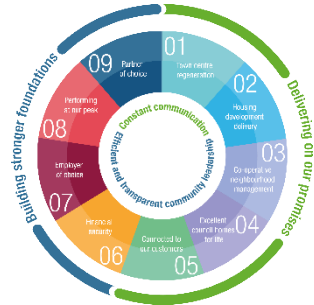


Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Environment and Regeneration
Date 16 September 2020



STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY ADOPTION & ENGAGEMENT CONSULTATION UPDATE

KEY DECISION

Author Tom Ridley | 2823
Lead Officer Zayd Al-Jawad | 2257
Contact Officer Tom Ridley | 2823

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the climate change work, achievements and engagement so far.
- 1.2 To provide Members with an overview of the draft Climate Change Strategy and accompanying documents for adoption.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the updates to the Climate Change work and achievements so far are noted by members.
- 2.2 That the content of the draft Climate Change Strategy and accompanying documents are approved for adoption.

- 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 amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft documents prior to adoption.

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 (CO₂) trap heat in the atmosphere which would otherwise escape into space.
- 3.2 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 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 the 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 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.
- 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.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: That the updates to the Climate Change work and achievements so far are noted by members.

- 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 have been several Portfolio Holder Briefing Group meetings as well as a number of Climate Change and Sustainability Member working group meetings in order to shape and inform the work.

Working across Hertfordshire

- 4.3 SBC at Officer and Member level have been working closely with and leading on certain areas for the Hertfordshire-wide Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership and the Sustainability Officer Group. This ensures collectively across Hertfordshire that all Councils are using the same approach, sharing ideas and collaborating across the county to have the maximum impact and joined up methodologies.
- 4.4 The first County wide document produced is the Sustainable Herts Strategy which is an overarching Strategy guiding the development of the departmental action plans, the nature of the climate emergency means this must be a dynamic and living document.
- 4.1 The Growth Board and Herts LEP also have Climate Change as a key theme in their work, demonstrating a commitment to address Climate Change in our area and in our future planning.
- 4.2 Work is also being done with The East of England Local Government Association (EELGA). This has included a research project conducted in winter 2019 examining existing climate change policy in local authorities across the East of England. Using the accumulated evidence base, the East of England LGA (EELGA) hope to be able to identify good practice, share intelligence and create a platform for the communication of ideas between authorities.

Achievements so far:

People

- Digital engagement programme with 1400 Stevenage people about Climate Change (Jan- Feb 20)
- Climate Change Considerations in all Executive reports (Feb 20)
- Adoption of Climate Change Strategy – TBC (Sept 20)

Biodiversity

- 2 Community Orchards (Winter 2019-20)

Transport

- Draft Parking and Sustainability SPD consultation (Feb 20)
- New on street electric charging bays in the town centre (July 20)
- New cycle parking in the Old Town (Aug 20)
- Final stage bid for funding from the DfT for the Old Town – North Road cycle route (Aug 20)
- New cycle parking in the new town centre (Sept 20)

- Technical specification of the Bike and E Scooter hire scheme (Oct 20)
- Adoption of Parking and Sustainability SPD – TBC (Sept 20)

Energy & Water

- Working with Affinity Water to help them meet their 2030 carbon zero reduction measures (August 2030)

Homes

- Agreed investment in our housing and commercial estate to reduce the carbon emissions and heating costs (Feb 20)
- A development of nine affordable rent apartments with triple glazing, waste water heat recovery and flue heat recovery boilers (end of 2020).

Construction & Regeneration

- Climate Change considerations in all Planning Committee Reports – (Feb 20)

Waste and Recycling

- Refill Stevenage, free water refills at shops and cafes in Stevenage town centre (Dec 19)

Recommendation 2.2: That the content of the Climate Change Engagement Report be noted by members.

