

Meeting Executive

Portfolio Area Environment and Climate Change;
Communities, Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council;
Culture, Leisure, Children and Young People and
Economy, Enterprise and Transport

Date 12 October 2022



CLIMATE CHANGE – ANNUAL UPDATE OCTOBER 2022

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report builds upon the update provided to the Executive at its meeting in June 2022 and provides Members with an overview of the action that Stevenage Borough Council is taking to address climate change. The report also outlines further action being taken by Stevenage Borough Council, in partnership at county level through the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) and references the emerging activities of the recently established East of England Regional Climate Change Forum.
- 1.2 The report highlights the continuing need for substantial legislative and financial support from Government to achieve the target for the Town and Council to be carbon net zero by 2030.

- 1.3 As the report to the Executive in June 2022 provided a fuller update, this report focuses on the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change's new approach to neighbourhood and street level engagement.
- 1.4 The report acknowledges that to there is an extensive programme of work in place, wide engagement with other public sector partners, links with businesses and an opportunity to deepen local engagement. At the same time, the technical skills and knowledge required to bring forward relevant business cases, funding bids and projects to help reduce the Council's carbon footprint and lead efforts to achieve net zero across the borough will require additional skilled resource. The report sets out a proposal to create a new senior Officer lead role (Head of Climate Action), to be incorporated as a request for growth funding within the Medium Term Financial Strategy report to Executive in November 2022.

2 RECCOMENDATIONS

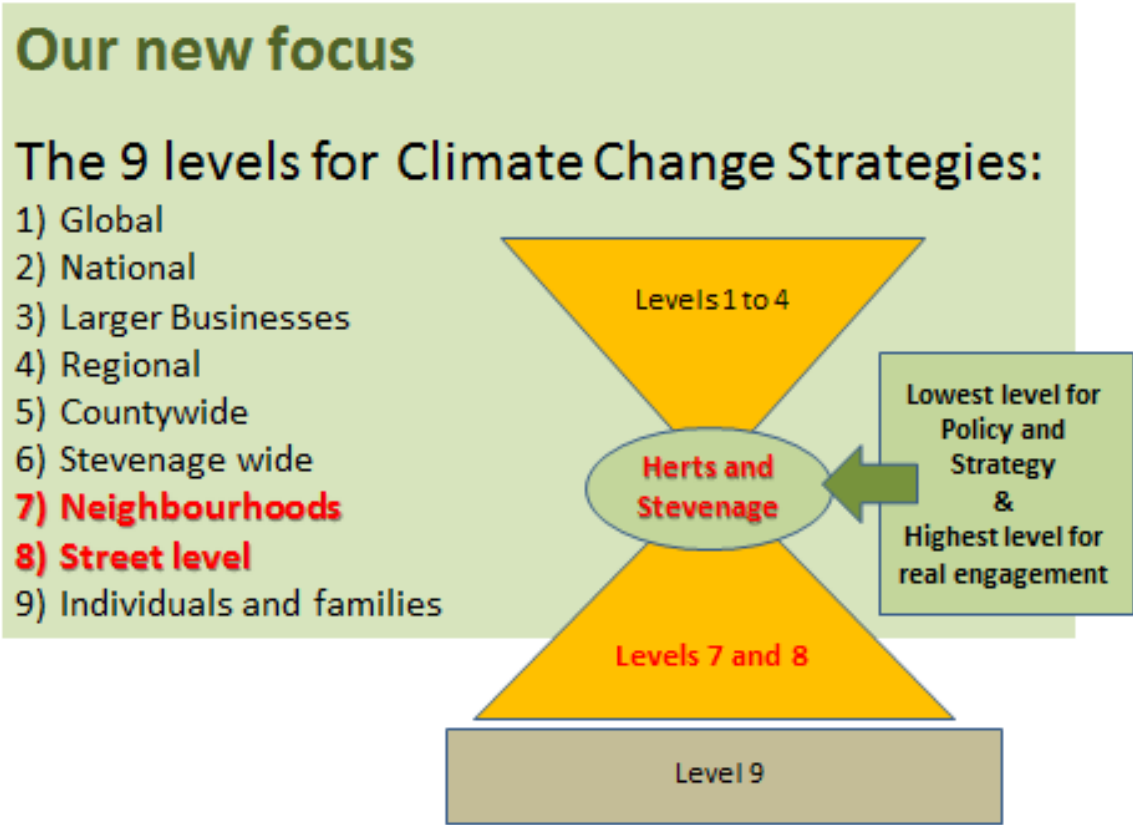
- 2.1 That the Executive notes the progress being made to deliver the Climate Strategy and Action Plan.
- 2.2 That the Executive endorses the proposed approach to engagement set out in this report.
- 2.3 That the Executive notes that a proposal to create a Senior Officer lead role for Climate Change will be included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report in November 2022.

