

# **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **EXECUTIVE**

**3 MARCH 2020**

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**Title:**

**Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy and  
Climate Emergency Action Plan**

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**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Williams, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability

**Head of Service:** Richard Homewood, Head of Environmental and Regulatory Services

**Key decision:** Yes

**Access:** Public

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### **1. Purpose and summary**

1.1 In September 2019, the Council joined a growing number of Councils that made a commitment to taking urgent action to address Climate Change and aim to become Carbon Neutral by 2030. It was agreed that an Action Plan would be produced specifying how the target will be achieved within 6 months of the commitment.

1.2 This report presents the draft Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy (Annexe 1) and the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan (Annexe 2) bringing together input from all Council services. The Strategy outlines Waverley's strategic commitment to addressing the causes and impact of Climate Change as well as wider sustainability. The Action Plan sets out the specific measures that will be taken in order to achieve the Councils commitment. It will be a living document, the actions within it will evolve and change throughout its life as new budgets and external funding opportunities become available and changes in technology take place to permit further work to be carried out.

### **2. Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Executive:

- a. Notes the draft Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2020-2030 at Annexe 1.
- b. Welcomes the work carried out so far on the development of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and notes its content, attached in Annexe 2.
- c. Recognises the need for further work to define SMART targets that will be measurable and tangible and request that officers present those in September 2020.

- d. Invites the Environment O&S Committee to contribute to the further development of the draft Strategy and the draft Action Plan.

### **3. Reason for the recommendation**

To update the Executive on progress with the development of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

### **4. Background**

- 4.1 In September 2019, the Council joined a growing number of Councils that made a commitment to taking urgent action to address Climate Change and aim to become Carbon Neutral by 2030. It was agreed that an Action Plan would be produced specifying how the target will be achieved within 6 months of the commitment.
- 4.2 Although most solutions to tackle Climate Change sit at national and international level, Local Authorities, businesses and the wider community have a vital role to play in reducing the impact of climate change. The overall target is incredibly ambitious and potentially unachievable within the current funding, resource availability and technological innovation. Officers will work towards significantly reducing Waverley's impact on climate change and will strive to get as close as possible to carbon neutrality.
- 4.3 Waverley is not alone in this and a number of other Councils face the same challenges. This ambitious target cannot be delivered without major changes in national policies, further funding availability and close working with key partners. Lobbying the government and other relevant organisations forms a major part of the action plan delivery. It is essential to enable carbon neutrality.

### **Draft Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy**

- 4.4 The Strategy's vision is to meet the needs of all the people in Waverley and promote sustainability to everyone whilst mitigating the effect of climate change to avoid compromising the needs of future generations.
- 4.5 The aim of this Strategy is to provide an overarching framework to guide the Council in integrating and coordinating the principles of sustainability and the need to reduce carbon emissions across all its strategies, plans, policies and actions and, in turn, to influence and provide direction on sustainability issues to the businesses and residents of Waverley.

### **Draft Climate Emergency Action Plan**

- 4.6 The draft Action Plan outlines short, medium and long-term actions. It takes a holistic view of sustainability not only addressing energy and fuel consumption but also the way we manage waste, encourage locally grown food, improve air quality and identify opportunities to offset carbon through managing greenspaces and planting trees. Getting our house in order is an important element of the plan but also leading and encouraging the wider community to consider how they can become more carbon conscious in their daily activities.

- 4.7 The scope of this work is very complex with a wide variety of elements within it. It will be challenging to quantify the overall target with one uniformed metric. In order to enable the Council to demonstrate its achievements throughout the 10-year period of the plan it is essential that the baseline and targets are agreed by the Executive are meaningful, tangible and measurable. Further work will be required by officers to refine this element of the Action Plan.
- 4.8 The journey to becoming carbon neutral offers great opportunities but also comes with many challenges and limitations, some of which are outlined below. While we have direct control over the environmental impact of the Council's operations and assets there are still important decisions that have to be taken that will involve the consideration of competing priorities.
- 4.9 The Council is facing significant financial pressures therefore **budgets** will have to be considered very carefully. Energy efficiency comes with a cost and the Council will need to consider quality over quantity in areas such as new housing. It would be feasible to commit to building zero carbon homes but there would be fewer of them in order to stay within the agreed budgets.
- 4.10 The Council has limited **resources** in terms of staff time and in-house expertise. Significant consideration should be given to how teams are resourced and equipped to deliver the commitments outlined within the Action Plan.
- 4.11 While there is a lot of innovation in **low carbon technologies** and renewables, most of it is not yet at a stage to be widely rolled out and in many cases is unaffordable.
- 4.12 **Partner/stakeholder engagement** is a significant element of the Action Plan delivery and this comes with its own challenges, as different organisational priorities could be in conflict. The Council outsources its biggest services, which will require negotiation with contractors in order for them to share our carbon aspirations.
- 4.13 **Targeted communications and engagement** activity will be a key factor in taking forward the Action Plan – not just in respect of actions that refer to lobbying but also when we are seeking to change the way we do things as a business and as a borough community. Budget will need to be identified to fund each separate communications and engagement campaign.
- 4.14 The Council and its residents will continue to rely on **grid gas and electricity** and until the grid can provide 100% green energy the task of becoming carbon neutral as a borough will be very difficult.
- 4.15 Our role as a community leader is a very important one. Waverley **aims to help, guide and facilitate change** in our community but overall we have no control over how people live their lives.

### **Funding the action plan**

- 4.16 The Council allocated a budget of £100k to support the ongoing delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and £200k that can be spent on specific projects.

However, such an ambitious plan cannot be delivered by taxpayers' money alone. Officers will have to be proactive in identifying external funding opportunities. Considering a carbon-offsetting fund from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions could also generate funding for the delivery of the carbon neutral plan.

## **Conclusions**

- 4.17 Over the next 10 years, the Council will strive to become carbon neutral. However, it should be noted that with the current funding, government support and technological innovation this target is unlikely to be achieved.
- 4.18 It is hoped that during the period of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, technological improvements, changes to government policies and additional funding will enable Waverley to realise its ambitious target.
- 4.19 The journey to becoming carbon neutral could offer exciting opportunities but also carries significant challenges that will result in difficult dilemmas. The Council's role is to lead by example and support our community to reduce their impact on Climate Change, to raise awareness and attempt to influence national government to radically change policies.
- 4.20 In order to achieve carbon neutrality a lot of change will be required within existing practices and policies. Embedding carbon reductions in strategic decision making, procurement, budgets and Council policies is a vital part of the Action Plan delivery.
- 4.21 The projects within the Action Plan require further investigation and quantification to offer a true reflection of the costs involved. The delivery of the Action Plan will be funded through a combination of Council funds, CIL contributions, external grants and funding opportunities.
- 4.22 The Action Plan presented will be continually evolving and adapting to accommodate changes. It is recommended that an updated Action Plan be presented to Environment O&S in September 2020 and the Executive in October 2020 to include a collection of meaningful and measurable targets. This date will coincide with the annual Greenhouse Gas reporting. An annual progress update will be reported every October thereafter.

## **5. Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan**

This report directly relates to the Climate Emergency Motion that the Council has identified as a top priority in its Corporate Strategy.

## **6. Implications of decision**

### **6.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)**

The approved 2020/21 budget includes £300k provided for climate change; £100k for ongoing costs of delivery of the action plan and £200k for one-off project costs.

Currently, any further funding needs will require a supplementary estimate or Waverley will need to achieve external funding such as grants, S106 or CIL funding.

Some projects may offer savings to Waverley, therefore improving the financial situation of the council; the financial impacts of each project will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Staff resource to support projects will be met within current staffing levels at this stage. Any additional requirements will be met from the project budgets.

## **6.2 Risk management**

The target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 will not be achieved without additional funding, resources and technological improvements. The Council will continue to lobby the government, seek external funding opportunities and exploit new technologies as the opportunity arises.

## **6.3 Legal**

There are no direct legal implications associated with this update on the progress of the development of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

## **6.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion**

There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications in this report.

## **6.5 Climate emergency declaration**

This report is directly related to the Climate Emergency declaration. The Action Plan is the proposed path to achieving its target.

## **7. Consultation and engagement**

The draft Strategy and Action Plan will be submitted to the Environment O&S Committee for scrutiny. Guidance on the extent of any wider consultation is also being sought.

## **8. Other options considered**

None at this stage

## **9. Governance journey**

- 3 March – Executive
- 23 March – Environment O&S meeting
- Possible public consultation

## **Annexes:**

Annexe 1 – Draft Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy

### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers, as defined by Section 100D (5) of the Local Government Act 1972).

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Agreed and signed off by:

Legal Services: 19/02/2020

Head of Finance: 11/02/2020

Strategic Director: Management Board 11/02/2020

Portfolio Holder: 11/02/2020