

## BASILDON BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Report to:** Cabinet  
14 September 2023

### **ADOPTION OF REFRESHED CLIMATE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

**Report by:** Cabinet Member for Environment, Carbon Reduction and Waste Enforcement

**Supported by:** Director of Community and Environment

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**Enclosures:** Enclosure No.1 - Risk Management Implications  
Enclosure No. 2 – Climate Strategy  
Enclosure No. 3 – Climate Strategy Action Plan

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Council has agreed to work towards net-zero carbon emissions from the Council's operations by 2030, and across the borough by 2050 in the first Climate Change Policy for Basildon (endorsed by Members at the former Neighbourhoods and Public Spaces Committee on 10 March 2021). The Policy sets out the high level aspirations around managing and mitigating the impacts of climate change on residents, businesses and the local environment for Basildon. A Climate Strategy was agreed in June 2021, but the nature of learning and planning in relation to the Strategy and associated Action Plan means that it is appropriate to keep it under review. The Strategy has been refreshed, as has the Action Plan, as further detail around delivery has been clarified. This was subject to review at the Place Scrutiny Committee on 15 March 2023 where Members endorsed the documents for recommendation to Cabinet for adoption.

Summary feedback on the climate consultation with residents completed earlier this year is also included within the body of the report.

#### **CORPORATE PLAN AMBITIONS:**

##### Corporate Plan Ambitions

- Place

#### **WARD(S):**

All Wards

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the Cabinet approves and adopts the refreshed Climate Strategy and Action Plan, as set out in Enclosure Nos. 2 and 3**

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## **BACKGROUND**

Evidence that carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) (and other) emissions are the cause of global warming has been extensively debated and analysed. Scientists have identified since the early 1800s that greenhouse gases in the atmosphere trap heat and that this negatively impacts on our environment creating climate change. Global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from human activity have increased by over 400% since 1950.

Data from the Meteorological Office (Met Office) UK Climate Projections 18 (UKCP18) outlines how all the top 10 warmest years on record have been since 1990, whilst average rainfall has also increased, meaning (on average) England is around 11% wetter today than between 1961-1990. In 2022, the country experienced a prolonged hot, dry summer with temperatures passing 40°C for the first time, according to the Met Office which issued its first ever red alert weather warning. Since 2000, the hottest day of the year has surpassed 35°C seven times. This only happened on five occasions in the 90 years prior to 2000. At local level such climate change has the potential to create negative impacts on our residents, our businesses and our local environment.

Under The Climate Change Act 2008 the government set out an ambitious carbon budget seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. Whilst these targets are not imposed on local authorities as a legal requirement, the Government has confirmed its expectation that local authorities will play a central role in efforts on climate change adaptation within local communities. The Government has identified that it will support local authorities to “play a full role in the Net Zero transition, including through resourcing, guidance, involvement in local area energy plans, statutory reporting on the emissions from their estate and reforming the planning framework to enable delivery of low-carbon and climate resilient measures.” (Government Response to the Committee on Climate Change’s 2020 Progress Report to Parliament). The UK Government has stated that “The truly global challenge presented by climate change cannot be underestimated”.

The Basildon Council Climate Change Policy, endorsed by Members in 2021 articulates the Council’s ambitions and commitment to playing its part in support of this national and global challenge. The policy set out 2 key ambitions – “carbon neutral” by 2030 at organisational level, with ongoing activity in support of the wider UK target of 2050 at borough level. Carbon neutral in this respect refers to the ability to offset the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases through reducing reliance on carbon producing activity or creating savings elsewhere in the emissions network. Emissions can, for example, be lowered through changes to heating and power use, fuel efficient transport and transport practices (including through use of ultra low emission vehicles); the use of offsetting schemes and natural climate solutions, such as tree planting, as well as technological initiatives such as carbon capture and storage. Whilst the 2 target dates for change have been set out in the Climate Change Policy, the focus will remain on escalating that change more quickly where possible.

Key is the ability to remain agile and responsive as opportunities arise for new funding streams and as new technologies develop, particularly where these also create the opportunity for efficiency. We continue to learn from others and since the Climate Policy and Strategy were originally produced, the Essex Climate Commission has also published its own Action Plan which is clear on its need for wider collaboration across all the district authorities to support delivery.

In order to recognise the rapid changes as our understanding of what actions are needed to tackle climate change, the original Climate Strategy has been refreshed (Enclosure No. 2) and a more detailed action plan produced (Enclosure No. 3).

The Climate Strategy and Action Plan delivered as part of the Corporate Plan continues to see a range of activity across the main key themes, but it is important to capture other actions necessary to support the organisations ambitions. Over the past 12 months, these have included:

- Recognition of the part played by key organisational Strategies and Action Plans in delivering against the climate ambitions, including the Waste Strategy; the developing Housing and Corporate Asset Management Strategies, and the recently endorsed “Vision for Basildon Town Centre” refresh. Climate change and air quality are also being considered as part of the sustainability element for the emerging Local Plan;
- The success of funding applications for Social Housing Decarbonisation Grant to support the retrofit of council owned properties (to improve energy efficiency and heating decarbonisation) and the Homes Upgrade Grant for improving energy efficiency of homes currently off gas. Further grant applications continue to be planned as funding streams are released in relation to council homes and other assets. The learning from the experiences of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund bid will be applied to future grant applications;
- The introduction of electric vehicles as part of the Council’s fleet renewal, including for refuse and parks vehicles – the organisation currently operates 6 electric vehicles and has 6 other vehicles on order. A wider review of the fleet is contained within the action plan;
- The further review of electric vehicle charging points at Council owned car parks as part of the review of the Parking Strategy and wider consideration of electric vehicle charging within the borough;
- Delivery of ongoing improvements in local biodiversity, through the planting of a further 3,500 trees in 2023, and changes in the way our open spaces are managed, e.g. in reduction in mowing, roadside verge management and increased planting of wildflower meadows. The planting of a community orchard in an extension to Wickford Memorial Park was completed at the end of the last financial year.
- The adoption of an Active Environment Strategy, with a view to encouraging increased use of walking, cycling, wheeling and scooting delivering health co-benefits as well as supporting the Transport ambitions in the Climate Strategy, along with the launch of Pedal Power;
- The continuation of the Department for Transport funded e-scooter pilot trial within Basildon in partnership with Essex County Council now in place until 2024;
- The ongoing delivery of the climate change campaign, “Small Changes, Big Impact” with a distinctive branding designed to influence the wider behaviour change piece;
- Work to embed the consideration of climate change mitigation and adaptation in council decision making in common with other issues such as health;

- Work with partners within the Association of Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) and Basildon businesses to maximise the benefits to the area through joint initiatives. An Environment and Climate Work Stream has been established for ASELA under the Sponsorship of Councillor Andrew Baggott;
- Officers have continued to work collaboratively with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub to support the delivery of grant funding to those most vulnerable to fuel poverty to deliver home energy efficiency;
- The delivery of a Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities grant funded project of in excess of £80k to undertake survey work in relation to the private rented sector and engage with landlords to improve minimum energy efficiency standards for privately rented properties;
- Working with Essex County Council to improve Active Travel infrastructure to encourage a more sustainable way to travel in the local communities;
- Work with Essex County Council and Adult Community Learning (ACL) to promote the delivery of free Retrofit skills training to enhance local capacity to deliver the retrofit upgrades required to local homes and buildings;
- A review of the approach to carbon literacy training within the Council with a view to seeking to achieve Carbon Literacy certification with training rollout imminent;
- The delivery of a Member investment in relation to the replacement of existing Council owned street lighting with LED units with the co-benefit of energy savings;
- Work continues to better capture the Council's own carbon footprint through more effective tracking of relevant data and use of appropriate modelling, with external support where necessary, including the completion of an audit of the Council's energy usage;
- Activities through the Cost of Living Working Group, whilst not directly delivering against mitigation of climate change impacts, creates co-benefits through energy efficiency advice and use of Warm Spaces.
- The construction of the new Pitsea Pool to energy efficient standards.

It is important that our approach continues to remain agile to enable a response to changes in funding streams from central government and other sources. As new opportunities arise, in terms of changing practices, partnership working and new grants, these will be captured within the action plan against the high level actions. Annual updates will continue to be provided to Members via this Committee or through briefings, as appropriate. Member decisions will continue to consider climate impacts as necessary as more detailed scoping of individual projects require decisions.

Members are therefore being asked to approve the refreshed Climate Change Strategy (**Enclosure No. 2**), and associated Action Plan (**Enclosure No. 3**).

