

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE LOCALLY

Executive Summary

In November 2021, the UK hosted COP26, a conference that emphasised the continuing critical need for climate action. The Glasgow Climate Pact comprises various pledges covering aspects of mitigation and adaptation such as reducing dependence on fossil fuels, ramping up the transition to electric vehicles and halting and reversing deforestation. Whilst the focus of these negotiations was sealing international collaboration, there also came an emphasis that governments and communities at all levels can and must play their part. Climate change is a global issue but one that can be tackled locally. It is therefore a good time to reaffirm Woking Borough Council's continuing commitment to this agenda.

This report begins with an overview of Woking's climate change activities to date, our local pledges and continuing climate commitments. It then goes on to formally confirm the Borough Council's support for Surrey County Council's newly adopted Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan. This solidifies ongoing collaborative working on this agenda across the county and emphasises our collective ability to deliver on climate action and the associated co-benefits for health and economy.

This support for continuing countywide collaboration is set in the context of Woking Borough Council's (WBC) ongoing environmental commitments which, while delivered through its Climate Change Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan, will also be fundamental to the emerging Corporate Plan (2022 – 2027).

While looking to the future, this report considers the challenges ahead and the need for further priority actions in order to "get our own house in order" and achieve accelerated emissions reductions, particularly with regards to energy consumption across the corporate estate. Suggested projects and next steps are highlighted which will give WBC improved insight into where best to invest to yield carbon reduction and value for money with cost/benefit analysis of interventions helping to influence future financial planning for climate action. While external funds will need to meet the majority of our needs, good practice acknowledges that being "bid ready" will see us in good stead. This will require some allocation of funds in the five-year Investment Plan.

The report focuses on climate mitigation and net zero across the corporate estate. However, it also highlights the crucial role that local authorities can play in leveraging climate action more broadly through policies, partnerships and public engagement.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the continuing corporate commitment to addressing climate change and its inclusion at the core of the emerging Corporate Plan 2022 – 2027 be noted;
- (ii) support of Surrey County Council's Climate Change Delivery Plan be formally noted;

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- (iii) the priorities for corporate climate action as listed in Appendix 1 to the report be noted and approval given to the allocation of funding for an independent carbon footprint assessment;
- (iv) items in section 9 of the report be noted as additional low/no cost options that will be progressed to further embed the corporate commitment to climate action; and
- (v) the affordability and mechanics of creating a Corporate Carbon Offset Fund (or similar) as outlined in section 10 of the report to ringfence funds for the delivery of climate projects be explored by the Director of Neighbourhood Services in consultation with (a) the Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, (b) the Director of Finance and (c) the Director of Legal and Democratic Services.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To recognise the Council's long-term and continuing commitment to local climate action; and to strengthen its position in meeting its climate and ecological declaration commitments.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers:

[Woking 2050](#)

Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress Reports

[Report and presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 22 March 2021.](#)

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1.0 Woking Borough Council – A long running environmental commitment

- 1.1 Woking Borough Council has long been committed to protecting the environment. Its first climate change strategy was adopted in 2002, although activities in this area began much earlier, in 1990. A timeline of activities is available on the Council's website at www.woking.gov.uk/nature-and-sustainability/climate-change/climate-change-and-sustainability-timeline.
- 1.2 There are two key strategy documents that underpin activities in this area. [Woking 2050](#) is the borough's current climate change strategy. This sets out a vision guiding our collective efforts to create a sustainable borough by reducing our impact on the environment. The significance of the year 2050 used in the strategy's title is tied to the national legislation in place at the time of its adoption. The UK's Climate Change Act sought to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 on the 1990 baseline. This was adopted as a local target at the time of the last revision of the Climate Change Strategy (September 2015). This national target has now been superseded by a pledge to reach net zero by 2050, which has also been adopted locally as part of the Council's climate and ecological emergency declaration (2019). A future update of Woking 2050 will reflect this, as well as other actions that have been developed as part of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, which is outlined later.
- 1.3 Complementing Woking 2050 is the [Natural Woking](#) strategy (adopted in March 2016), which is the Council's equivalent strategy for biodiversity and green infrastructure strategy. It sets out how we intend to enhance the provision and accessibility of green spaces, conserve existing biodiversity and habitats and create opportunities for species to return to the borough.
- 1.4 Delivery against the Woking 2050 and Natural Woking strategies is monitored through regular reporting to the Climate Change Working Group whose members include representatives from the community, business, environmental organisations, councillors and council officers. This cross political party group was established in March 2003. It is a non-public meeting however notes of topics covered are published on the Council's website at www.woking.gov.uk/nature-and-sustainability/climate-change/climate-change-working-group. A wide range of projects have and are being delivered in implementation of the objectives of Woking 2050 and Natural Woking, by the Council, by partner organisations and groups. More information about these is available at www.woking.gov.uk/nature-and-sustainability. This earlier work provides a strong foundation on which the Council is building as it takes additional steps in light of the urgency of the climate challenge for Woking borough as for local authorities everywhere.
- 1.5 On 25 July 2019, the Council declared a [climate and ecological emergency](#). This cross-party declaration recognised the continued priority and commitment the borough gives to addressing climate change, both through mitigation and adaptation. The Council pledged to become carbon neutral by 2030 across its own estate and operations, and by 2050 (or sooner) across the wider borough.
- 1.6 Further to the declaration, a [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) (CEAP) was approved by the Council on 13 February 2020. The plan highlights and acknowledges this is a continuation of the long-term commitment of the Council to protecting the environment and addressing climate change.
- 1.7 Given the breadth of the pledge to reduce (and eventually eliminate) the Council's own impact and contribution to climate change, the action plan is naturally broad ranging. Crucially, it acknowledges the need to accelerate existing Woking 2050 activities in order to meet the pledge. Every quarter an update on the CEAP and progress against its actions is considered by the Climate Change Working Group and is [published online](#). The CEAP is a living document which will evolve and continue to be developed as more information is gathered about potential new projects and activities.

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- 1.8 A number of key activities and projects have been progressed since the Council's climate and ecological emergency declaration, as recorded in the CEAP updates. These activities build on a strong foundation of green initiatives that pre-date July 2019 which are recorded on the Council's website [here](#).
- 1.9 The nature of the declaration is such that many activities are cross-cutting and involve inter-departmental working. All Council activities and services have an important part to play in reducing its overall climate impact. The need for cross-service collaboration is vital and will be fundamental to the emerging Corporate Plan (2022-2027) ensuring greater focus and prioritisation of these actions by all services going forward.
- 1.10 This collaboration is reflected in the themes of Woking 2050 and the CEAP. Details of local action taken by the Council and its partners to meet our carbon neutral goals is presented in the CEAP updates.
- 1.11 Many activities and projects continue to be made possible through working together with key stakeholders, commercial partners and volunteer organisations to meet our common environmental goals. These partnership activities are key to achieving carbon neutrality both across the council estate and borough wide. Our continuing collaboration with organisations such as ThamesWey, Action Surrey, Woking Environment Action, Surrey Heathland Partnership and Surrey Wildlife Trust (amongst others) is highlighted in the quarterly CEAP updates.
- 1.12 In March 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update report of climate activities in the preceding year. This provides a useful catalogue of activities undertaken to complement this report. A further annual update to the Committee is scheduled for March 2022.

