

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Climate Change Strategy 2022-2027

REPORT OF: POLICY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member for the Environment and Leisure

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report proposes a refreshed version of the Climate Change Strategy that was originally adopted in 2020, and amended in 2021. This refreshed version is The Climate Change Strategy 2022-2027.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Cabinet adopt the following documents, taking into consideration the additional actions proposed under each priority area:

- Appendix 1 Climate Change Strategy 2022-2027
- Appendix A Proposed Actions
- Appendix B Achievements

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 In 2019, the Council passed a motion to declare a Climate Emergency. In this motion the Council pledged their commitment to do everything within their power to become carbon neutral by 2030. This iteration of the Strategy has been revised to reflect the latest legislation, research, and best practice; and includes additional proposed actions under each priority area to respond to gaps we have identified. Appendix B Achievements lays out progress against each action.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 There are no alternative options to be considered.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 The additional proposed actions have been consulted on with the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure, the Officer Lead for Climate Change, and, where relevant, other Executive Members and Service Directors.

5.2 More broadly, the discussions at the Cabinet Panel for the Environment have been taken into consideration in the renewal of the Strategy.

5.3 The original version of this Strategy (including completed and proposed actions) was agreed by the Leadership Team (comprising of Managing Director and Service

Directors), Executive members and Public Liaison Board, as part of the approval process.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 6th September 2022.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The Council has considered climate action to be one of its long-term priority areas for a number of years. Currently this is expressed through the priority of Sustainability in the Council Plan. Following the passing of the Climate Change Emergency Motion in 2019, a new Climate Change Strategy was adopted in 2020.
- 7.2 This version of the Strategy will be the third iteration, with the 2021 version amending the priorities, reiterating the target for the Council's operations to be net zero by 2030, and bringing forward the target for North Herts to be a net zero district from 2050 to 2040.
- 7.3 The first priority of the Strategy (*Taking Action*) is designed to further progress towards the 2030 target, while the second and third priorities (*Enabling Savings*, and *Inspiring the Community*, respectively) are designed to work towards the 2040 target for the wider district.
- 7.4 The Climate Change Strategy relates largely to the reduction of carbon emissions but some actions around adaptation, biodiversity, and broader sustainability initiatives (such as plastic reduction) are also included to enable the Council to address the full range of environmental issues. With this mind, the Strategy will act as the foundation upon which actions arising from other service areas across the Council are built.
- 7.5 The Council has the ability to influence emissions which occur as a direct result of its own operations, and can utilise its role as a Local Planning Authority (LPA) to improve environmental standards of development within the district. The Council can enhance nature through the decisions it makes on management of its own greenspaces, and also has a role to play in encouraging and making it easier for our residents and businesses to live and operate in a more environmentally-friendly way. As such, the Climate Change Strategy encompasses a wide range of areas for action.
- 7.6 In the interests of accountability, transparency, and effective monitoring, the new Appendix B Achievements highlights progress against each of the proposed actions listed in Appendix A. This is a clarified way of reporting on our progress and will allow us to identify areas for greater focus.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Strategy outlines the international frameworks and agreements that informed the global response to Climate Change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s 2018 special report on Global Warming highlighted that we should aim to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change, but noted that efforts to do this (as agreed at the Paris Accord) would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society. In tandem, the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC) similarly asserted in 2019, 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.

- 8.2 In line with this research, The Climate Change Act 2008 was amended in 2019 to introduce a target for a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 came into effect on June 2019. Additionally, in December 2020, the UK Prime Minister announced a new target to reduce the UK's emissions by at least 68% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. In April 2021, ahead of hosting COP26 (United Nations Climate Change Conference) the government built on these commitments by setting into law the target to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.
- 8.3 The government have also published The Climate Change Strategy 2021-24 which outlines how the government will meet its climate commitments via five strategic pillars, and the Net Zero Strategy 2021 sets how the UK will deliver on its commitment to reach net zero by 2050.
- 8.4 The most recent IPCC report (2022) finds that, globally, greenhouse gas emissions are continuing to rise and that current plans to address climate change are not ambitious enough to limit warming to 1.5°C. The latest UN report (2022) found that globally, existing carbon-cutting policies are likely to lead to 2.8°C warming. If stated pledges are delivered upon, warming is likely to reach 2.6°C, meaning that further pledges are necessary in order to limit warming to 1.5°C.
- 8.5 In light of this research, the revised Strategy proposes additional actions under each priority area, and has a renewed focus on adaptation to climate change.
- 8.6 Appendix A proposes an additional action under the Taking Action priority which states:

All council owned or leased cars and light goods vehicles acquired from 2025 onwards to be zero emission wherever feasible. All heavy goods vehicles acquired from 2025 will have the lowest practical emissions at the time of acquisition. The council will ensure that it has a strategy for dealing with the emissions of any such vehicles by 2030 (if they are expected to be still in use at that time) as part of its organisation wide offsetting plans.

With regards to this, the July 2019 Full Council motion on the transition to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) should be noted. This was resolved:

*“(1) The Council undertakes to only lease or purchase Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (including Electric Vehicles and Plug in Hybrids PHEVs) when the replacement of any council owned or leased vehicle is due. This also includes any company cars used by officers;
(2) The Council also undertakes to encourage all of its contractors to adopt similar measures;
(3) That the implementation of these undertakings shall be subject to agreement by the Cabinet.”*

<https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/b7091/Notice%20of%20Motion%20-%20Ultra%20Low%20Emission%20Vehicles%2011th-Jul-2019%2019.30%20Council.pdf?T=9>

The new proposed action seeks to further progress the work which the 2019 motion initiated, with recognition that there may be instances in which it is not possible for certain vehicles to be replaced with zero emission models within the indicated timeframe.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet's Terms of Reference include at 5.6.1 the power 'to prepare and agree to implement policies and strategies other than those reserved to Council'. The proposed actions at Appendix A detail how the Council plans to meet its target of being carbon neutral in its own operations by 2030, and furthers the priority of Sustainability, as laid out in the Council Plan 2022-2027. The Council Plan's strategic priorities for 2022-2027 provide high level reference points to assist the Council making clear and effective decisions to reduce environmental impact.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 A number of the proposed actions detailed in Appendix A will require additional resource and costs to achieve. This is likely to include both revenue and capital costs. Some of those actions could then deliver future reductions in costs (e.g. where they then reduce energy usage), but the pay-back of these projects is generally quite long. As part of the annual budget planning process each year it will be necessary to prioritise determine the actions that can be achieved in the coming year(s), and the costs involved (including whether they are capital or revenue). There will be a need to prioritise the actions, in terms of the extent to which they can be delivered and the timing of delivery, to ensure that the overall programme is affordable within the resources that the Council has available. The Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2023-28 sets a target for the delivery of net savings of £2.6m per year by the end of 2027/28. As this is a net target, this does allow for additional costs relating to new priorities but does require that these will increase the gross savings (efficiencies, income generation or service changes) that need to be delivered. Some of the proposed actions will involve capital expenditure. Whilst this will come from capital funding sources (including borrowing), this will also have revenue budget implications/ opportunity costs. A business case will be required to assess the financial and environmental case. Where available the Council will look to access funding from other sources.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Failure to adopt a refreshed Strategy and action plan could lead to a lack of focus and an uncoordinated approach to delivering the Climate Change related activities that will help the Council achieve its priorities. If the Council fails to plan and respond to the potential negative impacts of Climate Change, there is a risk that services are not able to adapt or respond to changes linked to Climate Change. This could lead to services becoming less resilient and becoming ineffective in responding to changing needs.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. There are no direct negative impacts attached to this Strategy. However further equality impact assessments may be undertaken for individual proposed projects.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 Each of the Proposed Actions will have an individual Environmental impact assessment completed as the projects come to fruition.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 A number of the proposed actions detailed in Appendix A will require additional staffing resource to achieve. They will have impacts across a number of teams including planning, estates, property services, leisure, waste, green space, parking and policy. Some of the work may be able to be incorporated in to existing and developing work plans, but it will mean that other activities will be deprioritised.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1. Appendix 1 – Climate Change Strategy 2022-27
15.2. Appendix A – Proposed Actions
15.3. Appendix B - Achievements

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 [Previous Climate Change Strategy 2021-2026](#)