

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 3 SEPTEMBER 2019

COUNCIL - 18 SEPTEMBER 2019

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**Title:**

**CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Steve Williams]**

**[Wards Affected: All Wards]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

To consider a report requesting the Council to declare a Climate Emergency.

**The Executive recommends to Council that:**

- i) Waverley Borough Council declares a ‘Climate Emergency’ requiring urgent action.**
  - ii) Waverley Borough Council aims to become carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions, and takes a leadership role to achieve this working with other councils, including town and parish councils within the borough.**
  - iii) Waverley Borough Council recognises that the achievement of the target will require central government to provide the powers, funding and other resources to achieve the target and therefore calls on the government to provide such powers, funding and other resources as appropriate to facilitate achieving the 2030 target.**
  - iv) Officers be instructed to provide to the Council’s Executive, within six months of the date of this decision, a report on the actions the Council and the local community can take to address these issues together with an action plan, specifying year on year milestones and metrics to show progress towards achieving the goal of carbon neutrality by 2030 noting any additional costs that might be involved.**
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**How this report relates to the Council’s Corporate Priorities:**

The declaration of a Climate Emergency and the subsequent action plan will reduce the impact of carbon emissions on the environment, enhancing Waverley as a Place and improving the health and well-being of the People in accordance with the Council’s corporate priorities.

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

Any equality and diversity implications will be assessed as the action plan is developed.

**Financial Implications:**

Budget implications will be determined for all actions identified.

## **Legal Implications:**

Further work is required before the legal implications of a Climate Emergency declaration can be established. This work will be undertaken as part of the preparation of the six-month report to the Executive referred to in the Recommendation below, and as part of the supporting action plan.

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## **1. Background – The need to limit global warming**

### **1.1 IPCC report and context**

1.1.1 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a special report in October 2018<sup>1</sup> on the subject of ‘Global Warming of 1.5°C’. The report is an international effort to summarise the current scientific consensus on how society might limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, as well as the likely consequences of this and greater levels of warming. The report states that:

- human activity has already caused 1°C of warming to the earth.
- to limit warming to 1.5°C it will be necessary to halve global carbon emissions<sup>2</sup> by 2030 and to achieve near-zero net emissions by 2050.
- the consequences of 2°C warming are significantly worse than 1.5°C warming across all areas considered in the report.

1.1.2 At present, humanity is falling far short of the action necessary to limit warming to even 2°C. The likely global failure to achieve this target would result in increasingly severe consequences including very large scale water and food shortages, widespread flooding, heat-related morbidity and large scale destruction of the natural world and its bio-diversity.

1.1.3 These would result in substantial political and economic instability. The magnitude of the changes is difficult to quantify exactly, but the likely results are grave, both internationally and more locally. These changes are already in progress, and unless curtailed are likely to severely affect all of society before the end of the century.

### **1.2 IPBES report and context**

1.2.1 In its recent report the Intergovernmental Science – Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services<sup>3</sup> highlighted nature’s dangerous decline and unprecedented rates of species extinction that are accelerating. It identified that the current global response is ‘insufficient’ and transformative changes were needed to restore and protect nature.

1.2.2 These concerns are echoed in the Government’s 25-year plan for the environment<sup>4</sup> which states that “We are in danger of presiding over massive human-induced extinctions when we should instead be recognizing the intrinsic value of the wildlife and plants that are our fellow inhabitants of this planet.”

1.2.3 In recognition of this crisis the former Prime Minister has stated the ambition to “become the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it and pass on to the next generation a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future.”

1.2.4 Waverley Borough Council has a critical role in helping to achieve this locally.

## **2. Becoming a Carbon Neutral Council**

- 2.1 To become a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030 is a very ambitious target and will require the Council to work in partnership with a wide range of partners.
- 2.2 The changes required over the next 11 years to become carbon neutral are already well documented. They are, by and large, the changes required nationally and across every other part of the UK to move to a low carbon economy, as documented in official Government national strategies and plans as well as in various reports by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).
- 2.3 It is clear that the ambitious targets involved cannot be realised by local government acting alone; it will require concerted effort from national government, national network operators, national and local business and finance working together. However, there are a number of crucial roles that a council can play working in partnership with their citizens, key statutory and non-statutory partners and, most importantly, with businesses. These include leadership and delivery, coordination, engagement, policy, and planning.

## **3. Our place in reducing CO2 emissions and biodiversity decline**

- 3.1 Carbon emissions reporting from local authority operations has been a requirement for Local authorities since 2008 as part of the Nation Indicators introduced at the time. After the NI withdrawal, it became a requirement to monitor and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions under the Greenhouse Gas Protocol.
- 3.2 Monitoring and reducing carbon emissions is not new to Waverley. Carbon emissions are monitored and reported annually. In 2010 Waverley adopted a Carbon Management Plan 2010-2015, that committed the Council to reducing carbon emissions from its own operations and buildings by 25% by 2015 from 2008 levels. This Plan was replaced by the Energy Efficiency Plan 2015-2020<sup>5</sup> which committed the council to reducing its energy and carbon emissions by 3% year on year from 2014/15 levels, in line with the GHG reporting.
- 3.3 Over the past 9 years Waverley has implemented a number of energy efficiency projects including, installations of LED lighting in all car parks and part of the offices at the Burys, efficient boiler replacements, installation of a combined heat and Power plant at Haslemere leisure centre, solar photovoltaic installation at the Burys, Godalming, Cranleigh and Haslemere leisure centres as well as looking at ways to increase the fuel efficiency of contractor vehicles.
- 3.4 Waverley is serving in increasing number of people every year by delivering a variety of services. In 2017-18, the council offices at the Burys have seen a 13% reduction in net emissions. The emissions per visitor from the leisure centres have reduced by 17% although there was an increase in the actual emissions and number of visitors. These reductions are in relation to 2014-15 levels.
- 3.5 Waverley Borough Council must acknowledge the urgent need for global society to reduce carbon emissions and conserve biodiversity. We need to recognise the part that we have to play and commit to taking an active role in achieving this, by:

- leading by example by proactively reducing our CO2 emissions as an organisation and improving biodiversity across our estate;
- seeking to encourage and enable our community to decrease their emissions and improve their resilience to climate change and to enhance wildlife;
- raising awareness of the impact on the environment of purchasing animal products derived from livestock where the intensive breeding of such livestock, generates significant levels of methane which in turn increases levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere;
- seeking to influence the policies of other organisations such as the parish and town councils and Surrey County Council to encourage them to reduce their emissions and enhance biodiversity and also support any decisions they might take to pursue a similar policy.

3.6 The Council must acknowledge that ‘business as usual’ is not an option in the face of this climate and biodiversity emergency, and that society in its current form is unsustainable. Therefore, to meet our obligations above, we will need to assess and adjust our current activities both in terms of their scope, and how we are undertaking them.

4.1 The Executive has noted that:

- i. the continuing rise in greenhouse gases, if not addressed, represents an existential threat to our civilisation on this planet.
- ii. the impacts of climate breakdown are already causing serious damage around the world.
- iii. the recent 2018 IPCC report stated that we had just 12 years to act on climate change if global temperature rises are to be kept within the recommended 1.5 degrees Celsius; this assumes we reduce emissions to net zero by 2050 from the current 40+ billion tonnes.
- iv. such a reduction will require (in the words of the IPCC) “*rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems. These systems transitions are unprecedented in terms of scale, but not necessarily in terms of speed, and imply deep emissions reductions in all sectors, a wide portfolio of mitigation options and a significant upscaling of investments in those options*”.
- v. all governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to act, and local governments that recognise this should not wait for their national governments to change their policies.
- vi. strong policies to cut emissions also have associated health, wellbeing and economic benefits.
- vii. central government has committed to a zero-carbon national target and has adopted a policy whereby sales of petrol and diesel engine cars and vans, one of the main causes of emissions resulting in climate change, are to be totally phased out.

- viii. a growing number of UK local authorities have already passed 'Climate Emergency' motions in recognition of the urgency of the climate crisis.
- ix. Waverley Borough Council and other local authorities working to ambitious targets for achieving net zero carbon emissions will require additional urgent support from central government in order to achieve their goals.

## **Recommendation**

### **The Executive recommends to Council that:**

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- iii) Waverley Borough Council recognises that the achievement of the target will require central government to provide the powers, funding and other resources to achieve the target and therefore calls on the government to provide such powers, funding and other resources as appropriate to facilitate achieving the 2030 target.**
- iv) Officers be instructed to provide to the Council's Executive, within six months of the date of this decision, a report on the actions the Council and the local community can take to address these issues together with an action plan, specifying year on year milestones and metrics to show progress towards achieving the goal of carbon neutrality by 2030 noting any additional costs that might be involved.**

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### Background Papers

- 1. [www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/](http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/)
- 2. "Scope 1 and 2 cover direct emissions sources (e.g., fuel used in company vehicles and purchased electricity), scope 3 emissions cover all indirect emissions due to the activities of an organization." [www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions/](http://www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions/)
- 3. [www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment](http://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment)
- 4. [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#)
- 5. Waverley Energy Efficiency Plan 2015-2020

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