

Emerging Climate Change Strategy Consultation February 2020

Stevenage declares a
Climate Change
Emergency

We would like your opinion!

Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Foreword by portfolio holder

Climate Change has now reached a point where we must all take immediate action, and with its declaration of a climate emergency in June 2019, Stevenage Borough council is committed to tackling this head on. We have a holistic vision which focuses on cutting our own emissions to net zero and supporting our businesses and residents to do the same by 2030. The Council will now develop a strategy which will set out how we plan to achieve this and the action we all can take which will have the most far reaching impacts. The steps we must take in order to ensure a climate safe future will also have significant positive impacts on our health and wellbeing, as we look to champion warm, energy efficient housing, protection of green space and improved food systems.

Climate Change by its nature is a global issue which requires real change in the way our current globalised production and consumption systems operate. Although it can seem like a daunting task the reality is that locally driven action will be pivotal in realising national and international targets to keep global warming to a level that can continue to sustain life on earth. The current crisis presents an opportunity to prioritise a fair and just transition to a sustainable era of living.

Cllr John Gardner

Emerging Climate Change Strategy

This document will act as a starting point for the development of a resident-led, co-produced Climate Change Strategy for Stevenage. The Council will act as a community leader and facilitate local people and businesses during the decarbonisation process. Through consultation with academics and climate change organisations the Council has taken this first-step to consult with residents and businesses. The resulting feedback will form the basis for collaboration in order to co-produce a dedicated Climate Change Strategy.

This document is a starting point for discussion and provides contextual information and focusses on the Council's proposed approach for tackling climate change. This is a vital strategic task which will consider the role the Council must play as a facilitator for change and advocate for radical transformation of the transport and energy systems, as well as having a robust plan for reducing emission from the Council's own land, buildings, fleet and assets. It is critical that the carbon footprint and wider environmental impacts of all new developments in the town are now considered through planning and residents are informed and empowered to be able to make the meaningful lifestyle changes required for Stevenage to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

What is Climate change?

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 (CO₂) trap heat in the atmosphere which would otherwise escape into space. Although this is a global issue, 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 resulting in catastrophic sea level rising and increased intensity and frequency of natural disasters.

“Business as usual” is no longer an option. As depicted in figure 1, if we as a global community continue to emit greenhouse gasses 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.

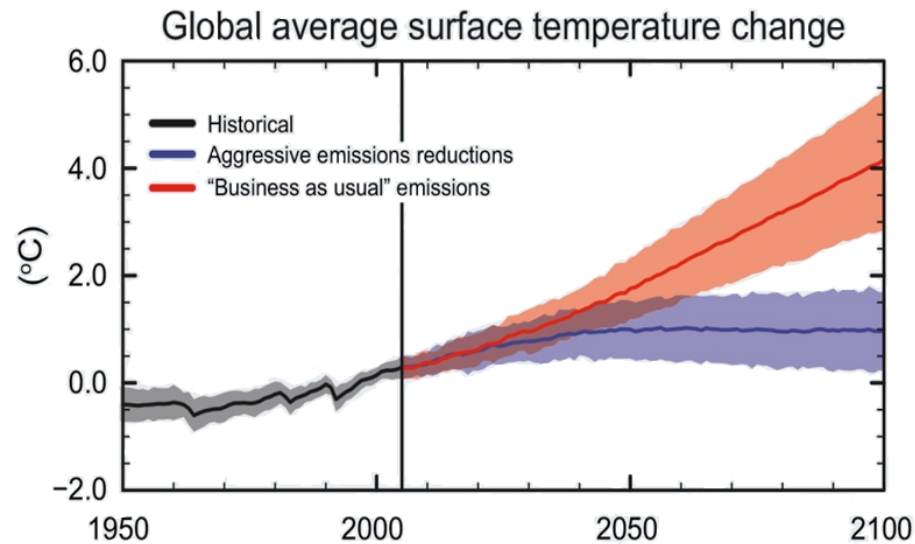


Figure 1: Global Average Surface temperature changes ¹

The levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) 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 we use land have caused carbon dioxide levels to rise by 40% since the pre-industrial era².

¹ The Royal Society – Climate Change Evidence and Causes, Basics of Climate Change

<https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/climate-change-evidence-causes/basics-of-climate-change> see also the National Centre for Environmental Information www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/global/time-series

² IPCC, 2013: Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1

Since the mid-20th century changes in terms of sea levels and temperatures have had huge effects on the climate system. Consequently, the polar ice caps are rapidly melting, and we are increasingly at risk of worldwide crop failure. In order to avoid climate breakdown, we must commit to deep and rapid emissions reductions, the creation of new carbon sinks, and bringing 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.

The UK Position

The UK 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 atmosphere³. The agreement is realistic and rational but requires a transnational, multifaceted approach at all levels. This is a crucial time in the global effort to tackle climate change. Global average temperature has already risen by 1°C from pre-industrial levels, driving changes in our climate that are increasingly apparent. Achieving net-zero in the UK would lead the global effort to limit the global rise to 1.5°C.

Stevenage Borough Council Position

On the 12th of June 2019 Stevenage Borough Council 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, we must also consider factors such as improving energy efficiency, transforming transport, protecting biodiversity and ending the reliance on fossil fuels. We 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 LSE (Burke 2019) www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/news/what-is-net-zero

Stevenage is well placed to become a carbon neutral town by 2030 ahead of the UK government target of 2050. Our residents and businesses care about climate change and are already taking action within their communities. We boast an outstanding town-wide cycle network, excellent rail links, substantial green spaces and are home to an impressive range of small businesses and lots of tech-based industry who can be at the forefront of reducing emissions and green innovations. Building on our 2009 Climate Change Strategy⁴, in June 2019 Stevenage Borough Council declared a climate emergency, and this strategy outlines the measures we are putting in place to ensure we achieve this ambition⁵. For Stevenage Borough Council the climate emergency requires the following action:

- Continue to reduce the council's building and fleet emissions through developing and investing in carbon reduction projects and update our Carbon Management Plan annually.
- Reduce emissions through updating and futureproofing the Council's housing stock and working with tenants.
- Continue to support residents and businesses in Stevenage to reduce their emissions using the powers and funding currently available to the Council.
- Establish a Stevenage Climate Charter calling on all organisations, businesses and individuals in the town to each establish their own Carbon Management Plans and to commit to reducing their carbon emissions working towards our town's net carbon-zero aspiration.
- Establish a Stevenage Citizens Panel to coproduce a Climate Change Strategy and monitor the town's progress on Climate Emergency Actions against targets set by both the Council and other stakeholders.
- Continue to work with the Hertfordshire Sustainability Forum, the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership and Hertfordshire Infrastructure & Planning Partnership to promote and advocate joint measures and actions to meet our aspirational targets.
- Advocate to Hertfordshire County Council and Central Government for actions that will help achieve a carbon neutral Stevenage and UK by 2030.

⁴ A Climate Change Strategy for Stevenage 2009 www.stevenage.gov.uk/content/15953/34508/34511/27759

⁵ Stevenage Borough Council – climate change emergency motion <https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=7367>

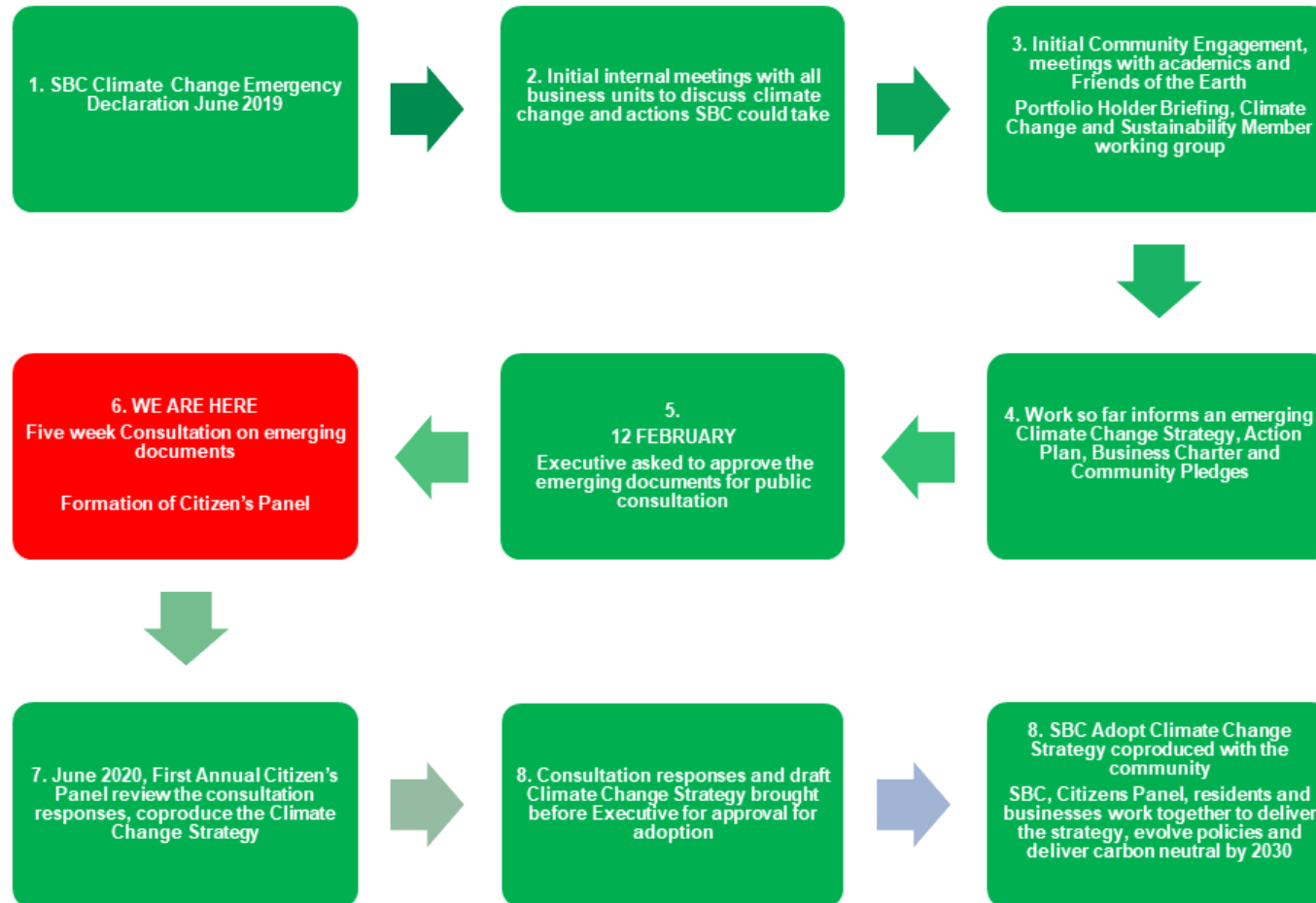
To achieve these aims Stevenage Borough Council will be implementing a clear framework and working in partnership both with residents and businesses across the town along with Hertfordshire County Council and our neighbouring councils across the county to identify both direct and indirect sources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Where action needs to be taken beyond the powers and functions of the council, we'll raise our voice on behalf of our residents and businesses to pressure national government to take decisive action.