2.0 Planet Woking

- 2.1 Work continues on the Planet Woking programme – the Council's successful climate change communications campaign. Its purpose is three-fold:
 - To share what the Council has been doing to date to address climate change and sustainability locally;
 - To raise awareness about what the Council is doing to meet its carbon neutral targets; and
 - To inspire local people to get involved and continue to make changes to live a greener, more sustainable life and gather their feedback for new project ideas.
- 2.2 Examples of Planet Woking activities since its launch on 24 September 2020:
 - Standalone website launched at www.planetwoking.co.uk
 - Communications through the dedicated Facebook and Instagram accounts.
 - Hosted three well-received online events as part of a programme of themed talks aimed at residents, schools and businesses. Topics covered in these talks were sustainability at home; the great outdoors; and adapting to climate change. Audiences enjoyed a series of presentations given by expert guest speakers. Each online talk was followed by an open discussion during which viewers had the opportunity to share their own experiences of living greener and to ask panellists and Council representatives questions. These discussion sessions have proved to be a great forum through which to gather ideas to later share through Planet Woking. Recordings of the webinars are available via the Planet Woking website event page for those unable to view the live event.

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- A growing set of community focused case studies inspired by local individuals and groups published to the Get Involved section of the Planet Woking website.
- In October 2020, the Natural Woking newsletter was relaunched as a Planet Woking e-newsletter which carries all the latest local climate change, sustainability and biodiversity project updates. This now has a circulation of over 1000 readers. New subscribers can sign up to the newsletter at www.planetwoking.co.uk/get-involved/newsletters/
- The Council's website features a direct link to the Planet Woking website from the [climate change pages](#).
- Full page features in each edition of the Woking Magazine. The Magazine is circulated to all households in the Borough and available online [here](#)

3.0 Surrey County Council's Greener Futures – Climate Change Delivery Plan

- 3.1 Surrey County Council's (SCC) Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan (CCDP) was approved at a meeting of its Cabinet on 26 October 2021. The Plan sets out its ambitions to reduce emissions and tackle the effects of climate change in line with its net-zero carbon targets for the period 2021-2025. A summary of the Plan is available online at [https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/documents/s82193/Annex_2a- Climate Change Delivery Plan Summary Report Cabinet Draft.pdf](https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/documents/s82193/Annex_2a-Climate_Change_Delivery_Plan_Summary_Report_Cabinet_Draft.pdf)
- 3.2 SCC's Climate Change Strategy was published in May 2020 and sets out what needs to be achieved to decarbonise the county by 2050 and SCC by 2030. The Greener Futures CCDP 2021-2025 identifies four areas of focus and around 70 key initiatives to deliver against the wider strategy. The four areas of focus are:
- **Greener Futures Communities:** To empower individuals, businesses and communities to reduce emissions in their own homes, communities and workplaces.
 - **One Net Zero Public Estate:** Local Authorities and other public sector organisations to reduce carbon emissions from their own buildings, vehicle and supply chains and meet the challenging targets that have been set.
 - **Build Back Greener:** Design with climate in mind to ensure that planning decisions, regeneration projects and major infrastructure are ready for a zero-carbon future and are adapted to deal with the impacts of climate change on people and wildlife.
 - **Grow Back Greener:** Managing woodland, green spaces and farmland to maximise the ability to absorb carbon from the atmosphere, grow food sustainably and improve habitats needed for wildlife to thrive.
- 3.3 The adoption of the CCDP follows consultation with Leaders, Portfolio Holders, Chief Executives and climate change officers across the districts and boroughs.

4.0 Support for the Surrey CCDP

- 4.1 There are clear synergies between WBC's own climate commitments and those of the newly adopted county plan. Ultimately the Borough Council's actions to reduce its own, and the wider borough's, carbon footprint will help contribute towards these wider county ambitions. The CCDP itself states:

"Around 70 actions have been identified, which build on action already being undertaken by Local Authorities (i.e. SCC and the 11 districts and boroughs). As well as setting ambitious targets to reduce emissions in our own organisations, Local Authorities will act to enable others to make changes within their homes, businesses and neighbourhoods. This requires Local Authorities to consider climate change in everything they do. Working closely together, Local

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Authorities seek to maximise shared expertise and make delivery more uniform, efficient and cost effective.”

- 4.2 What is clear is that collaborative working on this agenda is needed whilst recognising the areas of influence, opportunities and uniqueness that each geographical area offers in decarbonising their own operations and services; and helping their communities do the same.
- 4.3 The CCDP aligns broadly with WBC’s own net zero targets and timeframes as stated in the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) and declaration. As communicated to SCC during the consultation, WBC officers support its adoption and will continue to work with SCC to develop and deliver against these common targets.
- 4.4 Indeed, WBC officers already work with SCC on this agenda. Of direct relevance is the Surrey Climate Change Officers’ Group that meets monthly to progress joint working across the agenda and share good practice. There are also a number of linked officer working groups that have been set up in furtherance of SCC’s Climate Change Delivery Plan and district/borough climate action plans. These focus on particular themes within the CCDP (e.g. One Net Zero Public Estate) and report into the wider Surrey Climate Change Officers’ Group.
- 4.5 WBC’s own CEAP has been categorised into five target areas of action which largely correspond with those of SCC’s newly adopted CCDP:
 - our assets (council corporate and leased) – energy and waste
 - transport
 - policy, leadership and behaviour changes
 - sustainable development
 - adaptation, ecology and habitats.
- 4.6 It is important to note that the adoption of the CCDP follows existing district and borough plans that, like WBC’s, are a continuation – and acceleration – of action on climate change. In this way, the CCDP seeks to complement and work within these existing local frameworks.
- 4.7 Public engagement is inherent to climate action and runs through the themes of Woking’s and SCC’s climate delivery plans. Effective communication and engagement are essential in affecting change and more sustainable behaviours. There are existing networks across the county through which local climate action can be promoted. These include local authority communication tools and those of community groups. As explained in section 2, [Planet Woking](#) was launched in September 2020 to raise awareness of local action being taken by the Council and its partners to meet our carbon neutral goals; but also to inspire and encourage the local community to join us and continue to play their part in looking after our environment.

5.0 The National Picture

- 5.1 Our local approach to climate change collaborative working is supported by national policy. With regards to local climate action and the role of local government, the Government’s Net Zero Strategy, published on 19 October 2021, states:

“Not only does local government drive action directly, but it also plays a key role in communicating with, and inspiring action by, local businesses, communities, and civil society. Of all UK emissions, 82% are within the scope of influence of local authorities.” Page 260
[Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener - October 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

6.0 Climate Change as a Corporate Commitment

- 6.1 This paper demonstrates clear commitment and synergies on tackling climate change at the local and national level. There is also recognition at all levels that no entity, group or governing body can achieve these goals alone.
- 6.2 WBC has to date and continues to demonstrate its long-term commitment to protecting the local environment. Climate change will remain embedded within WBC's emerging Corporate Plan 2022 - 2027. Feedback received from community engagement activities between October and December 2021 support local climate action as a continuing core priority.
- 6.3 All Council activities and services have an important part to play in reducing the Council's overall climate impact. The Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) is coordinated by officers in Green Infrastructure but it cannot be delivered in isolation.
- 6.4 There are opportunities to better align the corporate resources available to this function to further embed and deliver on our climate targets. Two such opportunities are outlined in Appendix 1 which will help to identify a schedule of costed energy projects across the corporate estate and provide assistance in preparing bids for external funding. Combined, they will help the Council become 'bid ready' and strengthen its position when competing for funds.
- 6.5 WBC's Corporate Plan currently states:

"We will continue to be at the forefront of innovation in addressing the challenges we face as a result of climate change. The commitments we have made to tackle climate change are fundamental to good growth and must underpin our regeneration plans. The targets we set to reduce carbon emissions and improve biodiversity and how they manifest in improving the living environment for residents go hand in hand with improving the wellbeing and health for all."

- 6.6 The Plan also goes on to state our role in helping residents reduce their carbon footprint and impact on the environment as part of striving for an "enterprising, vibrant and sustainable borough". Elements of climate adaptation¹ are also stated with habitat conservation and creation and flood prevention central to securing the borough's biodiversity. The need for low carbon energy supplies and active travel are central to the sustainable development of the borough and ensuring it is fit for the future.

