

Council Report

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Director of Strategic Services

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Council Motion on Climate Change: Progress Report

Executive Summary

On 6 October 2020, the Council considered its response to a petition requesting the Council to:

“implement a binding citizens’ assembly to formulate a plan for the council to tackle the climate emergency”.

At that meeting, the Council adopted a motion in response which declared that, given the scope and scale of the challenges the Council faces to meet its earlier climate emergency declaration set out in 2019, it should explore relevant collaborative opportunities with other local councils. It also redoubled its commitment to taking urgent action to decarbonise its assets and operations.

The Council recognised that uncertainty over the borough’s recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and discussions on possible unitary local government structures in Surrey arising from the Government’s Devolution White Paper could bring about significant change to roles and responsibilities for areas and services contributing to carbon emissions.

Consequently, the Council considered that holding a citizens’ assembly to formulate a plan to tackle the climate emergency alone was not appropriate or practicable at this time. Instead, the Council recommended the Climate Change Board should focus on work already underway to explore possible joint working arrangements to address the climate emergency, this Council being strongly placed to lead action on climate change locally and contribute meaningfully across the county.

The Climate Change Board was asked to report on possible formal joint working arrangements on climate change, seeking formal agreement that climate change policies be the leading priority for any new unitary council(s) in Surrey and further consideration of using a citizens’ assembly as a means of engaging with the community and harnessing the power of local interest in the formulation of such policies (paras 3.2 to 3.6).

The motion also required the Council to commit to taking urgent action in the short term to minimise climate change and for the Climate Change Board to report to full Council within three months on actions taken including progress on the development of policies, such policies to include:

- measures to reduce the carbon footprint of the borough council's own activities and assets (para 3.7 to 3.17)
- measures to reduce the carbon footprint of buildings within the borough, so that the carbon footprint impact is assessed on all planning applications and given substantial weight in determining those applications (paras 3.18 and 3.19); and
- new building policies, using the Council's planning and policy role including detailed planning requirements to minimise embedded carbon and impose the highest possible standards on all new building within the borough (paras 3.20 and 3.21).

Recommendation to Council

That the Council endorses the measures taken in response to the motion adopted by the Council on 6 October 2020 outlined in this progress report, while suggesting any amendments and/or additions.

Is the report (or part of it) exempt from publication? No

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To request the Council to endorse measures taken following the adoption of the motion in response to a petition on 6 October 2020, in particular to explore and report on possible formal joint working arrangements and agreement on implementing robust and sustainable policies and citizen assemblies across borough and district councils within Surrey to address the Council's climate change emergency at county level; and to provide a progress report on urgent actions taken in the short term by this Council to minimise climate change.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 As a result of the Climate Emergency Declaration on 23 July 2019, responding to the climate crisis has become a strategic priority, building on our previous commitments and strategic aims regarding the protection of our environment. The Climate Emergency Declaration commits the Council to working towards making the its activities net-zero carbon by 2030.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 6 October 2020, the Council considered its response to a petition requesting it to *"implement a binding citizens' assembly to formulate a plan for the council to tackle the climate emergency"*. At that meeting, the Council adopted the following motion in response:

- (1) That the Managing Director be instructed to open discussions with all Surrey councils:
 - (a) to explore possible formal joint working arrangements on climate change;
 - (b) to seek formal agreement that the implementation of robust and sustainable policies on climate change should be the leading priority for any new unitary council(s) in Surrey with a recommendation that they explore the benefits of using a citizens' assembly as a means of engaging with the community and harnessing the power of local activism in the formulation of such policies; and
 - (c) to report the outcome of these discussions to the full Council.
- (2) That, in addition, the Council itself commits that it will take urgent action in the short term to minimise climate change, such action shall include the development of policies by the Climate Change Board, who will present a progress report to full Council within three months, such policies will include:
 - (i) measures to reduce the carbon footprint of:
 - (a) the borough's own activities (moving to a net zero-carbon position);
 - (b) the borough's assets;
 - (c) buildings within the borough, so that the carbon footprint impact is assessed on all planning applications and given substantial weight in determining those applications; and
 - (ii) new building policies, using the Council's planning and policy role including detailed planning requirements to minimise embedded carbon and impose the highest possible standards on all new building within the borough.

