

## **CABINET**

**3 MARCH 2020**

### **CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Howard Doe, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive

Author: Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Frontline Services  
Vicki Emrit, Project Officer

#### **Summary**

This report provides an update on the activities undertaken and work currently underway towards establishing a Climate Change Action Plan, as set out in the report previously presented to the Cabinet in July 2019.

The Cabinet are asked to note the progress that has been made.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 In April 2019, Full Council declared a climate change emergency in Medway. Responding to this declaration, fits with the Council Strategy priority 'Medway: A place to be proud of' and the key outcome of a 'clean and green environment'. The Council does not have a statutory duty to reduce emissions in line with the Climate Change Act 2008 or to develop an action plan.
- 1.2 The Council has engaged with Kent County Council on the development of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy and have contributed to the development of an emerging implementation plan. The Strategy is a key document in shaping Medway's Climate Change Action Plan.
- 1.3 The Cabinet authorised the signing of the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change on 18 July 2006.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 On 8 October 2018, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a report on the state of climate science, warning that if the planet warmed by 1.5 °C there would be devastating consequences such as extreme weather conditions.

- 2.2 Since then, over 200 local authorities have passed climate emergency motions, setting targets to be carbon neutral by 2050 in line with the Committee on Climate Change recommendation to central government and in some cases setting more ambitious targets of 2030, making it one of the fastest growing environmental movements in recent history.
- 2.3 On 25 April 2019, Full Council declared a climate change emergency in Medway. Council requested that the Cabinet establish a clear action plan for Medway to become carbon neutral within an appropriate timescale.
- 2.4 On 1 July 2019, officers from a range of Council services attended a Climate Change workshop. The workshop stimulated a number of discussions on actions to address climate change including those that the Council is already undertaking and new actions the Council could consider taking in the future.
- 2.5 On 9 July 2019, a report was presented to the Cabinet setting out the Council's aspirations and approach to the delivery of an action plan. In particular, the Cabinet agreed the establishment of the Climate Change Member Advisory Group. Further details are set out in paragraph 3.3 below.
- 2.6 The emerging Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sets a target of achieving net zero carbon by 2050, with significant action required in the next ten years to achieve this. Medway Council have adopted this target for the geographical area of Medway. Officers are currently considering and exploring options for an accelerated target year of 2030 for its own estate and operations.
- 2.7 A 5 year rolling action plan is being developed. In order to know what we need to do to reduce our carbon emissions, we need to quantify and understand the carbon footprint of the organisation by undertaking a carbon baseline assessment. This will allow us to set realistic targets for inclusion in the action plan. Additional expertise and support are required to carry out this assessment.
- 2.8 Updates will be presented to the Cabinet bi-annually, this being the first. The update includes a draft outline of the action plan (Appendix One), a live document which will be updated as progress is made and/or if circumstances change. It is anticipated that the action plan will be finalised by August 2020, subject to the completion of a carbon assessment and the potential requirement for further work depending on the results. It will be presented to the Cabinet for consideration in November 2020.

### **3. Options/Update on our approach to the delivery of an action plan**

- 3.1 Following the July 2019 workshop, officers have started collating baseline data and will continue to compile information on energy consumption and Greenhouse Gas Emissions across our buildings and operations for input into the carbon baseline assessment. An audit of our data is likely to identify some gaps and may require a review of how this information is collected going forward.
- 3.2 Initial Year One, Two, Three-Five and longer term actions have been identified and set out in the attached action plan.

