

Environmental Charter

Summary: North Norfolk District Council's (NNDC) Corporate Plan commits to the delivery, and adoption, of an Environmental Charter.

The draft Environmental Charter is based on evidence and views contributed at engagement events and has been formulated with the input of a wide range of officers and members, through a series of workshops. The draft document appended to this report has now been shared with external stakeholders via the Environment Forum.

Options considered: To endorse the Environmental Charter

To not endorse the Environmental Charter, however, this contradicts the Council's Corporate Plan objectives.

Conclusions: The Environmental Charter is an important step in the Council's approach to dealing with the Climate Change Emergency declared in April 2019. Born out of public and stakeholder proposals garnered at the Council's 'Environment Forum' the Environmental Charter is a public facing document which sets out NNDC's path towards environmental excellence and a net-zero carbon emissions future.

Recommendations: To approve the Environmental Charter.

Reasons for Recommendations: NNDC's Corporate Plan commits to delivering an Environmental Charter. Once approved the Environmental Charter will become an adopted Council document which will enable this element of the Corporate Plan to be delivered whilst simultaneously reinforcing NNDC's commitment to addressing the climate change emergency, which it declared in April 2019. Engaging with the Environment Forum has completed the circle of engagement as the concepts within the Charter are derived from input provided at the first Forum workshop.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AS REQUIRED BY LAW

(Papers relied on to write the report, which do not contain exempt information and which are not published elsewhere)

N/A

Cabinet Member: Cllr Nigel Lloyd	Ward(s) affected: District Wide
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1. Introduction

1.1 In April 2019 NNDC declared a climate change emergency.

Having considered the views of stakeholders, residents and community groups at the 'Environment Forums' held in 2019 NNDC committed to the development of an Environmental Charter and Action Plan with the view that these documents would outline the Council's route towards achieving environmental excellence and net-zero carbon emissions by 2030.

1.2 A draft Environmental Charter was prepared earlier this year and has been informed by a series of workshops with staff and Members. The document accordingly reflects the input from a wide range of internal stakeholders. *Please see the Environmental Charter in Appendix One of this report.*

1.3 The Environmental Charter was written assuming the definition of charter as 'a formal document which describes the rights, aims or principles of an organisation'.

1.4 The Environmental Charter comprises three main sections, each with differing aims and principles. These are summarised as:

- delivering change across the Council's own internal estates and operations in order to achieve environmental excellence and net-zero carbon emissions by 2030;
- the Council as a community leader and influencer, supporting and enabling our communities, stakeholders, businesses and residents to address the challenges presented by the climate change crisis; and
- how residents/citizens can act in support of the Council's environmental aims and make a difference in their own neighbourhoods to address the climate change crisis.

2. Current position

- 2.1 During the internal engagement process with both officers and Members the contents of the draft Environmental Charter were developed and discussed. The overall document was well received and support from staff and Members for the principles, aims and ambitions of the Environmental Charter were overwhelmingly positive.
- 2.2. Feedback from these sessions has informed the draft Environmental Charter and the final draft version of the document is appended to the report (see Appendix One). The engagement workshops also elicited many ideas as to how the Charter's aims can be achieved and this will help inform the development of an action plan.
- 2.3 The draft Environmental Charter was considered by Overview and Scrutiny committee which made the following recommendations:

Recommendation One

'That consideration is given to developing and including a Charter Mark system setting standards across the spectrum of environmental improvements sought, such as: Energy Conservation; Renewable Energy Generation and Storage; Water Capture, Usage and Quality; Flood Prevention and Mitigation, Reductions in Single Use Materials and Carbon Capture projects. Such a system should link up with relevant Planning Policy standards, include an annual award/recognition scheme and seek accreditation with an external environmental body'.

In the implementation of the Environmental Charter officers will devise a means by which standards can be promoted to ensure widespread adoption of the provisions within the Charter.

Recommendation Two

'That consideration is given to increasing the educational and public engagement opportunities to promote active commitment to the Charter and the wider climate change agenda'.