3 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

- 3.1 Officers have been working with the new Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change, to review the current Climate Strategy and Action Plan, existing and possible engagement activities, projects and schemes which are underway or could be brought forward, and the overall steps that will be needed to accelerate our collective efforts to achieve the aim of a net zero Town and Council by 2030.
- 3.2 As the country faces an energy crisis and a cost of living crisis, efforts to decarbonise the economy and protect the planet are vital. While the Government, and governments of other European countries, have taken steps to mitigate some of the financial impacts of the energy crisis, it is ever more crucial that further steps are taken to decarbonise the economy, reduce energy wastage and secure alternative, sustainable forms of energy.
- 3.3 At the heart of our efforts to tackle the climate crisis is a plan that recognises actions are needed at all levels, from coordinated international efforts such as those set out in COP26 and other global programmes, all the way through to individual actions and choices, and changes that can be made in immediate places and neighbourhoods in which people live.

- 3.4 At the global level, significant funding commitments have been made, for both developing countries to transition away from polluting, and investments in new low carbon technologies. Over £200bn was pledged during COP26. The world's biggest CO2 emitters, the US and China, pledged to co-operate more over the next decade in areas including methane emissions and the switch to clean energy. Leaders from more than 100 countries, covering around 85% of the world's forests - promised to stop deforestation by 2030. A scheme to cut 30% of methane emissions by 2030 was agreed by more than 100 countries, but not China, Russia or India. Methane is currently responsible for a third of human-generated warming.

- 3.5 This report highlights some of Stevenage Borough Council's points of engagement and action, from reflecting global trends, through to actions in our local economy, and the active engagement needed in our local communities.



Level 1: Global and national level climate action

- 3.6 The global pandemic and associated 'lockdowns' have had a significant impact on climate change during 2020 – 2021. This included an estimated 85% drop in long haul air travel and reductions in all type of commuting, and meant that emissions declined at the fastest rate on record in 2020, an estimated 13% drop. The drop in 2020 marked a record eighth consecutive year of reductions in the UK and much will depend on the recovery in 2021 and beyond to see how much of these carbon savings can be maintained and further improved, in a way that does not exacerbate energy poverty to

lower income households, or limit access to employment and good quality housing.

- 3.7 The current of living crisis and unfolding energy crisis are presenting deep challenges for individuals, households, businesses and our local community. A Cost of Living Taskforce is in place to help tackle some of the severe challenges ahead. While it is challenging to forecast the implications of this in terms of energy consumption and carbon emissions in the medium-term, the dramatic increase in energy prices for individuals and businesses alike is likely to result in behavioural and production changes. While this may limit energy use in the short term, there will be profound effects on us all, particularly highlighting the urgent need for government-level initiatives to promote insulation and energy efficiency measures and alternative forms of sustainable energy production.

Level 2 - Business

- 3.8 Many of the large businesses in Stevenage are well on their way to meet their own corporate objectives of net zero by 2030 or even earlier. Previously we have surveyed businesses along Gunnels Wood Road, including GsK, MBDA, Fujitsu and Wenta. Local businesses such as the IET and Flamingo Foods are investing significant amounts of money in Stevenage to lower their carbon emissions, from both their buildings and their processes, and some organisations working through carbon offsetting programmes.
- 3.9 The Council is working with them to share best practice and learning. SBC has agreed to fund 100 Silver Memberships for a Wenta-run net zero programme, which supports local small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to understand what can be done about climate change; identify the business opportunities and risks arising from climate change. It also helps SMEs calculate the business and climate benefits of Net Zero and understand what becoming “Net Zero” can mean for the future of your business.
- 3.10 Through the Community Renewal Funding programme, the Council are currently supporting micro businesses and voluntary organisations with workshops to support sustainability planning and how to identify cost savings, but also opportunities through a ‘Meet the Buyer campaign’. From liaising with business partners including Federation of Small Businesses we are supporting businesses having to achieve ISO environmental accreditations to work with a wider supply chain.

