

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

Executive Summary

The Council consulted on a new climate change strategy 'Woking Net Zero' between May - June 2023. This strategy was intended to replace 'Woking 2050' and set out our new ambitious targets for net zero across the Council's operations and the wider Borough. The strategy initially set out nine themes intended to target all sectors within the community and provide guidance on how the Council, residents and businesses should go greener and respond to the impact of climate change.

In June 2023 the Council issued a S114 notice, which led to difficult decisions being made and the restructure of services which are now focused on the delivery of our statutory duties. As a result of the restructure the actions set out within Woking Net Zero have been reviewed to ensure they remain within the Council's capacity and resources. Further consultation has occurred internally to consolidate feedback from officers on the proposed changes.

The following strategy (Appendix 1) being presented to Committee sets out a streamlined version of the Council's climate change interests and objectives to address. The modified strategy reflects the significant changes to the Council's services while also acknowledging the national targets for net zero set by central government through the Climate Change Act 2008.

The adoption of the revised strategy will demonstrate the Council's commitment to consider climate change within decision-making and strategic plans in the future.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the Committee supports the Council's adoption of the strategy;
- (ii) the changes to the WBC Climate Change Strategy and key objectives be noted;
- (iii) the committee supports the final strategy and the Council's continued sustainable practices within the delivery of our statutory services; and
- (iv) the representations to the Climate Change Strategy consultation made between May - June 2023 are noted (Appendix 2a – 2b).

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendations set out above.

Background Papers:	None.
Reporting Person:	Jill Peet, Planning Policy Manager Email: Jill.Peet@woking.gov.uk
Contact Person:	Jill Peet, Planning Policy Manager Email: Jill.Peet@woking.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Liam Lyons

Email: cllrLiam.Lyons@woking.gov.uk

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the revised climate change strategy to Committee following a report to Executive (13th June 2024) which provided an update and set out the intention to ensure that the revised climate change strategy would reflect the changes to service delivery following the S114 notice.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The revised strategy largely follows the same format as the one which was consulted on last year, except there are now eight themes instead of nine which include: WBC's Journey to Net Zero, Energy, Waste, Water, Transport, Economy (Business and Supply Chains), the Natural Environment, and the Built Environment.
- 2.2 The strategy has been streamlined so that repetition across actions and guidance has been removed and focuses on the objectives the Council can do with current resources.
- 2.3 The strategy has been set out across each theme in a clearer format which features an introductory paragraph to provide context and occasionally facts on the Borough's performance, before listing objectives for the Council, residents and businesses to consider as the UK moves toward net zero in 2050.
- 2.4 The objectives set out within each theme are designed to be factored into decision-making processes and to serve as an aid to those within the Borough looking to make greener choices. For the Council, these objectives provide a framework to factor in climate change (and its impact) within the delivery of our statutory services.

3.0 Proposal

- 3.1 The process of streamlining the strategy has resulted in a set of objectives for the committee and Council to consider in terms of feasibility and deliverability. The following paragraphs provide a snapshot of what each theme is looking to achieve:
 - i. (Theme 1) WBC's Journey to Net Zero: the Council has a duty to demonstrate that climate change has been factored into decision-making. To do this we need to review our current organisational procedures and assess how to embed the principles of net zero within them. This extends to our communication with staff and the local community on the important of making sustainable choices and also in lobbying government for higher standards within national policy.
 - ii. (Theme 2) Energy: the cost-of-living crisis is just one of a few recent events which has placed energy at the forefront of people's minds. The Council will remain committed to ensuring owned buildings perform efficiently and will continue to work through Action Surrey/Thamesway to enable residents to access advice and opportunities to reduce their energy consumption.
 - iii. (Theme 3) Waste: contributing towards a circular economy is key to making sustainable choices for everyone within the Borough. Through reviewing our current procurement processes and communicating / signposting advice to staff and residents, the Council will continue to reduce the amount of waste generated across the Borough.
 - iv. (Theme 4) Water: the Council will report on the water efficiency of owned buildings and ensure guidance (such as planning policy) continues to be updated according to changes in building regulations. We will also continue to work with environmental bodies to protect the water quality, ecology and habitat of water infrastructure within the Borough. This includes mitigating against the impact of flooding.