- 4.3 Since the declaration, Officers have been consulting with residents and businesses as well as researching best practice from other local authorities to develop a draft strategy. In addition to this, Officers have been taking every opportunity to reach out to the wider community to assess people's knowledge of, and interest in climate change, in order to establish what The Council can do to help people and businesses reduce their carbon footprints. So far engagement activities have reached over 1,400 people.
- 4.4 The Climate Change Engagement Report included as Appendix B sets out the full details and chronology of consultation and engagement methodology undertaken so far. For the purpose of analysis the engagement has been divided into three distinct sections: initial online engagement, Stevenage Borough Councils questionnaires and formal consultation. To clarify, these three sections overlapped significantly in terms of questions posed and language used. This is why overarching conclusions can be drawn when combining the three data sets.
- 4.5 The Consultations have reached a wide range of people from all backgrounds and can be considered very successful in terms of participant numbers and demographic reach. The most common responses called for improved cycling facilities, cheaper public transport, more carbon education, green energy provisions, better recycling facilities, carbon neutral new builds and greater consideration for green spaces.
- 4.6 It is this consultation and engagement which has shaped the draft CCS in terms of content and actions. This is only the start of the process to reach SBC's climate change goals. Following the adoption of the CCS there will

be ongoing engagement with the community and it is expected changes at national and international level along with ever changing social attitudes and technological advances mean the Council must be dynamic and able to adapt quickly to changes. With this in mind the CCS is the starting point for the Council, the next public engagement is planned for September 2020 and will be in the form of the first annual Citizens Panel on Climate Change.

5

Recommendation 2.3: That the content of the draft Climate Change Strategy and accompanying documents are approved for adoption

Climate Change Strategy (CCS)

- 4.7 The CCS is included as Appendix C and is the starting point for the Council; it begins by outlining 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.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 The targets and the data presented in the CCS focus primarily on direct use and the associated CO₂ 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.
- 4.10 After identifying the baseline emissions, the focus of the CCS is on climate change mitigation, i.e. reducing greenhouse gas emissions (particularly carbon dioxide (CO₂), as well as methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O)), identifying action to address how the borough sources, consumes, and produces energy. However, in mitigating CO₂ 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.
- 4.11 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.

4.12 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.

4.13 The CC is split into eight key themes which the Council implement through its ability to develop policies and actions, its ability to lead and its ability to lobby national government. These themes are:

People

The only way we can achieve the goal of carbon zero by 2030 is if everyone plays their part. Through educating, engaging, supporting, listening to and communicating with our residents from all background, positions, ages and interests can we collectively make the required changes to our behaviour we need.

Biodiversity

Ensuring our biodiversity is improved as part of the carbon reduction measures will ensure we have a holistic approach to the wider sustainability impacts we as humans are having on our local ecology. Using nature's natural way of addressing the human impact of climate change is the most effective method of taking action. Ensuring that one area of improvements does not undermine the other is vital.

Transport

Making up nearly a third of our emissions Transport is a key area for us to address, and one that behaviourally we as residents, employers, employees or visitors make every day. Big changes and support from the Transport Authority can have huge transformational impacts not only on our carbon outputs, but also health and employment opportunities.

Energy & Water

The source and use of energy has the opportunities to make significant changes in our carbon emissions relatively quickly, particularly while we are still trying to change behaviours. It is expected that the general electrical grid will be fully re-carbonised by 2050 which is too late for our targets, so encouraging all energy users to not only consider where they source their energy from but how much is used, is one of the first major actions. As our temperatures increases, our water usage increases and availability decreases. Hertfordshire is already one of the driest regions in the UK while also using twice as much water as people in places like Manchester. Actions to address leakage and chalk stream sourcing also need to be considered.

Businesses & Homes

Industrial and residential users make up nearly two-thirds of carbon emissions, investment in de-carbonising industrial processes, and home heating / energy use are key areas to support and educate our businesses and residential to make the changes. Government financial support will be required too.

Construction & Regeneration

As a leader in building new homes and regenerating the town centre the Council will have significant powers and opportunities to build better buildings and places, which are designed in sustainable ways, in sustainable locations.

Waste & Recycling

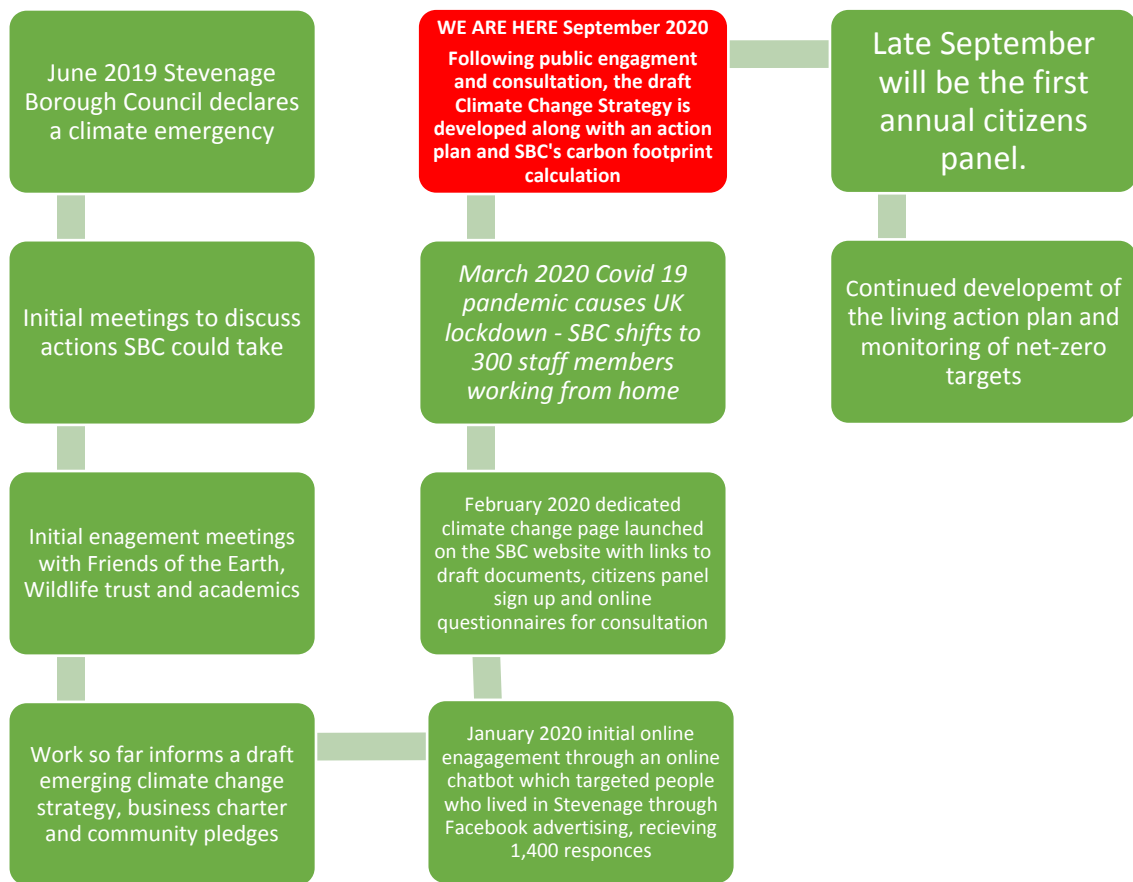
Reducing reusing then recycling need to be at the heart of what we do as a Council collecting and processing waste but also in educating our residents and businesses.

- 4.14 The Council has produced the CCS as a starting point, 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, to 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.
- 4.15 Members are asked to note the content of the CCS and approve the document for adoption. This will demonstrate that the Council is taking action on climate change and allow all future council decisions to be guided and led by the aims in the CCS. This will enable the Council to deliver and be held accountable for its carbon neutral targets.

5

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

- 5.1 The draft CCS is appended to this report. However, it may be necessary to make changes prior to the adoption. This might include cosmetic adjustments, the correction of typographical errors and any minor factual changes or to update national changes.
- 5.2 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.
- 7.0 **NEXT STEPS**
- 5.3 As with the COVID-19 pandemic, the sooner action is taken the less serious the repercussions will be, there is no space for complacency when addressing the climate emergency. Once adopted CCS will be accompanied by a living action plan (to be continuously 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:
- 5.4 Time Table:



6 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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

- 6.3 There are no direct legal implications associated with adopting the CCS, however it is likely the Government will begin introducing stricter targets with legal implications for those Councils that are not meeting carbon reductions.

Risk Implications

- 6.4 There are no risks identified with adopting the CCS.

Policy Implications

- 6.5 The emerging CCS has been produced in consultation with all business units within the Council Services.
- 6.6 Therefore, the document should be aligned with all other corporate Council documents. Further consultation will be held with all business units regarding future climate change actions or emerging policy changes.

Planning Implications

- 6.7 There are no planning implications at this stage.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.8 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

- 6.9 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the CCS and does not have any direct equality or diversity implications. This will continue to be monitored as the CCS develops.

Community Safety Implications

- 6.10 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 Top Climate Actions
- B Climate Change Engagement Report
- C Climate Change Strategy