#), the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact what has been possible to deliver during 2020/21. The council's focus has remained on providing support to the most vulnerable residents including those at risk of fuel poverty as well as securing funding for projects such as retrofitting homes. This work has been prioritised as domestic properties are the largest source of carbon emissions in the borough. Other work includes the publication of a boroughwide repair map, and promotion of Solar Together 4, a group purchasing scheme for residents to buy solar panels and battery storage. Due to the pandemic restrictions, work on areas such as a reduction in single use plastics and public events has continued to be paused.

2. Cleaner Air

Sustainable Transport Strategy

- 2.1. In January 2021, the council published its draft [Sustainable Transport Strategy](#) for public consultation. The strategy aims to provide opportunities for greater use of walking, cycling and public transport for those who live, work and visit the borough. As well as giving residents more choice, the Strategy seeks to improve their quality of life by improving road safety, reducing air pollution and making transport more accessible, especially for children, families, older people and other people who are vulnerable. The consultation closed at the end of March and the results will be analysed and published later this year.

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

- 2.2. Following the 'Bishopsgate' Judgement against TfL and subsequent legal advice, the schemes installed under the Safer, Active, Greener Programme (SAGS) were removed following a decision at the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee on 11 February 2021. The London Borough of Sutton remains committed to seeking modal shift to increase rates of active travel and improve air quality. On 15 March 2021 consultation commenced on 11 school streets for the borough. Consultation closed on 4 April 2021 and analysis of the responses is currently ongoing. Preparations are underway for stakeholder engagement to commence with residents in Butter Hill and Worcester Park after the June meeting of the Environment & Sustainable Transport Committee.

Cycling improvements

- 2.3. At the end of 2020 the council was successful in securing funding from Transport for London to deliver cycle parking improvements. Starting in April 2021, the cycle parking infrastructure will be installed at urban centres, parks, local amenities, five schools and two housing developments. Scooter parking will also be installed at the schools.

3. A Greener Borough

Parks and open spaces

- 3.1. Updates and creation of new and existing management plans for the boroughs parks and open spaces has continued during the start of 2021. During quarter 4, management plans were completed for Beddington Park, Manor Park, Oaks Park and The Grove. Additional management plans under development include Queen Mary's Park, Carshalton Park, Corrigan Avenue Rec, St Helier (including Middleton, Revesby and Poulter Parks), River Wandle green spaces and parks, Overton Park, Rosehill Park and Cheam Park. The plans are important as they set out how the parks will be managed in a sustainable way, including supporting biodiversity.
- 3.2. Support for pocket parks is ongoing, with the Plant Up Hackbridge project now being part maintained by the council. Working with the Hackbridge Development group, the council will be supporting them during the year ahead to deliver the group's objective to improve biodiversity and landscaping in Hackbridge. The council has also committed to delivering additional pocket parks in areas of nature and green space deficiency during 2021/22.
- 3.3. Grass verges at the sides of roads are ideal homes for pollinators and wildlife. Reducing the frequency of mowing during the summer months allows these ecosystems to thrive. Work is ongoing to identify locations in the borough where a biodiversity friendly approach to maintenance can be trialled. To date, 12 sites have been identified. Further sites can be nominated by emailing biodiversity@sutton.gov.uk.

Tree Planting

- 3.4. Community participation remains vital to the boroughs tree planting programme. At the start of the year 60 Sakura Cherry trees were planted at Beddington Park in partnership with the Sakura Cherry Tree Project, a national initiative to plant thousands of Japanese Sakura cherry trees all across the UK. The ongoing maintenance of these trees will be supported by the borough's tree warden volunteers. Approximately 250-260 trees were planted at Corrigan Recreation Ground in early 2021. This brings the total number of trees planted during 2020/21 to nearly 800. While these numbers are lower than the council's target, given the restrictions in place throughout the year due to COVID-19 this demonstrates considerable progress. The council continues to seek additional funding to support its ambitious tree planting target. Applications have been submitted to the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy and will also be submitted to the Local Authority Treescapes fund in early 2021/22. If successful tree planting for this scheme will commence in the Autumn.

Biodiversity

- 3.5. The council continues to contribute towards the River Wandle Catchment Plan and the Beverley Brook Catchment Plans. This includes the provision of section 106 funds to undertake minor works along the Carshalton arm of the River Wandle and £156,000 to undertake river restoration work at Richmond Green in partnership with South East Rivers Trust.
- 3.6. Further funding to deliver biodiversity improvements includes £4,000 towards butterfly banks and £11,000 to fund meadow creation works in Beddington Park. Funding has also been secured to appoint an officer who will be responsible for delivering biodiversity offsetting projects in line with the council's commitment to deliver biodiversity net gain across the borough.

