

**6a REFERRAL FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 6 DECEMBER 2022
– CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2022-2027**

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (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
- (2) That Cabinet reflects the Climate Change Strategy for contracted services when considering the revision of the Procurement Policy.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: 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.

Councillor Steve Jarvis presented the report entitled 'Climate Change Strategy 2022-2027' and advised of the following:

- This was an update to the previously adopted Climate Change Strategy and was updated to reflect changes, nationally and locally, that had occurred.
- There were mitigation and adaption proposals included and some of these would be taken alongside partners, such as the Herts Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP).
- Objectives of the strategy, such as achieving carbon neutral Council by 2030, creating Council operations that are resilient to Climate Change, achieving a net zero district by 2040 and creating resilience across the district, remain unchanged.
- The principle areas of action, taking action on the emissions of the Council, enabling emissions savings in the community and inspiring the community to reduce emissions, also remain unchanged.
- A lot of work had been done to understand what the emissions of the Council were and what could be done to offset these. It was clear from this that it would require a combination of tree planting and renewable energy generation, but there was still work to be done to understand how the required level of offsetting could be met.
- There were proposals to move away from requiring new vehicles to be Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles, to be required to be zero emissions from 2025, where possible.
- Progress to date had been provided in the report.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Tony Hunter
- Councillor Adam Compton

In response to questions, Cllr Jarvis advised:

- There had been a lot of work to estimate the emissions of the Council and it was around the level to be expected.
- One issue with comparisons is that various authorities have approached this in different ways. Scope 1 and 2 emissions have to be included, these are the direct emissions of the Council and the indirect emissions respectively, but some, including North Herts, have included Scope 3 emissions, which regard the emissions of staff.
- There was also an appreciation that the emissions of contractors employed to run services should be included.
- There had been a number of considerations on working from home and the effect of this would depend on the nature of the job and the personal circumstances of the employee. There may be instances where emissions could be reduced by working in an office, but this would not always be the case.
- Instilling behavioural changes was the most difficult part of the Strategy, but it was also the most rewarding if done correctly. As the Council amounted for less than 1% of the district emissions, there was a need to bring the communities with it.
- Some members of the public had reported an interest in solar panels following the Council's bulk buy scheme, despite not formally signing up to the scheme at the time, which demonstrated the community leadership of the Council.
- Changing behaviour is complex and needs to be carried out in various ways. North Herts had the Cabinet Panel on Environment to involve those already engaged and was set to attend an event a year in each of the towns in the district to promote Council actions and support. Engagement with schools had not yet been possible due to issues accessing schools during the pandemic.
- One of the five themes of the HSSCP is on behavioural change and it was important that the Council worked with community groups and partners across the district on this aspect.
- The emissions of contractors providing Council services, such as John O'Connor and Urbaser, have been included in the Scope 1 and 2 emissions of the Council, due to the nature of these relationships. The Scope 3 emissions of contractors was not currently being monitored.
- The leisure centres in the district were included within the Scope 1 and 2 emissions of the Council. The figure could be reduced by 60% if the leisure centre emissions were removed from the calculations.
- There was the possibility that the review of the procurement process could take into account the policies in the Strategy.
- Some suppliers are custom built services for the Council and it was deemed appropriate to include these, others are "off the shelf" or occasional services and it was felt that there was no need to put a disproportionate response into contractors which represent a small amount of emissions.
- The emissions of big or industrial businesses in the district was better for the LEP to deal with, and the LEP represented on the HCCSP.
- There was a scheme run by West Suffolk Council in which the Council would install solar panels on the roofs of industrial buildings and then sells the energy produced back to the companies, which is being explored by the Enterprise team at North Herts.

In response to questions the Policy Officer advised that the LGA had started to look at the relationship between working from home and emissions, but at this stage it remained in the early stages and was dependents on a lot of factors. The impression at the moment was that there was a benefit with regard to emissions for those who work in the office and live within 20 minutes commute.

Councillor Phil Weeder proposed and Councillor Adam Compton seconded and, following a vote, it was:

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The reports and papers associated with this item can be viewed here: [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 6th December, 2022, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)