

Key Decision: No

CLIMATE CHANGE – STRATEGY STATEMENT 2020-2030

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Rushmoor recognises that tackling climate change is a huge challenge if future generations are to have a positive future. It is clear that action needs to be taken as a matter of urgency to reduce the impact of climate change and the Council is committed to that locally. A climate emergency was declared in June 2019 and the Council has agreed to make its activities carbon neutral by 2030 and to build a more sustainable Borough.

Since that time a considerable amount of work had been undertaken to develop a strategy and action plan. The report sets out a strategy statement setting out the key principles and priorities for the Council and identifies the further work to be carried to develop the strategic framework and action plan.

The Cabinet is recommended to approve the Climate Change Strategy Statement.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Local authorities have a key role to play in addressing the effects of climate change. Rushmoor has recognised this by making a clear statement of intent in June 2019 when a unanimous decision was taken to tackle climate change locally by developing a plan to enable a more green and sustainable Rushmoor and to become a carbon neutral council by 2030.
- 1.2. Since that time, work has been carried out to develop a strategy and action plan through a Climate Change Working Group established by and reporting to the Cabinet in August 2019. This Report sets out the current position and contains a draft of a strategy document to form the basis of more detailed work and, importantly, the preparation of a comprehensive action plan aiming to achieve the key objectives.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Rushmoor's first Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan was adopted in 2006 and was refined for the period 2013 to 2018. During that period, action was focussed on the key themes of:
 - Energy management
 - Renewable energy

- Biodiversity and habitats
- Procurement
- Education and awareness raising

2.2. Some of the main impacts during this period were to:

- Reduce the Council's carbon footprint by over 22%
- Cut the use of gas by 15%, electricity by over 30% and water consumption by over 50%
- Implement solar energy schemes generating approximately 37,000KWH of electricity annually
- Creation of new wildlife habitats

2.3. The new document reflects the strongly and increasingly held view that significant action needs to be taken both to mitigate the effects of climate change and to adapt to it. The approach taken has drawn on the following:

- Data that is currently held by the Council including its carbon footprint calculation from 2017
- A review of what the Council is currently doing in other policies and projects
- The national position, especially the potential impact of the Environment Bill, and the work that is being done locally across Hampshire where there is an increasing move towards a joint approach between the County Council and the districts
- Developing baseline data
- The views of Members and stakeholders, including a range of possible initiative and opportunities
- An assessment of local impacts and what some of the resource implications might be

3. CURRENT POSITION ON STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

3.1. Over the past few months work has been undertaken to develop the strategy and to start pulling together an action plan. This work is quite advanced and currently there is consultation taking place with services. Some of the work has been interrupted during this period, in particular, the Coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on the preparatory work and is likely to affect the work going forward. Nevertheless, a strategy statement has been prepared and this is attached for consideration by the Cabinet. The document sets out a vision and overall goals, some contextual information and identifies the priority areas of action.

3.2. There is also commentary on the structure and content of the emerging action plan and how this might be moved forward. The key messages about the action plan are that as far as possible it will reflect the same process as the Council Business Plan and that the timeframes work towards the objectives. This means that activities are planned for the short, medium and longer terms.

- 3.3. The Council has allocated a reserve of £250,000 towards the cost of some of its work on climate change. Consideration is still to take place on how this resource will be best used moving forward and how it can help to draw in other resources.

4. COVID 19

- 4.1 In addition to having an impact on the preparation of the strategy and action plan, COVID 19 is looking like having an increasing impact on the content and approach of the action plan. The Council is currently moving into the response phase to the pandemic and has established a number of workstreams to address this and the outcomes of these will affect the content of the action plan. Some of these impacts will relate to:

- New ways of working, including how the Council will operate
- The way that the Council works with community and voluntary organisations
- The wider impact on services within the Council of expectations and behaviours of the local community
- The finance and economic impacts on business and other organisations, like the Council
- Societal changes

- 4.2 The work will include impact assessments, and the resultant plans will no doubt mean changes to the structure and priorities within the action plan and time will be needed to consider these.

- 4.3 One other impact of the pandemic has seen that many funding streams offered nationally or regionally have changed focus at present so that resources are only available for projects associated with COVID 19. This of course will change again over time.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1. Subject to the views of Cabinet on the content of the strategy document the next steps in the process will be:

- Review the strategy document and draft action plan with the Deputy Leader and the Climate Change Working Group, taking account of the response work from COVID 19
- Use the next few months to build the baseline data to inform the action plan process – this will include an up to date calculation of the carbon footprint which it is hoped will be done on a county wide basis following discussions with other authorities
- Hold discussions with a range of stakeholder groups, to include the Rushmoor Partners Network. It is also intended to clarify the Government's current policies towards climate change and the potential to work with Hampshire County Council on local priorities

- Consider a few quick wins which sit with the Council's Business Plan and help to move the strategy and action planning process forward. Examples of this might be the development of sustainable planting schemes as an offset measure and an awareness and engagement campaign involving key messages about energy saving and green issues
- 5.2. Another important element will be the identification of measures and targets for the life of the strategy and a system for regular monitoring and evaluation of performance.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Multiple sources are indicating that the world is living through an unrivalled drop in carbon output because of the pandemic. However, whilst there could be a fall of 5% this year the concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere and global warming will not stabilise until carbon net-zero is reached. This means that a 5% reduction would be needed every year to reach carbon zero by 2050. Over many years organisations and individuals have been encouraged to "think globally, act locally". The data makes this statement even more relevant.
- 6.2 The Council has made a clear statement of its intent to play its part in addressing climate change and the strategy document is the first step in seeking to do that. Whilst the pandemic may cause a rethink of some of the work, the key principles will remain and it is the intention that over the coming months the Council will have established a clear process and action plan for taking the work forward.

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CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY STATEMENT - 2020 – 2030**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The changing climate and its impacts have been recognised nationally and internationally as the most important environmental challenge faced by the planet. A changing climate is having, and will increasingly have, profound effects on everyone and especially future generations. It has been estimated that in 2020 the average temperature will have increased by 1.1°C since the 1900's and will continue to increase with current and predicted greenhouse gas emissions. Rushmoor recognises that action needs to be taken now to make a positive influence on the future of the Borough and the Council fully intends to plan its activities in order to meet the climate change challenge.
- 1.2 Acknowledging the need to make a clear statement of intent the Council took the unanimous decision in June 2019 to address climate change locally, by developing a plan to enable:
- A green and sustainable Rushmoor
 - A carbon neutral Council by 2030
- 1.3 The aim of this Climate Change Strategy is to co-ordinate and set out a range of objectives into one document to guide the Borough to achieve its targets.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 Climate change is defined as the increase of the average temperature on the earth. The main causes of the rise in worldwide temperature is the increase in the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This terminology is used because the gases keep heat in the atmosphere like a greenhouse, thereby warming the earth.
- 2.2 A statutory target was set out in the UK Climate Change Act 2008 to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from 1990 by 2050. The Government has now adopted a UK Committee on Climate Change recommendation to increase this target to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment identifies six priority risk areas of flooding, high temperatures, water supply shortages, natural capital, food production and pest and diseases..
- 2.3 Rushmoor has regularly calculated its carbon footprint for its operations, the last assessment being carried out in 2017. The figures are below:

Source	2016-2017 in kilogrammes of carbon dioxide
Electricity	1,378,658
Gas	1,484,048
Renewables (50% of generation)	(-14,091)
Transport	1,228,755
CF Total (kg)	4,077,370
CF Total (tonnes)	4077

- 2.4 Carbon emissions from the Council's activities fell by 21.6% between 2008 and 2017. The Council's previous plans from 2006 to 2018 helped to reduce emissions and the declaration made by the Council to ensure a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 will be delivered mainly by directly reducing emissions and also by taking opportunities for offsetting, such as through the planting of certain types of trees and other vegetation. The intention is to keep the level of offsetting to an absolute minimum.
- 2.5 The Council will be seeking to work with residents, business and other stakeholders to deliver a more sustainable Borough through the use and adaptation of technologies, plans and strategies to ensure the impact on the environment is kept to a minimum.

2 THE VISION AND OVERALL GOALS

- 3.1 The Climate Change vision for Rushmoor is:

"Rushmoor Borough Council will seek to have a positive impact on future generations by working with businesses, communities and organisations to protect and enhance Rushmoor's environment. Through direct action and by encouraging and supporting others, Rushmoor will address the challenges and opportunities presented by climate change"

- 3.2 The ten-year vision is underpinned by the following principles which summarise what the Council is seeking to achieve for the Borough:
- Protect and enhance the environment and conserve and encourage biodiversity
 - The built environment and infrastructure reflect sustainability whilst enabling prosperity
 - Natural resources will be used sustainably and waste will be minimised
 - Raise awareness of the challenges and, through engagement, build resilience and involvement within the local community

3.3 The Council understands its duty to protect and care for the local environment and this is a significant priority for the Council. It will minimise the environmental impacts of the Council's activities and will reflect a robust strategic approach in its plans and policies, including the Council Vision to 2030 and Business Plan, Rushmoor Local Plan 2019 - 2032 and the link with the Hampshire Policy Framework.

3 PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

4.1 Rushmoor's Climate Change Strategy establishes the strategic framework within which action plans will be aligned over a ten year period. The Strategy reflects the important role the Council plays in tackling climate change as a leader, facilitator, enabler and deliverer of services to the Rushmoor community and beyond.

4.2 The ten year planning horizon will enable the Council to develop and deliver a comprehensive programme of action which will be prioritised to reflect impact, resources and deliverables. It is proposed that the Strategy would be reviewed at the midway point in 2025/26 to reflect the situation at that time and the outcomes achieved.

4.3 The strategy and complementary action plan will be co-ordinated and managed by the Council. Implementation will be achieved through a collaborative approach with a range of stakeholders and the local community.

4.4 The structure of the strategy is based around these main themes the details of which follow:

- A. Awareness raising and engaging the local community**
- B. Reducing Climate Change Impacts (Mitigation)**
- C. Building Resilience (Adaptation)**

4.5 In addition there is an additional theme '**(D) Other Sustainability Initiatives**' which focus on other projects which support the principles set out in this Strategy.

(A) Awareness raising and engaging the local community

The Council intends to ensure that the Borough provides significant support to local work to reduce the impacts of climate change. The collective contributions of stakeholders and the local community will be key to the Borough meeting its targets. The Council will seek to improve understanding and awareness of the issues and how the community can have an impact through their own behaviour and action.

The Council's activities within this theme will focus on the following priority areas:

- Develop and deliver a programme of environmental education and promotion of behaviour change (Action Plan category A1)
- Work with stakeholders in the Borough and County to establish a framework for and to co-ordinate action (Action Plan category A2)
- Mobilise the local community to support work to address climate change targets (Action Plan category A3)
- Encourage a low carbon economy in the Borough and households to take action to become more sustainable (Action Plan category A4)
- Climate change will be a corporate commitment for the Council which will adapt and update its policies and allocate resources to support it meet the challenges and opportunities (Action Plan category A5)

(B) Reducing Climate Change Impacts (Mitigation)

The Council has a range of policies to protect and enhance the environment and proposes to reduce the impact of the Borough's activities on the environment. It will seek, in conjunction with partners and the community, to make Rushmoor a better place to live, visit or work by reducing the impact of climate change.