7.0 The Co-benefits of Climate Change Mitigation

- 7.1 As well as the direct environmental benefits of climate change mitigation², there comes a range of positive effects – also known as co-benefits – to other services provided by the Council:
- Lower emissions and less pollutants result in cleaner air and improved public health.
 - Local energy and climate projects can result in employment and economic activity.
 - Active travel (walking and cycling) results in positive health benefits through physical activity.
 - Energy security brought about by renewable supplies.

¹ Adaptation is defined as the adjustments made to limit the negative effects of climate change or to take advantage of opportunities provided by a changing climate.

² Climate change mitigation is defined as the reduction or avoidance of greenhouse gases emissions

8.0 Climate Challenges and Priorities for Action

- 8.1 As a community leader, service provider and estate manager it is imperative that the Council first get its “own house in order”.
- 8.2 Whilst progress against the CEAP and themes within it will continue using existing resources, achieving net zero across the corporate estate in less than ten years will require a further acceleration of action across all operations and services.
- 8.3 The annual [Greenhouse Gas \(GHG\) Emissions](#) Reports show a general reduction trend against the representative baseline. It is important to note though that the GHG report has followed the same methodology for a number of years and does not provide a comprehensive carbon footprint for the entire Council estate. It is a good indicator but really a representation rather than a full footprint / baseline. The need for a full assessment of the Council’s baseline is highlighted as a priority action within Appendix 1. Whilst energy consumption is generally reducing this needs to be accelerated with a simultaneous move to low or zero carbon fuel sources.
- 8.4 Recognising the limits to public finance at the local level, Appendix 1 identifies suggested immediate priorities for continuing to reduce our own climate impacts. It focuses on mitigation and carbon reduction in order to move forward towards emissions reductions targets and considers the role of Council services in contributing to overall targets. There is also a focus on scope 1 and 2 emissions over which WBC has greater control and influence³ as per our climate emergency declaration.
- 8.5 In so doing, Appendix 1 focuses on the biggest contributor to our corporate carbon footprint – energy use. It includes an overview of current obstacles and opportunities for further action as well as suggested possible solutions. The intention is these ideas can be used to prioritise next steps and give us improved insight into where best to invest to yield carbon reduction and value for money with cost/benefit analysis of interventions helping to influence future financial planning for climate action.

9.0 Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

- 9.1 The schedule in Appendix 1 focuses on items within the corporate estate that will reduce carbon emissions. However, also included is public provision of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure which will be an area of focus for 2022.
- 9.2 Transport accounts for 30% of the borough’s carbon footprint (Local Authority CO2 estimates, 2018, BEIS). Sustainable transport is a priority in Woking 2050 and the CEAP; in the county’s CCDP and the Government’s Net Zero Strategy. Local authorities have a key role in enabling the provision of public charging infrastructure either on-street or off-street in publicly owned car parks. Accessible and reliable EV charging infrastructure will better enable the transition to zero emission vehicles benefiting the borough’s carbon footprint and air quality. Conversely, any actual or perceived unmet demand of public charging infrastructure could become a political issue. Combined with a growing public awareness of climate change there is a need for leaders to deliver on this agenda.

³Scope 1 (Direct emissions): Emissions from activities owned or controlled by your organisation that release emissions into the atmosphere. They are direct emissions.

Scope 2 (Energy indirect): Emissions released into the atmosphere associated with your consumption of purchased electricity, heat, steam and cooling. These are indirect emissions that are a consequence of your organisation’s activities, but which occur at sources you do not own or control.

Scope 3 (Other indirect): Emissions that are a consequence of your actions, which occur at sources which you do not own or control and which are not classified as scope 2 emissions.