Our discussions with Surrey councils so far

Steps taken in the exploration of possible formal joint working arrangements on climate change with Surrey Councils

- 3.2 The Council will be aware that Surrey County Council (SCC) had signalled their intent to submit a Case for Change to Central Government, presenting their preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation as a single Surrey unitary authority. The Government's Devolution White Paper has been delayed and as a result, the SCC approach has not been progressed at this time. It is expected, however, that further discussion on this issue will resurface later this year. This means that any arrangement relating to policies and a unitary arrangement have been delayed.

In the meantime, the Surrey District and Borough Councils have been looking at opportunities for improved collaboration. The eleven District and Boroughs

- commissioned KPMG to work with us to look at this further. This work is on-going. This Council is also looking at joint working/partnership opportunities with local councils in our part of Surrey. All this work is ongoing and any opportunities for joint working within the climate change agenda will be explored.
- 3.3 Members of the senior leadership team at the Council have also held discussions with the Director of Environment at SCC. Through these high-level discussions, the Council and SCC are in the process of agreeing shared objectives on climate change and a number of related mutual-interest activities in which they are key partners, these include climate change communications to residents and businesses, transport and air pollution, and energy infrastructure. This agreed strategic direction has established an active workstream under the name 'Greener Futures Partnership'.
- 3.4 The delivery of initiatives under the Greener Futures Partnership, which is proposed to be led by a leadership group, will meet twice or quarterly (unknown at this stage) and inform regular cross-sector 'summits'. The existing Climate Change Officer Network, comprising officers from all Surrey councils, will report into the Partnership.
- 3.5 The Climate Change Officer Network, which includes officers from Guildford, will identify and progress joint delivery opportunities, as well as provide an officer forum for information sharing. This group has already convened and is seeking to initiate a number of projects.
- 3.6 The Surrey Environmental Partnership, also covering all Surrey councils, is revising its remit to focus specifically on resources and so become the Surrey Resource Partnership. It will be separate to the Greener Futures Partnership but support the relevant groups as necessary. The resources work overseen by the Surrey Environment Partnership will continue to be chaired by the Council's Head of Operational and Technical Services.

Our actions taken in the short term to minimise climate change

Measures to reduce the carbon footprint of (a) the Council's own activities and (b) its assets

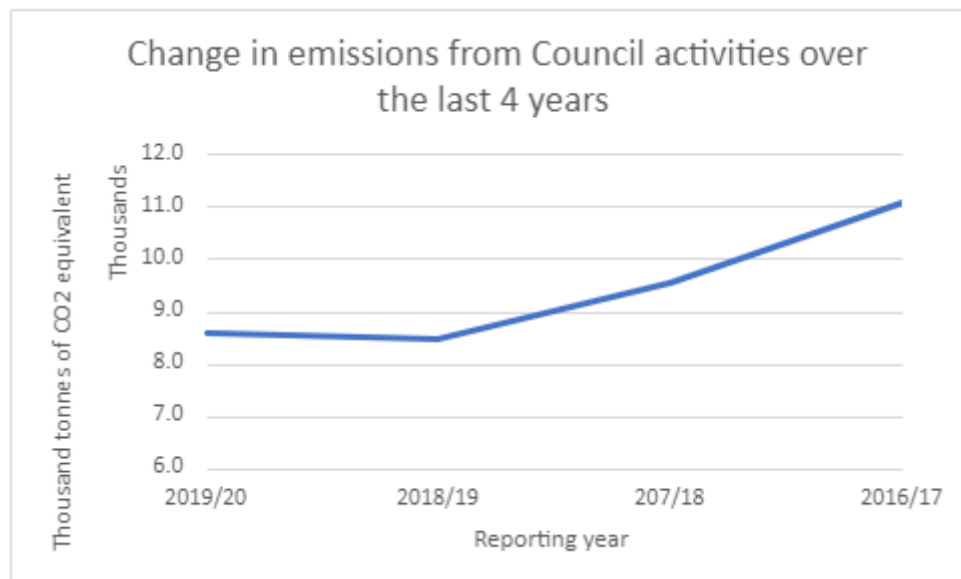
- 3.7 In July 2020, the Executive approved an Energy and Carbon Reduction High-Level Action Plan (Appendix 1) to address carbon reductions for Council assets and operations as well as across the borough as a whole. Steps to achieve this were sub-divided into three development sections, namely:
- Section 1: Carbon footprint and emissions reduction trajectory
Section 2: Development of an Energy Delivery Framework (EDF)
Section 3: Project Delivery
- 3.8 A summary of the major actions progressed in the last three months, plus next steps, insofar as they relate to the Council's own activities and its assets include:

