

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY REVIEW

Executive Summary

The Council's climate change strategy is under review, informed by self-assessment against good practice examples and feedback from recent external evaluation. The draft document provides a comprehensive update on the Council's ambitions and next steps in achieving its climate and ecological emergency declaration targets. The draft was recently considered by the Greener Woking Working Group and following Councillor and officer feedback, a further draft will be subject to public and stakeholder consultation from mid-May 2023. This will not only help shape and inform the final strategy but will also provide an opportunity for public engagement and further awareness raising of the need for all to play their part in local climate action. The review and consultation will run in parallel to that of the Council's Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Recognising the power of individuals and communities to make a difference, the Executive is also asked to endorse the national, volunteer led Take the Jump campaign which encourages sustainable living through "shifts" in behaviour. In order to lead by example, Woking Borough Council staff and Councillors are encouraged to consider what behaviour shifts they can take in support of the shared objectives of the campaign, the Council's corporate and Borough-wide climate commitments.

The report also acknowledges the Annual Climate Change Update that was recently received by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 20 February 2023. The update highlights work undertaken in furtherance of the Council's climate and ecological emergency declaration over the last year as well as outlining future projects and plans.

The report also seeks formal approval for renewed Terms of Reference for the Greener Woking Working Group.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the contents of the proposed draft climate change strategy (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) be noted and approved for public engagement and consultation commencing mid-May 2023;
- (ii) delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director - Place, in consultation with the Greener Woking Portfolio Holder, to approve amendments to the draft strategy to reflect new information before it is published for public engagement;
- (iii) the Take the Jump campaign be endorsed, and staff and Councillors be encouraged to consider what behaviour shifts they can take in support of the Council's corporate climate commitments;
- (iv) the activities undertaken to date and those planned in furtherance of the Council's climate and ecological emergency declaration, be

noted as reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 February 2023; and

- (v) the Terms of Reference for the Greener Woking Working Group be approved.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To note the review of the Council's climate change strategy and planned public consultation; the role of public engagement in local climate action and the continuing activities of the Council and its partners in furtherance of its climate and ecological declaration commitments.

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

- Background Papers:** [Woking 2050](#)
[Annual Climate Change Update report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 20 February 2023](#)
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Climate Change Strategy at Appendix 1 is presented as the draft follow up strategy to Woking 2050 which was adopted in 2015. It reaffirms the Council's commitment to tackling climate change – a central priority for this Council.
- 1.2 [Woking 2050](#) set 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 was 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 was superseded by a pledge to reach net zero by 2050, which was also adopted locally as part of the Council's [climate and ecological emergency declaration](#) (July 2019).
- 1.3 Much has been achieved locally since the last strategy, with the following activities offering a snapshot of how the Council has and continues to progress this priority agenda:
 - The Council's biodiversity and green infrastructure strategy – Natural Woking – was adopted in 2016;
 - On 25 July 2019, the Council declared a [climate and ecological emergency](#) pledging to become carbon neutral by 2030 across its own estate and operations, and by 2050 (or sooner) across the wider Borough;
 - A Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was adopted in February 2020 setting out a range of priority actions in furtherance of the declaration;
 - The Council's climate change and biodiversity communications campaign, [Planet Woking](#), was launched in September 2020;
 - May 2022 saw the new Liberal Democrat administration confirm climate change within its top three priorities;
 - The Council's Woking for All strategy (adopted in 2022) includes a core greener communities theme, acknowledging the commitment to climate change action by the local authority and in its role as a key influencer and enabler for engagement by others;
 - A carbon footprint assessment undertaken in 2022 gives the Council the most accurate insight to date into its emissions and pathways to a net zero estate.
- 1.4 A comprehensive update of activities over the last year was reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 20 February 2023 as part of the Annual Climate Change Update report. See section 4 of this report for more details.
- 1.5 The revised strategy sets out our continuing climate ambitions across nine themes:
 - Energy
 - Waste
 - Water
 - Transport
 - Economy, business and supply chains
 - The Natural Environment
 - Communicating and Enabling Change
 - The Built Environment
 - Woking Borough Council's Journey to Net Zero
- 1.6 Each gives guidance and direction for how the local authority, our residents, businesses and partner organisations can all play their part to achieve our shared environmental goals.