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9.3 Activity is underway in Woking borough that will see enhanced local provision over the short and medium term, including:

- Green Infrastructure attends monthly meetings of the Surrey EV Strategy Forum (established in April 2021). The aim of this forum is to work together to deliver a consistent strategy across the county to provide the necessary EV infrastructure for Surrey residents to help meet common climate targets and facilitate a shift to zero emission transport in line with the Government's [Road to Zero Strategy](#) (2018) which bans the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles from 2030. The Government subsequently updated its ambitions with the publication of [Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain](#) (July 2021).
- Green Infrastructure has submitted a funding application to the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) for the installation of over 70 electric vehicle charging points in the new Red Shoppers Car Park due to open in spring 2022. Results are awaited.
- Green Infrastructure is liaising with potential suppliers to provide ChargePoint Operator (CPO) services for the management and maintenance of the new Red Car Park EV points. The feasibility of applying this to other existing points is being considered but their age and specification may preclude this.
- As well as management and maintenance, a CPO solution offers easy customer access to chargepoints on a plug and go basis via an app. This will also enable the Council to introduce a tariff for power used to charge EVs.
- WBC is part of the SCC-led [On-Street Electric Vehicle Charging Point \(EVCP\) project](#). A total of 20 on-street charging bays are being installed across the borough. This is a pilot project from which monitoring information will help with the standardisation and wider roll out of EVCPs across the county. The pilot will increase the number of public EVCPs in Woking borough and will in particular benefit those with an EV but no access to off-street charging at home.

9.4 Green Infrastructure is also exploring the possibility of linking into a concession framework for EV chargepoint installation. Concession frameworks are a popular delivery mechanism for local authorities looking to increase EV infrastructure as they offer no or low-cost options with extensive roll out of fast and rapid chargepoints. As opposed to local authority owned and operated points, a concession model requires low or no upfront capital and no ongoing maintenance costs. When used by multiple authorities, such frameworks could provide standardised tariffs and streamlined charging systems for customers.

10.0 Further “Quick Wins”

10.1 There are some further “quick wins” that the Council should embark on to continue to embed climate change action at the heart of its business. Good practice guidance from organisations

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such as Ashden⁴, the Local Government Association⁵ and benchmarking exercises by Climate Emergency UK⁶ suggest the following activities in this regard:

- **Climate literacy training** can assist staff and Councillors to understand their role in achieving the Council's climate targets. This is being explored currently with Neighbourhood Services staff trialling an online climate e-learning module. It is hoped this will be made available as part of the Council's wider corporate training programme around January 2022 pending feedback.
- **Sustainable procurement policy** – The Local Government Association's 'Climate change and procurement road map' advises how the commissioning and procurement of products or services can help councils take action to address their climate emergency declarations. For example, a sustainable procurement plan that encourages low energy and more sustainable options and also promotes local purchasing where possible; assessing the carbon footprint of the goods and services we procure, in order to understand the impacts of our existing procurement and commissioning; and producing a sustainable procurement code of practice. Whole-life costing for all capital projects would also assist in understanding their sustainability and carbon impacts. Given its ecological declaration, the Council also needs to lead by example with regards to the biodiversity net gain delivered in all of its future developments.
- **Integrate climate change into Council decision making processes.** Climate change priorities and targets should be integrated into all key corporate projects, programmes and strategies. Currently Woking Borough Council committee reports require a sustainability and equalities impact assessment to be completed, although this is not proactively enforced. This could be reviewed to ensure the climate emergency declaration objectives are reflected and ways in which the project or strategy contribute to carbon reduction and adaptation targets. Similar emphasis could also be included in the project process itself, via updating of the project mandate and workbook templates.
- Ensuring climate change is appropriately addressed within our **risk management and business continuity processes**. This is particularly relevant for climate adaptation and the impacts that are and will continue to be felt across our local communities. In particular extreme weather events such as flooding and heatwaves. The Council can continue to strengthen this through its existing emergency plans.

11.0 Funding for Net Zero Projects

11.1 It is not yet possible to identify the exact financial cost of delivering net zero for Woking Borough Council, but it is acknowledged that significant public and/or private investment will be required and that innovative funding mechanisms will be essential given the tightening constraints on the public purse.

⁴ Ashden is an environmental charity whose mission is to accelerate transformative climate solutions. Their "31 Climate Actions for Councils" was created to help councils choose the right interventions for their communities to progress action on climate change and is available online at <https://ashden.org/climate-action-co-benefits-toolkit/>.

⁵ This Local Government Association guide - <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/sustainable-procurement-delivering-local-economic-social-and-environmental-priorities> - contains advice on embedding climate change considerations at the heart of a procurement strategy.

⁶ Climate Emergency UK is compiling a local authority league table on climate change action. Ahead of its publication in January 2022, Climate Emergency UK gave all local authorities a chance to review its initial assessment against 100+ criteria. Officers in Green Infrastructure have completed the review and submitted additional evidence detailing the Council's activities in furtherance of its climate and ecological emergency declaration. Further information about the proposed league table is available at www.climateemergency.uk/council-climate-league/

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- 11.2 The suggested independent carbon footprint assessment referenced in Appendix 1 would enable improved knowledge and ability to prioritise action and target (external) investment that yields the best results in terms of environmental and financial benefit.
- 11.3 Climate Emergency UK advises that local authorities outline how they will allocate funds to ensure budgets are being used most effectively to support carbon neutrality. However, local authority contributions to such schemes will be limited, so central and regional government grants, private investment, and community funds will be essential. Possible mechanisms include:
- Ring-fenced funds – in the 1990s, the Council ring-fenced financial savings accrued through energy efficiency measures to be used for other environmental initiatives.
 - Public Works Loan Board offers low borrowing rates for local authorities.
 - External funding streams e.g. Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund; Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund.
 - Climate bonds provide a way of engaging the community in the financing of local environmental projects e.g. renewable energy. The Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) has considered a paper by Green Infrastructure on climate bonds.
 - Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds – neighbourhood forums could see the opportunities to invest CIL monies in community climate projects.
- 11.4 In the 1990s, the Council utilised an energy efficiency fund. This principle could be used to create a "Corporate Carbon Offset Fund" where for every project approved, a small percentage of its cost (e.g. 0.5%) is added to the overall project budget which is automatically ring fenced in the fund. This could then be used solely for the delivery of other climate projects.
- 11.5 Additionally, the Council could boost this fund by "offsetting" its best-known footprint i.e. that calculated through the Greenhouse Gas Report with a one-off payment to boost the pot. This would not only help deliver climate projects – it would also be a strong public demonstration of its commitment. However, it is acknowledged that the affordability and mechanics of such a scheme would have to be carefully tested, particularly at a time of acute budgetary pressures.
- 11.6 The schedule of priority actions in Appendix 1 helps to identify some opportunities for accelerated action. Additionally, it highlights opportunities for further identifying energy projects and resources to put WBC in a stronger position to leverage external funding opportunities. Often these are oversubscribed with local authorities that have "shovel ready" projects placing them in the strongest position. Moreover, consortium bids are often favoured over single authority bids, as demonstrated with the Green Jump Surrey project delivered by Action Surrey on behalf of the Surrey districts and boroughs.

12.0 Public Engagement

- 12.1 Whilst this report focuses on the challenges and priorities for our corporate estate, it is important to reference the pledge for borough-wide carbon neutrality by 2050.
- 12.2 The nature of our climate and ecological declaration commitments is such that the scale of the task will require the advocacy and support of the community. Public engagement and consultation will continue to be essential to set what is required in the context of the wider needs of energy and environmental security and the commitment to achieve net zero carbon across Woking borough. The Local Government Association's Pathway to Net Zero Councillor Workbook (April 2021) emphasises that:

"Local authorities are well placed to drive and influence action on climate change through the services they deliver, their regulatory and strategic functions, and their roles as community leaders, major employers, large-scale procurers and social

landlords. They also provide a vitally important leadership role, setting an example for others to follow.”