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- v. (Theme 5) Transport: the Council will continue to work in collaboration with Surrey County Council, as the lead transport authority, to promote active travel and support the network to connect services and communities through sustainable transport modes.
- vi. (Theme 6) Economy, Business and Supply Chains: we will signpost to opportunities for local businesses to help them to make sustainable choices. Additionally, the Council will consider internally how emergency and continuity plans will address climate change and seek to minimise associated risks.
- vii. (Theme 7) The Natural Environment: where there is opportunity to do so, such as through the planning process, the Council will continue to collaborate with partner organisations/groups to support projects to enhance and conserve habitat and wildlife. We will also continue to perform our statutory duties to protect the health of the environment and monitor air quality.
- viii. (Theme 8) The Built Environment: improving the energy efficiency of buildings, both owned by the Council and across the Borough, is vitally important in reducing carbon emissions. To do this we will signpost to advice and update Council guidance accordingly.

4.0 Purpose and Outcome

- 4.1 The committee is asked to recommend the strategy to Exec for adoption to enable the Council to continue to deliver on its commitments to demonstrate mitigating / adapting against the impact of climate change.
- 4.2 The strategy, once adopted, will provide a basis to embed sustainable decision-making within strategic plans in the future, and ensure that climate change remains a consideration irrespective of changes to the Council's services.

5.0 Process

- 5.1 As mentioned above a version of the climate change strategy went to public consultation last year. Since then, there have been several changes to the Council which have meant that version is no longer deliverable.

6.0 Decision Type

- 6.1 The climate change strategy and its forthcoming adoption is a key decision for members to consider. The objectives within the strategy detail what the Council will need to commit towards doing and delivering within its statutory duties. Every department across the Council has a duty to consider the impact of climate change on service delivery. Decision-making must consider the adoption of more sustainable practices so that future generations are not left disadvantaged.
- 6.2 The ambition is for the strategy to be approved for adoption later in the year once approved by Exec. Upon adoption, the strategy will be published on the Council's website in a clear and accessible format for the public to access.

7.0 Implications

Legal

- 7.1 Under the Climate Change Act 2008 local authorities are required to demonstrate how strategic plans have considered the impact of climate change. Additionally central government has committed to net zero across all sectors by 2050.

Resources (including finance)

- 7.2 The Council has reviewed the revised Climate Change Strategy to reflect the changes imposed by the S114 notice issued in June 2023. The financial implications of adopting the strategy have been considered and agreed by senior management.

Equalities and Diversity

- 7.3 There are no equalities or human resources implications associated with this report. The purpose of the strategy is to engage with everyone within the Borough and support greener choices which help to mitigate against the impact of climate change.

Risk (Corporate Governance)

- 7.4 There are no risk implications to consider, however without the adoption of the strategy future decision-making may fail to acknowledge the risks associated with climate change.

Scrutiny

- 7.5 At this stage the purpose of presenting the strategy to O&S is to allow members the opportunity to review the strategy in its most recent form following both public consultation and the subsequent S114 notice.

Decision Scope

- 7.6 The committee is asked to recommend the strategy to Exec and approve for adoption later this year.

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.
- 8.2 The consultation ran in parallel with the Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which was subsequently adopted in November 2023. Consultation on both the SPD and Strategy was part of a wider Net Zero engagement plan which included the delivery of workshops and advertising material being used.
- 8.3 Further public consultation is not deemed necessary. The changes within the strategy retain the key messages and actions of the consultation document, but within the context of our statutory services and the Council's current resources.

REPORT ENDS