2.0 Strategy review process

2.1 A number of steps have been taken to inform the revised draft strategy:

- Officers in Green Infrastructure undertook a self-assessment of the prevailing strategy against good practice examples from other local authorities and against guidance, such as that available through [Ashden's 31 Climate Actions for Councils](#).
- The prevailing strategy was also benchmarked against the Council's scores and feedback from Climate Emergency UK's (CEUK) score cards on local authority action on climate change. Released in January 2022, CEUK's "league table" scored councils on climate action based on the availability of information on their authority websites and through their climate change strategies. Woking scored 70, ranking tenth amongst district councils nationally, and only second to Waverley Borough Council in Surrey.
- Using the information above, a gap analysis was undertaken by Green Infrastructure to identify what the updated strategy needed to include.
- The prevailing strategy was adopted before the Council declared a climate and ecological emergency and associated carbon reduction targets, so these are a central focus of the update.
- Relevant aspects of Surrey County Council's [Climate Change Delivery Programme](#), which the Council resolved to support in January 2022, are also addressed.
- The reviewed strategy also reflects topics received by the Greener Woking Working Group through quarterly CEAP updates, Woking Environment Action proposals, and other relevant committee reports in recent years.

2.2 The results of the recent corporate carbon footprint assessment, completed in September 2022, have also been incorporated into the update.

2.3 The draft document has been subject to internal officer consultation and has been through the following Working Groups and Committees ahead of this Committee and planned public consultation (see section 7 of this report for further details):

- Local Development Framework Working Group – 1 February.
- Greener Woking Working Group – special meeting 8 February.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 20 February.

2.4 The strategy is currently in 'living draft' form while officer and councillor feedback continues to be incorporated. It will be subject to further formatting and inclusion of images to make it more reader friendly and accessible. It is hoped that the final document could be subject to graphic design expertise to fit with the corporate branding and style of other Council strategy documents.

2.5 A summary document will also be compiled by Green Infrastructure to accompany the full strategy at the public consultation stage.

3.0 Take the Jump climate campaign

3.1 The [Take the Jump](#) campaign is a volunteer led national campaign that promotes movement away from unsustainable consumption to a greener way of living that is in balance with nature. While recognising the role of government and business in changing policy, it emphasises the power that individuals and communities have to make a change.

- 3.2 The campaign encourages people to try out six lifestyle shifts to live more sustainably. The aim is “a world of *less stuff and more joy, balancing humanity with nature* and reducing the *impact of consumption in rich countries by 2030*”. Research behind the campaign highlights that citizens can have a huge role in making this happen and so encourage everyone to try out a shift for one, three or six months to see the positive change it can make. The shifts include:
- End clutter – keep products for at least seven years.
 - Travel fresh – without personal vehicles if you can.
 - Eat green – promoting a plant-based diet.
 - Dress retro – limit new items of clothing to three a year.
 - Holiday local – limiting the number of flights to one in three years.
 - Change the system – encouraging one life shift to “nudge the system”.
- 3.3 [Woking Environment Action \(WEAct\)](#) has promoted the campaign to visitors to their climate hub and has asked that the Council encourage members of the public to sign up.
- 3.4 As stated in the draft climate change strategy (see Theme 7: Communicating and Enabling Change), the public sector only accounts for 3% of borough wide greenhouse gas emissions. Consequently, as well as influencing policy and regulation, Woking Borough Council has a key role in helping support communities by enabling change through engagement and helping others to also take ownership of action on climate change.
- 3.5 One of the fundamental ways the Council can help is to raise awareness of climate change and how our local residents, businesses and community groups, large or small, can get involved and make a difference.
- 3.6 In September 2020, the Council launched the [Planet Woking](#) programme – our climate change communications campaign. Its purpose is to share what the Council has done and continues to do to meet our net zero targets; and to inspire local people to get involved and continue to make changes to live a greener, more sustainable life.
- 3.7 The Take the Jump campaign complements the Planet Woking initiative and our wider climate ambitions and so endorsement of the campaign is sought by the Executive. To further lead by example, it is encouraged that Council staff and councillors be asked to consider what behaviour shifts they can take in support of the Council’s corporate climate commitments.

