

Progress Update - Climate Action Strategic Plan

Committee name	Environment, Housing and Regeneration Select Committee
Officer reporting	David Haygarth, Climate Action Manager.
Papers with report	Please see list of background papers with weblinks.
Ward	All

HEADLINES

The Councils Climate Action Strategic Plan was adopted in July 2021. This report provides a progress update for Members. It outlines actions taken by officers to establish organisational approaches and accountability for climate action, while simultaneously aligning current and future projects to the strategic vision and intentions of the plan.

A further report for this Select Committee is scheduled for 14th April 2022. That will update Members with further detail on specific action plans and operational activities being taken to achieve the strategic goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee:

- 1. Notes the sustainable approach being taken to integrate the climate action strategic plan into Council business.**
- 2. Notes the corporate approach taken to ensure officers have the awareness and capability to provide leadership and effective management of our climate action work.**
- 3. Notes the work of the communications team to raise awareness of the plan across the organisation.**
- 4. Considers how any future policy reviews in Council services, can be informed by the requirements of the Climate Action Strategic Plan.**
- 5. Agrees to review progress on specific action plans in April 2022.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Climate Emergency

The climate emergency refers to the situation brought about by increasing temperatures across the planet, caused by greenhouse gas emissions. Internationally, governments have agreed to try to limit the temperature increase to prevent catastrophic climate related events. Globally, these are best understood as sea level rise, crop failure and climate related mass migration. More locally, increasingly severe and damaging weather events, disruption and flooding are possible. Responding to this, the Council unanimously declared a climate emergency in 2020 and created a Climate Action Strategic Plan, which was adopted in 2021. This plan builds on the Councils strong track record of reducing greenhouse gas emissions across a range of activities.

The strategic plan sets out our vision to, **“become the greenest London borough, to protect and enhance the environment, and to provide a brighter prospect for future generations.”** This statement is rooted in the belief that we have the capability to use our resources and expertise to tackle the climate emergency, lead our community and create opportunity in the process.

Underpinning the vision are a range of stated aims and activities, categorised below.

- 6 corporate climate commitments
- 62 strategic objectives (across 9 themes)
- 16 action plans

These aims and activities were adopted following a full public consultation on the draft strategic action plan, which completed on 20th June 2021. The consultation secured hundreds of comments from residents, businesses, and other bodies in the borough. Officers collated the responses and recognising the huge support and the concerns of the public, amended many objectives to take account of those views. Making Council intent clearer, commentaries were added to each of the existing themes. Recognising the views of the consultees were broader than the Councils first draft, three commitments and two themes were added.

The Environment, Housing and Regeneration Select Committee was also consulted on the 8th June and provided helpful commentary. All information received was consolidated into an updated draft and adopted by Cabinet on the 8th July.

A Sustainable Approach

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is not the sole intended outcome of the strategic plan. Taking a sustainable approach to climate action brings a range of benefits to our borough. Through investment in carbon reduction technologies and practices we can improve a range of social, economic, and environmental outcomes. When we think about the target of being carbon neutral, we are also thinking of what more we can do in the process to achieve complementary aims. Part of this approach involves drawing on existing staff expertise, transforming existing services to have lower emissions and providing leadership to our residents, schools, and businesses. In terms of organisation delivery, the aim is to make climate action part of our everyday approach to business and develop our existing skills and expertise to into the new task.

The climate action role is the strategic organisational lead in this respect, linking council services and plans to the objectives in the plan. It also provides technical direction on climate change activities across the organisation and updates the Cabinet Member and Corporate Director on progress at monthly intervals. A key part of the climate action role is ensuring colleagues are aware of the strategic plan and incorporate tactical climate goals into their service delivery. Once colleagues are informed on the plan and its relationship to their role, they can connect their specific goals and target to the climate objectives and targets.

Operating in this way allows climate action to become an integrated business as usual matter, augmenting existing skills and expertise of colleagues. However, it requires organisational acceptance before it can occur. To achieve this a series of climate action briefings were arranged, sequentially targeting the different layers of management, and presented internally by the climate action manager.

