

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

Executive Summary

Between May – June 2023 the Council consulted on the climate change strategy 'Woking Net Zero' which provided an opportunity for members of the public to feed into the Council's plans to tackle climate change. The responses to this consultation are available in Appendix 2a-2b. This strategy was intended to replace Woking 2050 and set out ambitious net zero targets for the Council, alongside providing guidance designed to engage with all sectors within the community.

In June 2023, the Council issued a S114 notice, and difficult decisions were made, including the restructure of Council services. Given the significant change it was deemed necessary to revise the climate change strategy according to the Council's statutory duties. The strategy has been streamlined and now sets out objectives for the Council, residents and businesses to consider as we all look ahead to the national target of net zero by 2050.

For the Council these objectives provide a framework to embed the principles of sustainability within decision-making and ensure that climate change remains a priority moving forward. For residents and businesses there are also objectives to provide guidance on what the Council will do to support the transition to greener living, such as through signposting to advice or grant funding opportunities provided by partner organisations.

Climate change affects us all and will require action from all members of society at all levels to reduce our impact as a Borough. Through the adoption of the strategy the Council will acknowledge its commitment to climate change and how we plan to address it through the delivery of our statutory services.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the representations to the Climate Change Strategy consultation made between May – June 2023, attached at Appendix 2a – 2b to the report, be noted;**
- (ii) the revised Climate Change Strategy, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted and set a basis to how the Council will continue to factor in the impact of climate change within decision-making; and**
- (iii) upon adoption, the Council will embed the objectives of the Climate Change Strategy across all departments and service reviews.**

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To note the necessary revisions made to the Climate Change Strategy since public consultation and the issuing of the S114 notice which has changed how the Council operates.

The item(s) above will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to Council.

Background Papers: None.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The climate change strategy (see Appendix 1) is presented as the revised version following the Council's restructure and is intended to replace Woking 2050. It reaffirms the Council's commitment to tackling climate change through the delivery of our statutory duties.
- 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 continued the climate change 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;
 - 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 The revised strategy being presented to the Executive largely follows the same themes as the consultation version, but now covers eight themes instead of nine. These are as follows: WBC's Journey to Net Zero, Energy, Waste, Water, Transport, Economy (Business and Supply Chains), the Natural Environment, and the Built Environment.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 The strategy has been streamlined so that repetition across guidance has been removed to ensure clarity. The key focus is on presenting the objectives the Council can do according to current resources.
- 1.7 Additionally, the strategy has been set out across each theme in a clearer format and 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 we move toward net zero in 2050.

2.0 Corporate Strategy

- 2.1 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, wildlife and habitats, collaborating with partner organisations, and supporting sustainable development and a greener economy.

3.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 3.1 There are no direct risk implications associated with this report. However, without the adoption of the strategy future decision-making (or other strategic plans) may fail to acknowledge the significant risks associated with climate change.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 3.2 There are no specific 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.
- 3.3 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

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

4.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 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