

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Environment and Regeneration  
**Date** 12 February 2020



## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE & ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

### KEY DECISION

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### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the climate change work and engagement.
- 1.2 To provide Members with an overview of the draft Climate Change Strategy and accompanying documents and to note feedback from the consultation will be brought before the Executive later in the year.
- 1.3 To endorse cooperative engagement with Businesses and the Citizens Panel.
- 1.4 To seek Members' approval to carry out public consultation on the draft Climate Change Strategy, Charter and Community Pledges.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the content of the draft Climate Change Strategy, Charter and Community Pledges be noted.
- 2.2 That the Executive approve publishing the draft Climate Change Strategy, Charter and Pledges for consultation from 18 February 2020 for five weeks.
- 2.3 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft documents prior to consultation.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

### *Climate Change: the global position*

- 3.1 Climate change refers to the impact on the climate of too many greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, causing accelerated global warming. This is a result of many different human activities such as burning fossil fuels (e.g. gas, coal and oil) intensified agriculture, polluting industrial processes and the clearance of vegetation. Greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) trap heat in the atmosphere which would otherwise escape into space.
- 3.2 The levels of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) now exceed both atmospheric and ice core recorded concentration levels for the last 800,000 years. Fossil fuel emissions as well as changes to how land is used have caused carbon dioxide levels to rise by 40% since the pre industrial era.
- 3.3 Since the mid-20th century, changes in terms of sea levels and temperatures have had substantial effects on the climate system. Consequently, the polar ice caps are rapidly melting and there are increasing at risks of worldwide crop failure and weather extremes. In order to avoid climate breakdown everyone must commit to deep and rapid emissions reductions, the creation of new carbon sinks, and bring down atmospheric greenhouse gas levels from 400 parts per million (ppm) to below 350ppm globally. This will involve scaling up current efforts to combat climate change significantly.
- 3.4 It is now recognised by the majority of the scientific community that “business as usual” in terms of human activity is no longer an option. If we continue to emit greenhouse gases at current rates we are set for at least a 4 degree increase in global surface temperatures which is far beyond what is considered climate safe.
- 3.5 In 2015 the United Nations member states adopted the sustainable development goals. This was in response to growing concern among the international community that rapid and uneven economic, social and environmental development round the world was having detrimental impacts on people’s lives and the planet. All 17 goals are interlinked and act as a framework for a better future for all, focussing on equality, a climate safe future and global peace and justice. This is the starting point for member nations to assess and reduce their own carbon emissions and impact on climate change.

### *The UK Position*

- 3.6 The UK government has made a commitment, under the 2015 Paris Agreement, to achieve a 'net-zero' target by 2050. Net zero refers to achieving an overall balance between emissions produced and emissions taken out of the atmosphere.
- 3.7 The agreement is considered realistic and rational, but requires a transnational, multi-faceted approach at all levels. This is a crucial time in the global effort to tackle climate change. The global average temperature has already risen by 1°C from pre-industrial levels, driving changes in our climate that are increasingly apparent. Net-zero in the UK would lead the global effort to limit the rise to 1.5°C. The Committee on Climate Change for the UK have stated a target of 'net-zero' by 2050 which although achievable, will rely on clear and well-designed policies being implemented and enforced across the country.
- 3.8 The UK public are also increasingly concerned with climate change, with an August 2019 Ipsos MORI polling showing 85% of Britons are now concerned about climate change. With the majority (52%) very concerned – the highest levels Ipsos MORI have recorded since they began tracking concern in 2005

### *Stevenage Borough Council*

- 3.9 On the 12th of June 2019 Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) declared a climate emergency. This was in recognition of the need to urgently increase efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Council's role as a land and asset owner, a regulator and as an agent for change will be addressed. The battle against climate change goes beyond reducing single use plastic and planting more trees. Although these things are extremely important, the Council must also consider factors such as improving energy efficiency, transforming transport, protecting biodiversity and ending fuel poverty. The Council must nurture the sense of social responsibility which has come as a result of collective action in recent years and set firm goals for reducing emissions.
- 3.10 Stevenage is well placed to become a carbon neutral town and has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Our residents and businesses care about climate change and are already taking action within their communities. The town boasts an outstanding town-wide cycle network, excellent rail links, open green space and is home to an impressive range of small and global tech-based industry.
- 3.11 The climate emergency declared by SBC in June 2019 is recognition that the Council must accelerate our response to tackle the issues. Urgent efforts must be made by the Council along with the town's residents and businesses to halt carbon emissions and remove the greenhouse gases from the atmosphere to prevent unsustainable global warming. A failure to act may result in catastrophic sea level changes and increased intensity and frequency of natural disasters.
- 3.12 While we have been working on ideas that the Council can lead on and potential possibilities for the community. We want to collaborate and coproduce the Strategy and Action Plans. As such we have been liaising with

key stakeholders and technical experts to better understand our current carbon position and what some of the most effective solutions might look like.

