

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

14 JANUARY 2016

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Environment – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mike Smith

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

1. Summary

We have a responsibility to contribute locally to the UK's strategy in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and better preparing for extreme future weather events, and we have a strong track record in both of these areas. Our Council Plan contains the objectives of delivering our 'Green Vision' of a low carbon economy and improving resilience to extreme weather events, and this strategy aims to meet both those commitments.

The Climate Change Act 2008 introduced a binding reduction target requiring the UK to reduce its emissions by at least 80% by 2050 against 1990 levels and we have responsibilities to submit annual emissions reports on our performance as well as on domestic energy efficiency performance and fuel poverty. We have made significant contributions over the past few years to the work of reducing emissions across the Borough particularly under our first Carbon Management Plan and Climate Change Action Plan in 2008/2009. These programmes have led to direct significant reductions in emissions with a Borough wide emissions reduction of 27% since 2005, while we reduced emissions from direct Council activity by 18%, or 5877 tonnes, between 2012 and 2015. This is a positive environmental impact but also contributes to improved financial sustainability through reduced energy and fuel use.

We are now recognised nationally and ranked 5th under the annual, independent Local Authority Energy Index of 103 English and Welsh local authorities however, we need to begin dovetailing our work on reducing emissions with future adaptation actions to better protect the Borough. We have successfully delivered a range of former climate change plans, strategies and policies in previous years including the Climate Change Action Plan, Sustainable Energy Action Plan, Carbon Management programme and Renewable Energy Strategy, and this strategy brings these strands together in one document and now supersedes all previous plans.

The strategy sets out to reduce Council emissions by 21% on a 2014/15 baseline by 2020, reduce Borough wide emissions by 18% by 2020 on a 2013 baseline, and improve preparedness for future extreme events. As a result, this Climate Change Strategy aims to address the challenge of meeting our CO₂ reduction targets by the year 2020, ensure that we are better prepared for future extreme events, can minimise the impacts of them when they occur, and meet our Climate Local obligations.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet note the report and the excellent performance in recent years on greenhouse gas emissions reductions.
2. Cabinet approve the attached strategy

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To present a new Climate Change Strategy and action plan covering 2016 – 2021, superseding a range of individual plans and strategies on carbon reduction, climate change and renewable energy, in order to set out our objectives and targets for further reducing greenhouse gas emissions and better preparing for future changes in climate and extreme weather.

4. Members' Interests (the text below is fixed and should not be altered by the author, however, extensive guidance on the Members' Code of conduct is available to officers if required)

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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SUMMARY

We have a responsibility to contribute locally to the UK's strategy in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and better preparing for extreme future weather events, and we have a strong track record in both of these areas. Our Council Plan contains the objectives of delivering our 'Green Vision' of a low carbon economy and improving resilience to extreme weather events, and this strategy aims to meet both those commitments.

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We are now recognised nationally and ranked 5th under the annual, independent Local Authority Energy Index of 103 English and Welsh local authorities however, we need to begin dovetailing our work on reducing emissions with future adaptation actions to better protect the Borough. The strategy sets out to reduce Council emissions by 21% on a 2014/15 baseline by 2020, reduce Borough wide emissions by 18% by 2020 on a 2013 baseline, and improve preparedness for future extreme events. As a result, this Climate Change Strategy aims to address the challenge of meeting our CO₂ reduction targets by the year 2020, ensure that we are better prepared for future extreme events, can minimise the impacts of them when they occur, and meet our Climate Local obligations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet note the report and the excellent performance in recent years on greenhouse gas emissions reductions.
2. Cabinet approve the attached strategy.

DETAIL

Background

1. In 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's most authoritative body on climate change, reiterated that human interference with the climate system is occurring and climate change poses risks for human and natural systems. In order to prevent future and further climate change we have a responsibility in Stockton-on-Tees to contribute locally to the UK's strategy in seeking to not only reduce our greenhouse gas emissions but to better adapt for the potential impacts of extreme future weather.
2. In Stockton-on-Tees we have a strong track record, and have demonstrated significant performance, in both reducing our emissions of greenhouse gases (mitigation) and better preparing for extreme climatic events (adaptation). Our Council Plan contains the objectives of delivering our 'Green Vision' of a low carbon economy and improving resilience to extreme weather events, and this strategy aims to meet both those commitments.

