

CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee – 10 October 2023

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Planning and Regulatory Services

Status: For information

Also considered by:

N/A

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report updates members on the progress made towards tackling the challenge of climate change in Sevenoaks District.

This report supports the Key Aim of: The Council's commitment to tackling climate change.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. McArthur

Contact Officer(s): Emma Henshall, Ext. 7358; Margaret Carr, Ext. 7341

Recommendation to Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee:

To note this update report for information.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure that the District Council continues to play its part in tackling the challenge of climate change.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The challenge of tackling climate change is a key priority that encompasses all aspects of the Council. It incorporates energy efficiency and generation, sustainable transport and active travel, air quality, health and wellbeing, habitats and biodiversity, flooding, water supply and consumption, and more.
- 2 The Council has committed to tackling climate change in two parts. The first is in relation to the Council's own assets and services, which during 2022–2023 produced 2,612 tCO₂, equating to 0.36% of the District's overall emissions. The second is a much wider ambition to help reduce the carbon emissions of the

District, which make up the vast majority of the District's total emissions, at approximately 714,600 tCO₂¹ (99.6%).

- 3 The Council therefore has an important role to play in community engagement and leadership, to encourage low carbon measures across the District through education, best practice, incentives, policy and opportunities. This includes working collaboratively with Kent County Council (KCC), Town and Parish Councils, local interest groups and the Local Government Association.
- 4 This report provides an update on the progress made by the Council towards the challenge of tackling climate change over the last 12 months.

Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

- 5 Following the adoption of the Movement Strategy in 2022, the Council secured funding to undertake a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Sevenoaks urban area. The LCWIP identifies eight walking, wheeling and cycling routes, mapped at Appendix 1, and prioritises them in terms of benefits and likelihood of achieving modal shift.
- 6 Working in partnership with KCC, the Council has secured significant funding from Active Travel England to progress three of the identified routes, as well as to complete a LCWIP for Swanley. These projects are all making good progress – an update on each project is set out at Appendix 2.
- 7 These projects aim to improve the walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure to provide safer and more attractive environments for users in the District. They promote active travel and reduce the need for short car journeys, in time helping to reduce emissions, improve air quality and benefit the health and wellbeing of our communities.
- 8 A new 'rail trails' app has been launched, offering short and longer walks from each of the railway stations along the Darent Valley, from Swanley to Sevenoaks, offering insights into local history and landscape features along the way and encouraging people to walk, wheel or cycle. It is free to download and the app is the result of collaborative working between the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership, the Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership and local residents. Printed copies of the trails are also available at stations along the Darent Valley line.
- 9 We have also launched a new Workplace Travel Plan, to facilitate our staff to travel to work more sustainably, where they can. A staff survey was undertaken to understand travel preferences and barriers to change, and the

¹ (Source: www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics)

Plan promotes incentives such as car sharing, pool e-bikes, cycle training and workplace travel challenges.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

- 10 In 2022 the Council commissioned Field Dynamics to complete a study into future electric vehicle demand within the District. This has now been completed and forms a separate report to this committee. The Study:
- Identifies future EV ownership in the District;
 - Identifies future residential demand for public charging;
 - Creates demand zones to help with prioritisation of future charging infrastructure; and
 - Models the impact of public EV chargers, existing and proposed.
- 11 The demand identified in the Study will help inform future provision through the emerging Local Plan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Energy Efficiency

- 12 Last year the Council was successful in securing £402,500 from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's (BEIS) Home Upgrade Grant, to help tackle fuel poverty for low income families by providing energy efficiency upgrades, insulation and low-carbon heating to low-income households in the District. This project is led by the Energy Efficiency Project Officer, working with communities to identify suitable households. Since receiving the funding the inflation crisis has meant that all costs were higher than anticipated. That said, we still completed 14 properties. We have since been successful in securing an additional £1.2m through the Home Upgrade Grant Tranche 2, to support energy efficiency installation to 60 homes over the next 2 years. Work has started and so far 11 properties have been assessed. Properties benefitting from solar panels through the Home Upgrade Grant will save approximately 8,900kg of carbon per year.
- 13 The solar panels that have been installed by households in the District as part of the Solar Together scheme last year will save 190,058kg of carbon per year. Phase 3 of Solar Together opened in August and so far has had 191 registrations.
- 14 The Council also took part, alongside Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, in the Green Business Grant scheme, funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This scheme was for businesses based in the two local authority areas operating in the low carbon and renewable energy economy to help them develop new ideas, and for any business operating from commercial premises located within these areas that were looking to reduce their carbon footprint. Priority sectors, in case the scheme was oversubscribed, were food