- 3.13 We have started an on-line digital engagement programme with interested people. During the proposed consultation on these first initial drafts of the documents we have a series of meetings and events planned with schools, youth and faith groups alongside an engagement programme targeting as wide a group of people as possible. The culmination of this first phase will be in an initial Citizen Panel in the next month and a main Citizen Panel in June to review the ideas so far. The panel would have a technical climate change advisor to support them.

#### **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS**

**Recommendation 2.1: That the content of the draft Climate Change Strategy, Charter and Community Pledges be noted.**

- 4.1 Since the declaration, officers have been working internally and externally with local interest groups and academics. Climate change must be a consideration in all decisions and actions undertaken by the Council. The Council also recognises that it not only has a role in reducing its own emissions, but also as an influencer and leader in the community.
- 4.2 There has been a Portfolio Holder Briefing Group and the first Climate Change and Sustainability Member working group to inform the work so far.
- 4.3 The work so far has included discussing potential measures the Council, businesses and residents can take to reduce their carbon output. To date these measures have included introducing a number of community orchards and tree planting, installing cycle hangers, and the Refill Stevenage project, where people can refill their own bottles of water.
- 4.4 While these projects are all worthwhile, the Council requires an overall vision which can influence and lead the response to the climate change declaration. Nationally, councils are starting the process through the production of a 'Climate Change Strategy'. These documents are in general conformity and contain the same information as a starting point for action.
- 4.5 In order to align with other councils both in Hertfordshire and nationally, the Council has consulted with Friends of the Earth and climate change academics for guidance to produce a draft Climate Change Strategy (CCS) for Stevenage. In addition at the most senior levels we are working on County wide initiatives and best practice to ensure we have the widest impact.
- 4.6 This has resulted in the production of four documents which include; the draft CCS (Appendix A) which contextualises the global climate emergency and sets out what action needs to be taken by the Council to support the ambition of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. A Business Charter (Appendix B) and Community Pledges (Appendix C). A Member working group has also been established to guide and oversee the progress as well as monitor success.

- 4.7 The Executive are asked to note the content of the CCS, Business Charter and Community Pledges. Broad overviews of the documents are presented below.
- Climate Change Strategy,*
- 4.8 The CCS is the starting point for the Council and outlines the known data on greenhouse gas emissions in Stevenage. This includes emissions across the town as well as for the Council's own activities providing an important baseline. The CCS also presents what must change to support the aspiration of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. The CCS outlines the areas the Council needs to focus on in order to reduce its own carbon footprint and to engage residents and businesses in an active cross-town commitment to reduce Stevenage's contribution to climate change.
- 4.9 The document outlines the action that the Council should undertake in partnership with local stakeholders, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Through further consultation and development in 2020 it will evolve into a more comprehensive vision which takes into account the action being taken across the town by a wide range of stakeholders. This will help ensure that future policy making in the area is truly "joined-up" avoiding duplication, capitalising on collaborations and increasing investor confidence in Stevenage as a leader in town-scale action on climate change.
- 4.10 The targets and the data presented in the CCS focus primarily on direct use and the associated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, from homes, other commercial and industrial buildings, transport and waste. The Strategy focuses on these direct activities, but also recognises the need to better understand and reduce indirect emissions. The power to make change through consumer habits must also be highlighted and will be further explored such as fast fashion or long distance food transportation.
- 4.11 After identifying the baseline emissions, the focus of the CCS is on climate change mitigation, i.e. reducing greenhouse gas emissions (particularly carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), as well as methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O)), identifying action to address how the borough sources, consumes, and produces energy. However, in mitigating CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the Council will influence, and be influenced by a range of other issues and strategies including energy security, fuel poverty, climate adaptation and resilience.
- 4.12 The CCS will need to be well integrated to reduce duplication, share resources and costs, and maximise co-benefits across the Council and the County. The issues of energy reduction and low carbon life style transitions effect almost every department within the Council and require a holistic approach across all tiers of government. As a borough council our main priorities must be energy efficiency for our assets, our vehicle fleet and particularly our housing stock.
- 4.13 Departments across the organisation are working towards reducing emissions, championing green spaces and improving the built environment and this is why a joined up approach is vital.
- 4.14 The council has produced the CCS as a starting point for consultation with businesses and residents. It doesn't and isn't meant to provide all of the solutions or actions the Council will undertake to combat climate change or

reach the 2030 carbon neutral target at this stage. Instead it is a document which aligns with local and national CCSs which aim to set the baseline locally, enable discussion and set out the Council's vision for 2030. It is the discussions and actions that stem from the CCS that will achieve the zero carbon by 2030.

