

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CLIMATE CHANGE MEMBER GROUP 25 FEBRUARY 2021  
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING  
AND GOVERNANCE)

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Council has declared a climate change emergency, created a Climate Change Member Group and agreed to prepare a strategy and action plan to help tackle the agenda. This includes an objective for the Council to seek to become carbon net zero by 2030, as well as efforts to encourage carbon efficiency and carbon reduction by businesses and residents.

**2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 That Cabinet adopts the Climate Change Strategy and agrees to a maintain a 'live' action plan of projects to be delivered by the Council and its partners.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 In June 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, or a justification for a later date if the review finds this unachievable.
  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 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.
- 3.3 The Council has consulted on a draft Climate Change Strategy which 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.

- 3.4 The baseline position is that Welwyn Hatfield emitted 629,000 tonnes of carbon from industrial, commercial, domestic and transport activities in 2019; an average of 5 tonnes per person, which is identical to the county average and slightly less than the UK average. Emissions have been on a downward trend since 2005.
- 3.5 A carbon footprint appraisal report has calculated that the Council's buildings, services and transport activities emitted 2,507 tonnes of carbon in 2019/2020.
- 3.6 A Treeconomics report reveals that the Council's tree stock of 100,000 woodland trees and 17,000 of street trees annual sequester about 2,400 tonnes of carbon and annually remove 31 tonnes of pollution from the ground and air.
- 3.7 The Council hosted a virtual online 'town hall' event on 25 January 2021, so that interested parties could debate the actions in the draft strategy and help the Council to define the final version of the strategy and ongoing actions. The event raised a variety of interesting issues, including, but in no particular order: the need for a carrot and stick approach, encourage less travelling, agile working, more pedestrian and cycle routes, convert leisure cycling into commuter cycling, tree planting, increase canopy cover, convert mown grass to woodland, electric bikes, a review of car parking standards, encourage council house tenants to use renewable energy suppliers, promote green spaces through social media, plant different trees to attract different animals and insects, cycle proficiency lessons for children, safe parking spaces near schools for drop-off, meadow planting, eco-school curriculum, recognise value of other habitats beyond trees, purchase renewable energy, more electric buses, wildflower meadows on road verges, prioritise bus use, transfer from gas boilers to air source heat pumps, step change in individual behaviour, Council to act as community leader, communication and education programme.
- 3.8 The Council has £150,000 allocated for the climate change agenda up to 2020/21 which has been set aside in an earmarked reserve to utilise as projects are identified and approved. Approved commitments from this reserve includes £50,000 for a project to help local businesses to improve the energy efficiency and carbon emissions of their premises and activities and £13,000 to install electric vehicle charging points in council-owned car parks.
- 3.9 The Council has received 20 responses to the public consultation, which are set out in full in Appendix 3, summarised below and have been incorporated into the final Strategy, although often in general rather than as explicit actions. This is because it is considered that the Council should start delivering the strategy by unapologetically prioritising actions which are likely to result in the greatest carbon reduction for the least cost. There is a risk of diluting early effort by attempting to do too many things at once. It is recommended that Members and officers return to this list and expand the action plan once the priority actions have been achieved. For information, black text is a summary of the response and blue text explains how the comments have been incorporated into the strategy.
  - Thames Water support proposals to reduce water usage and promote sustainable drainage, to help minimise flooding risks. They recommend a standard planning condition on water efficiency to accord with building

regulations to not exceed 110 litres per person per day. [This is a policy in the Submitted Local Plan and acknowledged in the Action Plan.](#)

- Herts County Council question whether the strategy goes far enough to tackle the scale of the emergency. There is scope to set more ambitious targets. It should be recognised that actions can have wider social and economic benefits. It then goes on to list a wide range of actions that the Council could undertake to further tackle climate change. [The Strategy has incorporated many of these suggestions.](#)
- The Forestry Commission highlights the carbon value of trees, grants available to local authorities to plant new woodlands and the value of home grown timber for the construction industry. [The Action Plan highlights the carbon value of trees and makes reference to a countywide Off-Site Manufacturing project which includes scope for home grown timber.](#)
- The Woodland Trust asserts that trees and woodland can play a key role in tackling the climate change and biodiversity emergency. They encourage additional tree planting, a 30% target for borough-wide canopy cover and three new trees for every one street tree removed. [The Action Plan includes projects for additional tree planting, subject to land being identified.](#)
- Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust recommend that the strategy should underline the importance of the natural environment to the local economy, draw links between a healthy natural environment and health and wellbeing, reference the Herts State of Nature Report, strengthen the biodiversity net gain policy in the local plan, tougher targets for land managed for wildlife, more biodiversity features on council houses, reduce water consumption in council buildings and do more to protect water habitats and water quality. [The State of Nature report is now mentioned in the strategy. The action plan states that biodiversity net gain will be implemented once the Environment Bill is enacted.](#)
- The Gardens Trust supports policies for waste water recycling, SUDs and green infrastructure. Such issues should consider the heritage associated with historic parks and gardens in the borough. They also recommend more work on a robust, fit-for-purpose green corridor through the borough. [Policies for these issues appear in the Submitted Local Plan and are sought through the planning application process.](#)
- CPRE Hertfordshire recommend that the Council should aim for net zero as soon as possible, place more value on the countryside and align land use planning and transport strategies. The introduction should re-emphasise the urgency of the situation and a chart showing future projected scenarios. The strategy should recognise the carbon impact of building new homes, the need to reduce emissions from existing homes, targets for walkable neighbourhoods, more green space to offset small homes, reduce car dependency, decarbonise travel options such as zero emission vehicles, the recycling of brown and grey land, policy tools such as parking charges, road charging and road space allocation, review by the Carbon Trust, an emphasis on air source heat pumps rather than new gas boilers in council homes and carbon literacy training for councillors and officers. [The strategy sets a target for net zero by 2030, which is ambitious given the scale of the task ahead.](#)

- Groundwork supports more efforts to encourage behavioural change and a scaling-up of communication, awareness and education, which they could help to deliver. [The strategy references efforts to encourage behaviour change, communication, education and awareness.](#)
- Cuffley Parish Council recommends that parish councils should adopt the same objectives and work in partnership with the Council. They also recommend a borough wide forum to coordinate actions and projects. [The action plan includes an intent to host future community meetings and events.](#)
- David Lock Associates on behalf of Tarmac Ltd endorse the strategy's aspirations and highlight how their proposal for Birchall Garden Suburb will achieve many of these objectives. [Development at Birchall Garden Suburb is proposed in the Submitted Local Plan and will be complemented by a masterplan process once the site is allocated.](#)
- A borough councillor encourages more urgency, more national action, more detailed local plan policies, tighter standards for homes, improving the EPC rating of all homes in the borough, all borough vehicles should be electric, more training for councillors and officers, collaboration with the University of Hertfordshire and others to develop new ideas, more waste recycling, weekly articles in TeamTalk, solar power generation projects, changing to a renewable energy supply, wildflower meadow planting, more solar panels on council house roofs and pilots for air source heat pumps. [Urgency is now mentioned in the strategy introduction. The Submitted Local Plan contains many sustainability policies, which can be superseded as new national policies are enacted. The action plan priorities renewable energy supply for council buildings.](#)
- A borough councillor (as administrator for Ludwick Family Centre) comments on Herts County Council pension fund, the merits of moving to a renewable energy supplier, the ability of a green corridor to protect existing features, an annual celebration of trees, the merits of ground source heat pumps and other alternatives to gas boilers, ambitious household recycling targets and the merits of wildflower meadows. [The action plan priorities renewable energy supply for council buildings.](#)
- A resident suggests more pavements and cycle paths of the same quality as roads. [The action plan now references the intent to prepare walking and cycling improvement plans for Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield.](#)
- A resident advocates a leadership role for the Council to explain what steps ordinary residents can take to reduce the carbon emissions of their homes. [The strategy references efforts to encourage behaviour change, communication, education and awareness.](#)
- A resident recommends adequate recycling facilities for existing and new flats. Many bins are overflowing which leads to flytipping. [The Submitted Local Plan contain policies to secure recycling facilities in all housing schemes.](#)
- A resident thinks more can be done via local plan policies such as stating the most desirable sustainability technologies for developers to use and coherent plans for walking and cycling. [The Submitted Local Plan includes](#)

sustainability policies, which can be superseded as new national policies are enacted.