Section 1: Carbon Footprint and emissions reduction trajectory

3.9 Compilation of Greenhouse Gas emissions reports to assess 5-year trend to 2019-20 (Appendix 1 Item 1.1)

- In September 2020, the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Energy was appointed to analyse the Council's carbon footprint and identify a base level year against which to track progress in reducing carbon emissions.
- APSE Energy will do this by calculating the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of the Council's own operations based on the format of the data that was provided in the Council's GHG Emissions Report 2015-16 using a methodology based on the international standard laid out in the GHG Protocol and in accordance with UK Government GHG Conversion Factors. This will allow a consistent approach to comparing emissions and using recognised techniques for future reporting.
- APSE Energy are due to complete their report in February 2021 calculating for the 4-year period from 2016-17 to 2019-20, the quantity of carbon emissions overall as a result of Council activity, along a breakdown of areas responsible for these emissions. Due to the timing of this report, we are only able to report on the initial findings at this stage.
- Initial draft findings show a downward trend in the volume of emissions resulting from Council activities. With net emissions falling nearly 22%, from 10,998 tCO₂e¹ in 2016-17 to 8,568 tCO₂e in 2019-20, see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Guildford Borough Council activity emissions 2019/20 compared back to 2016/17 - (tCO₂e)



¹ tCO₂e means the amount of greenhouse gasses emitted during a given period, measured in metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent,

- In the most recent year, 2019-20, the Council's gross emissions were 8,613 tCO₂e and net emissions were 8,568 tCO₂e. This is a 45% reduction against the baseline year of 2008-09 but an increase of 2% from 2018-19. This increase from 2018-19 to 2019-20 is attributable to:
 - A 7% increase in gas consumption and a decrease in renewable generation by the Council,
 - The increase in gas consumption is likely caused by 2019-20 being a colder year, leading to an increase in gas used for heating. The reduction in renewable electricity generation is largely due to the Millmead Hydro system experiencing outages in this period.
 - Furthermore, electricity consumption was 10% higher in 2019-20 than the previous year, the reasons for this are not evident. Despite this increase the associated emissions fell by 0.5% due to a decrease in the carbon intensity of grid-based electricity.
- Further explanation of the change in emissions is forthcoming in the as-yet-unpublished APSE emissions report referred to in para 3.9.

3.10 Identification of gaps in emissions data and suggested data collection methodology (Appendix 1 Item 1.2)

- In order to monitor our decarbonisation progress, it is also essential that we have an effective emissions monitoring and reporting methodology.
- It is therefore critical to ensure emissions data collected is accurate. The findings of the report mentioned in para 3.9 will highlight any gaps in emissions data along with any assumptions made in the methodology.
- Data gaps also comprise the emissions that the Council does not yet include in its reporting data but may wish to in the future. The Climate Change Board will be recommending which emissions the Council should include and take responsibility for. These can then be used to set boundaries to ensure the Council is reporting consistently each year. This will include direct emissions (produced by the Council) and indirect emissions (produced by third parties facilitating the Council's activities, including staff).

