

# **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**1 DECEMBER 2020**

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**Title: Carbon Neutrality Action Plan 2020-2030**

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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. We committed to becoming a carbon neutral council and doing everything in our power to ensure that Waverley is a zero carbon borough by 2030. Officers are working towards significantly reducing Waverley's impact on climate change and will strive to get as close as possible to carbon neutrality.

1.2. This report presents Waverley's Strategic Carbon Neutrality Action Plan 2020-2030 ([Annexe 1](#)) and the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy (Annexe 2) bringing together input from all Council services and the wider public through a consultation that took place between September and October 2020. The action plan sets out the objectives and measures that will be taken in order to achieve the Councils carbon neutrality commitment. The Strategy is the overarching strategic document with links to all areas of work that have an impact on environmental sustainability.

1.3. The action plan 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 or changes in technology take place to permit further work.

### **2. The Strategy**

2.1. The purpose 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.

2.2. The Strategy Aims to "Promote and sustain a sense of responsibility by all for our

environment, promoting biodiversity, championing the green economy and protecting our planet.”

### **3. The Action Plan**

- 3.1. The Carbon Neutrality Action Plan (CNAP) takes a holistic view of sustainability not only addressing energy and fuel consumption from council operations, but also the way we are managing waste, improving the quality of housing in the borough, improve air quality, using the planning system to deliver change and identify opportunities to offset carbon through managing greenspaces. 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.
- 3.2. The carbon impact of delivering all the actions contained within the action plan have not been fully quantified yet. This is due to the complexity of the work required and the wide variety of elements within it. We have set high-level targets that we will work towards reaching, by identifying the most achievable pathways. Whilst some of the actions are worked up enough to be able to demonstrate carbon savings from delivery, many are not yet at that point and will require further work. In order to prioritise resources and maintain focus the plan has been divided in Short, Medium and Long term actions. While our immediate efforts will be put in the short-term actions, we will continue planning for the medium and long-term ones. A “scoring” system for cost and carbon impact has also been introduced that uses broad assumptions to provide an indication of the scale of investment required and carbon saving achieved for each action.
- 3.3. The Council recognises the magnitude of achieving the 2030 net zero target and acknowledges that it has limited powers, responsibilities, resources and finances. Although our role as a community leader is a very important one, this ambitious target cannot be delivered without major changes in national policies, further funding availability and close working with key partners. The council’s role is to **deliver** where it can, to **enable** and **support** the community and partners to take action, to **lobby** and push change in policy, legislation and funding to enable carbon neutrality.
- 3.4. 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 and considerations that have to be taken that will involve competing priorities.
  - 3.4.1. 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 most cases though, energy efficiency also delivers a return on investment so those opportunities should be prioritised first.
  - 3.4.2. The Council has limited **resources** in terms of staff time and in-house expertise. Significant consideration should be given on how teams are resourced and equipped to deliver the commitments outlined within the

action plan. External consultancy support will be sought to develop the more technically complex elements of the action plan.

3.4.3. 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 unaffordable.

3.4.4. **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.

3.4.5. 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 challenging.

3.5. The plan will be continually evolving and progress updates will be reported annually.

#### 4. Public Consultation

4.1. To inform this important action plan the council launched a public consultation in September 2020 and invited the wider community to have a say in how it prioritise actions to become carbon neutral by 2030.

4.2. A total of 965 people responded to the consultation. Some of the key findings are summarised below. A more detailed summary is attached in (Annexe 3).

- 78% of participants felt it was “very important” and an additional 16.5% felt that climate change was “quite important”
- 94% would welcome more opportunities for recycling and upcycling to help them reduce their own carbon footprint
- 90% felt that the council and its contractors should switch to low carbon transport
- 90% felt that new council properties should be built to carbon neutral standards.
- Lack of infrastructure and facilities were seen as the greatest barrier to being environmentally friendly.
- 88% felt it is “extremely or very important” for the Council to lead by example and take action and 89% felt that the Council should prioritised reducing their own emissions first.

#### 5. Funding the action plan

5.1. Financing the delivery of the CNAP will be a major hurdle to overcome. Over the coming year, the Council will work to explore different funding mechanisms, opportunities and investments to help support delivery of this Action Plan.

5.2. 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.

5.3. Creating a ring-fenced budget from savings achieved through energy efficiency investment should also be considered carefully.

## 6. Governance

6.1. To succeed in achieving net zero carbon it is important to demonstrate leadership and adopt a strong governance structure for delivery. It is recommended that the following structure is put in place:

6.1.1. Executive Committee – will ultimately be responsible for the delivery of the action plan, making key decisions to enable progress.

6.1.2. Climate Emergency Board – chaired by the Environment Portfolio holder this strategic group will closely monitor the progress of the action plan and assist with removing barriers for delivery. The Board will meet quarterly and the outcomes of the meetings will be reported to the Executive in the same frequency or as appropriate. The following board membership is proposed:

Strategic Director(s)	Environment portfolio holder (Chair)
Environment Head of Service	Finance portfolio holder
Sustainability Team	Housing portfolio holder
Officers when required to provide progress updates within their area.	Economic Development portfolio holder
	Three other elected members from the existing advisory group

It is proposed that this group replaces the advisory group currently in place.

6.1.3. A Climate Emergency Officer Group is already in place consisting of heads of service and service managers and the sustainability team with the purpose of developing and delivering of the action plan. This group will meet every 4-6 weeks.

6.1.4. The Environment O&S committee will receive annual updates once the action plan has been approved.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1. Over the next 10 years, the Council will strive to become carbon neutral and this ambitious target will require a lot of change 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.
- 7.2. 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. The delivery of the action plan will heavily rely on partnership working, external funding, government support and technological innovation.
- 7.3. The projects within the action plan require further investigation and quantification to offer a true reflection of the costs involved and this is not an easy or a quick task. Separating the action plan in Short, Medium and Long term actions will help focus on quantifying those actions that are likely to be delivered first, while at the same time continue developing the medium and long term actions. The action plan presented will be continually evolving and adapting to changes.
- 7.4. The journey to becoming carbon neutral could offer exciting opportunities but also carries significant challenges that will result in difficult dilemmas. The consultation feedback reassures that climate change and its impact is important to the majority of our residents and that reducing the council's own emissions should be a priority.
- 7.5. The delivery of the action plan will be funded through a combination of Council funds, external grants and funding opportunities.
- 7.6. Strong governance structure is important for the successful delivery of this action plan. An annual review of the plan with progress updates will be presented to Environment O&S in September 2021 and the Executive in October 2021.

## **8. Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Executive:

- a. Approves final Strategic Carbon Neutrality Action Plan 2020-2030 attached in Annexe 1, including the high-level targets within it, and acknowledges that it will be an evolving document.
- b. Approves the final Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy in Annexe 2
- c. Endorses the governance structure proposed, including the membership of the Climate Emergency Board.
- d. Notes the responses within the consultation summary which is attached in Annexe 3.

## **9. Reason for the recommendation**

To adopt the final Strategic Carbon Neutrality Action Plan 2020-2030 and the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy.

## **10. 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.

## **11. Implications of decision**

### **11.1. Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)**

The proposed 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 budget approvals 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; each projects financial impacts will need to 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.

### **11.2. 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.

### **11.3. Legal**

There are no direct legal implications in this report. The target to become carbon neutral by 2030 is not enshrined in law.

### **11.4. Equality, diversity and inclusion**

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

### **11.5. Climate emergency declaration**

This report is directly related to the Climate Emergency declaration. The Carbon

Neutrality Action Plan is the proposed path to achieving its target.

## **12. Consultation and engagement**

An online consultation has taken place seeking the views of the residents and the wider community on the direction the council should take in terms of achieving carbon neutrality.

A Communications and Engagement strategy will be put in place over the next few months to plan further engagement with residents, businesses and the wider Waverley community.

## **13. Other options considered**

None at this stage

## **14. Governance journey**

- 3<sup>rd</sup> November – Executive briefing
- 11<sup>th</sup> November – Environment O&S meeting
- 1<sup>st</sup> December - Executive meeting
- 15<sup>th</sup> December - Full Council

## **Annexes:**

Annexe 1 – Carbon Neutrality Action Plan 2020-2030

Annexe 2 – Climate Emergency Consultation summary

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## **Background Papers**

**There are / 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: Sophie Thorp - 27 October 2020

Head of Finance: Rosie Plaistow/Peter Vickers – 27 October 2020

Strategic Director:

Portfolio Holder: Steve Williams – 29 October 2020