- 3.3 A Member Advisory Group has been set up to meet on a quarterly basis. The first two meetings have already been held (in September and December 2019) resulting in the identification of a considerable number of positive actions. These meetings are held in public and meeting papers are published on the Council's website.
- 3.4 An Officer Steering group, made up of key officers across the Council, has been established to oversee the development of the cross-cutting action plan. The group have been meeting on a monthly basis since September 2019 and provide the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services with regular updates. The membership of the Steering group is likely to evolve as the work progresses to ensure that the group focus on specific initiatives while still retaining the knowledge base from across all service areas.
- 3.5 A number of stakeholders have been identified and engaged with including, but not limited to, Kent County Council and other district councils, SE7, University of Kent and bus operators. Discussions have already taken place and will continue to share ideas and best practice around tackling climate change and to jointly respond to funding opportunities.
- 3.6 An officer in the Integrated Transport Service is currently overseeing the climate change work until end of March 2020, alongside existing duties. This limits the time available to manage the significant level of work required to deliver a robust action plan. The recent Front Line Services restructure has proposed the creation of a dedicated Climate Change officer post, to sit under Environmental Services. Alongside other environmental health and protection functions, the new post will support the clean, green agenda. It is anticipated that the new structure will be effective from 1 April 2020.
- 3.7 A dedicated Communications Account Officer has been appointed to develop a communications strategy in order to engage with stakeholders and residents and to highlight the excellent work the Council will be undertaking to combat climate change. This will include, but not be limited to, building on the work of the Air Quality Communications Strategy which supports initiatives such as Clean Air Day and the LiftShare scheme. Internal communications will also support the ambition to "get our own house in order" by increasing staff awareness and encouraging behaviour change.
- 3.8 A climate change web page has been created ([www.medway.gov.uk/climatechange](http://www.medway.gov.uk/climatechange)). It will be updated frequently as work on the action plan progresses. The intention is to provide support to residents and businesses and to share useful links to other key strategies and complementary actions plans; for example the Air Quality Action Plan.
- 3.9 Officers attended and supported Medway Youth Council's annual conference, on the subject of climate change, in November 2019. Officers sat on a Q&A panel alongside representatives from the Medway Youth Climate Change Group and Extinction Rebellion. Officers were on hand to offer advice about air quality and recycling. It is acknowledged that the challenge of becoming carbon neutral is something that we all have to work collectively on. Harnessing the efforts of individuals and groups in Medway is key to the

delivery of the action plan and therefore further collaboration will form an integral part of our approach.

- 3.10 Questions on climate change were included in the Citizen's Panel at the end of December 2019. The results will be available by the end of February and may assist with future engagement with the public.
- 3.11 It has been proposed that the challenge of addressing climate change is included in the refreshed Council Plan, supporting the Council priority "A place to be proud of". Working with partners and the public to minimise emissions of greenhouse gases and reduce Medway's contribution to climate change to net zero by 2050 will provide the local community with a clean, green sustainable future with a focus on clean growth for all. This was agreed by Full Council on 20 February 2020.
- 3.12 Member Advisory Group have approved the decision to include guidance notes in the Council's decision making reports, for officers to consider the implications around climate change, where relevant. Suitable guidance is currently being agreed.

Other progress highlights include:

- 3.13 Service providers have recently been invited to tender via the Re:fit programme, a government backed procurement initiative, which will see existing council buildings assessed for energy efficiency in order to propose retrofit measures which will contribute towards a reduction in emissions.
- 3.14 A bid has been submitted to the Heat Network Delivery Unit (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) for funding to support a Heat Mapping and Energy Masterplanning exercise for the Hoo Peninsula and Medway Towns.
- 3.15 An "able to pay" householder solar PV scheme is in development with Kent County Council and other district authorities.
- 3.16 The Environmental Protection Team have worked closely with the Energy Savings Trust to carry out a review of key parts of the Council's fleet operations. The review included an analysis of the grey fleet (staff vehicles used on council business) and heavy/commercial vehicle fleet (which includes refuse collection vehicles). The overall aim of the project was to identify potential emissions reductions and cost savings. In January 2020, Directorate Management Team gave their support for work to progress with the recommendations made as a result of the review.
- 3.17 A staff travel survey was conducted in December 2019. The results of the survey will help to understand the barriers to adopting more active methods of travel/commuting (for both business and commuting purposes) to encourage a shift away from single use cars. For example, the promotion of a closed LiftShare group (for Medway staff only).
- 3.18 A technical consultant has been engaged to undertake a carbon baseline assessment of the Councils' own estate and operations in order to establish a pathway to net zero.