Corporate Management Briefing

The council's corporate management team (CMT) were briefed on the steps needed to begin the process of integrating climate action. The corporate directors agreed to act as organisational "enablers" of climate action. They also agreed to hold quarterly governance sessions to ensure the strategic plan is meeting its objectives and aligned with other requirements. Finally, they nominated Heads of Service to act in a steering role, to ensure service objectives were aligned with the strategic aims.

Senior Management Briefing

All five senior management teams (SMT) received a service specific presentation, setting out the strategic plan, its commitments, and the recommended approach to delivery. SMT's considered how their own operations linked to the strategy and, establishing their own baseline. The briefing considered the need to understand the current emissions trajectory to 2030, the ways to reduce fossil fuel use and the opportunities that may allow us to go further to reduce emissions. The briefing explained how the climate action plan linked to leadership and general activities in buildings and transport, what we can do to improve and recognition of organisational change. It then discussed service specific areas and how those linked to the objectives of the plan.

Departmental Service Managers Briefing

Five more online briefing sessions were provided to communicate the intent and delivery methods of the strategic climate action plan. Approximately 100+ service level managers and team leaders were briefed on the rationale of the plan and, how teams will be able to align with the 62 strategic objectives. Several existing projects were highlighted, and new ideas put forward, which are being incorporated to the various action plans. Sessions were recorded for staff unable to attend, allowing the briefings to reach most colleagues in management positions. They can now brief their officers and teams on the corporate approaches of integrating climate action into business

The management parameters are summarised below.

Requirement	Remit	Function
6 corporate climate commitments	Corporate Management Team	Enabling, oversight, governance and leadership for SMT's,
62 strategic objectives (across 9 themes)	Senior Management Teams	Act as steering groups for each theme, ensuring climate objectives are part of service delivery, guidance to managers
16 action plans	Departmental managers or specialist officers.	Development of action plans, implementation of activities, monitoring and reporting progress.

Communications

Classification: Public

Environment, Housing and Regeneration Select Committee – 20 January 2022

A key part of climate action work is communicating our efforts. The council's communications team have played an important role in this area and excellent progress has been made to raise awareness of climate action. This began with the publication of the strategic plan in the Hillingdon corporate format. It was hosted on a new climate action webpage explaining our commitments and plans.

Further pages were added, detailing ways to for residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and, links to specialist support. The team also brought together the documentary and youtube links, detailing the journey of the strategy through key Council meetings. Various news stories and campaigns were also arranged, some of which were timed to coincide with COP26. This has increased visibility of the topic throughout the organisation and further afield.

As the action plans develop, more web pages will be created linking the various activities across the council back to our strategic objectives.

Amendments to the Climate Action Strategic Plan

At full Council in November 2021, Members unanimously agreed to new objectives in the climate action strategic plan. Mindful of the COP26 and the need to do more to tackle climate change the Council agreed to update the climate change strategy to:

- ensure that, where practical and cost effective, all the council's procured services are net carbon zero by 2035.
- support and work with businesses and organisations towards making the entire borough net zero carbon by 2050.
- review the Council's investment strategy within the next 12 months to give consideration to climate change impacts in the council's investment portfolio.

The Council also committed to increasing its accountability and transparency on climate change action by:

- proactively including young people in the process, ensuring that they have a voice in shaping the future.
- publicly reporting on the level of investment in the fossil fuel industry that our investment plans have.
- holding an annual 'people's assembly' with residents and relevant organisations to discuss and shape revisions to the climate change action plan.

The existing published strategy will be updated with these goals and published on the Council website.

Action Plan Development

The strategic plan has created 16 action plans spanning the broad range of council services and operations. Throughout the process of engagement with management, it is clear the council is already doing a lot to tackle climate change. These existing activities require linking to the strategic objectives to form a basis of our action plans. Continued analysis is required to understand the additional work and resources are required to develop the action plans to meet all the strategic objectives and climate commitments.