Levels 3 and 4: Regional / Countywide - Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership and at the East of England level.

- 3.11 A crucial element of the Council’s approach is to work with other local government partners to help secure investment, business cases and to find ways to collectively reduce carbon footprint and improve sustainability. This is a joint endeavour, bringing together our resources to help achieve the greatest impact
- 3.12 The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) consists of all 10 districts and the county council, plus the Local Enterprise

Partnership. HCCSP is a strategic group which acts as the lead partnership organisation for partners to collaborate and identify joint work programmes on environmental, climate change and wider sustainability issues, and where projects to address the climate challenge are best addressed across a wider footprint.

3.13 SBC are proactive participants in the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), with the Chief Executive the lead Officer sponsor for the HCCSP work plan and the Council is supporting on three of the six main themes for which detailed action plans are being developed:

- Biodiversity
- Carbon reduction
- Transport
- Water.
- Behavioural Change
- Climate Change Adaption

3.14 Much of the strategic work is being focused through HCCSP to harness the power of a county of over 1.2 million people. The themes fed into the Council's own 8 themes and it is through this work with HCCSP that the Council is delivering on its own objectives at a greater scale. Large amounts of work have been done already, including producing and agreeing the Action Plans and some important quick wins.

3.15 HCCSP has recently supported SBC in the launch in Stevenage of two schemes supporting our residents to reduce their carbon emissions and their heating costs.

A: Solar Together: Stevenage Borough Council is supporting a group-buying initiative for solar panels and battery storage.

Solar Together Hertfordshire, a solar group-buy scheme run by iChoosr in conjunction with local authorities, will assist homeowners to purchase high-quality panels, installed by approved fitters at a competitive price. This innovative scheme is part of the Solar Together programme which started four years ago and now runs across the UK.

3.16 The scheme has been very successful in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire amongst other countries, and is currently running in Bedfordshire. To date, Solar Together has delivered over 7,000 installations which will avoid 130,000 tonnes of carbon emissions over the panels 'lifetime'.

B: Energy Saving Trust Heat App:

3.17 Stevenage Borough Council has joined with councils across Hertfordshire to become one of the first in Britain to partner with Energy Saving Trust to provide an energy-efficiency app to help you cut energy use and help save carbon emissions.

3.18 The easy-to-use Hertfordshire Energy Advice Tool (HEAT) app gives a virtual tour around a typical home, asking questions and giving advice through each room. Based on the answers you give, quick, easy, low or no-cost actions are

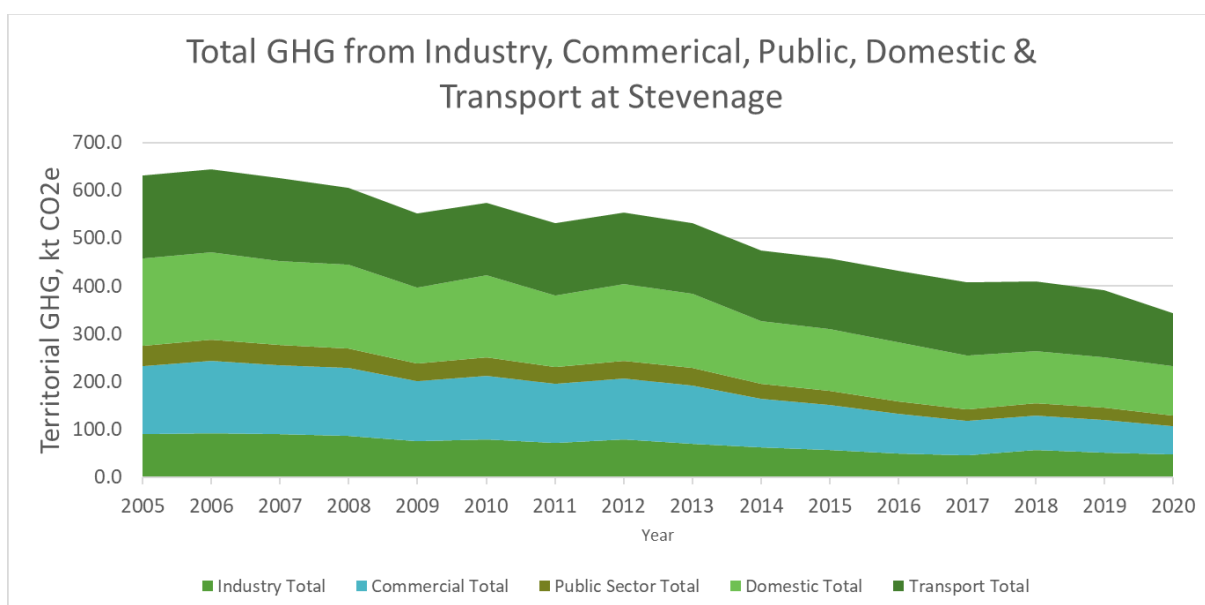
suggested to help you save money on your energy bills and cut your carbon footprint.

