

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY UPDATE

Executive Summary

In 2023, the Council consulted on an ambitious and detailed climate change strategy, Woking Net Zero. A follow up to the previous strategy, [Woking 2050](#) (adopted 2015), Woking Net Zero contained nine key themes, and a strategy giving 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.

With the issuing of the S114 notice, the Council has had to make difficult decisions, focusing resources on statutory functions. This means that the Council's capacity to deliver the actions contained within Woking Net Zero has needed to be reviewed.

In recent months, officers have looked again at the style and content of Woking Net Zero, and specifically the identified actions contained within the Strategy. Officers have reviewed how these actions can best be delivered, considering feedback received through the consultation. This has led to reflection on what can be achieved with remaining resources and how best the Council can drive forward its Strategy.

The volume and number of specific actions in the consultation version of Woking Net Zero cannot be delivered in the format proposed. To deliver in this way would be an expensive and involved process to monitor and update.

The proposal is for a repositioning of our strategic direction to place greater emphasis on the tools and levers that are immediately available and within the resource of the Council to deliver the actions set out in the consultation version of the document, recognizing that climate change is a global challenge that affects every sector within the community, and that local government has a vital role to play in implementing net zero ambitions. 'Woking Net Zero' could be streamlined to more clearly and simply reflect its role as a document that both sets out the Council's own plans to reduce its carbon footprint and shape and steer the actions and activities of others who are required to abide by the Council's various strategies, policies and plans.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the Woking Net Zero climate change strategy be re-shaped and amended to demonstrate how the Council will 'get their own house in order' and influence and steer the actions and activities of others through Council strategies, policies and plans; and
- (ii) within this context, a revised version of Woking Net Zero will be presented to Members in the Autumn for consideration and adoption.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To ensure the adoption of the Woking Net Zero climate change strategy is deliverable within the resources available across the Council.

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

- Background Papers:** None.
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Woking Net Zero was presented as the follow up strategy to [Woking 2050](#) which was adopted in 2015. Set out across nine key themes, the strategy set out 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.
- 1.2 The strategy was compiled in-house by officers in the Green Infrastructure Team informed by self-assessment against good practice examples and feedback from recent external evaluation.
- 1.3 The Greener Woking Working Group and the Executive received the draft strategy on 8 February and 23 March 2023 respectively ahead of a six-week public consultation. The consultation ran between 18 May and 30 June 2023. Residents and stakeholders were invited to review the strategy and feedback their views online via a Woking Net Zero hub on the [Woking Community Forum](#). A number of roadshow events took place to enable respondents to have their say in person. Venues included Centres for the Community such as The Vyne, Parkview and St Mary's.
- 1.4 Public and stakeholder consultation has confirmed the direction of the strategy and helped to further develop its themes and actions. It has also provided a useful opportunity for public engagement and further awareness raising of the need for all to play their part in local climate action.
- 1.5 However, in light of the Council's financial circumstances, the dedicated resources are no longer available to drive forward the strategy and to deliver and review its actions in this format. Responding to climate change remains a priority for the Council and following analysis of the actions set out in the consultation draft of the document, officers are proposing an alternative strategic direction.

2.0 Public consultation results

- 2.1 In total 141 responses were received via the online and in-person consultation, feedback from which has been collated and reviewed, initially to inform the final draft strategy for adoption.
- 2.2 The online survey gave the opportunity for respondents to state whether or not they agree with each of the themes' objectives and proposed actions, as well as suggestions for what else the Council should consider.
- 2.3 Alongside the full set of responses, common recurring views and key findings were collated along with an officer response and the detail of these will be appended to revised strategy in the Autumn.
- 2.4 Feedback showed support for the overall strategy vision and for the objectives and proposed actions for the themes on energy, waste, water, transport and for economy, business and supply chains. Where the themes on communicating and enabling change, the built environment and the Council's journey to net zero were supported to some extent, respondents gave suggestions for how to further supplement the themes. The consultation responses can and will be addressed through the proposed new strategic approach.

3.0 Woking Borough Emissions

- 3.1 The largest contributors to the carbon footprint are domestic emissions, i.e. heating and powering our homes (35.8%) and transport (27.1%). The industrial and commercial activities combined, account for one third of the area's greenhouse gas emissions. The public sector accounts for 3%.

3.2 The journey to net zero will require focus on the following specific areas:

- Significant retrofit for space heating and hot water;
- Large scale growth in solar and on/ off shore wind generation;
- Modal shift at scale away from cars, vans and motorbikes;
- The proportion of cars and buses that are electric will need to grow 100% by 2035; and
- Significant reductions in the volume of waste generated and recycling rates to increase by two thirds by 2035 and 85% by 2050.