production, tourism and hospitality, distribution and logistics, construction and independent retail. Funding was awarded to two businesses and applications will open again next year.

Community Engagement

- 15 We have continued to engage with our communities to publicise how we are working to tackle the challenge of climate change, and how residents and businesses can reduce their own carbon emissions.
- 16 We have continued to share at least one climate change social media post each week including World Environment Day, Bike Week, Big Green Week, National Clean Air Day, World Refill Day, National Picnic Week, Plastic Free July, Recycle Week and Net Zero Week. We will continue to dedicate a section of grapevine to climate change and encourage behaviour changes in our staff.
- 17 The Summer 2023 edition of In Shape included key statistics on what the Council is achieving in its ambition to tackle climate change.
- 18 This year's Community and Voluntary Awards included two categories that incorporated climate change as a consideration, and looked at how communities and businesses are doing things differently. These were the Best Business Award (Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce) and the Environmental Award (Fidelity Western).
- 19 This autumn, we will be talking to the Climate Change Youth Forum about walking, wheeling and cycling, recycling and air quality, and attending a local primary school's environmental awareness assembly.

Sevenoaks District Council Emissions Report

- 20 The Council reports annually on its carbon emissions, so that we can measure our progress and the impact our actions are having on reducing these emissions. The latest report was published in August 2023 covering the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 21 We use the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (formerly the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) reporting guidance, which categorises emissions under Scope 1, 2 or 3, as defined by the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Protocol. Scope 1 reports on the emissions from gas and fuel for our fleet; Scope 2 reports on emissions from electricity and water; and Scope 3 captures emissions from staff travel for business purposes.
- 22 The assets in the report for 2022-23 include Argyle Road, the depot, the Council's three leisure centres in Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge, and the

Council's fleet. Emissions have reduced slightly in the past year, in part due to efficiencies with the waste and recycling service, use of EVs and a reduction in gas and electricity usage. As indicated in paragraph 2 above, the Council's emissions as they are currently measured make up 0.36% of the District's overall emissions. The Council's main sources of emissions continue to be produced from the use of gas used for heating our built assets followed by electricity.

Carbon Reduction Plan

- 23 Expert consultants LASER have been appointed to undertake a study to include:
- Heat decarbonisation plans for Argyle Road, Dunbrik, and Sevenoaks and Edenbridge Leisure Centres;
 - A Carbon Reduction Plan looking at for the Council's assets to set out what will need to be done to reduce carbon emissions; and
 - A report that considers what the Council can do with partners to help reduce the overall emissions in the District.
- 24 The Plan will identify three options for moving away from fossil fuels and reducing the carbon emissions of our assets: business as usual, medium level interventions and high level interventions. The Plan will identify actions and draft costings for each option, including the amount of off-setting that will be required in order to reach net zero.

Moving Forward

- 25 To ensure that we all continue to play our part in tackling the challenge of climate change, work has begun on developing a Climate Change Strategy for the District. It is envisaged that this will identify a set of principles that we can all work to and share with our communities, businesses and other key partners. We will seek to build on our existing commitment to strengthen resilience to climate change. The Climate Change Working Group will shortly meet to develop the Strategy.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

The Council has made a commitment to tackle the challenge of climate change.