- 3.19 Once the virtual tour around the home has finished, a personalised advice report can be emailed, providing you with a summary of the potential energy and money savings. The average saving from using the HEAT app is estimated to be £70 a year.
- 3.20 Up to forty per cent of the borough's greenhouse gas emissions come from buildings, including homes. By taking small steps to be more efficient at home, we can all help do our part to help tackle the climate emergency and help get Stevenage to net zero emissions by 2030.
- 3.21 The Regional Climate Change Forum is organised by the East of England LGA, which the Council's Chief Executive leads on and its key deliverables and areas of focus are:
- Identifying the scale of the challenge in the region (e.g. specific issues/impacts unique to the EoE)
 - Understand our collective preparedness to meet the challenge – are there any gaps? What is the legislative framework
 - Developing regional strategy/themes/action plan/areas of focus
 - Exploring collaboration opportunities at regional level (e.g. joined up communications, behaviour change approaches, joint commissioning etc.)
 - Best practice information sharing
 - National lobbying activity
 - Regional funding bids
- 3.22 The LGA's Climate Change Sector Support Programme is promoting two of its virtual programmes to members with dates from September to December.
- 3.23 The programme will help senior council officers, across all services, to explore their crucial local leadership role in responding to the climate emergency. These actions will be evaluated by the Carbon Literacy Project for you to be certified as Carbon Literate, enabling you to train others in your area of work.
- 3.24 The LGA's Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool provides a straightforward and consistent approach for councils seeking to calculate their own carbon baseline. The tool, which is used to record scope 1 and 2 council emissions, has been very recently updated to incorporate wider scope 3 reporting. SBC will be able to benchmark our emissions with others to understand how their performance compares with their peers across the country.
- 3.25 In partnership with Innovate UK, EELGA hosted an event for councils to explore progress and future opportunities in meeting net zero targets. The pilot work summary can be found in the background papers.
- 3.26 The research work with the University of Hertfordshire looks in detail at the most effective ways of reducing carbon output. From this technical analysis, it can be seen that a combination of building insulation and tree planting has

the most impact, alongside behavioural change. This research should help with bids and seeking to apply resources to the areas with most impact.

Level 5a: Emissions in Stevenage

- 3.27 Central government data for Stevenage’s over emissions for 2020 have been released and is shown below. Clearly the effect of the pandemic has resulted in a sharper than average fall in emissions which was a benefit. The 2021 figures will be release in the next 6 months and are likely to show some increase as industrial production has recovered, as was the case after the 2008/2010 down turns.



- 3.28 The carbon emissions in the Stevenage Borough Council geography area dropped by **12.5%** in ktCO₂ (Kilo-tonnes of carbon) in 2020, from 380.3 ktCO₂ in 2019 and 397.9 ktCO₂ in 2018 (our baseline year). These amounts are on the most recent data and include and increased scope for CO₂ reporting. The big drop can be put down to the lockdown restrictions and subsequent decline in both industrial production and travel. The 2021 figures are expected to increase as we reopened. These are figures produced by central government taking into account a complex array of energy use data and are about a year behind.

