

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

19 September 2023

Leader of the Council: Cllr Jonathan Nunn

Report Title	Sustainability Report 2022/23
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Sustainability Report 2022/23

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to inform members and residents of the sustainability projects that have taken place and the progress towards the sustainability pledges during 2022/23 which have been reported on in the first of an annual sustainability report for the Council.
- 1.2. The creation of the sustainability report follows on from various sustainability commitments the Council has made since its conception, including Net Zero, sustainability pledges and more recently its first environmental accreditation to the Investors in the Environment scheme (iE).

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Alongside the publication of the Council's Sustainability Strategy in March 2022, the Council pledged to be a community leader for sustainability across West Northamptonshire. To achieve this the Council needs to lead by example, so it is important that progress towards delivery of our sustainability commitments is communicated accurately and on a regular basis, hence the introduction of this new annual report.
- 2.2 The report summarises the sustainability progress at the Council during 2022/23 with information drawn from key service areas such as public health, housing and waste as well as the work completed by the sustainability team.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- a) Agree to publish the Annual Sustainability Report for 2022/23
 - b) Note that the report is retrospective and is not making any new commitments

4. Reason for Recommendations

- The Council recognises the climate emergency and the importance of being transparent with residents and showcasing our sustainability achievements without green washing.
- Making the report publicly available shows accountability and reinforces the Council's commitment to the 2030 net zero target and will help set the format for work towards the 2045 target.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The sustainability project has been ongoing since late 2021 following the Council's commitment that year to recognise the climate emergency. Since that time various sustainability and Net Zero commitments have been made and the sustainability report showcases our achievements and progress towards these commitments.
- 5.2 The sustainability report is intended to be an annual retrospective report which details the achievements of the previous financial year. All service areas have had the opportunity to input information about projects that they have been working on and the report has contributions from the majority of service areas including waste, planning, housing and public health.
- 5.3 One of the main drivers for this report is to demonstrate progress to stakeholders through a transparent report on annual projects and sustainability initiatives.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 This report is a factual summary of work completed during the course of the last financial year, it is therefore not deemed to be contentious as it is not making recommendations, rather reporting on progress already made.

7. Implications

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1 Publishing of the report itself does not hold financial risk, however it should be noted that the Net Zero agenda which features as part of the emissions section has potential long-term financial implications, which will be considered in the relevant budget setting cycle.

7.2 Legal

7.2 There are no legal implications from publication of the report.

7.3 Risk

7.3 In order to meet the sustainability pledge of being a leader in sustainability the Council must strive to be transparent about its own progress. This means that the risk of reputational damage in not reporting progress and therefore 'green hushing' is deemed to be higher than risks associated with publication.

7.4 Consultation and Communications

7.4 The Council has engaged with community group Climate Action West Northants (CA-WN) to make them aware of the impending sustainability report. Communications have played a key role in communicating sustainability objectives, outcomes and achievements over the past year and will continue to do so to keep communities informed and engaged on future activities.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5 These recommendations have not been discussed with overview and scrutiny at this stage

7.6 Climate Impact

7.7 The sustainability report summarises climate and sustainability work and therefore is deemed to have a positive impact in this policy area.

7.8 It is acknowledged by officers and the sustainability cross-party working group that more action is needed directly on climate action, but the sustainability progress report is a summary of the Council's contribution to sustainability.

7.9 Community Impact

7.9 It is hoped that the community impact as a result of publishing the annual sustainability report is one which drives others to follow and inspires individuals, communities and businesses to contribute to the sustainability of West Northants.

8. Background Papers

8.1 Sustainability Annual Report 2022/23