

Climate Change



Report to: Scrutiny Committee

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Recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- A** Notes the progress the Council has made to date in formulating a Climate Change Strategy, and in cutting its own emissions in line with the current Carbon Reduction Plan.

Background

1. Development of the Climate Change Strategy has been on-going in 2023 following the agreement of a strategy Position Statement at Cabinet in March 2022. The agreed Position Statement set out seven objectives which have been brought forward into the strategy as seven themes, which are;
 - To achieve Net Zero emissions from the Council's operational buildings, land, vehicles and services, including those provided by service delivery partners;
 - To achieve Net Zero emissions from all homes and the built environment within Harlow;
 - To reduce consumption of resources, reduce waste and increase reuse and recycling in Harlow;
 - To adopt good stewardship of the natural environment across the town to support both climate change adaptation and mitigation;
 - To achieve a significant modal shift towards more sustainable means of transport;

- To promote reduction of emissions by businesses to Net Zero, supported by a successful green economy; and
 - To lead and encourage local communities, partners and stakeholders to reduce their emissions and contribute positively to meeting the challenges posed by climate change.
2. The draft strategy has been informed by a series of internal workshops with colleagues across the Council, including housing services, environmental health, HTS, planning services, landscape and biodiversity officers, parking, economic development, waste management and operations.
3. The workshops have identified a range of measures being undertaken by the Council to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate against climate change, including;
- Retrofitting the Council's housing stock using a number of pilots and reviewing Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of homes.
 - Implementing measures such as PV (solar) panels, LED lighting, replacement windows in the Council's operational buildings.
 - Replacing some vehicles with electric vehicles in the HTS fleet.
 - Raising awareness of climate change and using more sustainable engagement methods as set out in the Council's Communications Strategy.
 - Tree planting strategy with over 2,000 trees planted already as well as more wildflower areas planted.
 - Installation of solar panelled bins to improve efficiency in their collection and the installation of electric charging points in some of the council's car parks.
 - Production of a sustainability checklist for developers to complete and an addendum to the Council's design guide regarding sustainable measures and energy efficiency in new buildings.
 - The inclusion of sustainable measures in the Council's house building projects.
 - Use of digital technology in waste collection to improve efficiencies and a review of the routing of refuse vehicles.
 - The delivery of 10% net gain on new developments as per the Environment Act and a Supplementary Planning Document on net gain and Green Infrastructure has been prepared alongside a draft Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Stewardship Charter.

- Implementing two new walking routes across the town as identified in the Essex County Council Local Cycling and Walking Plan and work to begin on the North to Centre element of the Sustainable Transport Corridor which will improve walking and cycling and provide a dedicated bus route.
 - Development of an improved bus station and cycle storage area in the town centre.
 - Production of a Harlow Economic Strategy which refers to supporting a green economy and skills on retrofitting and modern methods of construction.
4. The draft climate change strategy sets out the proposed actions in the short, medium and long term for the Council to aim to achieve Net Zero by 2040. A number of the short term actions in the draft strategy are to develop more specific proposals and costings, as further work is needed to quantify these. The council will also seek external funding as it becomes available, and it is envisaged that Government will continue to implement top-down measures, which may be accompanied by funding, which the council continues to monitor.
 5. In terms of external bodies, businesses have also been implementing sustainable measures such as PV panels, and energy efficiency measures, Harlow College has opened an Electric Vehicle Maintenance Centre, and Essex County Council are undertaking engagement activity with residents and business which the Council is supporting.
 6. The Council's Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP) for 2021-26, sets out the steps the Council will take to achieve its target of net zero for its operations by 2040. To deliver this, the Council will take the following steps:
 - Fitting no fossil fuelled boilers into operational buildings after 2025/26
 - Buying no new carbon emitting vehicles after 2022/23
 - Achieving Net Zero from its waste service during the lifetime of the next contract from 2029
 - Developing a broader climate change strategy for the town
 - Working with HTS to help them achieve Net Zero by 2040 and to identify a potential 12% saving during the lifetime of this Plan.
 7. The CRP focuses on the Council's emissions and considers energy use / consumption in its operational buildings. Harlow Council's target for the period of the CRP will be to reach a 50% reduction in CO2 emissions from the 2014/15 2,700 tonne baseline, i.e., a reduction to 1,350 tonnes by 2026. The council monitors its CO2 emissions and voluntarily reports this annually at <https://www.harlow.gov.uk/your-council/accessing->

[information/carbon-emissions](#) with the published figures showing emissions being 1,765 tonnes for 2022-23.

8. Whilst the data shows an increase in emissions in comparison to 2020-21, this is largely due to the requirement for the Veolia fleet to travel further to dispose of waste. The emissions for 2022-23 are overall lower than 2021-22, indicating the trend is downward. Additionally, the council is committed to boiler replacements in its operational buildings over the next 12 to 18 months and this will further help to achieve our target.
9. It should be noted that if the council acquires buildings which are then deemed as operational, these would need to be included in the CRP, and could then affect the overall emissions.

Issues/Proposals

10. The next steps are to complete the internal engagement workshops and compile the final draft of the Climate Change Strategy to present to Scrutiny committee in February 2024. The strategy will then be presented to Cabinet in March 2024, seeking approval of the strategy for consultation externally. Following a period of consultation and engagement the strategy will be amended where necessary and subsequently recommended for adoption.
11. As technologies, supplies, skills and legislation changes, the Climate Change Strategy, actions and plans arising from it will need to be respondent to this, therefore the Strategy will need to be periodically reviewed and updated. This will be supported by the review and refresh of the Council's Carbon Reduction Plans (latest 2021/26) which will outline how the Council has reduced its carbon output. Other monitoring tools will also be considered.
12. Climate Change will form an important part of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Implications

Equalities and Diversity

An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed once the strategy has been subject to consultation and prior to adoption.

Climate Change

As detailed in the report.

Communities and Environment

The successful implementation of recommendations and actions stemming from the Climate Strategy once approved are anticipated to have wide ranging positive benefits for harlow

residents, communities, and the local environment. The successful delivery of net zero will also benefit the wider context of the Environment nationally and internationally.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Finance

The report sets out the measures already taken by the Council to reduce its carbon emissions which have been funded through specific grant funding, revenue budget or the councils capital programme. Once the strategy is fully developed there will be a requirement to factor further and ongoing costs of delivery in to its medium term financial plans.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Governance and Corporate Services

The Governance Directorate work supports the implementation of many of the projects mentioned in both this and previous reports. Technology exploitation that avoids the use of fossil fuel energy and resources is essential. Examples include hybrid working, moving away from on-site IT infrastructure and our IT Strategy for SAAS and changing procurement to encourage use of local resources and reducing carbon footprint.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services

Strategic Growth and Regeneration

The delivery of the Council's Net Zero ambitions is already being factored into the delivery of regeneration programmes such as through the commitment to Passivhaus standards in the Council's housebuilding programme. Commitment to Net Zero in the delivery of new housing by the private sector can to some extent be influenced by the Council's planning policy but to a larger extent will be influenced by the National Planning Policy Framework. The delivery of the town's growth ambitions though will also be reliant on the provision of suitable sustainable infrastructure, particularly transport, and the Council will need to see that keeps pace with growth plans.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Chief Executive

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

Carbon Reduction Plan

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

PV – photovoltaic or Solar Panel.

Net Zero - refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) that's produced and the amount that's removed from the atmosphere. It can be achieved through a combination of emission reduction and emission removal.

CRP – Carbon Reduction Plan