

## CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP – 3 DECEMBER 2019

**CLIMATE EMERGENCY – PLANNING FOR CARBON NEUTRALITY****1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 On 25 July 2019, the Council declared a ‘climate emergency’. This recognises the continued priority the borough gives to addressing global climate change, including biodiversity and habitat losses, through strong local commitment and most importantly actions. The Council pledged to become carbon neutral by 2030 across its own estate and operations.
- 1.2 Following the last meeting of the Climate Change Working Group on 26 September 2019, a number of recommendations were taken to the Executive and later a meeting of the Council on 17 October 2019 to confirm next steps concerning the pledge for carbon neutrality. These were approved and are listed in Appendix 1 for reference.
- 1.3 [Woking 2050](#) sets out a vision guiding our collective efforts to create a sustainable borough by reducing our impact on the environment and how as a council we can lead by example. However, in order to achieve carbon neutrality, we need to identify what actions can be accelerated to eliminate the Council’s contribution to climate change completely.
- 1.4 Some broad ideas on how this can be achieved were discussed at the last meeting of the Working Group with the intention of bringing a more detailed plan with estimated costs and emissions savings for further discussion. This is now attached at Appendix 2.

**2.0 Carbon reduction plan**

- 2.1 The draft carbon reduction action plan focusses on mitigation measures that will help reduce (and eventually eliminate) the Council’s carbon footprint. This plan must be considered as one that will evolve and continue to be developed as more information is gathered about potential new projects and activities. It is proposed to maintain the plan as a living draft so that the Working Group can supplement it as new opportunities arise, for example in light of good practice elsewhere. The proposed actions will require partnership working, as well as much financial and resource investment, to make them a reality.
- 2.2 Whilst the plan focuses on carbon reduction and mitigation at this stage, it acknowledges the ecological aspects of the climate emergency. As part of the wider work to enact the climate emergency declaration, officers will ensure that actions through the Natural Woking strategy are accelerated to continue to support our local species and habitats.
- 2.3 The climate emergency declaration pledges to achieve carbon neutrality across the wider borough by 2050. Officers will develop a complementary plan that looks at this wider target. This will by its nature include a greater focus on aspects of adaptation and ensuring our ability to protect our local habitats and species is robust.
- 2.4 The draft carbon reduction plan acknowledges the continuing work under the existing Woking 2050 strategy and demonstrates how suggested actions link to existing themes and actions.

- 2.5 The plan acknowledges where existing projects and activities are already underway and will help to contribute to the Council's pledge for carbon neutrality. However, many new actions will be required, along with identification of additional funds. Officers have indicated potential carbon savings and indicative cost implications where available. Due to the nature of some of the actions, further work will be needed to work up more detailed cost implications for the Council and feasibility assessments should the Working Group choose to progress them.
- 2.6 The plan has been categorised to more easily identify targeted areas of action, i.e.
- Council assets (corporate and leased) – energy and waste;
  - Transport;
  - Policy, leadership and behaviour changes;
  - Sustainable development;
  - Adaptation, ecology and habitats.
- 2.7 In order to initiate the carbon reduction plan, the Climate Change Working Group is asked to consider some options which are outlined in section 3.
- 2.8 To focus on the development of this draft carbon reduction plan, officers have not produced the regular Woking 2050 update for this meeting. Officers will continue to monitor and update the existing action plan but it is noted that as the carbon reduction plan evolves, it may supersede some existing actions.
- 2.9 Should a review of Woking 2050 be agreed (see action 20 in Appendix 2) it may be that it comprises two action plans – one for carbon reduction across the Council's estate and operations to 2030 and one for the wider Borough to 2050.

### **3.0 Options for consideration**

- 3.1 The draft carbon reduction plan highlights and acknowledges that this is continuing effort and a continuation of the long term commitment of the Council to protecting the environment and addressing climate change. The plan includes activities that are already underway but this report focuses on new actions.
- 3.2 Given the breadth of the pledge to reduce (and eventually eliminate) the Council's own impact and contribution to climate change, the draft plan is naturally broad ranging and has many ideas and proposed new actions. Therefore, to initiate the plan it is proposed that the Working Group consider the following packages / options for implementation:

**a) Suggested priorities for initial steps to be taken (during the remainder of 2019/20 and into 2020/21).**

These initial actions are suggested for early adoption in order to begin to reduce emissions associated with energy used across Council assets – the largest contributor to the corporate carbon footprint. They are highlighted in green in Appendix 2.

Action 1: External assessment of the Council's baseline

Actions 2-4: Collaborative work with Thamesway to align our work and identify actions within their Business Plans to deliver on carbon reduction goals.

Action 10: Improve the energy performance of Council owned and leased properties – initially through an appraisal of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) and Display Energy Certificates (DECs).