3.11 Setting an emissions reduction trajectory towards 2030 (Appendix 1 Item 1.3)

- The emissions report referred to above is the first of a two part of the trajectory report. APSE Energy is now engaged to produce a Carbon Reduction Trajectory to the net zero target year, 2030. This will identify those actions the Council can take to reduce its carbon emissions by focusing on individual assets and will quantify the potential for reduction of carbon emissions over the Council's timeframe, with a view to converging on a net-zero figure as early as possible.

- APSE Energy will use the data from the carbon emissions study above to create a trajectory which shows interventions that could be incorporated to reduce energy usage, generate small/large-scale power, the transition to electric vehicles and identify the unavoidable emissions that may require offsetting.
- APSE Energy is scheduled to provide a draft of this report in the first week of February 2021. This report relies on undertaking an assessment of the Council's assets to provide the basis of a recommendation of what interventions could be incorporated, the forecast capital cost, and the forecast year on year cost and carbon savings up to 2030. The Climate Change Board will be presented with this report to make a recommendation.
- The Climate Change Board would like to emphasise that the term 'net-zero' acknowledges that the Council cannot reach 'absolute zero' in terms of carbon reductions, given that even the most environmentally friendly technologies still result in some carbon emissions. Therefore, after all reasonable carbon reduction possibilities have been exhausted, the term 'net-zero' allows for remaining hard-to-treat emissions to be offset in some way.

Section 2: Developing an Energy Delivery Framework (EDF)

- 3.12 Building on the trajectory work above, an Energy Delivery Framework will determine the criteria and policies that will be used in order to deliver the identified carbon reductions. Therefore, progress on the EDF is pending the work currently underway on establishing emissions trajectory (Appendix 1 item 1.3).
- 3.13 Determine overall approach to developing and delivering projects (Appendix 1 Item 2.4)
- In order to deliver against the net zero target there will be a need for the Council to utilise its resources effectively and ensure that the net zero objective is shared across the Council. Officers are liaising with the Corporate Governance team on the best way for ensuring programme governance arrangements are adopted.
- 3.14 Technology feasibility studies, business case and funding (Appendix 1 Item 2.5)
- The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) was announced at the start of October 2020 and provides an opportunity for local authorities and other public service providers to access funds to complete improvement works. The main focus is on heat decarbonisation and other improvements can be fully or part funded. Other interventions can be funded such as insulation, lighting, or new windows.
 - The Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund (PSLCSF) enables local authorities to bid for funding to pay for external support to gather information and put together business cases which will be needed to apply for grants under the PSDS. This funding can also be used for work to draw up a decarbonisation plan for the Council's estate. The Council

has submitted a bid for funding for consultants and can be followed up with a further application to obtain grant funding for the capital required to deliver energy efficiency projects.

- APSE Energy have provided the Council with the skills required to make an application for these funds. Detailed calculations are required to determine the capital cost, energy savings and carbon savings for applications to be approved. The outcome of the application has not yet been communicated.

Stage 3: Project Delivery

3.15 Building energy projects (Appendix 1 Item 3.1)

- A significant number of projects continue to be progressed under each of the areas identified in the Energy and Carbon Reduction High-Level Action Plan. Most recently, the project to install solar PV panels at Farnham Road multi-storey car park and at Millmead commenced. Being run by a project team from Portsmouth City Council, these installations are scheduled to be completed by mid-April 2021.

