

Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

Strategy & Resources Committee, Thursday 26 September 2024

Report of: Head of Policy and Communications

Purpose: For decision

Publication status: Open

Wards affected: All

Executive summary:

In February 2020, Tandridge District Council declared a climate emergency, recognising the need to take urgent action in response to climate change. It was proposed the Council would develop its own climate change action plan, with targets to cut environmental impact and steps to become carbon neutral by 2030.

The pandemic and other issues mean the Council has not progressed work in this area as much as it would have liked.

A review of climate change work has been carried out and a new Climate Change Strategy (Appendix A) and Climate Change Action Plan (Appendix B) drafted, which propose to align the Council's target with the government's and become a carbon neutral council by 2050. These documents clearly set out the Council's role and what actions it can take to mitigate against climate change.

The strategy and action plan have been drafted and signed off by the cross party Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) (Appendix C).

The CCWG is also recommending the Council moves away from printing and posting committee and council agendas to support the Climate Change Strategy. A proposal to action this is attached at Appendix D.

This report supports the Council's priority of: Protecting and enhancing our environment

Contact officer: Giuseppina Valenza, Head of Policy & Communications,
gvalenza@tandridge.gov.uk

Recommendation to committee:

The committee is asked to:

- A. Approve the Climate Change Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan, recommended by the Climate Change Working Group, including changing the Council's target to become carbon neutral to 2050 to align with the national target.
- B. Approve the proposal to move to paperless agendas, recommended by the Climate Change Working Group, subject to approval of a capital budget for devices at a future meeting of the committee.

Reason for recommendation:

This committee has oversight of the Council's climate change work.

The Climate Change Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan support the Council's priority of *Protecting and enhancing our environment*.

Moving to paperless agendas supports the strategy and action plan, as well as the Council's drive to become carbon neutral and reduce costs.

Both recommendations have been put forward by the cross party Climate Change Working Group.

Introduction and background

1. Despite declaring a climate emergency in 2020, the Council's capacity to co-ordinate climate change activities has been limited.
2. Part of the work of the Policy and Sustainability Specialist appointed in 2023, covers the co-ordination and oversight of the climate change work taking place across service areas, as well as ensuring the Council takes a more active role in the county wide groups.
3. A review of climate change work has been carried out. Despite the lack of centralised resources there has been some climate change mitigation progress across the Council, detailed in the paper to this [committee](#) on 30 January 2024.

Climate change strategy and action plan

4. To ensure climate change mitigation work continues in a consistent and managed way, a Climate Change Strategy has been developed, along with a practical, deliverable action plan, which reflects the Council's resources (staffing and financial) and ability to deliver.

5. One of the priorities of the Corporate Plan is *Protecting and enhancing the environment*. The following objectives will help deliver this:
 - Ensure new development is properly planned and sustainable and benefits the district's communities.
 - Reduce our environmental impact and support residents and businesses to reduce their own impact.
6. To support the delivery of the priority and objectives, our climate change objectives are to:
 - Ensure plan making and planning decisions protect the environment while delivering quality place-making and appropriate land use with supporting infrastructure.
 - Seek Biodiversity Net Gain from new development and use the Council's own developments and assets.
 - Focus on improving biodiversity encouraging and enabling green tourism and green infrastructure within the statutory guidance.
 - Reduce waste and emissions across our own estate, assets and activities and use natural resources more efficiently.
 - Provide an efficient recycling and waste service, encouraging residents and businesses to reduce, reuse and recycle.
 - Work with Surrey County Council and other transport providers to promote sustainable transport choices, increase accessibility for all and reduce congestion.
 - Work with Surrey County Council and other partners to help local residents and businesses make responsible environmental decisions and to take action to reduce their own carbon footprint and use of resources, as well as increase their climate change resilience.
7. To understand if the Council is reducing its impact on the environment and to deliver the action plan, any actions need to be measured. Scope emissions are a way of categorising greenhouse gas emissions created by organisations in its operations and wider value chain.
8. There are three types of emissions. Scopes 1, 2 and 3 were developed as part of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, a joint effort by the World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development to create worldwide standards for measuring greenhouse gas emissions.

9. The three scopes are:

- **Scope 1 direct emissions**

This covers the greenhouse gas emissions the Council creates directly into the atmosphere, for example from the housing stock, other buildings, vehicles etc.

- **Scope 2 indirect emissions**

These are emissions the Council makes indirectly when the electricity or energy bought for heating and cooling buildings is produced on our behalf.

