

COUNCIL
19 JULY 2018

**REPORTS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH RESPONSIBILITY
– CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR
ENVIRONMENT**

Introduction

1. It is my pleasure as Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment to submit my annual report to Council on work that has taken place across my portfolio responsibility in the last year. The role of CMR for Environment is cross-cutting, covering a number of service areas. The Environment remains one of the Council's Corporate Priorities, it underpins the character of the county and I believe it is an essential resource for economic prosperity and social well-being of residents and visitors alike.

Waste Management

2. We work closely with our partners to reduce waste and minimise the cost and environmental impact of waste management. Our policies, facilities and communications and engagement activity make us well placed to meet these challenges.

3. Our action on municipal waste has seen reductions per household since 2015, and this is set to continue under the **Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy** refresh adopted in 2017. We are reducing the impact of waste generation, with **Household Recycling Centres** recovering value from 74% of material, and re-use partnerships at eight sites giving new homes to furniture, bicycles and other items. **EnviroSort**, the Materials Reclamation Facility, processed 77,000 tonnes of recyclables last year, and over 6,000 tonnes of road sweeper waste was recycled out of county.

4. We also extract value from waste that is not reused or recycled. It has been a successful first year for **EnviRecover**, the Energy from Waste (EfW) plant, which is exceeding targets and providing enough power for over 22,000 homes. Metals from the site are recycled and some residues are made into building materials. Our contractor engages with the local community, running a **Community Liaison Group** and hosting visits for residents, Councillors, other councils and industry.

5. The Pollution Control Team monitors **closed landfill sites** and nearby ground and surface waters and, last year, won the contract to monitor Warwickshire's closed sites.

6. Communications and engagement plays a big role in reducing waste. A successful **advertising and social media** campaign promoting composting, reusable nappies, and food waste reduction under our **Love Food Hate Waste** banner helps to prevent waste generation. Highlights include local radio features and a promotional film made with a local school. The Council-funded **Feed the Thousand** event saw over

1,000 people fed with the equivalent of a family of four's food waste. Working with a company experienced in behaviour change, the **Rewarding Redditch** campaign incentivises waste reduction, with residents earning points for activities such as buying compost bins or reusable nappies. Points are exchanged for vouchers, discounts or charitable donations. These initiatives combine with our wider **Let's Waste Less** campaign, which sees volunteers promote waste prevention and recycling. Alongside this, the importance of locally grown food is championed through the **Growing Worcestershire** network, which last year established a gleaning scheme to use otherwise wasted food from farms, and ran a lottery-funded **Worcestershire Food Links** project, producing an online directory of county food growers, producers and retailers.

7. We are also taking action on our own waste and, following Notices of Motion, The Council reviewed **single-use plastics** at its sites. At County Hall, our caterer is cutting single-use plastics, and our recycling facilities are being reviewed.

Flood Risk Management

8. The Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority and in its wider partnership working, continues to deliver crucial **flood risk management** activity, implementing large highways adaptation schemes in Worcester, Upton-upon-Severn, and Hagley, with a major Environment Agency scheme at Broadway also in progress. We are drawing up plans for further schemes, including in Worcester and Severn Stoke, with the Environment Agency.

9. We are helping to ensure new developments take full account of flood risk and, through our partnership with the district drainage teams, have scrutinised and responded to over 1,500 planning applications. We have inspected and improved over 30,000 highway gullies, and are looking at innovative ways to manage flooding through our **Natural Flood Management** project. We continue to engage with and support local flood groups to develop community flood resilience and are reviewing our Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment to ensure we have the best evidence about likely future flooding.

Natural Environment

10. We continue to protect and enhance our natural environment, and play a key role in the Worcestershire **Local Nature Partnership**, engaging with Defra and national and local bodies to ensure we join up environmental action and learn about potential funding streams at the earliest opportunity. Our new three-year **Natural Networks** partnership with the Wildlife Trust and Environment Agency will provide £1.3m of grants for biodiversity enhancement on 44 hectares of publically accessible land (enough to cover 61 football pitches).

11. Building on our commitment to be **pollinator-friendly**, we are working with Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on road verge management to inform future county-wide approaches. We have engaged communities, parishes, schools and colleges through two well-received pollinator conferences, and a workshop this autumn will identify practical interventions to help our pollinators thrive.

12. We ensure that any interventions are targeted through robust evidence, with our web-based **Worcestershire Habitat Inventory** a particular asset for the county. This comprehensive tool has wide-ranging applications, supporting neighbourhood planning and our Minerals Local Plan, guiding funding applications and planning responses, and informing schools, businesses and communities.

13. In the broader planning sphere, we continue to shape the **planning process**, providing environmental surveys and advice on corporate projects and policies, including the Minerals Local Plan, and promoting the environmental and economic benefits of Green Infrastructure (GI). As a leading member of the **Worcestershire GI Partnership** we work closely with our district councils to support GI in Local Plans. The county **GI Strategy** is being updated to align with the national 25-Year Environment Plan and revised National Planning Policy Framework.

Energy and Carbon Savings

14. Our action on climate change is capturing the financial savings from improved efficiency and reduced emissions. The county has already exceeded the **Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy's** 2020 carbon reduction target. Action within our own operations and our engagement with business and communities saw the Council named **Council of the Year** at the regional Energy Efficiency Awards.