Level 5b: Stevenage Council Homes

- 3.29 As a major housing provider the council has been keen to drive the decarbonisation of its own housing stock of almost 8,000 council homes. As opportunities have emerged the Housing Investment team have started to explore ways to reduce carbon emissions across the stock.
- 3.30 From March 2021 until May 2022 following a successful bid for grant funding through the Local Authority Delivery Scheme 1B (LAD1B) a programme of energy works was delivered to some of SBC’s housing stock. This funding was used to target properties in an EPC band D or below as per government

criteria's for the funding. 150 properties were included in this programme involving the installation of solar panels at 123 properties, loft insulation at 9 properties and cavity wall insulation at 45 properties. The delivery of these measures increased the EPC score of all these properties to an EPC C or above. It is also estimated to have made a CO2 saving of approximately 142,643KG a year in total.

- 3.31 The Council is preparing a further bid to the second round of this scheme to further drive this work and deliver to further eligible properties. This will be factored into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Planning process to consider future match-funding requirements from the HRA.

Level 5c: Stevenage Council activities

- 3.32 The Council is working across Hertfordshire to agree an approach to common baseline which can be used to track progress and monitor effectiveness. SBC is trialing new software that can better track and report our climate change progress, with a new informative public webpages expected to launch in early 2023.
- 3.33 The Climate Change Strategy is based around 8 themes, reflecting the breadth of services offered by the Council. The 8 themes are shown on the next page and the Council's delivery against the key activities agreed by Executive within those themes is set out below. The traffic light colouring (red, yellow, and green) depicts the progress made against each one.
- 3.34 As the Council has refreshed its approach to the Climate Strategy and Action Plan, there are several key areas which will be subject of additional focus will be:

People (Cllr Simon Speller / Cllr Sandra Barr / Cllr Richard Henry)

- Street meets to and walkabout to hear about local issues.
- Topic People Panel and Topic Reference Panels.
- Youth Council and school engagement.

Biodiversity (Cllr Simon Speller)

- Re-greening Stevenage in Fairlands Valley Park; North of Stevenage Country Park and other areas. Increasing our target from 2,500 to 4000 new trees and increase the number of new pounds from 3 to 6.
- Pilot Neighbourhood Green Plans (NGP).
- Delivering the Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Updating the Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Transport (Cllr Lloyd Briscoe)

- Work on EV Taxi strategy to get to net zero by 2030 across Herts.

- Successful £13m funding bid to central government for £6m funding for 30 single deck, battery electric buses to cover the Stevenage Arriva network.
- 12 New EV charging facilities in the Neighbourhood Centres bid to Department for Transport.

Energy & Water (Cllr Speller)

- Working with Affinity Water to support their 2030 net zero target.
- Supporting residents and businesses to best manage their energy and water usage.

Business (Cllr Lloyd Briscoe)

- Support for local businesses with shared knowledge.
- Wenta Net Zero Silver options for 100 local Stevenage businesses.

Homes (Cllr Jeannette Thomas)

- SBC successful bid for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund will see around 400 social homes with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D or lower receive upgrades to improve their energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. This includes fitting, if required, wall and loft insulation, double glazing and solar panels. SBC is currently bidding for second and possible third rounds.
- Reviewing the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to examine opportunities for further decarbonisation.
- Lobbying government for additional funding for social housing decarbonisation.
- Solar Together scheme, launched across Hertfordshire for local people to jointly purchase solar panels at a discounted rate.
- Housing Development programme to adopt high environmental standards triple glazing, solar power and other low carbon housing .

Construction and Regeneration (Cllr Simon Speller and Cllr Sharon Taylor)

- Inclusion of low carbon housing, carbon sinks and offsets in the review of the Local Plan.
- Sustainability and Climate Change requirement on procurement contracts.
- Developing the low carbon ambitions for the Station Gateway Area Action Plan (AAP).

Waste & Recycling

- Commitment to Food Waste collections for residential properties in Stevenage from 2025

Theme visions

- 3.35 The priorities above help deliver priority areas identified within the 2019 Climate Strategy and Action Plan, which is based on 8 priority areas. A summary of the vision for each theme (from 2019) is set out below.

People

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

Biodiversity

- 3.37 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

- 3.38 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

- 3.39 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 temperature increases, our water usage increases and availability decreases. Hertfordshire is already one of the driest regions in the UK yet we use twice as much water as people in places like Manchester. Actions to address leakage and chalk stream sourcing need to also be considered.

Businesses & Homes

- 3.40 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

- 3.41 As a leader in building new home sand 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

- 3.42 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 residents and businesses.
- 3.43 The following section and diagram provides a brief summary progress report on actions within this theme.

