

Subject:	Brighton & Hove Environmental Education Strategy		
Date of Meeting:	14 June 2021		
Report of:	Executive Director Families, Children and Learning		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Richard Barker	Tel: 01273 290732
	Email:	Richard.barker@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The report provides an outline of the provision of Local Authority coordinated environmental education in the city and considers some future actions to enhance this over a longer period.
- 1.2 There is already a wide range of initiatives taking place in the city and this report acknowledges that whilst seeking to raise awareness and outline additional activities that will be undertaken in the coming year. Aiming to deliver consistency of practice is a central aim, alongside the promotion of skills and techniques to educators in the city that will help them to improve their confidence in delivering environmental content to children and young people.
- 1.3 The report considers how the £96,000 one-off investment in an Environmental Education Strategy can be committed in 2021/22.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee notes the outline of the environmental education strategy funded by assigned £96,000 in 2021/22
- 2.2 That the committee note the indicative allocation of funding to each area of the strategy as outlined in the report (Appendix 1).
- 2.3 That the committee agree to receive a report at the CYP&S committee on the work undertaken as part of the Environmental Education Strategy no sooner than June 2022.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The council's plan 2020 - 2023 has identified becoming a sustainable city and a growing and learning city as outcomes. In the 2021/22 budget, Climate Action & Sustainability was a priority area that included proposals to invest in an environmental education strategy.
- 3.2 Whilst the report considers how the funding allocated for 2021/22 can be utilised alongside existing recurring funding, it is important not to see it in isolation and to contemplate some of the broader issues that need to be considered in relation to

the delivery of environmental education in the city. Brighton & Hove declared a climate and biodiversity emergency in December 2018 and the council has pledged to become carbon neutral by 2030 by reducing as much climate-damaging carbon emissions as possible and offsetting any remaining carbon emissions that cannot be eliminated.

3.3 The council held a climate assembly, hosted a Brighton & Hove Schools climate Q&A with local politicians, a youth climate assembly and a Headteacher Climate Change Conference. Brighton & Hove City Council are also lead partner in The Living Coast, Brighton & Lewes Downs UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. One of the three biosphere objectives is 'environmental learning, awareness & engagement'.

3.4 In its broadest form, the environmental education strategy needs to cover the following areas:

- Determining a clear definition and purpose for the city's education providers of what is meant by environmental education and what role the council plays in that, including an agreed vision and multi-year delivery plan.
- Promote the work already taking place in relation to this work and support a programme that further develops the capacity, skills, knowledge and confidence of the education sector on sustainability and climate change and makes appropriate links to other strategies such as the Anti-Racist Schools Strategy
- Maximisation of local, national and global resources, external expertise, council and city priorities, initiatives, programmes, campaigns and projects for contributing to shaping a structured and comprehensive environmental & climate educational programme for schools and youth in the city.
- Close liaison with The Living Coast Biosphere programme so as to benefit from its projects and partnerships.
- Reviewing existing travel options for children and young people working alongside colleagues in the School Travel team and organisations such as Sustrans as they work to promote cycling to schools.
- Taking action to address the council's commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030 (CN2030).
- Providing a hub of local resources, materials and training to support the teaching of environmental education including the central branding and hosting of resources.
- Promote the engagement of education settings in the delivery of environmental education and the opportunities to sustain that engagement through on-going activities such as volunteering.
- Supporting the council's work on addressing those at risk of disadvantage (both social/economic and nature deprivation), the green skills agenda and the priorities of the SEND Strategy.
- Supporting on-going youth engagement including the potential of Youth Ambassadors and the involvement of young people in wider council consultations/processes through a well-publicised route.
- Contribute to the promotion of staff and pupil well-being in education settings.

