

Public Document Pack

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

TUESDAY, 23RD FEBRUARY, 2021

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Please find attached supplementary papers relating to the above meeting, as follows:

Agenda No	Item
-----------	------

- | | |
|----|---|
| 8. | <u>INFORMATION NOTE - WORK PROGRAMME & ACTION TRACKER</u>
(Pages 3 - 14) |
|----|---|

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE POLICY AND COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

To highlight items scheduled in the work programme of the Cabinet Panel
on the Environment for 2020/21 following the initial meeting.

Please find attached the Climate Strategy Update 2021 and the Climate
Strategy Completed Actions 2020 for discussion.

This page is intentionally left blank

Foreword/Introduction

Foreword/Introduction by the Executive member for Environment and Leisure

What is Climate Change

Climate change refers to a large-scale identifiable change in the planet's weather patterns that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer.

The current period of warming is occurring more rapidly than in the past. Scientific evidence indicates that the natural fluctuation of temperature has been overtaken by a human-induced warming. This warming has come as a result of the changes that have occurred since the onset of the industrial revolution. These changes have serious implications for the future stability of the planet.

Mandate for Climate Action

At the twenty first meeting of the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris, member states, including the British government reached a historic agreement to strengthen the global response to Climate Change. This agreement included a landmark commitment to *“holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels”*.

Following the Paris Climate Agreement, in 2018 the United Kingdom became the first major developed economy to assess how it will meet the terms of the agreement. After an original target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% on 1990 levels and transition to a low-carbon economy by 2050, in June 2019 parliament passed legislation requiring the government to reduce the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100% relative to 1990 levels by 2050. This target was adjusted on the recommendation of the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC), following both the Paris Agreement and a report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicating aspiration to limit warming to 1.5C rather than 2C. The CCC note that the target is achievable with current technologies and improvements in people's lives, but that it will require the introduction of more stable, challenging, and well-designed policies.

Already, the increase in temperature is having widespread impacts across the UK. Over the last ten years the UK has experienced a variety of climate-related extremes, including record wet winters, major floods and heatwaves. In 2018 the UK Met office scientists published their climate projections for the next century based on different rates of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. The high emission scenario demonstrated that:

- Summer temperatures could be up to 5.4C hotter by 2070; Winters could be up to 4.2C warmer
- The chance of a summer as hot as 2018 is around 50% by 2050
- Sea levels in London could rise by up to 1.15 metres by 2100

- Average summer rainfall could decrease by up to 47 per cent by 2070, while there could be up to 35 per cent more precipitation in winter.
- The Committee for Climate Change stated in its 2018 report – *Managing the coast in a changing climate*, that coastal communities, infrastructure and landscapes in England were already under significant pressure from flooding and erosion.

Subsequently, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2018 special report on Global Warming highlighted that any effort to limit global warming to 1.5°C as agreed in the Paris accord would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society and the declaration of a Climate Emergency. In line with this, in their 2019 report the CCC similarly asserted that Climate Change requires more ambitious reductions and radical actions by national government, local authorities, businesses, communities and individuals. The CCC concluded that if radical steps are taken the UK can end its contribution to global warming within 30 years.

Current National Policy Environment

The Climate Change Act 2008 is the UK's long-term framework for tackling Climate Change. The Act aims to facilitate the UK's transition to a low-carbon economy by 2050. Since the Climate Change Act 2008, a number of national initiatives have been introduced to help meet targets.

- **The Carbon Plan 2011** identifies the emission reductions needed in five key areas of the economy; buildings; transport; industry; electricity; and agriculture to meet targets.
- **The Clean Growth Strategy 2017** outlines the plan to grow the national income while cutting greenhouse emissions.
- **The 25 Year Environment Plan** published in 2018, sets comprehensive goals and targets to improve the UK's air and water quality and protect threatened plants, trees and wildlife species.
- **The Resource and Waste Strategy 2018** outlines the actions the UK will take to minimise waste, promote resource efficiency and move towards a circular economy.
- **The Clean Air Strategy 2019** demonstrates how the national government will tackle all sources of air pollution, and boost the economy.
- **Climate Emergency Motion** affirmed Parliament's commitment to addressing Climate Change. While there is no single definition of a Climate Emergency, the general consensus is to work toward becoming carbon-neutral by 2030.

