

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 18 January 2023

Staffordshire Sustainability Board Communications Plan 2023



Councillor Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change said,

“We are on a mission to make Staffordshire sustainable. Engaging with our people about climate change is key to reducing the county’s carbon emissions and reaching our net zero target.

As a local authority we are only responsible for a small proportion of carbon emissions in the county, but our position allows us to set an example, raise awareness and inspire people to make more sustainable choices.

This joint communications plan will help us to share clear, consistent messages with our residents, businesses and communities about the climate change challenge and how they can make an impact.

We achieve much more by working together. Working closely with our local authority colleagues and collaboratively with our residents, communities, and businesses, we can really make a big difference.”

Report Summary:

Mitigating and adapting to climate change and becoming a net zero organisation by 2050 is a key priority for Staffordshire County Council and is a “green thread” throughout our Strategic Plan. It states that we will tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable

The Staffordshire Sustainability Board was established in January 2022. The aim of the Board is to encourage and support greater partnership working between the county’s local authorities to tackle climate change and reduce Staffordshire’s carbon emissions towards net zero targets.

This report details the Board’s communications plan for January to December 2023.

The plan proposes a joint and, aligned calendar of communications and behaviour change activity throughout the year, to be delivered in partnership with the eight district and borough councils in Staffordshire.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the progress of the Staffordshire Sustainability Board in developing a unified 2023 programme of activity across the county and eight district and borough councils, to tackle climate change and work towards our net zero targets.
- b. Approve the Staffordshire Sustainability Board joint communications plan (attached as Appendix 1), which sets out our 12-month programme of climate change awareness-raising and behaviour change activity.



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Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the progress of the Staffordshire Sustainability Board in developing a unified 2023 programme of activity across the county and eight district and borough councils, to tackle climate change and work towards our net zero targets.
- b. Approve the Staffordshire Sustainability Board joint communications plan (attached as Appendix 1), which sets out our 12-month programme of climate change awareness raising, and behaviour change activity.

Local Member Interest: N/A

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Reasons for Recommendations:

Background

1. The Staffordshire Sustainability Board was established in January 2022. The Board aims to encourage and support partnership working to address climate change in Staffordshire, promote more sustainable lifestyles and business practices, and reduce Staffordshire's carbon emissions footprint.
2. The Board is comprised of cabinet members with a sustainability/climate change portfolio from the county and eight district and borough councils in Staffordshire. It is chaired by, the County Council's Cabinet member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change.
3. Each of the nine councils is delivering its own action plan to reduce carbon emissions and reach net zero targets. The board looks beyond the immediate responsibilities of the councils to see how we can collectively influence and reduce Staffordshire's wider carbon emissions.
4. In March 2022 the Board shared its vision alongside 10 commitments for action during 2022/23, which was signed off formally by all members, including Staffordshire County Council at Cabinet (See Appendix 2).

5. Commitment Five focuses on communications, stating that: All Councils will contribute to a countywide communications group, and plan and deliver a countywide Communications Plan, working together to drive our collective net zero visions forward.

Joint Climate Change 2023 Communication Plan

6. On the 10 October 2022 the Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB) considered and agreed a joint climate change communication plan for 2023.
7. Whilst each member of Staffordshire's Sustainability Board and their respective local authority are responsible for communicating their climate change responsibilities and actions it was recognised that by working together could have greater reach and impact.
8. The joint communication plan attached as Appendix 1, sets out a calendar of unified and consistent communications activity to be delivered throughout the year to raise awareness, deepen understanding and inspire action on climate change.
9. It details a programme of activity and joint messages on key dates including Valentine's Day, various religious festivals and on high profile climate change focused events such as Earth Day and World Environment Day. It was noted at the Staffordshire Sustainability Board that some more diverse holiday messages should be included in the plan. This will be incorporated into the plan following further research.
10. Public events will also take place throughout the year to raise awareness of the impact and threat of climate change, and the steps we can all take to reduce carbon emissions and our impact on the environment. Following a successful pilot in Stafford Town Centre in April 2022 a 'Carbon Bubble' roadshow is planned for Summer 2023.
11. The roadshow will feature a one-day event in each of our eight district and boroughs, to engage with residents and increase carbon literacy. A 10 m x 10m sphere will be inflated in central locations, representing the equivalent size of 'one tonne of carbon dioxide'. The events themselves will be low carbon, using hydrogenated vegetable oil to inflate the balloon. At the events, staff will talk to Staffordshire residents, businesses and visitors about climate change and encouraging them to pledge to do their bit to be greener. Pledges will be captured on a board that will then be hosted in libraries as part of a climate change display.
12. A formal consultation is planned for Summer 2023 to understand residents' perceptions about climate change, what the barriers are for them to be greener and what would inspire them to change their

behaviour. This information will enable us to gain insight into public views on climate change and provide an evidence bank and base line for campaign planning going forward.

13. The joint communication plan lays a strong foundation for more joined up working between councils. Working together in this way makes the best use of resources and makes sure we promote consistent messages countywide.

Legal Implications

14. The Climate Change Act commits the UK government by law to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050. This includes reducing emissions from the devolved administrations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), which currently account for about 20% of the UK's emissions.
15. The Council has made a commitment to become net carbon zero by 2050 although it should be noted that the communication plan set out in this report is primarily targeted at climate change implications outside the Council's direct accountabilities.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

16. It is intended that the joint communication activity will be co-funded, with a £25,000 contribution from the county council budget for climate change, and a £3,000 contribution from each of the district and borough councils.
17. The funding will be used to deliver an impactful and effective communications and engagement programme, including the carbon bubble roadshows, consultation sessions and social media activity.

Climate Change Implications

18. While the county council is already making significant strides to reduce its carbon emissions to net zero, we make up a small proportion (less than 1%) of the county's total emissions. It is therefore imperative we work with partner councils and Staffordshire's residents and businesses to make them aware of their carbon emissions and to the reduction of our collective carbon footprint.
19. The communications and engagement activity has been designed within our ethos of making Staffordshire sustainable. Every effort will be made to during the course of the year ahead to make activity associated with delivering the plan as green or low carbon as possible.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Staffordshire Sustainability Board – Communications Plan 2023

Appendix 2 - Staffordshire Sustainability Board – Vision and Commitments 2022-23

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