- Build on previous bi-annual pupil events to establish a yearly conference for young people and consider the feasibility of an annual inset programme for school staff.
 - Establish a cross-directorate oversight group with relevant sub-groups such as education leadership, curriculum development and the role of food and travel within the strategy.
 - Follow up the spirit of the Notice of Motion from September 2019 when the Green group asked each head to nominate one teacher in their school to become a Lead Teacher for Climate Change Education and encourage teacher training providers to include the Climate Change Teacher course as part of their PGCE and Cert Ed qualifications.
- 3.5 Whilst the national curriculum covers environmental education through a range of subjects and approaches it does not provide a clear definition applicable to all education settings. Environmental education is already a feature of the curriculum in Brighton & Hove schools.
- 3.6 Environmental education is a life-long learning process that helps individuals, communities and organisations connect, learn and understand more about their local environment, explore environmental issues to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between humans and the environment and develop critical thinking skills that enable responsible decision making and environmental activism going forward. It opens up an area of practical and academic skills that will enable participation in a more sustainable future society and support a green recovery as part of wider economic growth.
- 3.7 There is a high level of intersectionality with other initiatives that hold a current relevance to the curriculum and young people which makes this work even more timely. For example, the PSHE Team have ensured that teaching about periods includes discussing reusable and plastic free products.
- 3.8 To ensure that any initiatives started by this one-off funding are long lasting and self-sustaining the city must work to a common understanding and purpose.
- 3.9 It has been identified that further work can be undertaken by education settings to help the council meet its CN2030 commitment. Whilst construction works at schools are commissioned to meet the council's own environmental expectations there are a range of services that need to be reviewed specifically from the perspective of reducing the city's carbon emissions including the provision of school meals, the sourcing of water and energy, home to school transport and travel, school excursions, waste and resource management and procurement strategies.
- 3.10 The Council's 2030 Carbon Neutral Programme includes a focus on areas such as active travel which includes the School Street initiative, Greater Brighton Energy and Water plans, a focus on reduce and reuse when it comes to waste generation, the City Downland Estate Plan, the exploration of a Decarbonisation Skills Academy and Sustainable Urban Drainage schemes.
- 3.11 There is a plethora of materials and resources available from council teams, The Living Coast biosphere partnership, national organisations, and local groups as well as facilities and local sites to enable the delivery of environmental education.

These are hosted in a variety of places and are often dependent upon local knowledge which is inefficient and time consuming for teachers to maximise their use.

- 3.12 It is proposed that in the short-term funding is committed to cataloguing what is available and undertaking a gap analysis to see what additional materials should be commissioned. Two prominent areas of information on environmental education are the [Brighton and Hove Environmental Education website](#) and [The Living Coast website](#). It is proposed that consideration is given to a unified branding of future resources to promote environmental education in the city alongside a central depository available for education settings in the city to access. This will include consideration of the role the Council's existing [BEEM](#) portal can play as a school focussed depository of information and communication channel.
- 3.13 A longer-term prospect is the further exploration of how the council's own sites can be utilised as an environmental education hub. The Wilding Waterhall project would be an ideal opportunity to consider what additional capital works could be undertaken to give environmental education a physical hub that would be accessible to many children and young people. It is proposed that further feasibility work is undertaken to consider what is feasible and how that may be financed. In addition, the reduction in pupil numbers is meaning a proportion of school buildings could be available to host an environmental education hub.
- 3.14 The development of the City Downland Estate Plan is a further opportunity to look at how we use or local resources into the future. Through the development of a vision which makes the most of the inherent and unique physical characteristics such as: landscape, geology and soil types and protected habitats within the terms and conditions of our contractual commitments as they emerge from time to time and are shown to be financially viable.
- 3.15 Education settings must continue to produce the spark of inspiration through the teaching of environmental education so the flame must be kept burning in children and young people through opportunities to participate in environmental work and to continue to develop the thinking skills that embed responsible decision making and environmental engagement into adult life.
- 3.16 To provide the necessary support and challenge to the city's educators requires passion, skilled pedagogy and persistence alongside a knowledge of the opportunities available to make it happen. The investment in 2021/22 needs to facilitate the work of either an individual or individuals to engage schools and colleges especially those who have not developed a strong environmental programme and to ensure that access and take-up of environmental and climate education is consistent across all schools across the city. Consideration must be given to how the best elements of the UN accredited training are dispersed through the education workforce and other programmes such as [AimHi](#) can be used.
- 3.17 In building on the good practice already in place within the city's education settings the links to PHSE are crucial. Whilst environmental education is obviously wider than PSHE this is the area of the curriculum where learning will take place in regard to active citizenship, thinking about rights and

responsibilities and the relationship between mental wellbeing and our environment.