Key Implications

Financial

Funding for the initiatives referred to in this report has been met through existing budgets or secured through external funding. Any costings arising in the Carbon Reduction Plan are not currently budgeted for.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

No legal implications have been identified.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Net Zero Implications

Members are reminded of the Council's stated ambition to be Net Zero with regards to carbon emissions by 2030. The decisions recommended in this paper directly impact on this ambition. The impact has been reviewed and there will be a decrease in carbon emissions produced in the District as a result of this decision.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Walking & Cycling Routes identified in the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP

Appendix 2 – SDC Active Travel Projects

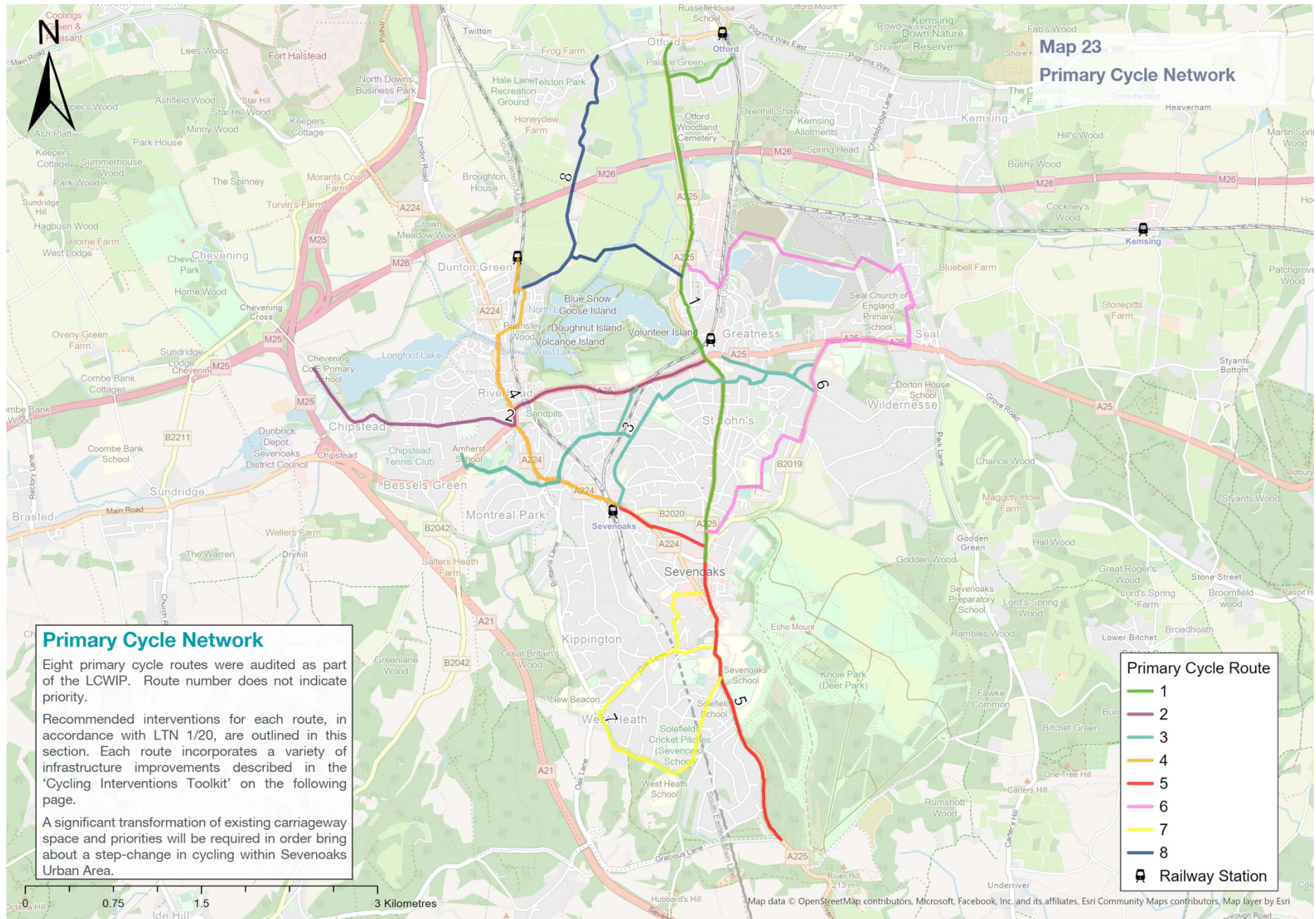
Background Papers

None.