- 12.3 As covered earlier in this report, [Planet Woking](#) was launched in 2020 as the Council’s dedicated climate communications campaign. The details in section 2, together with the report taken to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2021 and quarterly CEAP updates, provide a useful catalogue of Planet Woking engagement to date. In April 2001, the [South East Climate Alliance \(SECA\)](#) recognised WBC as a council communicating well on climate change through the Planet Woking programme.
- 12.4 Green Infrastructure will continue to use the dedicated Planet Woking website, social media channels, e-newsletters and events to further raise awareness and strengthen community understanding of and engagement with the borough’s climate emergency declaration.
- 12.5 The Council roadshows which took place October to December 2021 gave residents the opportunity help shape the future priorities of the borough, as part of a comprehensive programme of engagement and consultation that will assist with the development of the Council’s new five year Corporate Plan (2022 – 2027). Early feedback shows that the environment continues to be a priority for our local communities.
- 12.6 Future opportunities to engage on climate topics may also be available through the [Woking Residents’ Panel](#) and the [Planet Woking hub on the Woking Community Forum](#).

13.0 Corporate Strategy

- 13.1 Prioritising the items put forward in this report and accompanying Appendix 1 will enable delivery of a number of corporate objectives, most notably effective use of resources, improving the borough’s biodiversity and green infrastructure, engaging our communities, and supporting sustainable development and a strong economy.

14.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 14.1 As outlined earlier in this report, it is difficult to identify the exact financial cost of delivering net zero for Woking Borough Council. However, the report suggests opportunities for developing a fuller picture of our corporate emissions; and for further identifying energy projects and resources to put WBC in a stronger position to leverage external funding to assist project delivery.
- 14.2 A full and independent carbon footprint assessment will enable improved knowledge and ability to prioritise action and invest (external) funds. It will also assist with additional benefits such as emissions trajectories; interim reduction targets and insight into where best to invest to yield carbon reduction and value for money. A cost/benefit analysis of interventions over time would inform best value both economically and environmentally and would provide a data led focus in the Council’s environmental decision making.
- 14.3 Consideration will be given to opportunities for “offsetting” to a corporate fund ringfenced for local climate delivery. As noted earlier in the report, the affordability and mechanics of such a scheme would have to be carefully tested, particularly at a time of acute budgetary pressures

Equalities and Human Resources

- 14.4 There are no equalities implications.

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- 14.5 All Council activities and services have an important part to play in reducing the Council's overall climate impact. The report and Appendix 1 highlight opportunities to better align the corporate resources available to us to further embed and deliver on our climate targets.

Legal

- 14.6 Legal Services have been consulted and have not raised any issues in respect of this report.

15.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 15.1 As stated earlier in the report, the Council roadshows last autumn gave residents the opportunity help shape the future priorities of the borough, as part of a comprehensive programme of engagement and consultation that will assist with the development of the Council's new five year Corporate Plan (2022 – 2027). Early feedback shows that the environment continues to be a priority for our local communities.
- 15.2 Much has been done in climate change communications through [Planet Woking](#) since its launch in September 2020 and this continues to be a platform through which to build on this to help raise awareness and strengthen community understanding and engagement with the borough's climate emergency declaration. Opportunities may also be available through the Residents' Panel and Planet Woking hub on the Community Forum. The Woking Residents' Panel will also provide people who live in the borough with ongoing opportunities to shape the borough's future, by acting as a sounding board for future initiatives.

16.0 Conclusions

- 16.1 Woking Borough Council has a long history of local climate action.
- 16.2 However, as 2030 draws nearer, the challenges of the climate emergency declaration pledges are brought closer into focus. In order to meet those targets, we need to maintain momentum, even in the face of constrained public finances. Continued collaboration across the county – and within our own organisation - will give strength in numbers enabling better leverage of external funding; larger scale delivery; resulting in positive results for the environment and wider co-benefits that climate action can bring to health and economy.
- 16.3 This report and accompanying Appendix highlight some immediate priorities that will strengthen the Council's position in meeting these targets, while also demonstrating continued delivery to the public.

REPORT ENDS