- A resident supports the move to webcasting of Council meetings and electronic papers and wishes to see this continue and expand to more meetings. [The Council will continue to webcast meetings and rely on electronic papers.](#)
  - A resident recommends more information on baseline data such as water usage per person, where wildflower meadows will be planted, the Hatfield Living Lab project, the collection of small electrical items, recycling rates, campaigns for fighting fast fashion, use of recycling banks, reference to hedges and good practice from other Councils. The emergency of the situation should be conveyed more. The Council should also declare a biodiversity emergency. The Council should encourage car clubs for residents. There needs to be sufficient funding to tackle all of these issues. The focus should be national and local government action not an emphasis on resident behavioural change. [The Council will continue to collect and refine baseline data. Urgency is now mentioned in the strategy introduction. The strategy references efforts to encourage behaviour change, communication, education and awareness.](#)
  - A resident describes the strategy as ‘embryonic’ and recommends more metrics, benchmarking, a decisive action plan, exemplar activity by the Council, more efficient council meetings, favour holistic solutions, the value of tree planting, environmentally friendly flower planting, value bird life and pollinators, better management of council-owned woodlands, more biodiversity, restrict council car parking spaces, more electric charge points, more free-to-use bikes, better construction standards, green energy supply, use of solar panels, more activity to resolve fly-tipping, carbon reduction first then carbon offsetting. [The Strategy has incorporated many of these suggestions. The Council will continue to collect and refine baseline data.](#)
  - A resident considers that the strategy contains disconnected information. It contains too many “the Council will...” and not enough actions. It should make clear what the £150,000 will be spent on. There should be more guidance for solar panels in Welwyn Garden City. The Council should attempt to reduce fly-tipping around the borough. More meetings should be online. [The action plan identifies practical projects that will be delivered over the coming weeks, months and years.](#)
- 3.10 The Council has also received climate change responses to its recent Vision consultation exercise to inform its new Corporate Plan. These include requests for quicker action, more recycling bins, double glazing for council houses, locally produced food in supermarkets, less grass cutting to allow wildflowers and insects, tackle fly tipping, solar panels and other sustainability features on new houses and new car parking standards, while some others dismissed the threat of climate change and requested that public money be spent on other issues.
- 3.11 The Strategy also identifies a limited list of actions that are judged to make the greatest contribution to climate change in terms of carbon reduction, cost and ability for the Council and its partners to achieve. These are a renewable energy supply for council buildings, sustainable energy generation for council buildings and council houses, sustainable energy generation for privately owned houses

and business premises and an enhanced programme of tree planting wherever suitable land is available.

#### **4 Legal Implications**

- 4.1 The Council has a duty through various pieces of legislation to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The Climate Change Act 2008 sets a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 against 1990 levels.

#### **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.
- 5.2 The Strategy is likely to have other financial implications as the Council and its partners consider the cost/benefit of different actions to tackle climate change.

#### **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 a number of procurement initiatives which have also been incorporated into the Procurement and Commercial Strategy 2021-2025.

#### **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 adopting a strategy and agreeing a live action plan of projects that will be delivered by the Council and its partners 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 draft Climate Change Strategy was made available for public consultation in November 2020 until 5 February 2021. The Council held a virtual town hall event on 25 January 2021 to discuss the draft strategy with interested parties and seek feedback on options to help tackle the challenge. The Council sought to engage residents and businesses during this period via social media messaging.
- 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 EqIA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies. All of the policies in the Submitted Local Plan have been subject to equality impact assessment.

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### Appendices:

1. Final Climate Change Strategy
2. Action Plan
3. Consultee comments