Mitigation

3. Climate change mitigation efforts are crucial to avoid extreme dangerous climate change in the latter half of this century. There are wide ranging global and national drivers for action on climate change mitigation such as the UK Climate Change Act 2008 and of course the prominent and recent agreements at the UN Climate Conference of Parties (COP) in Paris. The Climate Change Act introduced a binding reduction target requiring the UK to reduce its emissions by at least 80% by 2050 against 1990 levels. It also introduced a long-term framework for managing emissions through a system of national carbon budgets: caps on the total quantity of greenhouse gases permitted in the UK over a specified time.
4. Under the former National Indicator Set, our performance to reduce greenhouse gas emissions was measured via NI 186 'reduction in CO2 emissions in the local authority area'. We are no longer required to report under this indicator, however we must submit an annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions report to Defra each July documenting performance on domestic housing, transport and industrial and commercial emissions 'within our scope of influence', as well as a bi-ennial report under the Home Energy and Conservation Act (HECA) on Borough wide emissions, domestic energy efficiency performance and fuel poverty.
5. As a Council we have made significant contributions over the past few years to the work of reducing emissions across the Borough. In 2002 we were one of the earliest signatories of the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change, worked with our neighbouring Tees Valley local authorities in adopting the Tees Valley Climate Change Strategy in 2006 and 2010, adopted our first Carbon Management Plan in 2008 and published a Climate Change Action Plan in 2009. These programmes have led to direct significant reductions in emissions over time. On our original 2005 baseline, we have seen a Borough wide emissions reduction of 27%, or almost 300,000 tonnes. Between 2012 and 2015 we reduced emissions from direct Council activity such as energy in buildings and travel by 18%, or 5877 tonnes and this is not only a positive environmental impact but contributes to improved financial sustainability through reduced energy and fuel use.
6. The positive contributions we have made in Stockton-on-Tees are now being recognised nationally. The annual, independent Local Authority Energy Index, published in November 2015, ranks 103 English and Welsh local authorities for their work across a range of criteria including energy efficiency, emissions reductions, public reporting of performance, reductions in fuel poverty and significant housing improvements, and we rose from 54th to 5th in the rankings between 2014 and 2015.

Adaptation

7. However, we have never dovetailed our impressive work on reducing emissions with the equally important role of better understanding the potential future impacts of a changing climate and delivering adaptation actions to better protect the environment, communities and our services. This needs to cover a series of fundamental stages including undertaking a comprehensive risk based assessment of vulnerabilities to our services and communities, from extreme events both now and in the future, embedding climate impacts and risks across council decision making, developing comprehensive adaptive responses to these events and implementing and monitoring those responses.
8. As such adaptation to climate change must feature heavily in any climate change strategy. We have demonstrated that it is a priority in the past with strategic approaches such as the introduction of a dedicated Snow Plan in 2011 and large scale capital projects such as the Lustrum Beck flood alleviation scheme.

Future priorities

9. A manifesto commitment was made in 2015 on emissions reductions and a target was set to 'cut the Council's own carbon emissions by a further 5% by the end of 2016 and 21% by 2020'. Both of these targets form the basis of the greenhouse gas emissions element of the strategy, together with a trajectory to meet the 2020 target. Page 20 of the strategy outlines 4 key priorities on mitigation and a range of actions to be delivered in order to progress towards the target. In order to contribute towards our Council Plan objective of improving resilience to extreme weather events, page 21 of the strategy outlines 3 key priorities on adaptation and a range of actions to be delivered in order to significantly improve preparedness for communities and our services.
10. As a result, this Climate Change Strategy aims to address the challenge of meeting our CO₂ reduction targets by the year 2020, ensure that we are better prepared for future extreme events, can minimise the impacts of them when they occur, and meet our Climate Local obligations.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. Delivery of some measures within the action plan will have resource implications however there are existing resources available such as the Energy Efficiency Fund which recycles savings back into carbon reduction schemes. The adoption of this strategy will also assist us in accessing external funding for specific schemes and we will continue to seek resources to do so. Furthermore, there are efficiencies to be made by implementing a Climate Change Strategy for example making us more energy efficient, generating income from renewables, and delivering schemes such as District Heat and Power.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12. There are no legal implications associated with this decision.

RISK ASSESSMENT

13. The principal risk of adopting a strategy is that actions to meet the objectives are not delivered, and no improvement is gained in performance. This could lead to a reputational risk and the Council perceived as signing up to commitments and not following them through. However, we have a strong track record of success in this area, evidenced by the emissions reductions trajectory since 2005 and the recent Local Authority Energy Index, possess detailed action plans and are delivering measurable improvement.

COUNCIL PLAN THEMES

14. Economic Regeneration and Transport
Environment and Housing

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

15. This report is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

16. Environment and Housing Cabinet Member briefing, 7 December 2015.

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Education related?

No

Background Papers

Climate Change Strategy 2016 – 2021

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

All wards

Property

Not applicable