1. Purpose of Report

1.1. To introduce and update the Cabinet Panels on the work and progress made in responding to the declaration of a Climate Emergency (County Council meeting of 16 July 2019) and present the scope of the future work identified in order to meet the December 2019 deadline to prepare a Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy.

2. Summary

2.1. The concept of climate change is not new, however in recent years it has come into sharper focus and there has been an increasing governmental and public appetite to take greater action.

In July 2019 the County Council unveiled its new Corporate Plan to cover the period 2019-2025 [County Council-16 July 2019](#), outlining the vision and aspirations for the county in the coming years and setting out the key steps to achieve these aims.

2.2. At the same meeting the County Council declared a climate emergency and made a commitment to develop an ambitious programme to improve sustainability in the county, one of the key aims set out in the new Corporate Plan. As well as covering key environmental issues like climate change, biodiversity and the Council’s use of resources, the Sustainable Hertfordshire strategy will also focus on social issues like education, health care and building a thriving local economy.

2.3. This is a significant piece of work for the County Council, and each of the council’s departments has been asked to put forward their own plans for how to improve the sustainability of their work and the services they deliver and commission. It is equally important for Hertfordshire residents who care about the environment and playing...
their part in improving sustainability in the county, now and into the future.

2.4. The County Council is well placed not only to reduce its own environmental impact but also to enable and inspire Hertfordshire residents and businesses to do the same.

2.5. This paper gives an overview of the work to date, the scope of the future tasks and the timetable for strategy production.

3. Recommendation

3.1 The Panel is asked to note the content of this paper, the project Scope (prepared by consultants WSP) (Appendix A), the Hertfordshire County Council project briefing note (Appendix B) and the programme timetable (Appendix C).

4. Background

4.1 The Council’s vision for the county is expressed in the Corporate Plan 2019 – 25, which presents ambitions:

- Opportunity to Live in Thriving Places
- Opportunity to Share in Hertfordshire’s Prosperity
- Opportunity to Everyone to Achieve their Potential
- Opportunity to Enjoy and Live Happy and Safe Lives

4.2 It is recognised that in order to achieve these overarching aims and in particular to create ‘a cleaner, greener and more environmentally sustainable county’ and ‘sustainable employment opportunities for all’ there needs to be a coordinated and holistic approach to looking at all sustainable issues in Hertfordshire.

4.3 The conventional definition of sustainability covers economic, social and environmental objectives with the Council’s service areas having an impact on all these elements. Pre-existing, ongoing work and strategy delivery will be recognised as part of this coordination and it is important to note existing programmes and strategies such as Sustainable Placemaking in the Building Futures programme, the Air Quality Strategy, the Energy Strategy, the Pollinator Strategy and SmartWorker initiatives.

4.4 The Local Transport Plan (LTP4) is also a new strategy for the development and delivery of the transport network across the county. This document in particular recognises the increasing challenge of transport on the environment and supports a move towards cleaner air, sustainable modes of transport and sustainable Travel Towns, which in turn would help to address impacts whilst supporting the economic growth of the county.
4.5 Climate change is not a new phenomenon (and is scientifically widely accepted as fact); the issues associated with climate change have been the subject of many documents and strategies at a local, national and international level. The recent high profile and on-going media attention around climate change, carbon reduction, energy supplies, renewables, emissions, habitat loss, waste and pollution have hugely raised the profile of ‘sustainability’ issues more generally and the need for more a more ‘sustainable development’ approach to every aspect of day to day life.

4.6 All human activity creates the release of ‘greenhouse’ gases, including carbon dioxide. Over the decades of industrial and agricultural activity, these gases have become concentrated and act as a trap for heat; it is this action which is causing global warming. This warming effect, known as climate change, has an impact on the ecosystem on a global scale.

4.7 The importance of climate change and sustainability is in no doubt and are particularly important to the County Council because of the potential impact on all of its services.

4.8 In recognition of the work undertaken to date and the County Council’s most recent Corporate Plan, the Climate Emergency declaration laid the foundations for the development of a Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy by the end of 2019. In order to take rapid action, to draw together the existing work programmes and identify further opportunities, the existing contractual arrangements with framework consultants and partner WSP (an established global consultancy with expertise in this area of work) have been utilised to prepare a scope for the work needed.

