

Environmental Policy



The policy

At East Cambridgeshire District Council we recognise that we can affect the environment through: the services we provide and how we deliver them; our policies; our enforcement of laws and regulations; the choices we make when buying goods or commissioning services – as well as our role as a community leader. This policy will support the Council in its commitments to take action on urgent environmental issues facing the district and the wider world. This includes the increasing threats presented by dangerous climate change and loss of biodiversity and habitats.

In addition to fulfilling our statutory environmental responsibilities and complying with all legal and other requirements, including any voluntary commitments, we will use our powers and influence to further protect and improve the environment – challenging ourselves to make continual improvements in our performance.

We will:

- Annually update and implement our 'Environment Plan', which is a Strategy and Action Plan to boost the environment and help mitigate climate change.
- Target becoming at, or near to, net zero by 2034/35, and a truly net zero organisation by 2040, with annual updates towards those targets published. We want to reduce our actual emissions, not buy 'credits' to offset our emissions – and on that basis we will primarily use 'location based' reporting of our emissions, not 'market based' reporting.
- Working with partners, develop our understanding of the risks presented by climate change and ensure our services and infrastructure (such as our water management and flood prevention capacity) are adapted to protect the district and its residents.
- Prevent or minimise pollution to air, water and land (including noise pollution, litter, fly tipping and the impacts of car travel) and work to ensure that air quality in East Cambridgeshire meets all legal limits on air pollution levels.
- Protect and enhance the quality, extent and accessibility of East Cambridgeshire's 'green infrastructure' (open spaces, trees, waterways and natural environment) for people and biodiversity. Use the improvement of green infrastructure to help the district adapt to climate change and reduce carbon emissions.
- Contribute to the creation of a sustainable built environment through the planning process and achieving a high level of sustainability in our own development projects.
- Minimise energy and water demand across our estate and use all resources efficiently to reduce the environmental impacts of their consumption by our services and activities.
- Encourage the appropriate generation and use of renewable and low carbon energy, including through the installation of projects within our own estate.

- Minimise waste and the impact of its disposal by applying the ‘waste hierarchy’: maximising waste reduction, reuse, recycling or composting and energy recovery to minimise the amount sent to landfill.
- Reduce the environmental impacts of the goods we buy and the works and services we commission, and promote a circular economy.
- Use products and materials such as paper efficiently.
- Promote a culture of environmental awareness within the Council, including through the provision of training and ensuring that staff are aware of their role in implementing this policy.

We will convey this policy to all our employees and Council Members and make certain that they are provided with proper training and information to increase awareness of environmental matters.

A Council Member has, from January 2021, been designated as the ‘Natural Environment and Climate Change Member Champion’, overseeing the corporate implementation of this policy and help promote it within, and beyond, the organisation. Separately, the Strategic Planning Manager will act as the ‘Natural Environment and Climate Change Officer Champion’, coordinating the day-to-day delivery of activities under this Policy, and promoting the Policy throughout the organisation.

We will make this policy available on our website, in a location and format that is accessible and easy to find.

Implementing the policy

All staff are expected to implement this policy within the Council wherever it relates to their work and managers are expected to ensure it is implemented as relevant and appropriate.

We recognise the importance of effective communication in delivering this policy, as well as the potential of participation and dialogue to enhance progress.

We will communicate this policy within the Council and to our external stakeholders, enabling our staff and others to fulfil their role in delivering it by providing information and other support.

We will also encourage dialogue within the Council and with our stakeholders to foster debate, learning and greater environmental improvement. This will include the public, businesses, education and community organisations, and regulators.

We will encourage the public, schools and partners to take action too, through environmental information, advice and services.

Accountability

This Policy has been approved by the Operational Service Committee (21 March 2022) and will be regularly reviewed. The Council will publicise its environmental performance and progress each year, in its Environment Plan, to enable the people of East Cambridgeshire to hold us to account.