People

SBC will produce a Climate Change Comms Plan to help education and inform our residents.

Continue to work with youth groups, Youth Council and local schools to help both understand their Climate Change concerns and also empower them to make changes.

Biodiversity

Tree protection and Planting Strategy

Biodiversity Plan and Actions

Plant over 4000 trees by 2030

Construct at least 6 new lakes or ponds by 2030

Transport

Electric Taxis and support to drivers to transition their fleet.

Electric Buses, with expanded routes and frequencies.

With HCC, introduce work-place parking charges

Living Streets trials

Decarbonising the SBC fleet before 2030

Bike and E-bike hire

Energy & Water

Promote cross county purchase of renewable energy supply

Identify opportunities for local renewable energy generation.

Test a Combined Heat & Power Station as part of new swimming pool development.

With Affinity Water & HCC, support their move to zero carbon

Businesses

Lobby government to support our businesses and a Green Recovery

Using our network's shared knowledge to support SME to adapt to climate change opportunities

Share knowledge and improved ways or working across our business community to reduce carbon.

Homes

Energy efficient housing and subsidies for public and private homes

Planning Policy for zero carbon homes on all large scale developments

Zero carbon development at the Station Gateway

Fully electric / zero carbon heat and power on SBC lead developments

Construction & Regeneration

Design a Carbon Neutral new Civic Hub

Work with Regeneration Partners that are committed to zero carbon operations

Fully electric SG1 residential development

Zero carbon state schools

Waste & Recycling

Develop a new Waste Strategy promoting reduction, reuse and recycling

Zero waste to landfill or incineration

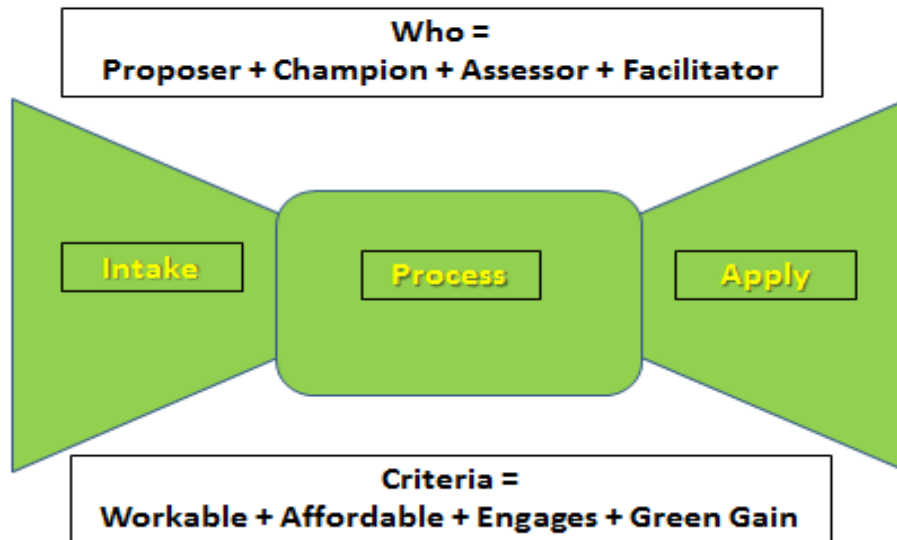
With HCC produce biogas

Levels 6- 9: Local Engagement

- 3.44 To inform the strategy and action plan, extensive consultation has taken place. An open consultation in 2019/2020 achieved wide and broad engagement across the town, with 1,600 responses helping shape the strategy. Key priorities identified by residents included making a change to their method of travel and eating habits.
- 3.45 Further work on engaging with young people through the Green Schools network is being explored, alongside work with North Herts College. The Deputy Leader and Youth Mayor and Youth Council will also work with the Council to ensure the Borough's younger voices are heard and empowered into action.
- 3.46 The Environment and Economy Select Committee have committed to reviewing the delivery of the climate strategy and action plan over a two year period. Through this Committee, there has been technical work with the University of Hertfordshire and extensive discussions with stakeholder groups like HEART.
- 3.47 There is a cross-party Member led group within the HCCSP, Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, which Cllr Speller (as Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change) will attend and contribute towards.
- 3.48 Over the last two years, a significant amount of preparation work has been undertaken to engage residents and businesses, work with partners and focus on deliverable actions that can achieve the goals of the Stevenage Borough Council Climate Strategy. The Council is working closely with partners through Stevenage Together, to share experiences on climate change, speak with a single voice to Government and support its residents and customers to reduce their emissions.
- 3.49 The Council will update its webpage as way to inform but also hear from residents and interest groups. Currently it is about sharing information and education, but it will be expanded to including more interactive features, communication with the Council and more detail updates on key projects.
- 3.50 The Council is developing a new reporting platform for internal and external use with a Finnish company specialising in climate change reporting. The system is being tested at the moment with the hope of having a live version ready in the new year. It is designed to be user friendly and easier for the public to see how SBC is performing in its climate change ambitions.