Our vision for change

The next stage is to work with our community and set up a Stevenage Citizens Panel which will be formed to represent the community. A coproduced Climate Change Strategy will then be prepared with a focus on the following:

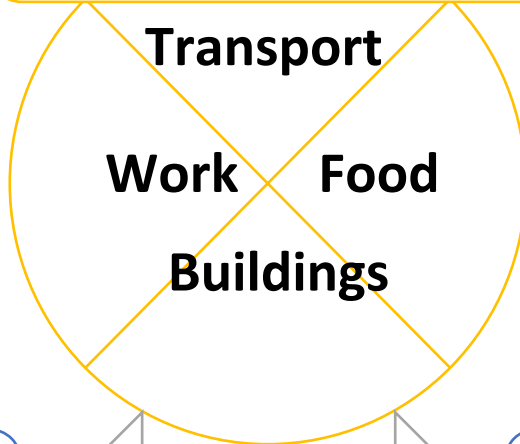
- Why this is a global issue which is already having far reaching consequences both for Stevenage and worldwide and what radical changes are to be made in the effort to reduce emissions.
- A breakdown and understanding of the emissions, building up a detailed picture of Stevenage's outputs.
- 'Get our house in order' - ensuring Stevenage Borough Council is reducing greenhouse gas output and achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 across all its buildings and services
- Advocating for and facilitating real change - Stevenage Borough Council lobbying for more drastic action at central government and county levels.
- Resident led approach - the response to the climate change emergency will be resident led which means the community will be fully involved throughout the process.
- Working with businesses and local stakeholders' efforts to shrink their carbon footprints.
- Promote equality – the council will utilise this opportunity to improve our residents quality of lives, by striving to end fuel poverty, improve the built environment to encourage the shift to active travel and ensure healthy plant based food is available throughout the town.
- Monitoring the targets and actions with the Citizens Panels.

The emerging strategy will be accompanied by a living action plan (to be developed with the community) which will lay out specific actions the Council will take to tackle climate change. The Timetable for the project is as follows:



This diagram sets out the Council's approach.

Stevenage Carbon Footprint



Stevenage Residents

Stevenage Businesses

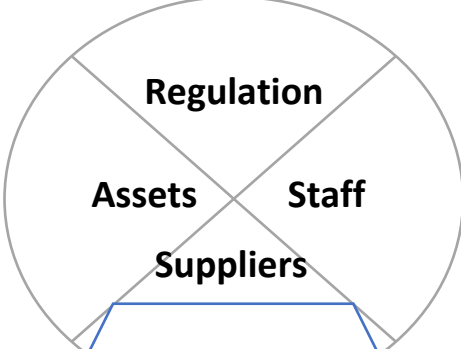


Pledges

Charter

Climate Change Strategy / Action Plan

SBC Carbon Management



Stevenage Borough Council

UK Government

Hertfordshire County Council