4.9 The scope (Appendix A to the report) has been prepared in consultation with key officers and within the current context of international, European and national sustainability targets. The project brief includes the need to establish a baseline of information and evidence, the identification of key officers for their engagement, the wish to ascertain quick wins and recognise current good practice and to prepare the draft strategy ready for wider stakeholder engagement.

4.10 The briefing note (Appendix B to the report) acted as an introduction to the project and was used to initiate meetings with officers. To date, meetings have been held with over 30 officers covering all Portfolio areas. Consultants are in the process of using this feedback to form the first draft of the strategy. Engagement with officers and Members (via the panel process) will continue over the coming months.

5. The Scope and Timetable

5.1 In order to progress the delivery of the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy, a Scope (Appendix A) has been prepared and agreed by the Lead Member and Chief Officers.
5.2 The Scope sets out the purpose of the project as the development of a strategy to ‘cover the sustainable performance of the County Council’s direct actions as well as exploring the County’s performance as a whole.’

5.3 As can be seen from the Scope, the timetable for delivery is very short and split into distinct sections:

- Initiate the project (July) – Set up the working group, define the scope and confirm a work programme.

- Define a baseline (August) – Agree the sustainability elements that are most relevant to Hertfordshire, build a model to assess current performance, assess existing plans and strategies.

- Develop the strategy (September – December) – Engagement with key officers and members, identify opportunities and quick wins, develop targets and draft the strategy.

- Approve the strategy (January - March 2020) – Engage with wider stakeholders, assess feedback and prepare and present the final strategy document.

The timetable for strategy production and the cabinet panel cycle is set out at Appendix C to the report.

5.4 The aspiration of the strategy is to provide a clear direction and purpose for all service areas of the County Council. In order to gain an insight, the lead consultants from WSP have met with representatives from all departments. The strategy will now be developed to cover three broad areas:

- Lead – identify what Hertfordshire County Council is doing and what it can do directly.

- Enable – identify how Hertfordshire County Council can influence policies and decisions.

- Inspire – highlight and signpost other organisations and individuals to take action.

5.5 Though the County Council was already developing policies and strategies relating to climate change and sustainability issues, the new Corporate Plan 2019-25 and declaration of a Climate Emergency provided the impetus to take a more holistic approach to sustainability issues. The scope of the strategy not only recognises the work that the County Council has already undertaken and is currently taking, but also what can be done in the future. The primary focus of the strategy will be on the County Council itself and the areas that it has a direct influence over. However, the strategy will also create a foundation upon
which to explore, in the medium/longer term, the wider sustainability issues impacting Hertfordshire and to work more broadly with the Council’s public sector, private and charitable partners across the county and further afield.

5.6 The Strategy will mirror the long-term policy direction, in the form of the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan (Jan 2018), which sets out intentions to improve the environment, ‘within a generation’ by using and managing land sustainably, making links to health and well-being, protecting and improving the environment and promoting resource efficiency.

5.7 In line with the July motion a Final Strategy could be drafted and Cabinet approval sought by the end of the year, but to ensure inclusivity this initial paper will be presented to all Cabinet Panels in the October/November cycle; feedback from the Panels can then be fed into the process. A final draft Strategy will be presented to all Cabinet Panels in the January/February cycle, with the intention of seeking Cabinet approval of the final Strategy itself and an Action Plan in March 2020. Wider stakeholder engagement will take place throughout the whole process in particular with the District and Borough Councils, the Herts Leaders Group and the Hertfordshire Sustainability Forum.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Initial work on the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy, including development of the Strategy itself, is being funded through Invest to Transform funding of £150,000 in 2019/20 (as approved by the Director of Resources).

6.2 For future years, a provisional request for up to £300,000 per year has been included in the Integrated Plan process – funding a small project team to coordinate and lead this work across the Council. Further work on this funding request will be undertaken alongside the draft Strategy being finalised.

6.3 Additional investment, beyond that above, will be needed to deliver specific elements of the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy in forthcoming years. Where appropriate and where there is not existing budget available, investment proposals will be put forward by the relevant individual service areas within the Council – with the case for investment being predicated on the benefits to sustainability in Hertfordshire.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

7.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered, the equality implications of the decision that they are making.
7.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council’s statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.

7.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the County Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

7.4 This paper is an information item for member discussion at the appropriate Panel meetings. It is not anticipated that the development of the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy will result in impacts on any of the protected characteristics. Any specific actions recommended as a result of the strategy would need an action specific EqIA in order to assess any potential impacts.

Background information

County Council - 16 July 2019