

Three Rivers District Council

Committee Report

Date: 15 March 2023

**LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE – 15 MARCH
2023**

PART I - DELEGATED

**8. DRAFT CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY
(CED)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 The Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy was adopted by committee March 10 2021 and by Full Council 25 May 2021. This was followed up by an Action Plan which was agreed at LEC 13 October 2021 and has been reviewed at LEC bi-annually since.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to present an update to the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy with the draft strategy detailed at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The revised Strategy has been prepared with consideration to the bespoke reports commissioned, consultation with all relevant officers, reflection on progress to date, and an understanding of how urgent the climate emergency is for residents of Three Rivers, and to ensure Three Rivers complies with the Climate Change Act (revised 2019) target for the UK achieving net zero by 2050.
- 1.4 The draft strategy has been prepared as a sequel to the [current strategy](#) and [supplementary document](#) to the strategy.
- 1.5 The Council has commissioned and received two critical reports, namely the [APSE Route to Zero \(Council and District\) report](#) (Appendix 2) on how the Council's strategy should address the climate emergency. [The Council's emissions from April 2018 to March 2022](#) are shown at Appendix 3, and the District baseline emissions are included in Appendix 2. This data informed our understanding of the scale and scope of the decarbonisation challenge for both the Council and the District.
- 1.6 Climate change is a core pillar of the Council's new Corporate Framework. Through this strategy the Council will consider the climate emergency and sustainability in all its decisions, steering council operations towards net-zero by 2030. It demonstrates strong leadership to inspire and influence the District to achieve net-zero by 2045 and acknowledges that mitigation alone is no longer sufficient to combat climate change; climate adaptation is now also critical to the future of our District.

2 Details

- 2.1 Since the original Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy was published in 2021, the climate has continued to change as a result of human activity. In 2022, the estimated rise in global mean temperature was 1.16 degrees higher than the pre-industrial period¹ and global carbon emissions were at a record high². The effect of these shifts in global climatic systems can be observed in every region on Earth, including in Three Rivers. The need for rapid and deep emissions reductions to prevent dangerous levels of global heating, while

¹ 2022: sixth warmest year on record globally - Met Office

² ESSD - Global Carbon Budget 2022 (copernicus.org)

adapting and building resilience to the effects of climate change that are already irreversible, remain the most urgent tasks of our time.

- 2.2 Since the last strategy, new legislation has been enacted, most notably the Environment Act 2021 which obliges local planning authorities to require a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain from development amongst numerous other requirements.
- 2.3 Substantial progress has been made by this Council in tackling the Climate Emergency - the highlights of which include:
- retrofitting 117 fuel poor homes
 - building a new depot to optimal energy efficiency standards
 - establishing a free-to-call Home Energy Support Service
 - engaging with over 1600 people in the district on climate and sustainability issues
 - embedding climate change into Council decision making
 - introducing a new grassland management regime and planting 750 trees across the District together with providing over 2500 free trees and hedging to residents
- 2.4 As recognised by the [“Mission Zero” review of Net Zero \(2023\)](#), the Council needs long-term certainty of government funding in order to make net zero investment plans through to 2030, and beyond
- 2.5 Council emissions are measured annually and have declined by 5% since 18/19 to 2113 tCO₂e.
- 2.6 The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) trajectory at Appendix 2 advises a budget of £19m (at 2022 prices) is required to achieve net zero by 2030. The updated strategy will establish how this can be achieved given the current financial climate for local government. The strategy focuses on objectives which are achievable within the current funding environment, but that will lead to a substantial drop in emissions. For example, it requires an in depth review and exploration of expanding the Solar PV capacity of the Council. Whilst a substantial investment would be required, the subsequent cost savings are likely to mean it is affordable.
- 2.7 Appendix 2 reports that the district emits just under 500,000 tCO₂e per annum but identifies that grid decarbonisation and transition to electric vehicles alone will only lead to a moderate reduction in emissions. Therefore, the Council will need to demonstrate leadership to inspire everyone to play their part.
- 2.8 Chorleywood North and Sarratt, and Moor Park wards are the highest emitters in the district with households producing on average 25 tCO₂e per annum. Residents in South Oxhey have the lowest carbon footprints, producing an average of 12 tCO₂e annually³ by comparison. The strategy recognises that for the district to achieve its vision of net zero by 2045, everyone must do their bit to contribute, no matter how big or small.

³ [Impact | Community carbon calculator \(impact-tool.org.uk\)](#)

- 2.9 Given the international and national context, it is clear net zero is a challenge, and the emphasis of this strategy is that we are doing all that we can within the parameters and resources available. There is no doubt central government has significantly more to do to enable local authorities and districts to achieve their net zero targets. The revised strategy keeps us on course by focusing on the immediate reductions we *can* make.
- 2.10 There is renewed emphasis on adaptation in recognition of the local impacts which were demonstrated so clearly in 2022 with extreme heat, drought, and wildfires,
- 2.11 The original objectives have been reviewed and updated to further develop initiatives to tackle the climate emergency. These objectives will generate new actions and revise existing actions in the [Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan](#) together with the continuation of projects underway.
- 2.12 This strategy will be supported by the [Action Plan](#) which is updated continuously and reviewed bi-annually by the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Enable the Council to achieve a reduction in operational emissions to advance us towards net-zero emissions by 2030, and demonstrate leadership to inspire the District to achieve net-zero by 2045;
- 3.2 Further the implementation of sustainability initiatives for Council operations and inspire everyone to move towards a circular economy;
- 3.3 Help build resilience against the unavoidable impacts of climate change on Council services;
- 3.4 Promote net-zero carbon and sustainable development of the Council.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets. The relevant policy is entitled Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy and was agreed by Full Council February 2022.
- 4.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators:
- CP50 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan
 - CP52 Greenhouse Gas emissions

- 4.3 The impact of the recommendations on this/these performance indicator(s) is:

This strategy will enable the continuation of current actions and the development of additional ones to continue the achievements within CP50, and drive down greenhouse gas emissions CP52.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Independent review of Net Zero 2022 recommends the Government provides continuity and long-term funding certainty. As a local authority, we need this long-term certainty of local government funding in order to make investment plans through to 2030.