### Residents Consultation Outcome

Previously Members also approved consultation on the draft Climate Strategy and a summary of that outcome is provided. Consultation was completed between 5 December 2022 and 20 January 2023. The consultation was directed at local residents and was focussed principally on attitudes to climate change and to measure the level of support for the primary ambitions set out within the Climate Strategy. The consultation was also used to gather information to help inform delivery of the Active Environments Strategy which has been separately considered by Members. The consultation responses (a total of 972) indicate the following:

- 81% of respondents were very/somewhat concerned about climate change;
- 62% were interested in climate change but weren't sure what they could do to make a difference;
- 89% agreed that everyone has responsibility for tackling climate change;
- 50% indicated that financial savings and a better understanding of the positive impacts on the environment would help to motivate the support for change;
- Energy reduction and recycling were the activities most supported by respondents in terms of their local contributions;
- 75% support the vision for transport;
- 91% support the vision for buildings and energy
- 83% support the vision for greening Basildon
- 78% support the vision for the Green Economy

The feedback indicates support for the visions which are set out within the strategy. The information from the survey will also be used to help to inform future climate related engagement and campaigns at local level.

## OPTIONS

**Alternative Option 1:** Delay the refresh of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan until a more fundamental review takes place. Due to their long-term nature, all actions will necessarily need to be updated and adjusted on a regular basis as they are developed, and as new technologies/better understanding/new funding streams emerge.

**Alternative Option 2:** Do nothing. This option is not viable or recommended due to the UK's overarching legal requirements to reduce carbon emissions by 2050.

## LEGISLATION/POLICY

The Climate Change Act 2008 sets out the main legislative framework for government. Adaptation is required through a variety of legislation including: Civil Contingencies Act (2004); Flood and Water Management Act (2010); Town and Country Planning (Local Planning, England) Regulations 2012; Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017; section 19(1A) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; and the 2011 Localism Act includes a general power of competence, which gives local authorities the legal capacity to do anything that an individual can that is not specifically prohibited. Changes being introduced through the Environment Act are also likely to have ongoing significant impacts on the environment, particularly waste management and air quality.

There is a legal duty under section 19(1A) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to ensure that climate change mitigation and adaptation are core objectives integrated across all local planning policy. There is also a legal obligation under the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) regulations to assess planning policy's consistency with wider climate change objectives.

These duties are also supported by requirements in national planning policy and guidance that local planning support "radical reductions" in emissions in line with the Climate Change Act, on the basis of a "robust evaluation of future emissions."

Basildon Council's Climate Change Policy sets out the ambition for the Council for its own activities (net zero by 2030) and the wider Borough (net zero by 2050). The Policy and Strategy are underpinned by other policies and strategies endorsed by the Council which acknowledge the climate impacts that these can also deliver (e.g. Waste Strategy; Pollination Strategy).

The Council must have due regard to its ongoing duties under the Equality Act 2010. Delivery plans for implementation of the strategy will need to take account of protected characteristics, ensuring they are fully inclusive and that an equality impact assessment is carried out at relevant stages.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### Corporate Plan Ambitions

The activities which will arise out of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will support the delivery of the Corporate Plan Ambitions by seeking to improve the local environment both in terms of reducing carbon emissions, but also creating a clean, safe and sustainable environment for all to enjoy, with the long term view in mind.

### Financial Implications

The financial implications of the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy and other relevant strategies and specific projects, including the resources necessary to deliver these will continue to be considered and reported when specific plans and proposals are brought before Members. The Government has undertaken to make funding available for relevant projects and officers will seek to identify grant funding opportunities and make applications. Risk Assessments will be carried out for individual projects as they arise. It is anticipated that certain activities will also deliver benefits in terms of efficiency savings against the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Reports will continue to be brought to committee regarding grant funding, partnership funding and any direct funding requirement as the need for change grows. This continues to be a fast moving agenda and officers will be ensuring all opportunities for funding are assessed and, where appropriate, applied for.

### Risk Management Implications

The risk management implications are set out at **Enclosure No. 1**.

### Diversity, Inclusion and Community Cohesion Implications

As a public authority, Basildon Borough Council is subject to the requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) found in s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 for the council to have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the 2010 Act.
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those that do not, and
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those that do not.

The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The implementation of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will be in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. There will be no discriminatory enforcement of this proposal in line with our PSED. Steps to tackle climate change will in general positively impact on those with protected characteristics, particularly around disability, age or pregnancy.

The national Climate Change Committee suggests that people in poverty are most likely to be affected by the risks and impacts of climate change, and are likely to benefit most from the co-benefits of reducing carbon emissions, such as the health benefits of improved air quality or energy efficiency within the home.

#### Other Relevant Considerations

None – the considerations are set out within the body of this report.

#### Background Papers

None