#### *Action Plan*

- 4.15 The Action Plan will accompany the baseline data and vision set out in the CCS. It will remain as a 'live' document which will be periodically updated. The political power and economic ability to tackle Climate Change at the borough level is likely to change significantly over the next decade. With new innovative 'best practice' being constantly developed, it is important that the way the Council deal with mitigation and adaption is scrutinised, measured and held accountable in order to ensure the most appropriate action is taken.
- 4.16 These actions are not yet costed and are currently at an early feasibility testing stage. Actions are currently divided into the business units which would be responsible for their implication. It is important to share these ideas with the community at this early stage to aid discussion. The Action Plan could also be extended to include community or business actions as the plan evolves and through consultation.
- 4.17 It is important that at this early stage all ideas and proposals are considered and tested. The Council wants to work with the community and has not ruled out any actions at this stage. This work will evolve through consultation and work with the Citizens Panel.

#### *Business Charter*

- 4.18 The Charter is about uniting the local business community and bringing about systemic change, to build a more sustainable future not only in Stevenage but through their supply and delivery chains. Some of our businesses have a global reach and the Council will be discussing climate change needs, solutions and options with the business community.

#### *Community Pledges*

- 4.19 Climate change reductions are not only about what the Council and businesses can do. To be effective there are everyday small changes everyone can make to their lifestyle or everyday choices.
- 4.20 The Community Pledges is a 'living' list of 40-50 changes residents can pick from to make their own list of 5 or 10 things they can do right now to support carbon reduction. These range from reducing the purchase of fast fashion, long haul flights and car usage, to shopping locally, recycling more and driving less.

**Recommendation 2.2: That the Executive approve publishing the draft Climate Change Strategy for consultation from 18th February 2020 for five weeks.**

- 4.21 The Executive is asked to approve the publication of the draft CCS in order to consult residents and businesses on the Council's strategy and proposals. It

is vital that the consultation is correctly carried out to ensure residents and businesses understand what the Council is trying to achieve, why and how they can input.

- 4.22 The CCS cannot progress without consultation at this stage as it is imperative that the Council is progressing in an open and transparent manner that gives the community ownership and input into the process. The Council has consulted with Friends of the Earth and academics who specialise in climate change and climate change strategies who have supported the Council's broad approach. At this stage the CCS should not be viewed as a finished document and will evolve after consultation.
- 4.23 A CCS is not a statutory document and no formal consultation process exists. Officers request the Executive approve the consultation to run from 18<sup>th</sup> February 2020 for five weeks. The consultation will follow the Council's Community Engagement Framework, while the Council has also met with local environmental organisations.
- 4.24 The Consultation will give an opportunity for residents and businesses to provide feedback and comments on the strategy. It will also be an opportunity to publicise the positive actions the Council is taking to reduce the causes and impacts of climate change.
- 4.25 The Charter and Community Pledges are not being formally consulted upon as they are live documents, however they are an important tool for us to support businesses and residents and as such will be shared extensively.

**Recommendation 2.3: That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft Strategy prior to its consultation.**

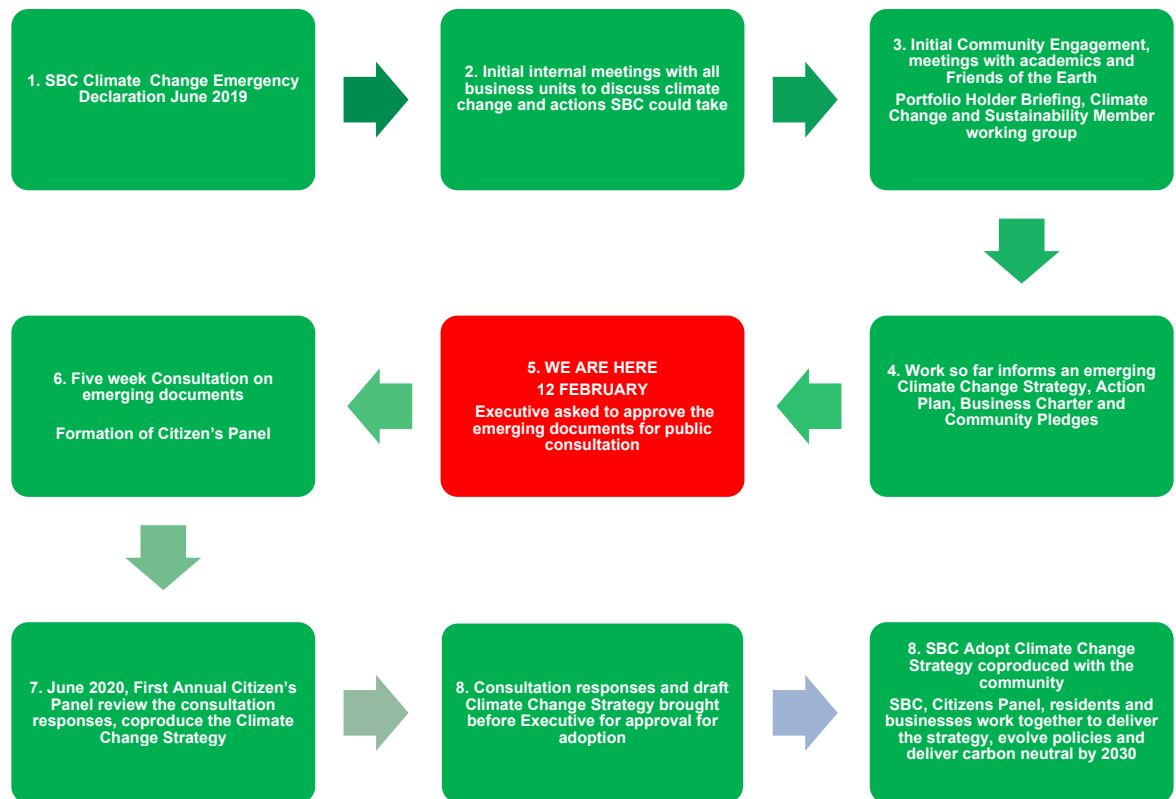
- 4.26 The draft CCS is appended to this report. However, it may be necessary to make minor changes prior to the consultation start date. This might include cosmetic adjustments, the correction of typographical errors and any minor factual changes.
- 4.27 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.

#### *Next Steps*

- 4.28 Following the five week consultation, the Council will consider the consultation responses, produce a consultation document stating the main issues raised by respondents, and summarise how the issues have been addressed by the Council.
- 4.29 In the summer, the responses to the CCS consultation and wider public engagement will go to before the Citizen's Panel for consideration. The Panel, supported by a technical advisor will make a recommendation on the ideas for the CCS and Action Plan. This will come back to the Executive via

the Member working group to seek approval to adopt the CSS and the Action Plan.

#### 4.30 Time Table:



## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### Financial Implications

- 5.1 The costs associated with producing and consulting on the draft CCS will be met from the agreed departmental budget, supported by the 2020/21-2021/22 Climate Change growth bid recommended for inclusion in the General Fund budget in the General Fund Budget report to the February Council.
- 5.2 Additional resources to meet climate change initiatives emerging from the Council's climate change agenda are currently not funded and will require either business cases, bidding for external resources, incorporating with current agendas such as the Locality Reviews and/or future growth bids as part of the Council's budget setting process.

### Legal Implications

- 5.3 There are no direct legal implications associated with consulting on the emerging CCS.

### Risk Implications

- 5.4 There are no risks identified with consulting on the draft CCS.



### **Policy Implications**

- 5.5 The emerging CCS has been produced in consultation with all business units within the Council services.
- 5.6 Therefore, the document should be aligned with all other corporate Council documents. Further consultation will be held with all business units during the public consultation and further stages to ensure any policy implications are understood.

### **Planning Implications**

- 5.7 There are no planning implications at this stage.

### **Climate Change Implications**

- 5.8 The emerging CCS has the potential to have a significant positive impact on climate change through the multiple benefits and opportunities outlined in the strategy.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.9 A brief Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the CCS and potential positive and negative equality or diversity implications have been highlighted. A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be developed as the engagement around the CCS progresses.

### **Community Safety Implications**

- 5.10 Whilst the emerging CCS does not have any direct community safety implications itself, when implementing any of the proposals the delivery body will need to consider any potential impacts on community safety.

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- BD1 Future Borough, Future Council 2018-23
- BD2 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031
- BD3 Future Borough, Future Transport 2019
- BD4 The Open Space Strategy 2015
- BD5 Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2022
- BD6 Stevenage Re-Imagined: A Ten-Year Arts and Heritage (Cultural) Strategy

### **APPENDICES**

- A Draft Climate Change Strategy
- B Draft Charter
- C Draft Community Pledges
- D Brief Equalities Impact Assessment