- 3.19 A business case and Gateway 3 report on an LED street lighting conversion will be coming to Cabinet on 7 April 2020. This will build on the street lighting column replacement and LED lantern upgrade programme completed at the end of 2019, which resulted in an upgrade to 22% of the network.
- 3.20 It is acknowledged that there is a requirement for an increase in EV charging points both on-street, off street and at the workplace. Officers have approached the Office of Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) and have been advised to establish a through evidence base and delivery programme before preparing a successful bid. Officers are currently in discussion with the Energy Savings Trust around potential studies and infrastructure options.
- 3.21 A successful trial of the first EV bus in Medway in partnership with ASD Buses was undertaken in October 2019. Officers are currently exploring options to bring forward the deployment of low emission and EV buses in Medway.
- 3.22 In consultation with Plant Life and Kent Wildlife, a review of the management of Medway's grass verges has provided an opportunity to create more wildflower "meadows". This will create over 100 miles of naturalised rural and urban verges supporting biodiversity.
- 3.23 In January 2020, Full Council approved supporting the assignment of a representative (Councillor Doe) to sit on the Plastic Free Community Steering Group, established by the Towards Plastic Free Medway Group. The group are seeking to achieve Plastic Free Community status for Medway by encouraging local businesses, stakeholders and other local public agencies to phase out the use of unnecessary single use plastic. This assignment will further support the motion passed in 2018 to become a single use plastic free Council.
- 3.24 In addition to the actions mentioned above, there is so much more that is still possible and will be addressed/ considered for inclusion in the emerging action plan including flooding, home insulation and tree coverage.

#### **4. Advice and analysis**

- 4.1 The emerging action plan intends to build on and refresh Medway's [Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan 2006](#) and [Corporate Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan 2007](#).
- 4.2 A Diversity Impact Assessment will be undertaken once the action plan has been finalised.

## 5. Risk management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>	<b>Risk rating</b>
Reputational Risk	The reputational risk to the Council if it does not provide regular updates on the progress it is making in relation to the development of an action plan.	Provide bi-annual updates to the Cabinet to ensure that Members and the public are involved in the journey towards net-zero emissions across Medway by 2050.	B2

## 6. Consultation

- 6.1 On 26 September 2019, Member Advisory Group were requested to consider and approve a timeline for delivering the action plan. Actions to date, and those for inclusion in the emerging action plan, have been discussed and agreed with a wide cross section of staff (see paragraphs 2.4, 3.3, 3.4) and, in some cases, developed as a consequence of working with key stakeholders (paragraph 3.5). Much of the progress detailed in section 3 of the report is as a result of excellent cross-cutting work across multiple teams.

## 7. Financial implications

- 7.1 To support the climate change work in 2020/21, £100,000 was allocated at Full Council on 20 February 2020. The funding will provide for a dedicated Climate Change officer, consultancy work to undertake a baseline carbon assessment and a robust communication strategy to support initiatives to tackle climate change.
- 7.2 It is anticipated that recommendations arising from a carbon assessment will include estimated potential costs and savings to allow decisions to be made around which initiatives to take forward. Any additional funding requirements to resource proposed measures would be reported to Cabinet in due course.
- 7.3 Officers will continue to identify and explore and respond to potential funding opportunities.

## 8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 places national targets on the reduction of emissions by 2050. The Council has powers to do anything an individual could, under the power of general competence in the Localism Act 2011. This includes taking steps to reduce Council emissions, which contribute to the local and national targets.

## 9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That the Cabinet note the progress made.

## 10. Suggested reasons for decision

- 10.1 To ensure the Cabinet is informed of the progress to date.

**Lead officer contact**

Vicki Emrit  
Interim Climate Change Officer  
Gun Wharf  
01634 331127  
[Vicki.emrit@medway.gov.uk](mailto:Vicki.emrit@medway.gov.uk)

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Draft outline Climate Change action plan

**Background papers**

None