- 3.18 Yet, PSHE Lead teachers are funded by Public Health and currently would not have capacity to develop this aspect of the curriculum. It could be that a secondment from an education setting would assist working to consider appropriate links to enhance pupil learning. Exploration of potential contributors such as [Thoughtbox](#) will also be pursued to augment the offer in the city.
- 3.19 There are two distinct but linked areas of major focus at this time, the climate and an anti-racist strategy. Both require educators to engage in difficult conversations with pupils and students. The relationship between climate and racial 'justice' is a focus being explored internationally in the way that people of colour have increased vulnerability to climate change impacts and by extension other global crises that may emerge. Whilst this requires further exploration in relation to an environmental education strategy, these two significant areas intertwine and will feature in future work.
- 3.20 The benefits of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation, voluntary and service-based activity on mental wellbeing and happiness are part of the statutory relationships sex and health education in primary schools. In secondary schools this also includes the positive associations between physical activity and promotion of mental wellbeing, including as an approach to combat stress.
- 3.21 Consideration must be given to how the city council can reach beyond government funded education establishments and seek to reach out to teachers and pupils in the private sector.
- 3.22 This needs to be part of an approach that links the theoretical with the practical and which can continue to harness and develop the youth engagement that has emerged through the Climate 4 Change marches, the city climate youth assembly, the work of two youth ambassadors, youth representation at UNESCO's global Education for Sustainable Development conference and the work towards having local youth representation at COP26 Glasgow 2021.
- 3.23 It is unlikely that one individual will be able to provide both the educational input and the youth development work. Ensuring that the investment facilitates a self-sustaining approach, the engagement of more than one individual to facilitate this work, perhaps on secondment, is crucial. To do so avoids the need to undertake a timely recruitment process and the commitment of a large proportion of the allocated funding to the employment of one person.
- 3.24 The current Brighton & Hove Environmental Education (BHee) programme is planned for retender during the 2021/22 academic year, to be in place for Autumn 2022. The future BHee programme and any further resourcing of this work needs to be shaped around the intelligence, outcomes and recommendations collated during this coming year's strategic planning work.
- 3.25 The impact of Covid-19 is still to be understood however, concerns about the impact of restrictions on children and young people's mental health is known. The practical elements of environmental education must support the work to

address mental health concerns through outdoor learning and a greater connection to nature. The environmental education strategy must forge strong connections to the work of relevant council teams including the Schools Wellbeing service, PSHE Service, public health teams, the Sports & Leisure team, Parks and The Living Coast Biosphere programme manager.

- 3.26 This then the council has introduced a cross-service Forest School therapeutic group offer to young people currently unable to access school as an alternative to a traditional group approach. Consideration should also be given to promoting active travel alternatives to public transport journeys that can be anxiety-inducing for less confident young people.
- 3.27 In addition to the council's priorities to address carbon neutrality and developing a more sustainable city, there is a focus on tackling disadvantage and enhancing green growth with a focus on addressing skills shortages and improving growth in low-carbon environmental goods and services sectors.
- 3.28 The strategy must look to provide opportunities to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and young people in our city, to reconnect families with learning and provide education opportunities and environments that meet the needs of the young people. The focus must be to engage those who are yet to understand the environmental changes taking place, make the nature on our doorstep more accessible to these individuals and for them to play their part despite what may be a lack of support or opportunity within their community. But also, for those individuals to benefit from the emerging opportunities through the green skills agenda. Alignment to the council's developing strategy on disadvantage, SEND strategy and [City Employment Skills Recovery Plan \(CESRP\)](#).
- 3.29 A recent school and college leadership conference on climate change evoked strong support for the establishment of a yearly conference for children and young people as well as INSET programmes for teaching staff in the city.
- 3.30 Feedback from the conference including the 10 point plans that schools were challenged to write and implement will be able to shape the areas to prioritised and there appears to be enthusiasm for a steering group of education leaders and teaching staff to help inform the strategy and develop the support required. It is likely that this will be sub-groups to an overarching, cross-directorate oversight group for the strategy as outlined in Appendix 1.
- 3.31 UNESCO recently held a global conference on Education for Sustainable Development and the [Berlin declaration on Education for Sustainable Development](#) demonstrates the relevance of the council's intended approach of a 'whole school, whole city' approach.
- 3.32 Exploring the impact of certain diets has upon carbon emissions, the environment and human health will be a feature of this work. It is likely that a sub-group will focus on the role that food plays and what can be implemented within the city. Whilst taking account of the complex tinter-related issues of parent and child preferences, the supported given to families by free school meals and outside of school programmes such as HAF and Chomp alongside health considerations such as the child health programmes.