- **Scope 3 other indirect emissions**

In this category are emissions the Council is indirectly responsible for. For example, from buying products from suppliers, commuting, emissions from contractors.

10. The strategy sets out what the Council will do to reduce its emissions under each scope.

11. An internal Climate Change group has been set up, with officer representation from across council services, to support the delivery of the strategy and action plan.

12. The Policy and Sustainability Specialist has been co-ordinating and overseeing the climate change work taking place, ensuring the Council can play a more active role in county wide groups. Joint working has enabled the Council to be able to provide resources, advice and guidance to all areas across the Council on climate change activities.

Climate Change Working Group (CCWG)

13. To support the development of the strategy and action plan, the January 2024 Strategy and Resources Committee requested a cross party Task and Finish Working Group be set up.

14. The Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) has met three times to discuss and agree the Council's approach to climate change and to help shape the strategy and action plan.

15. A key change agreed by the group is to align the Council's carbon neutral date with the government's target of 2050, rather than the current 2030 date.

16. The CCWG is also recommending the Council moves to paperless agendas by January 2026 to support the drive to net zero. Appendix D sets out proposals for a phased approach to achieve this, with a range of options to encourage councillors to make better use of the tools provided by the online committee system ModGov, supported by training.

Risk and budget considerations

17. The greatest risk to the Council not becoming carbon neutral by 2050 is the decarbonisation of the housing stock. The strategy acknowledges and highlights this issue.
18. The largest area of scope 1 emissions comes from the housing stock. There are around 2,600 council properties of which only a few new build properties meet net zero standards. Decarbonising the housing stock could cost around £200 million. Initial reports indicate it costs around £70,000 to retrofit a house and £45,000 for a flat. To meet the 2050 target 125 properties would need to be retrofitted a year. Government support will be required to meet this target. Some funding has been received through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.
19. Funding for decarbonisation is limited and the process can be time consuming and complex. Constraints imposed by the government could also mean that even when funding has been awarded it cannot be spent in the given time frame.
20. There is no specific revenue budget for climate change mitigation work. Any current activities are being absorbed by service areas as part of service planning. Any additional costs need to be agreed and funded within existing budgets, a case made for additional budget or a bid for funding made.
21. The Capital Programme for the Housing Revenue Account includes allocations for Social Housing Decarbonisation (met by government funding) and other measures, which will include improving the energy efficiency of the stock over time. Further work is needed to develop the 30 year business plan for the Housing Revenue Account to acknowledge the cost of decarbonisation and set out the level of government funding required.
22. Although part of the overall Climate Change Strategy, the scale and challenge of this work means a separate council housing decarbonisation strategy and action plan is being developed and is due to be considered by the Housing Committee in November.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

The actions contained in the Climate Change Strategy will be funded primarily through existing revenue budgets. These fall within the General Fund or the HRA depending on the services involved. The Council will also seek government and other external funding sources for specific climate change initiatives, where this is available.

In the short term the proposal to move to paperless agendas, recommended by the Climate Change Working Group, will be subject to approval of a capital budget for devices at a future meeting of the committee. The cost of this should be offset by savings in the printing and postage budget.

The Council, in common with most of local government, faces significant financial challenges over the medium-term and any investment in climate change activities will need to be prioritised against other spending requirements.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

s.1 Localism Act 2011 allows the Council to do anything deemed necessary or desirable to deliver or support its functions and duties providing that action is not otherwise prohibited by statute (the general power of competence). The preparation and delivery of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan would be permissible under s.1. The Council will need to ensure delivery of the Action Plan by ongoing monitoring and reporting of progress that will provide the detail as to how it will continually measure and improve progress to achieving the Council's objectives as set out in its Corporate Plan.

Equality

This report contains no proposals that would disadvantage any particular minority groups.

Climate change

This report is about the work taking place to minimise the impact of the Council's activities on climate change, as well as work to influence the behaviour of residents, businesses and suppliers.

The ability of the Council to meet its net zero target and to encourage third parties to do what they can to support this impacts climate change, as many solutions are currently still financially prohibitive for the Council and individuals.

In addition, achieving behaviour change is difficult and can take a long time, which inhibits progress.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Climate Change Strategy.
- Appendix B: Climate Change Action Plan.
- Appendix C: Climate Change Working Group Terms of Reference.
- Appendix D: Proposals to move to paperless agendas

Background papers

None.

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