- 3.7. In total, 492 children and 110 adults attended biodiversity education sessions during quarter 4 of 2021/22. This figure excludes school education sessions which were unable to take place due to COVID-19 restrictions. The total number of children attending biodiversity education events during 2020/21 was 1,378 along with a total of 927 adults.
- 3.8. Biodiversity improvements in the borough are heavily supported by the Sutton Nature Volunteers who attend task day activities. In total, 30.5 task days were held during the period January - March 2021 with a total of 258 volunteer days donated. This brings the total number of days provided during 2021/22 to 708.57 which equates to £51,175 of in-kind support.

4. Achieving Net Zero Carbon

Energy use in the council estate

- 4.1. As part of its ambition to become a net zero carbon borough, the council has committed to procuring fully renewable electricity across the council estate. The switch to a renewable tariff commenced on 1 April 2021.
- 4.2. In 2020 a funding bid was submitted to the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy to upgrade the lighting in Sutton Library. The bid was successful and £49,400 has been granted to enable the roll out of LED lighting which will take place in early 2021/22.
- 4.3. The council's top 10 highest energy consuming sites in the borough (excluding domestic properties) have been chosen for a survey to identify potential decarbonisation projects. This work will be undertaken in early 2021/22 with the outcome being used to identify funding opportunities to deliver the required works.
- 4.4. A electric vehicle charging point survey and feasibility report was undertaken for the council's Civic Offices in 2020/21. The outcome was positive, indicating that installation of EV charging stations is possible, however large infrastructure works will be required. This work will be progressed further during 2021/22.
- 4.5. During 2020/21 the council undertook a review of its office provision, in recognition of the benefits achieved from a flexible working approach. The WorkWell project will commence in April 2021, identifying teams' individual approaches to working flexibly. Included within this programme is the closure of the council's Denmark Road offices. Enabling a flexible working approach is expected to significantly reduce staff travel use as well as providing improved work life balance.

Greener Homes Grant - Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LAD)

- 4.6. In August 2020 Sutton was successful in securing £115,000 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 will be used to deliver window upgrades to a selection of Sutton Housing Partnership Properties.
- 4.7. In early 2021, a second round of the LAD scheme opened, this time with funding allocations provided by the regional energy hubs in accordance with population sizes and fuel poverty levels. It was indicated that Sutton is eligible for £0.5million of funding which must be used to deliver retrofit to properties with an energy efficient certificate rating of D, E, F or G. In addition, the residents must also be in a low income bracket. The council will work closely with the energy hub and the GLA during the remainder of 2021 to identify eligible households and promote the scheme.

Energiesprong

- 4.8. Sutton Housing Partnership is currently undertaking a pilot to deliver whole house retrofit to 8 properties in the borough. Using the innovative energiesprong model, the project seeks to retrofit the Sutton Housing Partnership properties to a zero carbon standard as well as providing residents with warmer, more energy efficient homes and lower energy bills. Works include newly constructed and highlighted insulated wall and roofing systems, new high performance glazing systems, solar photovoltaic panels as well as a new central heating and ventilation system. A procurement process is currently underway to expand the pilot to a further 92 properties in the borough. The initial pilot includes homes in Worcester Park and Clockhouse, with the additional 92 homes expected to include homes in the St Helier estate as well as additional homes in the Clockhouse area.

Housing - new builds

- 4.9. As mentioned in the quarter 3 report, the council is undertaking work to assess the feasibility of moving from a reduced carbon to net zero carbon build for its housing new builds. Consultants are currently undertaking this review on behalf of the council with results expected in 2021/22. It is expected that the outcome of the work will be used to identify an approach to building new homes to a net zero carbon standard in line with the council's declared climate emergency.

Fuel poverty and energy efficiency

- 4.10. A procurement exercise was undertaken during early 2021 to appoint a contractor to deliver a Sutton Healthy Homes service throughout 2021/22 - 2022/23. Funded by the Council, this will build upon the existing service (funded by the GLA). The new service will support residents through the provision of energy efficiency measures as well as assistance with switching energy tariffs. Where relevant, the provider will also support residents to apply for funding to deliver larger energy efficiency measures, therefore improving the energy efficiency of their property and reducing CO₂ emissions.
- 4.11. During 2020/21 the GLA funded fuel poverty support service undertook over 200 assessments. At the time of reporting, the full analysis of this service was not available, however we do know that in the period April - December 2021 the average saving and average of £236 per household. The total savings for 2020/21 (including CO₂ reductions) will be published in the next quarterly report.

Solar Together 4

- 4.12. In January 2021, the council successfully secured £6,000 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) and initial results indicate that the average cost of the panels is 33% lower than market price.

5. Creating a Circular Economy

Reducing waste and increasing recycling

- 5.1. Building upon the work undertaken in Repair Week 2020, a [repair map](#) has been created and published on the council's website. The map identifies locations across the borough where residents can get items repaired rather than replacing them. The website

also includes the [Sutton Reuse Map](#). This was highlighted by the GLA in their recent review of all London borough Reduction and Recycling Plans.