The Council's activities within this theme will focus on the following priority areas:

- Recognise the climate change implications in the planning and delivery of major new developments in which the Council is a partner (Action Plan category B1)
- Using the planning system to reduce the carbon impact of development in the Borough (Action Plan category B2)
- Seek to minimise the generation and disposal of waste by sustainable means and to increase recycling and re-use of materials (Action Plan category B3)
- Support and encourage energy reduction and efficiency and use of clean energy (Action Plan category B4)
- Support and encourage a low carbon economy in the Borough (Action Plan category B5)
- Support and facilitate the introduction of sustainable travel infrastructure and encourage reduced car use (Action Plan category B6)
- Measures to improve air quality and reduce pollution in the Borough (Action Plan category B7)
- Develop and introduce initiatives to enhance sustainable living and well being with the support of the local community and stakeholders (Action Plan category B8)
- Plan and deliver services to provide a more naturalised and protected environment with improved biodiversity (Action Plan category B9)

(C) Building Resilience (Adaptation)

With climate change predictions for the south of England indicating more severe weather conditions, including heatwaves and storms, the Council will seek to minimise the risk to the local community. The aim is for the Borough to remain prosperous and moving forward without detriment to the environment and by reducing the effects of climate change.

The Council's activities within this theme will focus on the following priority areas:

- Work with communities and businesses to plan and prepare for future climate change impacts and how to address them (eg flooding, heatwave, drought) (Action Plan category C1)
- Seek to ensure that measures to conserve the environment and biodiversity reflect the potential impacts of climate change (Action Plan category C2)
- Support the production and purchase of food grown locally and sustainability (Action Plan category C3)
- Work to ensure business continuity planning and risk management ensure resilience impacts (Action Plan category C4)

5 ACTION PLANNING

5.1 The Climate Change Strategy sets out the context and strategic priorities to enable the Council to achieve its high-level targets. Appended to the Strategy is an Action Plan setting out how it will be delivered. The Action Plan has the following underlying principles:

- A ten-year time horizon with a major mid-point review
- A rolling plan with one year, 2-3 years and 3 years' plus activities to be reviewed on an annual basis
- Each strategic priority will be underpinned by a series of actions with specific targets
- The Action Plan complements the activities set out within other strategies and policies adopted by the Council to ensure a consistent and approach
- Actions focus on:
 - Reducing, eliminating or offsetting carbon emissions
 - Support and involvement of other stakeholders, including voluntary sector groups, businesses and individuals/community organisations
 - Enabling longer term resilience to climate change
- A system of data collection and regular calculation of the carbon footprint will be undertaken to ensure that the Borough and Council is on track

5.2 An important element of ensuring that delivery of the Action Plan is effective and making a difference is regular monitoring and evaluation of performance. This will be undertaken by regular updated with the responsible Cabinet Member, the Climate Change Working Group and the Council's scrutiny process.

6. RESOURCING AND GOVERNANCE

6.1 It is likely that the Council's greatest focus in the early years of the Strategy will be on the key principles of "Awareness Raising and Engagement" and "Reducing Climate Change Impacts". The earlier that a reduction in carbon emissions is made the better it will be for the environment and community wellbeing. Whilst there is a cost with this, adaptation for the longer term is likely to be more costly than taking action to mitigate climate change outcomes in the shorter term. The Council recognises the need to allocate resources for the early stages of the Action Plan, which will also focus on building strong support and participation from the local community. Business cases will be developed where appropriate for specific actions to assist in the allocation and drawing down of resources.

6.2 The Climate Change Strategy will be overseen and driven forward by the Climate Change Working Group. It's main roles and responsibilities will be:

- Delivery of the action plan to ensure targets are met and progress is secured
- Review of local and national issues which will affect delivery of the plan
- Revising the Action Plan on an annual basis

6.3 The Council will establish an officer group to drive forward the changes within the Council and will report to the Corporate Leadership Team and portfolio holders. Some actions will fall within the responsibilities of specific portfolio holders who will work with officers to plan and deliver the actions.