At the Paris Climate Conference (COP21) Agreement placed emphasis on the notion that the real solution to climate change would require wide scale collaboration and sharing of best practices. Whilst Britain leaving the EU will not necessarily mean that Britain will stop collaborating with international partners, there may be a change in the manner this collaboration takes place

NHDC Approach

Climate action has been a long-term corporate priority area for NHDC, and it is currently pursued through our objective to *Respond to Challenges in the Environment*. The warming of the earth brings milder and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers, more intense

downpours and more frequent and intense flooding for North Hertfordshire. These changes pose great risk to the Council's service delivery. In accordance with this, the Council will continue to provide a clean and safe environment, in consultation and partnership with local people. We will continue to protect the natural and built-up environments and address the impacts of the climate emergency; in our approach to waste and recycling, food hygiene, environmental crime and the management of air quality areas.

Over the last two decades the Council has worked continuously to reduce our waste, reduce our CO₂ emissions and improve energy efficiency across the district. In 2007 we signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. In 2009 we published our original Climate Change Strategy, which we updated in 2013. Since then, the Council has passed several motions with the aim of encouraging residents, businesses and Council staff to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle plastics. Most notably, in 2019, the Council passed a motion to declare a Climate Emergency, in this motion the Council pledged their commitment to do everything within its power to make North Hertfordshire Carbon Zero by 2030. This declaration asserted the Council's commitment toward Climate Action beyond current government targets and international agreements.

Following this declaration, the Council established a Cabinet Panel on the Environment. The Panel is an advisory panel chaired by the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure, and Recycling and Waste alternatively. The panel meets approximately six times per year, and the community and any person or body are welcomed and enabled to participate at meetings.

As part of the declaration, when Council policies are reviewed, specific consideration is given to how the policies and related decisions and actions affect our contribution to climate change, and where necessary, update these policies to reduce our impact where possible. The inclusion of an Environmental implications section within the report and delegated decision template will ensure that impacts and mitigation measures and risks are identified at an early stage.

The Council has formed a Climate Change Implementation Group which has begun meeting regularly. This group supports and receives input from the Cabinet Panel, co-ordinates and formulates climate change actions and makes recommendations in relation to policy development.

The Council will undertake to conduct regular analysis of our activities in order to identify gaps for further action.

The Climate Change Strategy relates primarily to the reduction of carbon emissions but in conjunction with the Environment Panel and the Implementation Group, the Council is enabled to address the full range of issues relating to climate change (both mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of climate change) and environmental matters (such as biodiversity and waste) in North Hertfordshire.

As such, this Strategy contains certain actions related to waste and biodiversity in so far as they relate to carbon and greenhouse gas reduction. For instance, a particular form of organic waste management called anaerobic digestion captures the greenhouse gases that may be otherwise released from alternate waste handling practices, and produces a source

of renewable energy. As such, use of this management process has the potential to limit greenhouse gas emissions and to reduce future reliance on carbon.

High biodiversity levels can improve ecosystem reliability and increase the effectiveness of their functions, one of which is carbon capture. Recent research, for example, has shown that high levels of plant diversity can enhance storage of soil organic carbon.

Trees are probably those most often noted for their carbon sequestration abilities, but hedgerows, grasslands, and wildflower areas also have the capacity to absorb significant amounts of carbon, storing it in woody growth, in leaves, in roots and in the soil.

Efforts to increase biodiversity can therefore be an important means of reducing the amount of carbon dioxide currently in the atmosphere and of off-setting future carbon emissions.

The Council remains committed to playing a leadership role in local efforts to address the climate emergency. We will continue to approach climate action in an inclusive, fair and effective manner. However, with limited policy tools and resources available, successfully achieving carbon zero aspirations will require cross sector partnerships between NHDC, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), the Hertfordshire Climate Change Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) - which is comprised of HCC, all ten district and borough councils, and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership - local businesses, and voluntary and community groups.

Objectives

- Achieve Carbon Neutrality for the Council's own operations by 2030 (at least Scope 1 and Scope 2)ⁱ.
- Ensure all operations and services are resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- Achieve a Net Zero Carbon district by 2050.
- Become a district that is resilient to unavoidable impacts of climate change.

Strategic Priorities

1. Taking Action – taking direct action to reduce the Council's carbon emissions.
2. Enabling Savings – ensuring that our policies enable citizens and businesses to reduce their emissions.
3. Inspiring the Community – encouraging citizens and businesses to take action to go further and faster in cutting carbon emissions.

1. Taking Action – taking direct action to reduce the Council's carbon emissions

Overview

The UK Committee on Climate Change has identified reducing emissions from local authority owned buildings, estates and operations as a key responsibility for local authorities. NHDC has made significant efforts to reduce emissions from its estate and operations over the past eighteen years and will continue to plan our work with a view to reducing our energy usage from our own estate. The **three** key areas of focus, below

contribute most to the Council's carbon footprint and are areas where the Council has the most scope to influence emissions:

- A. Reducing emissions from the District Council's estate and operations.
- B. Reducing the need to travel and improving use of sustainable transport in our operations.
- C. Reducing our consumption of resources, increasing recycling and reducing waste.

2. Enabling Carbon Savings – ensuring that our policies enable citizens and businesses to reduce their emissions

Overview

The UK Committee on Climate Change emphasises the leadership role local authorities have in supporting residents and businesses to reduce their emissions. The Council will continue seeking to ensure that its policies open up opportunities which enable and make it easier for citizens and businesses to reduce their own emissions. This will include seeking to provide leadership and support for both businesses and residents to adapt to the impacts of planning projects and switch to renewable energy sources.

3. Inspiring the Community – encouraging citizens and businesses to take action to go further and faster in cutting carbon emissions

Overview

The Climate Emergency is a wide-spread cross-cutting issue, and requires a concerted and coordinated effort. In recognition of the value of community-led responses in helping contribute to the wider decarbonisation of the district and to reaching the national net zero target of 2050ⁱⁱ, inspiring the community forms a key part of the strategy. Local authorities can play a key role in stimulating community-led action and in encouraging behaviour change which will see residents, community groups, and businesses reduce their impact on the environment and make more sustainable choices. We will continue to work in partnership with those in our community in order to consult, inform, and inspire action which will ensure we mitigate and adapt to the Climate Emergency.

Measuring, Monitoring and Evaluating Impact

This strategy is accompanied by an Action Plan (appendix A), and a List of Achievements (appendix B). Impact and delivery of the strategy will be measured and monitored annually, and a fuller evaluation will be undertaken in 2025. In addition to this, the Strategy will undergo an annual review which will consider whether it needs to be amended or added to, based on developments in national policy, new research, changed circumstances, or our own gap analysis (see NHDC Approach).

ⁱ According to the Carbon Trust, Scope 1 covers direct emissions from owned or controlled sources. Scope 2 covers indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating and cooling consumed by the reporting company. Scope 3 includes all other indirect emissions that occur in a company's value chain <https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/briefing-what-are-scope-3-emissions>

ⁱⁱ In June 2019, parliament passed legislation requiring the government to reduce the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100% relative to 1990 levels by 2050. In December 2020, the Prime Minister announced a new target to reduce the UK's emissions by at least 68% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.

North Hertfordshire District Council Climate Change Strategy Completed Actions 2020

REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

- **We have engaged a consultant to help identify the Council's current carbon footprint.**

- We have received a report detailing the carbon emissions from our main sites and buildings, as well as energy efficiency measures and possibilities for investment in renewable energy which could help the Council reduce its carbon footprint.
- We have created an action tracker based on the energy efficiency measures recommended in the report.
- We are also having the emissions related to the Council's vehicle fleet, grey fleet, commuting, water, and waste assessed, and expect to receive similar reports for these elements which lay out the opportunities for carbon reduction.