- 5.2. Funding from the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy for a Library of Things in Sutton Library was confirmed at the end of 2020. The lending library, 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 library is expected to open in late 2021.
- 5.3. Food Waste Action Week took place in March 2021 and together with the South London Waste Partnership, Sutton took part, reminding people of the impact food waste has on climate change. Promotion was focused on social media and provided tips on facts and [tips to reduce food waste](#).
- 5.4. The council's waste and recycling website pages are currently being updated, helping remind people about alternative options, such as reducing waste, reusing or repairing an item, before seeking to throw it away. This embeds the waste hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle before disposal) across all pages and our ambition to create a circular economy.

Sustainable Procurement

- 5.5. As a significant procurer of goods and services within the borough, the council has a responsibility to ensure it minimises the environmental impact of these. During quarter 4 of 2021/22 a review of the council's Sustainable Procurement Policy was undertaken, aligning the policy with the council's Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Response Plan. A suite of guidance has been developed to ensure that sustainability requirements are included in all relevant procurements. A recent example of sustainability embedded into procurement is the appointment of a provider to redevelop and manage the Sutton Works site on Sutton High Street.

6. Tackling Climate Change

Flood Action

- 6.1. The council continues to progress detailed designs to establish the financial feasibility for flood alleviation schemes in the borough. The four priority areas for this work are Beddington Gardens, Worcester Park, Wallington Station and South Beddington. This work has enabled applications for funding to be submitted to the Environment Agency.

SuDS in Sutton Schools

- 6.2. 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 has been postponed due to COVID-19 impacts, however raised rain garden planters were installed at a number of school sites during 2020/21.

Emergency Planning

- 6.3. Extreme weather, including heatwaves, is a known effect of climate change. As part of the council's emergency planning activities, we have supported the GLA in developing criteria to identify cool spots which will be publicly accessible cool spaces during heat waves. The GLA's criteria were finalised in early 2021 and the council is currently

collating a list of cool spots within the borough which will be published on a map of locations across London.

School meals

- 6.4. The council procures a school meals service on behalf of 27 mainly primary schools in the borough. Working with the contractor, a number of measures have been put in place to minimise the environmental impact of the school meals provided. This includes a weekly 'meat free Monday' whereby no meat products are served. Vegan and vegetarian options are also provided throughout the week and 'added plant power' dishes will join the menu in Summer 2021. These dishes have a 50% reduction in meat which is instead substituted for plant based products. The kitchens have all attained the silver Food for Life accreditation mark and use only free range eggs as well as a number of Fairtrade items. All fish and fish products have Marine Stewardship Council certification and milk used is fresh and organic.
- 6.5. As part of the school meals contract, the council also supplies and maintains the catering equipment including ovens. Starting in quarter 1 2021/22 a trial is taking place in a number of schools to remove end of life gas ovens and replace them with electric equipment. Monitoring will take place to ascertain the environmental impact of this, however it is expected to contribute towards a reduction in CO₂ emissions.

7. Communications

- 7.1. The council has continued to promote sustainable living and the climate emergency to its staff and residents. At the end of February, the council worked with the local Fairtrade Community group to celebrate Fairtrade Fortnight. This year's theme was 'choose the world you want', focusing on climate change.
- 7.2. Throughout the year the council has supported Smart Energy GB, a campaign supporting the installation of smart meters in homes. Due to COVID-19 the focus has been on enabling residents to reduce their energy consumption with a suite of advice published on the councils [energy web pages](#). Information includes tips to stay warm during the winter months, advice on how to change energy supplier (including switching to renewable energy tariffs), funding to improve the energy efficiency of your home and information for landlords regarding energy efficiency requirements.

Committee meetings

- 7.3. Local Committee meetings take place across the borough, looking at issues relevant to the local area. Made up of Councillors and representatives from community groups, these public meetings have become virtual meetings in response to the pandemic. A number of the Local Committee meetings discussed the Climate Emergency and attendees were asked to help shape messages about climate change action and a network of Community Environment Champions which will be launched in 2021/22.
- 7.4. Across all committees the council is working to reduce paper use. Prior to COVID-19, agenda packs and reports would be provided in paper format to all councillors. In spring 2020, this changed and reports are now provided in a digital format, with the exception of those who have a specific requirement for paper copies.

Partnership work

- 7.5. Sutton is a member of the South London Partnership (SLP), a sub-regional collaboration of the following five boroughs - Sutton, Croydon, Kingston-upon-Thames, Merton and

Richmond. Collaboratively, the SLP are producing a Sustainability Statement which includes a core set of principles adopted by all five boroughs.

- 7.6. The council continues to work closely with London Councils on projects which support the Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Response Plan. This includes a Task and Finish Group to establish a pan-London approach for carbon emissions reporting (including scope 3) as well as a group addressing approaches to measuring and reducing lifestyle based emissions.
- 7.7. The council continues to work closely with Community Action Sutton on plans for the future of Hill House in St Helier. Current work includes supporting their ambitions to transform the outdoor space into an urban community garden to bring people together and provide the opportunity to grow food. The Mayor of London has pledged £10,000 in support of the project which includes raised planters, a large greenhouse for year round planting and a new sensory garden.

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