4.0 Annual Climate Change Update report

- 4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee received the Annual Climate Change Update at its meeting on 20 February 2023. The update highlights work undertaken in furtherance of the Council’s climate and ecological emergency declaration over the last year as well as outlining future projects and plans.
- 4.2 This activity informs the draft climate change strategy, along with key policy developments at the national and local level.

5.0 Greener Woking Working Group Terms of Reference

- 5.1 The Greener Woking Working Group, at its meeting on 30 November 2022, endorsed refreshed Terms of Reference for the group’s operation and resolved to recommend these to the Executive for their formal approval. The Terms of Reference are attached at Appendix 2.

6.0 Corporate Strategy

- 6.1 The climate change strategy review assists in the continued 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.

- 6.2 The Annual Climate Change Update report demonstrates activities that contribute to these goals over the course of the last year; as well as those planned for the year ahead.
- 6.3 The proposed endorsement of the Take the Jump campaign, alongside existing Planet Working communications, and planned public consultation will further engage residents on the green agenda.

7.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report. The climate change strategy review and draft has been undertaken in-house by officers in Green Infrastructure. Planned public consultation will be managed within existing budgets.
- 7.2 However, as noted in the Annual Climate Change Update report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee, delivery of the CEAP will require an ongoing financial commitment by the Council and access to external funding.
- 7.3 There are no risk management implications associated with this update report. However, as recognised through the cross-party declaration, the climate and ecological emergency requires urgency and sustained action in order to address the inevitable impacts of climate change.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 7.4 There are no equalities implications associated with this update report. Planned public consultation will be managed within existing staff resources.
- 7.5 However, it is noted that the impacts of a changing climate can be felt more acutely by those that are vulnerable within our community. Examples of this include flood risk and tackling fuel poverty.

Legal

- 7.6 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

8.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 8.1 Pending updates to the 'living draft' strategy document, the strategy will be subject to public consultation after the local elections. Exact dates are to be determined but a full six-week consultation period will be observed, from mid-May to the end of June.
- 8.2 The strategy review and consultation run in parallel to that of the Council's Climate Change SPD (subject to a separate report on this Executive agenda).
- 8.3 The details of the consultation programme and engagement methods for this and for the updated Climate Change SPD are being determined by Green Infrastructure and Planning Policy in consultation with the Council's Lead Engagement Officer in Marketing and Communications.
- 8.4 The draft strategy suggests a number of consultation questions that will be used to inform a consultation survey.

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- 8.5 Online consultation will be facilitated through the Woking Community Forum and through Planet Woking. In-person consultation will be facilitated through drop-in sessions at community centres.
- 8.6 Targeted stakeholder engagement will be undertaken by email, signposting to the wider public consultation.
- 8.7 Feedback gained through public consultation will be reviewed during July and August to inform a final version of the strategy for adoption. This will then be taken through equivalent Working Group and Committee cycles to those outlined in section 2 of this report, seeking approval and adoption during September and October 2023.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 The draft climate change strategy has been compiled in-house by officers in Green Infrastructure informed by self-assessment against good practice examples and feedback from recent external evaluation.
- 9.2 It offers a comprehensive update on the Council's ambitions and next steps in achieving its declaration targets.
- 9.3 Public and stakeholder consultation will not only help shape and inform the final strategy but will also provide an opportunity for public engagement and further awareness raising of the need for all to play their part in local climate action.
- 9.4 Endorsement of the Take the Jump campaign would further enhance existing climate focused communications via Planet Woking. Corporate endorsement would enable the Council to lead by example by encouraging its staff and councillors to take action in support of its green agenda.
- 9.5 The revised Terms of Reference of the Greener Woking Working Group recognise the ongoing role of the group in discussing sustainability and environmental issues in the Borough.

REPORT ENDS

Draft Climate Change Strategy

A copy of the draft climate change strategy is available as a PDF attachment. Please note this is a living draft and subject to changes as part of ongoing feedback ahead of public consultation.