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Select Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction. Identified adopted council policies are relevant to the progress of the climate action strategic plan are.

The London Borough of Hillingdon Air Quality Plan adopted 2019. This precedes the Climate Action strategic plan and does not yet refer to it. At a suitable opportunity, this can be updated.

The London Borough of Hillingdon Flood Action Plan adopted 2021, which refers to the climate action strategic plan.

These two plans serve specific requirements, while also meeting strategic climate objectives. Therefore, they are viewed as already providing the basis of two of the sixteen required action plans. In addition, the Council adopted a new Housing Strategy in November 2021. This strategy has important links to community leadership objectives in the climate action strategic plan.

Notably, during 2021 the Housing team undertook extensive internal consultation with colleagues across the Council. As a result, climate action criteria feature throughout the new strategy in various areas. The Housing Strategy also makes clear references to the commitments of the Climate Action Strategic Plan, making a coherent policy link between the two framework documents.

The collaboration between teams has linked objectives several areas which ultimately will enhance our services and increase joined up working across the Council. It is therefore recommended when policy and strategy come up for review in other services, the links to climate action strategic objectives should be thoroughly assessed.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

None at this stage, pending any findings by the Committee and any recommendations forwarded to Cabinet.

Financial Implications

There are several funding opportunities available for climate action work. The council has access to Section 106 carbon offset funding to support projects that will reduce carbon emissions. Projects may receive part or full funding providing they meet the "additionality" criteria set out in the London Plan. Officers are also researching the potential of using the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support projects in the borough. This could be deployed to support initiatives such as district heating schemes and, electric vehicle charging points.

Further funding for carbon reduction work was identified in the councils draft medium-term financial forecast (MTFF) presented to Cabinet on December 16th, 2021. Substantial investment at the Civic Centre was identified and improvements to energy efficiency will necessarily form part of that schedule of works.

Within the context of Property and Infrastructure, (para. 48 of the MTFF Cabinet report) expenditure of £25 million to be spent over the next 5 years was identified for, "investment in initiatives to reduce the boroughs carbon footprint."

In lieu of detailed proposals, it is important to note that any activity that reduces the council's energy consumption and carbon emissions will likely provide a saving on energy expenditure.

Officers will continue to consider opportunities for any additional investment required for the action plans and examine further any complementary external funding opportunities.

Legal Implications

The Borough Solicitor confirms that the legal implications are included in the body of the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

London Borough Hillingdon Full Council Climate Declaration 2020:

https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/media/7901/Climate-Change-Declaration-2030/pdf/Climate_Change_Declaration_2030_-_Full_Council_16_January_2020.pdf?m=1639390684777

London Borough of Hillingdon Climate Action Strategic Plan (Adopted July 2021)

https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/media/7171/Strategic-climate-action-plan/pdf/Climate_strategy_adopted_July_2021_1.pdf?m=1632473850913

London Borough of Hillingdon Full Council

Agenda Item 40, Motion from Councillor Mathers

<https://modgov.hillingdon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=117&MId=3972>

London Borough of Hillingdon Climate Action Webpages

<https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/climate-action>

London Borough of Hillingdon Cabinet Meeting 16th December 2021

Agenda Item 6, The Councils Medium Term Financial Forecast MTF, 2022/3 – 2026/7

<https://modgov.hillingdon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=4174>

London Borough of Hillingdon Cabinet Meeting 11th November 2021

Agenda Item 6, Housing Strategy for Adoption, Appendix 2

<https://modgov.hillingdon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=4173>

London Borough Hillingdon Cabinet Meeting 30th May 2019

Agenda Item 8, Air Quality Action Plan.

<https://modgov.hillingdon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=3178>

London Borough of Hillingdon Cabinet Meeting 27th May 2019

Agenda Item 6, Flood Action Plan.

<https://modgov.hillingdon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=3917>