4.0 Monitoring and governance

4.1 Delivery against our climate commitments was previously monitored through regular reporting to the [Greener Woking Working Group](#) whose members included representatives from the community, business, environmental organisations, Councillors and Council officers. Under the new committee governance model, the working group in this format has been disbanded. Reports are now likely to go to the Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee, or any task and finish group that may be set up to report to that Committee. Discussions are taking place with WEAct to explore how best some of the activities of the Greener Woking Working Group can be progressed through other channels.

4.2 Further to our climate and ecological emergency declaration in July 2019, a [Climate Emergency Action Plan \(CEAP\)](#) was approved by the Council on 13 February 2020. Other plans, strategies and policies that set out Woking Borough Council's commitment to net zero includes the 2016 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy and Guidance (Natural Woking); the launch of Planet Woking in September 2020 and the Climate Change and Biodiversity communications campaign.

4.3 In May 2022, the new political administration confirmed climate change within its top three priorities with the Woking for All corporate strategy including a core 'greener communities' theme. 2022 also saw the Carbon Footprint Assessment being undertaken. 2023 saw further progress with the adoption of the Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document and early work to secure guidance to support the deliver of Biodiversity Net Gain.

4.4 Subject to the views of the Executive, the Woking Net Zero strategy will propose key actions to reduce our environmental footprint at both the corporate and borough level, streamlining and refining those in the consultation version to include the following:

- Optimising energy efficiency and decarbonising energy supplies;
- Promoting and facilitating positive sustainable behaviours for the benefit of our environment and communities;
- Conserving resources by continuing to move away from unsustainable consumption and waste generation;
- Support the continuing transition to sustainable modes of transport away from fossil fuel powered vehicles; and
- Balance growth and prosperity with sustainable development and habitat conservation.

4.5 Our continuing collaboration with organisations such as ThamesWey, Action Surrey, Woking Environment Action (WEAct), Woking Chamber, Surrey Heathland Partnership and Surrey Wildlife Trust (amongst others), play an important role in achieving our goals. There are

synergies between the Council's climate commitments and those of neighbouring districts and boroughs, and Surrey County Council's Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Programme – this opportunity is vital for our local environment. As part of the work in developing a more streamlined Woking Net Zero document, consideration will need to be given to how best to monitor and review our activities to assess the effectiveness of our approach. SMART targets will be incorporated within the service plans across the Council departments and the Council's annual 'Authority Monitoring Report' already contains monitoring data relating to climate change. Where possible, this will be expanded to include measures not already covered in this way.

5.0 Key update – UK100 membership and 2045 area wide target date

- 5.1 [UK100](#) is a network of highly ambitious local government leaders supporting the transition of UK towns, cities and counties in their transition to net zero. The network, which is free to join, brings together local authorities across the country to share knowledge, collaborate, and petition the UK government with their collective power. UK100's Membership Pledge requires an area-wide net zero target date of 2045 – five years earlier than the original local declaration. Consultation feedback supported this change. However, further investigation is needed to understand the resource implications of joining this network and whether the Council can discharge the obligations that membership would entail.

6.0 Corporate Strategy

- 6.1 The existing and emerging corporate strategy provides synergy with the aims and objectives set out in Woking Net Zero and this will continue with the proposed new approach.

7.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 7.1 There are no direct finance or risk implications associated with proposed new approach to the strategy.
- 7.2 The Council acknowledges that it cannot fund net zero alone and will need to work in partnership with others. Through its various plans, policies and strategies, the Council can set out how it has and is working towards having its own 'house' in order. Furthermore, there is significant opportunity to influence the practice of partners and third parties including the new local plan.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 7.3 There are no equalities or human resources implications associated with proposed new approach.

Legal

- 7.4 There are no legal implications associated with the proposed new approach.

8.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 8.1 A six week public consultation took place between 18 May and 30 June 2023. Residents and stakeholders were invited to review the strategy and feedback their views online via the Woking Net Zero hub on the Woking Community Forum. A number of roadshow events took place to enable respondents to have their say in person. Venues included Centres for the Community such as The Vyne, Parkview and St Mary's.

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- 8.2 Separate stakeholder responses were received by email from Natural England, ThamesWey and The Woodland Trust.
- 8.3 The consultation ran in parallel with that of the [draft Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#) which was subsequently adopted.
- 8.4 Given that the proposed new approach maintains the key messages and actions of the consultation document, it is not necessary to undertake further consultation although it will be shared with key stakeholders informally for input.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.5 Woking Net Zero 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 and this will continue with the proposed new approach.

REPORT ENDS