3.16 Electric vehicles and green travel incentives (Appendix 1 Item 3.2)

- Electric Minibuses
 - The Council has purchased ten electric minibuses for the Dial-a-ride service. Five of the electric Minibuses are due to enter service at the end of February, closely followed by a further five vehicles at the end of April/beginning of May (dependent on COVID-19 restrictions). The charging infrastructure at Park Barn has been completed and tested ready for the arrival of these vehicles.
- Electric Vehicles
 - The Council has adopted a vehicle replacement programme which aims to deliver a fully electric Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) fleet by 2030.
 - The Council fleet currently includes 11 fully electric vehicles, 10 of which are LCVs and one is a small parks tractor.
 - This represents 10.42% of our LCV fleet or 6.1% of our road registered vehicle fleet (excluding Plant/tractors/trailers). These vehicles are used by various departments in various roles.
 - The procured electric minibuses will complement these figures and our total percentage of electric LCV's will rise to 20.84% once they are in service.
 - As part of the Council's commitment to move to greener travel, lease car drivers may only apply for Hybrid or Full EV vehicles. Full petrol or diesel vehicles will no longer be accepted.
 - The Council is actively monitoring the improvements in hydrogen and electric power for heavy vehicles, such as refuse trucks, with a view to moving away from diesel as soon as operationally and financially practicable.

3.17 Workshops and carbon literacy training (Appendix 1 Item 3.3)

- Officers facilitated a joint officer and councillor carbon literacy training workshop in October 2020. This was hosted by APSE Energy and led to accreditation status awarded to participants comprising councillor and officer members of the Climate Change Board.

Measures to reduce the carbon footprint of (c) buildings within the borough via planning application process

3.18 In 2019 the Council adopted part 1 of the Local Plan: Strategy and Sites. This plan included 'Policy D2: Climate Change, Sustainable Design, Construction and Energy'. The Council recently adopted a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) with the same name that provides detailed guidance for the policy. Together, these provide a robust starting point to assess applications for new development.

3.19 The policy and guidance require (among other things) new buildings to achieve a carbon emission rate that is at least 20% lower than the maximum rate allowed under the national Building Regulations. Compliance with policy D2 is judged through the planning application process. Therefore, the planning application process already includes measures to reduce the carbon footprint of new buildings.

New building policies to minimise embedded carbon and impose the highest possible standards on all new building within the borough

3.20 The Council is currently producing part 2 of the Local Plan which will set out detailed Development Management Policies. It recently consulted on the Local Plan: Development Management Policies Issues and Options document which sets the preferred options for the Local Plan part 2, including policies covering low carbon and low impact development. In line with the Council's declaration, these policies will seek to provide the highest possible standards consistent with meeting legislative requirements. Councillors will be aware that the plan can only be adopted, and therefore the policies in it carry full weight, if it is found 'sound' through an examination process by a government inspector. This process is expected to be completed by September 2022.

3.21 One of the preferred options includes measures that explicitly seek to reduce the embodied (embedded) carbon present in materials used for construction. The SPD already sets out guidance that steers development towards choosing materials with low embodied carbon.

4. Consultations

4.1 The Lead Councillor for Climate Change as well as the Director of Strategic Services have been consulted on this report and its appendix.

5. Key Risks

5.1 As a progress report there are no associated risks.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 As a progress report, no financial implications apply.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 The Council will need to ensure that any new policies are in line with legislation as well as local and national planning policy.

8. Human Resource Implications

8.1 Officers with responsibilities that are relevant to the delivery of the action plan will be sourced from existing teams.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

9.1 This duty has been considered in the context of this report and it has been concluded that there are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report.

10. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

10.1 These are covered within the main body of the report.

11. Conclusion

11.1 This report responds to the request in the Climate Change Motion (6 October 2020) for an update on policies and measures introduced to reduce the carbon footprint of the Council's assets and operations, and supporting decarbonisation across the Borough in accordance with the 2019 Climate Change Emergency declaration, as set out above.

12. Background Papers

None

13. Appendices

Appendix 1: Energy and Carbon Reduction High Level Action Plan (July 2020)