The draft Environmental Charter includes the following pledges:

"We will inspire citizens throughout North Norfolk by delivering a climate change public engagement programme which will seek to improve 'carbon literacy' across the District"

"We will inspire a new generation of carbon reduction champions – young or old we want to help everyone to reduce their carbon footprint"

In communicating the Charter, officers will use innovative ways, such as online events and Greenbuild, to promote and ensure active commitment to the Charter and the wider climate change agenda.

- 2.4 An Environment Forum session on the 23rd April considered the draft Environmental Charter and subsequently participants were invited to provide

feedback. A summary of the feedback will be provided at the meeting together with any recommended changes.

3. Corporate Plan Objectives

3.1 The table below demonstrates how the Environmental Charter will meet key corporate priorities as contained within the Corporate Plan:

Corporate plan objectives	How the Environmental Charter supports Corporate Plan Objectives
<p>Objective 4</p> <p>Developing an Engagement Strategy to set out how we will consult with our customers and our local Communities</p>	<p>The Environmental Charter is a valuable communication too which will be used to engage with residents, parish councils and community groups on the climate change crisis.</p>
<p>Objective 4.4</p> <p>Establish Environment Panels</p>	<p>The Environment Forum initially proposed that NNDC should adopt an Environmental Charter. The Environment Forum met on the 23rd April 2021 and considered the emerging Environmental Charter.</p> <p>The Environmental Charter specifically references the role that Environment Forums play in increasing environmental awareness within the District.</p>
<p>Objective 1.1</p> <p>Establish a framework by which the Council can work with interested parties as climate champions</p>	<p>The Environmental Charter explicitly references this Corporate Plan ambition by pledging to support a new generation of climate champions. This will be established by engaging with residents, communities and business groups across the District.</p>

<p>Objective 5</p> <p>Planting 110,000 trees – one for each resident</p>	<p>The Environmental Charter explicitly references this Corporate Plan ambition and advocates tree planting projects as an effective way in which to promote biodiversity within the District.</p>
<p>Objective 7.5</p> <p>Implement local community waste reduction measures, e.g. community fridges.</p>	<p>The Environmental Charter references the reduction in single use plastics, composting schemes and general waste reduction.</p>
<p>Objective 3</p> <p>Undertaking an audit to establish the Council’s baseline carbon footprint</p>	<p>The Environmental Charter pledges to carry out a baseline carbon data report and to provide annual reports which update progress</p>
<p>Objective 2.1</p> <p>Formulate a Local Plan that supports the transition to a low-carbon future</p>	<p>The Environmental Charter references a range of the low carbon policies contained within the draft Local Plan.</p>

4. Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.1 There are limited/no financial implications resulting from the formulation or adoption of the Environmental Charter.
- 4.2 Despite this, the financial implications of the specific actions that will be taken in order to deliver the Environmental Charter will need to be considered at a later stage. These will be presented in the format of an Action Plan and will sit alongside the Council’s carbon emission baseline information.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 N/A - whilst the Environmental Charter is a formal document it is not legally binding

6. Communication Implications

6.1 The Environmental Charter is an important tool for NNDC to use to communicate with residents, businesses, community groups and interested parties the work that is being done, and will be done, to address the climate change emergency in North Norfolk.

6.2 The Environmental Charter is a public facing document which will clearly set out the '*aims and principles*' that NNDC will uphold in order to address the climate change emergency.

7. Risks

7.1 The Council is morally obliged to act upon its declaration of the Climate Emergency; this Charter is the manifestation of that. It will also be expected to proactively deliver the pledges made within the Charter and it is anticipated that this will be scrutinised by pressure groups, private individuals and interested parties.

7.2 Failure to take action on the pledges contained within the Environmental Charter may expose the Council to reputational damage.

7.3 Failure to deliver a timely and well considered Environmental Charter may also expose the Council to reputational damage.

8 Equality and Diversity

No matters relating to equality and diversity arise from the contents of this report.

9 Section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations

This report raises no matters of concern to crime and disorder.

10 Sustainability implications

No matters relating to sustainability arise from the contents of this report.

11 Conclusions

The Environmental Charter is an important step in the Council's approach to dealing with the Climate Change Emergency declared in April 2019. Born out of public and stakeholder proposals garnered at the Council's 'Environment Forum' the Environmental Charter is a public facing document which sets out NNDC's path towards environmental excellence and a net-zero carbon emissions future.