5.2 Where possible, external funding will be sought for individual projects which will be approved either through Policy and Resources Committee or through the Strategic, Service and Financial Planning process.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 The recommendations in this report are fully in line with the expectations on local authorities to take local action on the climate issue contained in the Climate Change Act 2008.

6.2 A number of projects involved in the delivery of the Strategy will require contract preparation and approval.

6.3 All elements of the Strategy will need to be considered alongside the Council's legal duties and powers.

7 Equal Opportunities Implications

7.1 A Short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment has been completed and can be found at Appendix 4

8 Staffing Implications

8.1 None specific.

9 Environmental Implications

Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment Summary	
Homes, buildings, infrastructure, equipment and energy	3.40
Travel	3.33
Goods and Consumption	4.00
Ecology	4.00
Adaptation	3.50
Engagement and Influence	4
Total Overall Average Score	3.7

9.1 A strong assessment for the positive impact the Strategy will have in tackling the climate and ecological emergency, but some of the achievements will be dependent upon achieving sufficient funding to implement. Full details can be found at Appendix 5.

10 Community Safety Implications

10.1 None specific.

11 Public Health implications

- 11.1 The Strategy will contribute to a prevention of deterioration of health and well-being issues arising from the consequences of climate change such as overheating, skin cancers, decline in productivity, and respiratory illnesses. Improvements in Home Energy Efficiency through retrofit work will improve environmental quality within homes and reduce energy bills, thereby assisting in reduction of financial anxiety related to household bills and benefitting physical health by improving the warmth and air quality within homes, and preventing damp and mould.

12 Customer Services Centre Implications

- 12.1 The customer service centre will be expected to answer straightforward questions regarding projects as they progress for which they will either receive training or be able to find answers on the website.

13 Communications and Website Implications

- 13.1 The website is crucial to this strategy as the repository for the information about all relevant projects and initiatives.

The 'Enable and Engage' theme demonstrates the need for sustained engagement with the district to encourage a switch to more sustainable behaviours. The climate team already works closely with the communications team, this will need to be maintained.

Briefings are held with members as required in order to optimise the chances of success of the various initiatives.

Active engagement will continue to be essential with parish councils, schools resident associations, housing associations and activist groups.

14 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 14.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

- 14.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Community Partnerships, Environmental Protection, Regulatory Services, Property Services, Economic and Sustainable Development, and Leisure service plans. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within these plans.

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and impact)
The Council fails to develop the Strategy on climate	The Council will fail to deliver improvements to address climate change within the district.	For the Committee to approve the Final Strategy.	Tolerate	4

change and sustainability.				
The Council fails to act to reduce its' emissions	The Council 2030 pledge is unlikely to be met, unless a co-ordinated programme of activity is implemented. This will lead to reputational damage. And importantly the Council will not be addressing the Climate Emergency and thus will contribute further to the increase in global warming and its' consequences.	For the Committee to approve the Final Strategy.	Treat	6
The Council fails to adapt its services to the embedded impacts of climate change which are leading to more extreme heat and cold, drought and flooding	Services may be impacted and face significant cost to restore, residents and businesses may suffer leading to ultimate financial losses, and environmental damage could be costly both in terms of loss of habitat but also cost.	An adaptation risk assessment of Council services must be prepared, and arising actions incorporated into service plans.	Treat	6
Increase in costs of retrofit hinder domestic decarbonisation	Housing Associations may be unable to afford the cost of retrofit, despite grant funding and those classified as "able to pay" will be unable to pay.	Encourage housing associations to maximise use of ECO4. Apply for grants wherever possible. Aim to work at scale to enable participants to benefit from group buying.	Treat	6
Increase in construction costs for developers	Developers sacrifice net zero technologies and do not voluntarily work to higher energy efficiency standards.	Need to work with stakeholders to encourage wider knowledge and adoption of new technologies in order to bring down costs. Work with the other Hertfordshire Authorities to	Tolerate	6

		drive up net zero standards.		
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14.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely ----- Likelihood ----- Remote	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
		Impact		
		Low -----> Unacceptable		

Impact Score

- 4 (Catastrophic)
- 3 (Critical)
- 2 (Significant)
- 1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

- 4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
- 3 (Likely (21-79%))
- 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
- 1 (Remote (≤5%))

14.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

15 Recommendation

That the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee:

- 15.1 Approve the draft strategy to undertake a 6-week period of public consultation commencing May 15 2023;
- 15.2 For the final strategy to be presented at the 11 September 2023 Policy and Resources Committee on the 11 October 2023 Leisure, Environment and Community Committee.

Data Quality

Data sources:

1 Impact | Community carbon calculator (impact-tool.org.uk)

Data checked by: Ellie Nathan

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	X
3	High	

Background Papers

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix 1: Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy
- Appendix 2: APSE route to zero & district baseline emissions
- Appendix 3: APSE baseline emissions for TRDC '21/'22
- Appendix 4: Short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment
- Appendix 5: Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment

