

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
COUNCIL – 1 FEBRUARY 2021
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING
AND GOVERNANCE)

CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress since the Council declared a climate change emergency.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the objective for the Council to be net carbon zero by 2030, the progress made on this agenda and the future actions that will be delivered over coming weeks, months and years to help tackle climate change.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 In May 2019 the Council declared a climate change emergency and set itself five ambitious objectives:
1. To reduce carbon emissions from our own estate and operations to net zero by 2030.
 2. To comply with statutory obligations to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
 3. To work with, support, encourage and engage residents, communities, businesses and other partners in initiatives to reduce carbon emissions.
 4. To embed climate change mitigation and adaptation into our plans, strategies and policies.
 5. To reduce carbon emissions across the borough by promoting energy efficiency measures, sustainable construction, renewable energy, sustainable transport and behavioural change.
- 3.2 At present it is understood from Ministry for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) data that Welwyn Hatfield emitted a total of 629,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from its industrial, commercial, domestic and transport activities in 2018. This is an average of 5 tonnes per person, which is identical to the county average and slightly less than the UK average.
- 3.3 An independent carbon footprint appraisal of the Council's own buildings, services and transport calculates that these activities emitted 2,507 tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2019/2020. It is this number which the Council intends to reduce to net zero by 2030.

- 3.4 A Treeconomics Report reveals that the Council's manages a total tree stock of about 100,000 woodland trees and 17,000 street trees, which together store about 78,000 tonnes of carbon, annually sequester 2,400 tonnes of carbon and annually remove 31 tonnes of pollution from the ground and air.
- 3.5 The Council has created a cross-party Climate Change Member Panel to debate climate change issues, to guide the preparation and delivery of actions and to ensure that the Council achieves the objectives set out above. The agendas and minutes of the Panel can be viewed at [Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council - Browse meetings - Climate Change Sub-Group \(welhat.gov.uk\)](https://welhat.gov.uk/Browse-meetings-Climate-Change-Sub-Group).
- 3.6 The Council used to have an old Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan that was adopted 2014. Many of its actions were implemented and have continued to be deliver over more recent years, and this has put the Council in a strong position to further progress the agenda.
- 3.7 The Council has prepared a draft Climate Change Strategy that is available on the website for public consultation until 29 January. The strategy can be viewed at [Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council - Preface \(welhat.gov.uk\)](https://welhat.gov.uk/Welwyn-Hatfield-Borough-Council-Preface).
- 3.8 The strategy sets out the international agreements, national strategies and local strategies and partnerships that will guide the climate change agenda, identifies the baseline carbon dioxide emissions position for Welwyn Hatfield and for the Council and then identifies actions that the Council is already taking and will take over the coming weeks, months and years to help tackle climate change.
- 3.9 The existing and future actions are categorised as: governance actions, council building actions, planning actions, environment actions, transport actions, council housing actions, energy actions, water actions, waste actions, pollution actions and behavioural actions.
- 3.10 It is intended that public comments will be analysed in February and the final Strategy will be presented to Cabinet on 9 March for adoption. The strategy will however be maintained as a 'live' document that will be regularly updated to take account of new agreements, policies, strategies, partnerships and actions.
- 3.11 The Council intends to offer Carbon Literacy training to Members and officers, to ensure that they understand the potential to make local improvements to energy efficiency and carbon emissions at the borough level. This will include advice to officers on how to complete the 'climate change implications' section of committee reports so that Members can be fully appraised of all relevant issues.
- 3.12 The Council intends to host an online 'town hall' event in late January, so that interested parties can debate the actions in the draft strategy and help the Council to define the final version of the strategy and ongoing actions.
- 3.13 The Council is actively involved in the Hertfordshire Sustainability and Climate Change Group at both a Member and officer level, to ensure that local actions align with county actions and that we achieve economies-of-scale.
- 3.14 The Council has £150,000 allocated for the climate change agenda for 2020/21 and to carry forward into 2022/23.

- 3.15 The Council has earmarked £50,000 to support the climate change agenda. The Climate Change Member Panel has agreed that this should be used alongside the Eastern New Energy project that the Council has recently joined. This project will help local businesses to improve the energy efficiency and carbon emissions of their premises and activities. It has been agreed that any businesses that go through the audit process can then apply for a grant of up to £5,000 to help implement the recommended actions, so long as each £1,000 of spend will reduce their carbon emissions by 0.5 tonnes per year.
- 3.16 The Council has committed about £13,000 to install electric vehicle charging points in council-owned car parks around the borough.
- 3.17 The Council will continue to identify projects that can reduce energy usage and carbon emissions using the remaining funds. This might include community grants for climate change projects.
- 3.18 The Council has been working with npower Ltd to install smart meters at as many of its housing and commercial properties as possible. This enables automated meter reading which helps us to understand and better control our energy costs.
- 3.19 The Council has submitted three bids to the Government's Decarbonisation Scheme to help improve the energy efficiency and reduce the carbon emissions from public sector buildings. Bids have been made for £630,000 to replace gas-fired boilers with combined air source heat pumps and water source heat pumps at Campus East, for £999,000 to replace gas-fired boilers with air source heat pumps and water source heat pumps at Campus West and for £734,000 to upgrade to air source heat pumps and water source heat pumps at Hatfield Swim Centre. It is estimated that the projects would reduce energy consumption by approximately two-thirds at all three locations. If successful it would reduce the Council's carbon emissions by 500 tonnes per year; which is equivalent to 20% of the Council's total emissions in 2019.
- 3.20 The Council intends to update its Economic Development Strategy to incorporate greater emphasis on the climate change agenda. The Eastern New Energy project is one example of a combined economic development and climate change action that can simultaneously help businesses and the environment.

4 Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Council has a duty through various pieces of legislation to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Council has allocated £150,000 to support climate change action, including £50,000 of grants to help local businesses become more energy efficient and £13,000 for electric vehicle charge points in council-owned car parks.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 There are no risk management implications associated with this report. It is recognised however that there are long-term risk management implications associated with climate change, such as temperature, extreme weather events, flooding, air quality, etc.

7 Security and Terrorism Implications

- 7.1 There are no security or terrorism implications associated with this report. It is recognised however that there may be long-term security implications associated with climate change, in terms of access to water, food, energy, etc.

8 Procurement Implications

- 8.1 There are no procurement implications associated with this report.

9 Climate Change Implications

- 9.1 The Council has declared a climate change emergency and set ambitious objectives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is considered that the recommendations of this report will have positive climate change implications, by virtue of identifying the actions that the Council is already taking and will take in the future to help tackle climate change.

10 Human Resources Implications

- 10.1 The actions set out in the Climate Change Strategy will be delivered by officers, Members and partners as part of their day-to-day duties.

11 Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 11.1 There are health and wellbeing implications associated with tackling the climate change agenda, particularly in respect of issues such as pollution and air quality.

12 Communications and Engagement Implications

- 12.1 The Council is currently consulting on the draft Climate Change Strategy and intends to host an online town hall event in late January or early February.
- 12.2 The Council will continue to communicate with residents and businesses to help deliver climate change actions and to educate people on what they can do to help.

13 Link to Corporate Priorities

- 13.1 The subject of this report is linked to all five priorities of the Council's Business Plan 2018-2021: Our Community, Our Environment, Our Housing, Our Economy and Our Council.

14 Equalities and Diversity

- 14.1 An EqlA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies. It should be noted however that an EqlA will be completed when the Climate Change Strategy is recommended for adoption to Cabinet, as it will contain policies that may affect people with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act.

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