- **The Council has made the switch to renewable electricity and green gas to power and heat our buildings.**

- **The Council has worked with Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) to eliminate single use plastics from Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools.**

- Blue plastic overshoes were removed from Royston Leisure Centre and Hitchin Swim Centre on 13/12/2019 and 24/02/2020 respectively.



REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

- **Changes to the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy were approved to limit emissions. These changes included:**

- No idling points system introduced to enforce against drivers who do not comply.
- Restricted use taxi ranks - when the infrastructure is in place, it is intended to restrict use of prime location taxi ranks to environmentally friendly vehicles. This serves both as an incentive for licence holders to purchase environmentally friendly vehicles and addresses the issue of vehicle emissions in residential areas such as town centres.
- Require all new and replaced vehicles from 2028 to be ultralow emission vehicles (uLEVs) – this allows trade time to prepare ahead of the government target date with local regulation.

- **The council's Community Safety Team have replaced their vehicles with new, hybrid, Ultra Low Emission Vehicles**

- **Regular meetings are now taking place to engage with the local community about public transport.**

- Forum meetings are being held regularly, with the most recent having taken place in January 2021.

- **Our Estates & Asset Management have placed increased emphasis on introducing green clauses in leases and other property agreements.**

- **As part of the 'Sustainable North Hertfordshire', we have worked to develop and support policies that encourage electric vehicle use and other 'cleaner air' initiatives.**

- For example, we carried out a consultation to inform the development of an Electric Vehicle Strategy and are looking at options for electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

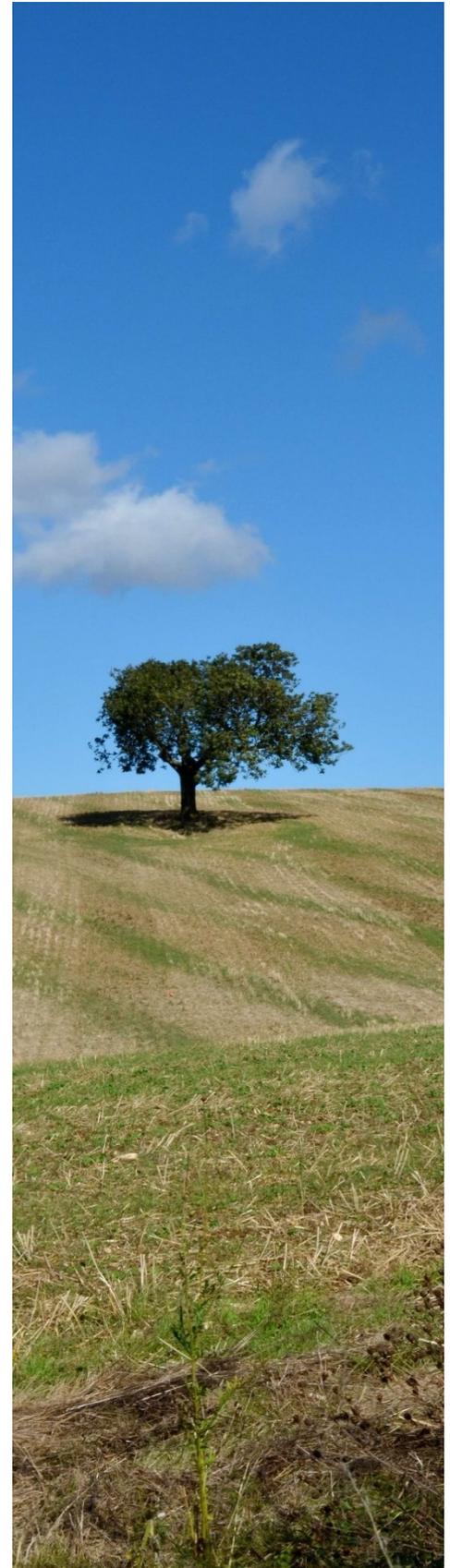


REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

- **We have committed to using the Section 106 Sustainable Transport Funds** we currently hold for measures that encourage cycling and walking as well as public transport.
- **We have made a successful submission for Hitchin to be part of the Intalink Feasibility studies.** This is a collaboration between Hertfordshire County Council, bus rail operators, district and borough councils in order to improve the bus network and user experience.
 - This will see bus priority measures in Hitchin from 2022-2023.
- **Letchworth Garden City and Royston have been approved for inclusion in the first round of the Sustainable Travel Towns Programme.**

LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE DISTRICT

- **We have continued to engage with individuals and the community**, to act as a sounding board on community ideas and projects, and to seek evidence and views as appropriate through our Cabinet Panel on the Environment. The panel has held the following meetings:
 - 7 July 2020: Introductory Session - Reducing Emissions from Transport and Travel
 - 9 September 2020: A New 'Normal' - Recovering from the Pandemic (to include biodiversity, air quality, and council operations moving forward)
 - 17 November 2020: Food Waste, Waste, and Recycling (to include food waste reduction and capture from the residual stream)



LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE DISTRICT

- **We have invested in glassware and related commercial cleaning equipment for events at Hitchin Town Hall, in order to avoid plastic.**

- Where glassware is inappropriate for an event, we have replaced plastic vessels with compostable alternatives.

- **We have appointed a Waste Awareness Officer to increase public awareness of waste and recycling issues.**

- **We have installed nine new on-street recycling bins in Royston Town Centre.**

- **We established Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Events**, to help residents dispose of their electrical equipment to be repurposed/recycled. These events have currently been put on hold due to the pandemic.

- **We led environmental health action days** such as those held on the 9/12/2019 in Letchworth and the 3/12/2019 in Hitchin. (with topics including dog fouling, fly tipping, and dumping of waste).

- **The Corporate Policy Team have created a regular update of actions that support the Council's aim to reduce its impact on the environment.** This is posted to the Council's website on its 'Climate Change' page in order to keep residents informed.

- **A Green Space Audit has been completed.**

- This has identified areas within the district where biodiversity can be encouraged through annual 'cut and lifts', wildflower meadows, hedgerows, woodland edge creation and tree planting.



PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- **We continue to work within the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP)** which brings together representatives from Hertfordshire County Council, all 10 district councils, the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, as well as external stakeholders and experts such as water companies and the Herts Middlesex Wildlife Trust, to tackle climate change in the county.

- As part of this partnership we have led the Biodiversity Subgroup which seeks to explore ways of conserving and improving biodiversity in Hertfordshire.
- We have produced a scoping document for a county-wide biodiversity baseline. This will enable us to understand the state of biodiversity in Hertfordshire as well as lay the foundations for exploring what and where are the key opportunities for increasing biodiversity.

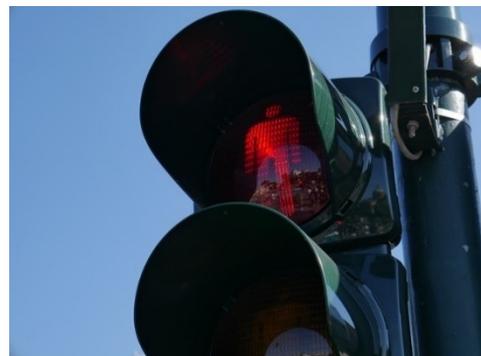
- **We took a role at the virtual HCCSP annual conference on the 3rd December to highlight the strategic work of the partnership.** All ten districts informed the attendees of the work of the sub- groups and answered a range of questions at the Q&A plenary session.

- **We have worked with Hertfordshire County Council to deliver new cycle stands in the district as part of the Department for Transport Emergency Active Travel Fund.**

- **We have continued to work with Hertfordshire County Council to develop a Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan.**

- **We have continued to work with Plastic Free Letchworth and Plastic Free Hitchin to deliver Plastic Free Communities.**

The Climate Change Strategy has been reviewed in 2021 and these achieved outcomes are in line with targets set in the previous year. Impact will be measured and monitored annually, and a full evaluation will be undertaken in 2025.



This page is intentionally left blank