Neighbourhood and street level working

Grassroots Projects Pitches



- 3.51 One of the new approaches is that ideas from local people for greening their street or local area, can be submitted via our website, with officer support, taken to the Climate Change Progress Group (CCPG) for a 'dragon's den' style consideration. Money from local Community Infrastructure (CIL) and other funding streams could be used. Projects which had more community ownership, support and potentially reduced costs for SBC while green a local street would be supported.
- 3.52 Working with the Portfolio Holder for Co-operative Council and Neighbourhoods, the Council is committed to getting buy-in from our members and officers, with much of this work already being done over the last few months, the next stage is listening and responding to our residents.
- 3.53 The approach is that through a series of street meets and walkabout, ideas from local people about what might improve their 'pocket neighbourhood' can be heard, and officers and local ward councillors working together can see how these re-greening improvements can be made. Much of this way of working will be embraced corporately as part of our Cooperative Neighbourhoods approach
- 3.54 This approach to engaging communities more proactively with the climate change agenda comes as the next phase of Co-operative Neighbourhoods is developed. Over the coming months Co-operative Neighbourhood groupings will lead visioning exercises with residents in each neighbourhood areas to identify local priorities, utilising community feedback already received. As part of this process climate change actions and activities will be identified. This process will begin over the coming month led by the community development team with local priorities identified in early 2023.
- 3.55 Following the success of the Pin Green neighbourhood planning, 3 trial areas for Neighbourhood Green Planning (NGP) are proposed. The 3 areas are Pin

Green & Bedwell; St Nicolas and Woodfield, and Shephall & Bandle Hill. In these areas, local residents and ward councillors with support from officer's would identify a vision for some significant improvements to their area and how the community can be empowered to take the lead in this. This may take the form of improved community facilities and usability of green space.

- 3.56 There will be an opportunity for Co-operative Neighbourhood Groups to determine investment priorities as part of this process and consider how to resource particular initiatives that are proposed. This may take the form of participatory budgeting exercises, direct in-house commissioning, external bids for funding or Dragon's Den style pitches through the CCPG.
- 3.57 Co-operative Neighbourhood Groups will have access to various funding sources over the coming two years. This will include allocations from the Shared Prosperity Fund and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This will be alongside Members' access to their own Local Community Budgets. This will provide some opportunities for investing in projects that support climate change ambitions.
- 3.58 More widely Topic People Panels and Topic Reference Panels would be set up to hear from both those with an interest in Climate Change and those without it, about what climate change means to them and what the Council can do.

3.59 Working with partners

Main external groups:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UKNet100 ■ EELGA ■ HCCSP 6 sub-working groups for officers
Main internal groups:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Executive / Scrutiny and senior team: 6 weekly meetings ■ E&E – finish review and then six monthly checks ■ SLT ■ New Corporate Climate Change Group, previously Information Exec on Climate Change – monthly. ■ SBC Estates team looking at decarbonising BTC and Market and capturing Rental requirement on EPC rating ■ SBC Fleet decarbonising working group
Consultation and deeper engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Street meets, Neighbourhood Green Plans ■ Topic Reference Groups and Specialist Referenace groups ■ Communications Plan updated
Main stakeholder groups:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Local community engagement planned (neighbourhoods / street level) ■ Engagement with schools and young people ■ Engagement with businesses and via entities such as WENTA, Biz4Biz, HCC . ■ Specialist groups – FOE, HEART

Governance - Climate Change Progress Group

- 3.60 With the appointment of the new Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Climate Change, Cllr Speller, officers are reviewing and expanding the Member governance around climate change. An expanded Member working group is being developed, to be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change. The group includes the Portfolio Holders for Economy, Enterprise & Economy; Housing & Housing Development; Resources and Information Technology; and Regeneration; and the Chair of the Environment and Economy Select Committee.
- 3.61 A new Climate Change Progress Group (CCGP) group will be established, led by the new Climate Change Programme Lead, to report quarterly clearly on SBCs performance in meeting its climate change commitments. This high level group of officers and Portfolio Holders will keep a track on performance and highlight achievements and areas which require additional support and resources.