15. The Sustainability Team has brought in around £11m of European, central government and private funding since 2016, supporting our businesses, schools and communities to save energy and save money. The Council successfully reduced its own payments under the government's mandatory Carbon Reduction Commitment. We paid £223,725 for the CO₂ we emitted in 2016/17. This is down 11% on the previous year, due largely to lower electricity use in street lighting and energy efficiency measures in our buildings. The commitment will be replaced by a climate change levy on our energy bills from next year.

16. Our **Energy & Carbon Management Plan** directs corporate energy and cost savings across our sites, vehicles, mileage and street lights, with 9% first year carbon savings translating to £300,000 saved on utility bills. Much of the saving is from the council's **Spend to Save** energy efficiency fund, targeting schemes with short paybacks to maximise financial benefits. To date, £2.8m has been invested in 114 projects, with an average payback of seven years.

17. We are also supporting our vulnerable residents to reduce their own energy costs, co-ordinating the **Warmer Worcestershire** network of local councils, with Age UK, the Act on Energy charity, and the Fire and Rescue Service. Overseeing the Fuel Poverty Plan for Worcestershire, the network helps the 11.5% of our households in fuel poverty. We give practical help to qualifying households through access to home energy efficiency grants. Since 2016, The Council has secured over £7m of government and private funds to enable around 1,000 homes to take efficiency measures. 46 homes in the county received an average of £2,000 of funding towards insulation and replacement heating last winter.

18. We also secured £3.6m of government funds to subsidise solid wall insulation under the **Green Deal Communities** project. By the project's end in 2017, over 700 homes had benefitted, with annual average savings of around £250 per home. As part of

the **Boilers on Prescription** scheme, 70 vulnerable low-income households benefitted from a total of £180,000 to replace heating systems, leading to average annual savings of £316 per home. We launched the **Worcestershire Energy Switch** tariff-switching scheme in 2017 to save residents' money. Offers to switch were taken up by 155 homes, saving an average £182 each.

19. As well as supporting households to save energy and cut costs, we have brought in over £4m of European and private sector funding since 2016 to help businesses reduce overheads, move to more energy efficient practices and grow the low-carbon sector. Central to this is the **Business Energy Efficiency Programme**, a joint European-funded initiative with local councils and the Chamber of Commerce. In Worcestershire, the programme funds energy assessments of local businesses and to date has identified almost £825,000 of annual savings, leading to 62 grants totalling £450,000 to help install lighting, efficient heating, insulation, faster warehouse doors, solar panels and energy storage.

20. Another key pillar of our business support is the **Low Carbon Opportunities Programme**, providing consultancy and grant support for SMEs. Since its launch last year, over £450,000 of European grant funding for renewable technologies and innovation in our growing low-carbon sector has been awarded. We are working closely with the Worcestershire LEP to identify challenges and solutions for businesses and communities who struggle with power, heat and transport, including grid capacity.

21. We recognise the importance of encouraging the next generation to think about energy, food, and waste, and we are a national leader on **EcoSchools**, with 92% of state schools registered, and 39 achieving top 'Green Flag' awards.

Priority activity for next 12 months

22. The next 12 months will see continued work to protect and enhance our natural environment and secure carbon, energy and cost savings across the county.

23. Our **One Waste Worcestershire** communications plan will help drive waste reduction.

24. The **Natural Networks** partnership project will launch with the appointment of project officers based at the Wildlife Trust, and our focus on **pollinator activity** will continue, including promotion and closer working with Council Highways.

25. Parts of our **Vale of Evesham Landscape Partnership** lottery bid will be progressed as smaller lottery bids this autumn, with bids to other funds as they become available.

26. We will publish an updated **Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan** in 2019, providing essential evidence to maintain our prized environment and guide funding bids and planning applications. It will be used by Natural England, the Environment Agency, District Councils, the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and developers, among others.

27. The sustainability team is awaiting decisions on £9m of bids. We will continue to support local businesses and await approval of £3.3m of European funding to extend the **Business Energy Efficiency** and **Low Carbon Opportunities Programmes** to 2022

and a bid to help the county's public sector implement exemplar low-carbon projects. Help for households will also continue, with the Council securing over £450,000 from National Grid's Affordable Warmth **Warm Homes Fund**. Working with our district councils in a three-year project, we'll help 150 households in need connect to the gas network for the first time. We also plan to run the Energy Switch scheme again this September.

28. The LEP **Energy Strategy**, managed by the Council and partners, is due in 2018. It will encourage clean growth and affordable energy, inform planning policy, and identify low-carbon projects for the county's Local Industrial Strategy.

29. The Lead Local Flood Authority will be completing highways **flood adaptation and flood alleviation** schemes and continuing to maintain and improve highway drainage. Construction of the major £4m Environment Agency flood alleviation scheme at Broadway will continue, enabled by over £500k of Council match funding. We will also be implementing property flood resilience schemes, including in Worcester, Droitwich and Evesham, and continuing to develop community flood resilience through community engagement. We will also be implementing our **Natural Flood Management** project which has secured £750k of government grant to reduce flood risk.

Acknowledgements

30. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Director of Economy and Infrastructure and the relevant heads of service, managers and staff across the Council for their commitment and work over the past 12 months.

Tony Miller
Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment