

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
SPECIAL COUNCIL 6 MAY 2020  
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING  
AND GOVERNANCE)

CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report updates members on the work undertaken since Full Council agreed a motion to declare a “climate emergency”. A copy of the motion is in appendix A. This update report was originally to be provided to Full Council in November 2019, however that was not possible owing to rescheduling of the municipal timetable in response to the snap General Election in December 2019. This report has therefore been brought up to date since that time.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 For members to note the work to date, and to agree that further updates should be provided to Council as work progresses.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 Like many local authorities, and in view of the international position regarding climate change, Full Council debated the issue and as a result agreed the motion in appendix A.
- 3.2 Since agreeing this motion the work detailed in this report has taken place to help carry into effect the motion. Climate change is in itself a complex geopolitical issue and in order for the council to stand the best chance of success both in reducing its own carbon footprint and acting as a leader and advocate for others, it will be necessary to involve parties both internal and external to the council over a significant timescale.
- 3.3 A number of actions have been taken in order to support the Climate Emergency motion and these are detailed below in 3.4 - 3.20
- 3.4 **Join other councils in declaring a Climate Emergency;** The council declared a climate emergency on 19 June 2019. The resolution in appendix A refers.
- 3.5 **Write to the Secretary of State** - A letter was sent on 19 August 2019, copy in appendix B.
- 3.6 **Set up a cross party climate change sub group reporting to EOSC with the aim of bringing a report and action plan to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 (or some later date) with regular reporting to EOSC** - A cross party group has been set up working with the terms of reference in appendix C. The group is supported by specialist officers from a number of service areas and has met several times. The minutes of these meetings are in appendix D.

- 3.7 **Climate Change Strategy** - The council has previously undertaken work in connection with climate change including a “green audit” (1990) and a climate change strategy and action plan (2010-13). The group has reviewed progress on the council’s previously adopted climate change action plan and noted that the majority of actions have been completed.
- 3.8 Preparatory work has now started for preparing a new strategy and action plan and the group has noted how the council has three roles which should be reflected in the new strategy:
- a) as an enabler (for example where our policies may actively encourage and facilitate response to climate change)
  - b) as a consumer (for example where we buy or use resources)
  - c) as a partner (where we can work with others)
- 3.9 **Carbon Footprint** - Work is underway on identifying and analysing the data to ensure a baseline carbon footprint for the council is available, against which any further reductions in carbon and emissions can be measured. This will be reported to the member group.
- 3.10 **Council’s policies** - how policies and our related decisions and actions affect our contribution to climate change, including procurement policies. The cross party climate change group received a presentation from the Procurement Manager on 23 October looking at potential options and opportunities to further build climate change into the procurement process.
- 3.11 The standard report template for all reports includes a “climate change implications section” so that members can be appraised of and consider the climate change implications of particular proposals.
- 3.12 **Develop planning policies to harmonise with the aims of the Climate Emergency so that development is as far as practicable, in support of the initiative.** Work is underway to scope out potential options, opportunities and challenges for example including the Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme. A member workshop has taken place to help members understand the current challenges, identify potential alternatives while continuing to protect the town and respond to future challenges such as climate change.
- 3.13 **Ask officers to investigate the most appropriate training for Members and officers about how to promote carbon neutral policies for consideration by Council** - Suitable training is being researched and this will assist members in shaping our revised strategy and action plan. This training will be offered through the member development programme. Additionally, the Portfolio Holder has attended a national briefing session in London and an event for Members at Warwick university.
- 3.14 **Continue to work with partners across the district, county and wide region to deliver widespread carbon reductions and to attempt to encourage public support for the aims of the Climate Emergency** - The Council is a member of the Hertfordshire Environmental Forum and discussions regarding climate change are taking place at all levels, including at the Chief Executive’s Co-ordinating group, which our Chief Executive currently chairs.

- 3.15 The Portfolio Holder and Director have been invited the inaugural meeting of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership. This strategic level partnership will be looking at how the climate emergency can be responded to across Hertfordshire as a whole. It will provide a mechanism for data collection (to establish a countywide baseline), collation and monitoring - allowing for the sharing of best practice; the establishment of joint initiatives and the securing of funding for countywide projects. The creation of this partnership has been supported by both the Hertfordshire Leaders Group and the Hertfordshire Chief Executive Group and at the inaugural meeting the remit of the Partnership, the Terms of reference, membership and future work programme will be discussed.
- 3.16 An officer group has been set up, comprising officers from each of our 9 service areas, with aim of providing a climate emergency “champion” in each service team and to help shape policies and potential actions.
- 3.17 ESOC has received a report regarding the role, value and importance of council trees in mitigating and offsetting carbon emissions. The report has identified that the carbon sequestered by trees annually is 237 tonnes from our street trees and 2147 tonnes for our woodlands. In terms of a monetary value this equates to an annual figure of £585,716.
- 3.18 Work has commenced on stakeholder mapping to identify which groups need to be involved in developing our updated strategy and action plan. A number of groups have approached the council directly and it is intended to explore ways of making sure all relevant groups can have input into the development of our strategy and action plan.
- 3.19 At the annual budget setting, Council also agreed a climate change reserve of £100k to be used to help respond to the climate emergency.
- 3.20 **Set up a £50K fund from general fund balance to provide grants to support local organisations to improve their carbon footprint, the criteria to be established by the Climate Change Group to be recommended to Cabinet for approval”** The climate change group has considered options and developed a set of access and awarding criteria for such a scheme.
- 3.21 Following discussions the Climate change group has also developed a list of potential areas for the council to explore as part of the climate emergency, these are:
- Small grants scheme
  - Procurement
  - Flat recycling (separate reports have been already made)
  - Greener utilities
  - Modification of policies to enable and promote greener alternatives
  - Carbon offset through council tree stock (separate reports have been made)
  - Staff travel plans (linked to the planning consent for Campus East)
  - Use of electric vehicles (progress reports have been made to Corporate Management Team)

3.22 Additionally, Members of the climate change group have identified some “checklists” from Friends of the Earth which the climate change group intend to work through to ascertain other areas of potential focus.

3.23 Members have also received clarification on the distinction between adaptation and mitigation and the council’s role in responding to climate change.

#### **4 Legal Implication(s)**

4.1 There a number of pieces of legislation dealing with climate change and the UK government has made a commitment for the UK to become carbon neutral by 2050

#### **5 Financial Implication(s)**

5.1 Council has agreed a budget of £50k to fund climate change grants and a climate change reserve of £100k to be used to help respond to the climate emergency.

#### **6 Risk Management Implications**

6.1 The risks related to this proposal are failing to recognise and respond to climate change in a proportionate way. The work carried out since declaring a climate emergency helps to mitigate this risk.

#### **7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)**

7.1 None directly arising from this report

#### **8 Procurement Implication(s)**

8.1 None directly arising from this report

#### **9 Climate Change Implication(s)**

9.1 This report updates members on the work the council has undertaken since declaring a climate emergency. The council can through its activities have a role in both adaptation and mitigation to climate change

#### **10 Human Resources Implication(s)**

10.1 There is no dedicated officer resource for climate change as climate change work is undertaken by a number of employees in various service teams. For some employees responding to climate change is part of their day to day work.

#### **11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)**

11.1 The links between climate change and health are well documented for example in the report from the Health Protection Agency<sup>1</sup>

## **12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

12.1 As part of the climate change policy a communications and engagement plan will be prepared to ensure relevant stakeholders, including members, partners and the public can be involved in helping to shape the council's climate change strategy and action plan

## **13 Link to Corporate Priorities**

The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority "our environment"

## **14 Equality and Diversity**

14.1 Equality and diversity implications will be identified and considered as part of the development of the climate change strategy and action plan

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<sup>1</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/371103/Health\\_Effects\\_of\\_Climate\\_Change\\_in\\_the\\_UK\\_2012\\_V13\\_with\\_cover\\_accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371103/Health_Effects_of_Climate_Change_in_the_UK_2012_V13_with_cover_accessible.pdf)