Engaging Council teams

- 3.62 Tackling the climate crisis is a significant priority for the Council, along with the existing Future Town Future Council programme, the emerging cost of living crisis and the need to ensure a stable financial position.
- 3.63 The next phase of work will require deep and broad engagement across different Council teams, from biodiversity, to commercial estate management, management of Council homes, planning and transport, local Co-operative Neighbourhood teams and beyond. Our proposed approach is for the Council's Senior Leadership Team to maintain an oversight of the delivery of the programme, and work through options to help equip teams with the skills to tackle the climate crisis ahead of us. To do so will require a learning and development programme, including developing particular skills such as knowledge of new technologies, preparation of business cases for investments and changes to particular assets, skills for public engagement to help support the Co-operative Neighbourhood working programme and street meets. There are likely to be opportunities for direct engagement, including local community projects to help support the delivery of smaller scale climate projects, and to help embed cross team working on this programme.

Communications

- 2022/2023 Communications Plan Agreed
- Helpful tips and reminders
- Linked to HSCCP and National Campaigns.
- Stevenage case studies

4 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 4.1 The costs associated with producing and consulting on the climate change strategy have been met from the agreed departmental budget. A number of projects referenced within this report have secured third party funding from government and other sources, such as S106 agreements, to be able to pilot initiatives, or to improve sustainable travel assets. Local CIL funding may also be available to support improvements to local infrastructure that reduce the carbon emission in an area such as new tree, better lighting and footway improvements.
- 4.2 SBC funding for permanent Climate Change Lead Officer has been agreed, the recruit taken place and the officer is now in the role.
- To further support the work on Climate Change at a senior level, to ensure the Council can priorities its commitment to decarbonising and supporting our businesses and residents to do the same, proposals to create a senior Officer lead role will be included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report in November 2022 for Executive's consideration.
- 4.3 We recognise that a move to net zero and sustainable travel could mean reduced income, for example related to car parking income, which is used to fund other services, and will need to be continually reviewed through the Medium Term Financial Plan process. There are likely to be significant reductions in income to the Council linked to changes in the way people commute and use the Council's car parks. This will need to be carefully managed to ensure the services and provisions for sustainable transport the income funds can continue. As the report identifies, for councils to meet net zero, by 2023, significant funding will be required from central government and/or third parties to fund the cost of large scale projects, such as implementation of Electric Vehicle charging networks, retrofit of council housing stock and commercial and operational buildings.
- 4.4 As the Council works on options and future projects to achieve the ambition of being a net zero carbon Council and town by 2030, Officers will need to bring forward a number of business cases. If the government does not step in to support the local government sector and the Council is required to provide the investment then a significant reprioritisation of other projects and activities would be required to progress highly complex projects to absorb increased revenue and capital costs.
- 4.5 The Council is resourced to do some of the work around Co-operative Neighbourhoods and can accommodate climate change considerations as part of that process. However dedicated bespoke engagement at street and neighbourhood level is going to be officer and member resource intensive which is yet to be fully budgeted for.

Legal Implications

- 4.6 There are no direct legal implications associated with adopting the Climate Change Strategy, 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

- 4.7 The greatest risks associated with this work are failing to secure sufficient support from residents, businesses and government to protect us all from the effect of climate change.

Policy Implications

- 4.8 The Annual Update on Climate Change supports the Council's own Climate Change Strategy and wider corporate ambitions for a low carbon future.

Climate Change Implications

- 4.9 This report highlights the risks, challenges and opportunities that the Council has to address, not only carbon emissions but its wider climate change aspirations.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 4.10 Climate change affects those in most need both in the UK and around the world. Those in deprivation, hunger or unwell are both most affected by climate change and least able to address it. Therefore the Council is duty bound as one of those in the world that are more able to act, to act now.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1 - Climate Change Work Programme 2022/2023

BD2 - LGA Net Zero Regions Pilot