Richard Morris

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Planning and Regulatory Services

Appendix 1 – Walking & Cycling Routes identified in the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP



Appendix 2 – SDC Active Travel Projects

Project title	Description of project	Funding secured	Funding source (via KCC)	Funding scope	Date of funding	Funding duration	Funding completed within required timescale?	Project start	Project complete	Project notes (July 2023)
Sevenoaks Urban Area Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)	To prepare a LCWIP for Sevenoaks urban area, to identify walking, wheeling and cycling improvements that, if delivered, will provide safe and attractive alternatives to the car.	£15,000	Active Travel England Capability & Ambition Fund 2021-22	Development of LCWIPs	March 2021	Spend to be committed by March 2022 (1 year)	Yes	January 2022	December 2022	Total cost £32,400 using top up funding from S106 receipts and net zero budget.
Sevenoaks Town East to West Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Route	To deliver walking, wheeling and cycling improvements identified as 'route 3' in the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP, connecting the east and west of Sevenoaks town, schools along the route and the communities they serve.	£1,200,000	Active Travel England Active Travel Fund Tranche 3	Capital funding to support the delivery of ambitious new cycling and walking infrastructure schemes	March 2022	Spend to be committed by March 2024 (2 years)	TBC	September 2022	In progress	Public consultation concluded July 2023. The Sevenoaks JTB (18 September 2023) considered the consultation report and resolved to proceed to detailed design and construction working closely with Sevenoaks Town Council and landowners specifically to mitigate concerns.
Swanley Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)	To prepare a LCWIP for Swanley urban area, to identify walking, wheeling and cycling improvements that, if delivered, will provide safe and attractive alternatives to the car.	£25,000	Active Travel England Capability & Ambition Fund 2022-23	Development of LCWIPs	January 2023	Spend to be committed by January 2024 (1 year)	TBC	March 2023	In progress - expected end 2023	Sustrans appointed. Stakeholder engagement to capture routes/barriers undertaken June 2023. Network of routes drafted subject to further stakeholder engagement W/C 25 September 2023.
Sevenoaks LCWIP route 6 (Oxford to Sevenoaks via Seal) feasibility study	To undertake detailed feasibility of the walking, wheeling and cycling improvements identified as 'route 6' in the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP, connecting Sevenoaks with Seal and Oxford.	£15,000	Active Travel England Capability & Ambition Fund 2022-23	Scheme planning and design	January 2023	Spend to be committed by January 2024 (1 year)	TBC	June 2023	In progress - expected late 2023	PJA appointed. Site visit undertaken. Stakeholder engagement to capture opportunities, risks and challenges scheduled W/C 25 September 2023.
Sevenoaks LCWIP town centre walking improvements	To further develop the walking improvements identified for Sevenoaks town centre in the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP.	£5,000	Active Travel England Capability & Ambition Fund 2022-23	Scheme planning and design	January 2023	Spend to be committed by January 2024 (1 year)	TBC	June 2023	In progress - expected late 2023	PJA appointed. Site visit undertaken. Draft report received.
Sevenoaks LCWIP route 1 (Oxford to Sevenoaks) feasibility study and outline designs (stage 1)	To undertake detailed feasibility of the walking, wheeling and cycling improvements identified as 'route 1' in the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP, connecting Oxford with Sevenoaks, including a review of previous studies undertaken. Then to prepare outline and detailed designs for phase 1 of the route (Oxford to Bat & Ball). The work has been split into two projects to allow for evaluation at outline design stage, before proceeding to detailed design.	£184,000	Active Travel England Active Travel Fund Tranche 4	Capital & revenue funding to support the delivery of ambitious new cycling and walking infrastructure schemes	April 2023	Spend to be committed by April 2024 (1 year)	TBC	July 2023	In progress - expected March 2024	PJA appointed. Site visit undertaken. Stakeholder engagement to capture opportunities, risks and challenges scheduled W/C 9 October 2023.
Sevenoaks LCWIP route 1 (Oxford to Sevenoaks) detailed designs (stage 2)	TBC						TBC - expected April 2024	TBC	Appointment TBC.	