- 3.33 The existing Eco-Schools programme will feature alongside consideration of other schemes that education settings in the city may want to promote in the future for example, Let's Go Zero and Plastic Free Schools. Or it may be possible to start our own accreditation that may take the building blocks such as the key elements of each topic that features in Eco-Schools: Food, Travel, Water, Energy, Litter, Waste, Biodiversity, School Grounds, Marine, Healthy Living, Global Citizenship.
- 3.34 Already the building works we undertake seek to improve the thermal performance of the building overall. This can include items such as repointing, replacing curtain walling with aluminium systems which have better lifecycle costs, recyclability and energy efficiency. When replacing or refurbishing roofs we look to exceed Approved Document L requirements in terms of energy efficiency. The insulation we install when undertaking roofing works are rated A+ (the highest) in the BRE Green Specification Guide.
- 3.35 Detailed planning of projects at educational establishments takes account of the implications of Brighton & Hove's policies in relation to sustainability issues generally. Projects within the planned programme are procured using the new building maintenance frameworks put in place last year. The successful contractors have to demonstrate that they would minimise waste, meet targets for reductions in waste to landfill and optimise the recovery, reuse and recycling of waste. In addition to this they must describe the steps they will take to minimise the use of resources (water, fuel, energy from fossil fuels) and improve sustainable sourcing.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 This report provides an outline of work to be undertaken as part of the council's investment in environmental education. It has followed a number of internal discussions to inform the aspects to be covered. Whilst alternative options could be considered the funding is £96,000 and time limited thereby placing a restriction on what can be undertaken.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 This report has been informed by discussion with colleagues in council teams especially the International and Sustainability Team, The Living Coast Biosphere Programme Manager, Sussex Wildlife Trust (who is currently delivering the council contract for schools and youth engagement on climate engagement) and schools. The views of several community groups are known by colleagues working in the council and represented through the discussions that have informed this report.
- 5.2 It is evident from the feedback after the climate assembly and more recently the headteacher conference that there is significant support to continue with facilitating the advancement of the work being undertaken in the city around climate change and environmental awareness.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The council has allocated £96,000 to the environmental education strategy. This report details the areas of focus that the strategy will cover during the 2021/22 financial year and provides an outline of the funding that will be assigned to each area.
- 6.2 The principle is for a this work to instigate a self-sustaining approach to environmental education in the city that highlights the best of the existing resources available, identifies what is missing and locates this in a convenient location with branding that helps to draw together the many facets of resources and facilities available.
- 6.3 It recommends that inspirational roles are required to support and challenge education settings to deliver high quality environmental education that dovetails into opportunities for further youth engagement and participation that generates long term responsible decision making and environmental engagement especially in disadvantaged communities.
- 6.4 The strategy is a framework by which the spark generated in children is carefully fuelled to ensure a long-lasting response that helps the council reach its climate commitments and ensures a sustainable city into the future whilst equipping our children with the knowledge and skills they need for the future.
- 6.5 Outline costings for the proposed use of the one-off funding are detailed in Appendix 1.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 At Budget Council on 25th February 2020 one-off funding of £0.096m was agreed in 2021/22 for investment in the Environmental Education Strategy. This is currently available within the Education & Skills budget within Families Children & Learning Directorate. The outline proposals for the Strategy are presented in this report and a broad draft spending plan is presented in appendix 1. The detailed spending plan will be developed in the coming weeks and reviewed to ensure the effective use of the funding is aligned with the agreed proposals.

Finance Officer Consulted: David Ellis

Date: 24/05/21

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date: 10/05/2021

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 This report details proposals for how a one-off allocation of funding can be utilised to develop an environmental education strategy that helps to reiterate the availability of existing local resources as well as identifying new work to be undertaken.

- 7.4 The aim is to provide greater awareness in education settings across the city of the resources available, to make this more accessible and identifiable and to also support other initiatives designed to better inform the city's children and young people about environmental issues and the climate emergency.
- 7.5 It is believed that certain groups of children and young people are not able to benefit from the existing work to inform and take action on environmental and climate issues especially those from particular groups including those with disabilities, those where English is an additional language and those with a disadvantaged background.
- 7.6 As a result, the strategy will look to ensure that specific opportunities for these groups are identified so that they can benefit from the range of opportunities outlined in this strategy.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.7 The report is focussed upon the investment in environmental education during 2021/22. The activities described are designed to provide a self-sustaining approach to enhancing the quality of and opportunity for environmental education in the city.
- 7.8 This report proposes a strategy for supporting delivery of key environmental priority areas including the CN 2030 commitment and supporting action plan, and The Living Coast Biosphere programme.
- 7.9 Recommendations from the work will seek to ensure that the future of the environmental education work, and accompanying resources, are developed and delivered in a way that has minimal environmental and carbon impact.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.10 There are no Brexit implications in relation to this report.

Any Other Significant Implications:

None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

- 1. Outline costing plan for the Environmental Education Strategy 2021-22