Quick wins can also be accelerated by making low/no cost changes to our transport arrangements so it is suggested that priority be given to the following actions:

Action 14: Avoiding unnecessary travel, opting for telephone conference calls and implementing a travel hierarchy

Action 15: Replace the existing petrol car club cars with electric cars

In order to reflect the responsibility and influence that the Council has in terms of its carbon footprint, actions around policy, leadership and behaviour change must also be accelerated from an early stage. Suggested initial actions are:

Action 20: Review the existing Woking 2050 strategy and action plan to reflect the adopted pledge and call for accelerated action and timeframes

Actions 21/24: Staff and councillor communications campaign to promote and raise awareness of the pledge to become carbon neutral whilst focusing on messages around switching off equipment, avoiding single use plastics, etc

There are also early opportunities for working with Planning Policy to update Council guidance to reflect how development can be adapted to encourage the adoption of low or zero carbon technologies:

Action 27: Planning and the natural environment

Action 28: Planning guidance for developers and homeowners

#### **b) The approach to be taken to agree to any newly identified actions.**

As outlined in section 2.1, the draft plan will evolve and continue to be developed as more information is gathered about potential new projects and activities.

To maintain momentum, it is recommended that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director (Place) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability and that they be consulted on potential new actions as they are identified in order to develop the plan further.

## **4.0 Timeframe and next steps**

4.1 Subject to the Working Group's discussion and agreement on the proposed way forward, it is proposed to report to the Executive on 6 February and to Council at its meeting on 13 February 2020.

- 4.2 Actions have been designated for 2020 and beyond following discussion at Council in February 2020.
- 4.3 Thameswey actions have been identified in the Thameswey Group Business Plan and their detail is subject to discussions at the Thameswey Limited Board meeting which coincides with the date of this Working Group meeting. Also see Actions 2-4 in Appendix 2.
- 4.4 In the longer term, officers will develop plans for Borough-wide emissions and adaptation actions, noting our ability to influence activities to address the climate and ecological emergency beyond our direct control.

## **5.0 Implications**

### Financial

- 5.1 There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report.
- 5.2 However, initial actions have been identified for suggested implementation within the next calendar year. These are mainly low or no cost actions that can be readily implemented. Those associated with Thameswey will have cost implications that will be identified as part of their Business Plans.
- 5.3 Subsequent further actions will have financial implications, to be determined.

### Human Resource/Training and Development

- 5.4 There are no immediate human resource / training and development implications associated with this report.
- 5.5 However, it is noted that the acceleration of identified actions will result in the need for prioritisation of staff resources.

### Community Safety

- 5.6 There are no community safety implications associated with this report.

### Risk Management

- 5.7 There are no immediate risk management implications associated with this report.
- 5.8 However, it is noted that as the carbon reduction plan is implemented, risk management will be a key requirement prior to project initiation e.g. the carbon consequences of acquiring assets and the rising market value of biogas etc.

### Sustainability

- 5.9 This report outlines the draft carbon reduction plan that has been developed in furtherance of the Council's climate emergency declaration and the pledge to that the Council becomes carbon neutral by 2030.

### Equalities

- 5.10 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

## Safeguarding

5.11 There are no safeguarding implications associated with this report.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

6.1 A draft carbon reduction action plan is presented for the Working Group's consideration in Appendix 2. It focusses on mitigation measures that will help reduce (and eventually eliminate) the Council's carbon footprint as per the climate emergency declared on 25 July 2019.

6.2 The group is asked to discuss and agree:

- Priorities for initial steps to be taken during the remainder of 2019/20 and into 2020/21.
- The approach to be taken to agree any newly identified actions. It is recommended that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director (Place) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability.

6.3 Subject to the Climate Change Working Groups' views, the proposed next steps will be to report to the Executive on 6 February 2020 and to Council at its meeting on 13 February 2020.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

7.1 The Group is requested to

### **RECOMMEND That**

- (i) officers be authorised to implement initial actions for 2019/20 and 2020/21 as recommended in this report;
- (ii) delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director (Place) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability to agree new actions as they are identified; and
- (iii) the Executive identify funding within the Council's budgets to implement the additional carbon reduction actions agreed by the Climate Change Working Group.

The item(s) above will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to Executive.
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Background Papers:       None.

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REPORT ENDS

**Climate Emergency – Recommendations Approved by Council**

Following the last meeting of the Climate Change Working Group on 26 September 2019, a number of recommendations were taken to the Executive and later a meeting of the Council on 17 October 2019 to confirm next steps concerning the pledge for carbon neutrality. These were approved. To recap these were:

(i) the Climate Change Working Group’s recommended public definition of carbon neutrality, set out below, be adopted and published on the Council’s website:

“On 25 July 2019, the Council pledged to become carbon neutral by 2030. It will reduce to zero any greenhouse emissions associated with its own estate and operations. Where any remaining emissions cannot be avoided, the Council will offset these through projects such as tree planting and maintain trade in renewable energy, thereby eliminating its contribution to climate change”;

(ii) the Climate Change Working Group’s recommended definition of the Council’s estate and operations – comprising all Council owned assets be adopted;

(iii) the Climate Change Working Group’s recommended baseline year of 2018/19 for monitoring emissions be adopted;

(iv) in the longer term, the Council will develop plans for borough-wide emissions and adaptation actions to address the climate and ecological emergency, in so far as it is able to influence activities beyond its direct control, with the aim of carbon neutrality by 2050; and

(v) the Planning Committee, having regard to the Parking Standards Supplementary Document, be requested to exercise its discretion wherever possible to permit zero or minimal parking provision in Woking Town Centre developments.