

## Review of the Climate Change and Environment Strategy

To: Environment and Green Investment Committee

Meeting Date: 16/12/2021

From: Executive Director Place and Economy

Electoral division(s): All

Key Decision: No

Forward Plan ref: N/a

Outcome: The outcome of this report is for Committee to recommend the revised Climate Change and Environment Strategy for adoption by Council at their next meeting.

Recommendation: Committee is asked to:

- a) Note this report
- b) Comment on the revised draft Climate Change and Environment Strategy attached as Appendices 1-3
- c) Recommend the Draft Climate Change and Environment Strategy to Council for adoption as corporate policy

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# 1. Background

- 1.1 In May 2019 the Council declared a Climate and Environment Emergency and committed to the development of a Climate Change and Environment Strategy (CCES). This Strategy was adopted by Council in May 2020.
- 1.2 On 18 May 2021, the new Joint Administration took leadership of the Council. In their Joint Administration Agreement (JAA) the climate emergency was highlighted as one of their top priorities. It committed the Council to act faster to tackle the climate emergency, review the Council's Climate Strategy and bring forward targets towards 2030.
- 1.3 An Action Plan to deliver the Joint Administration Agreement was adopted in July 2021 by Strategy and Resources Committee including the setting of December 2021 for the completion of the Review of the Climate Change and Environment Strategy.
- 1.4 The local and national policy position has shifted since March 2020. Government has legislated a 2035 target, published some key strategies and is aligning incentives and funding programmes towards favouring low-carbon options. These include:
  - To reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 78% by 2035 based on a 1990 baseline and reflecting the recommendation from the UK's Independent Climate Commission Sixth Carbon Budget. This target supplements the existing net zero by 2050 target, ensuring alignment with the Paris Agreement to keep global temperature rise below 2°C and preferably to 1.5°C.
  - Key strategies now published include the Heat and Buildings Strategy (October 2021); the Net Zero Strategy (October 2021); Environment Act 2021, Agricultural Act 2020, and the Transport Decarbonisation Plan 2021. These start to provide a clear direction to millions of people and businesses in the UK about the future, their role and choices in the change.

- 1.5 Locally, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Commission on Climate (CPICC) has published its Final Report and recommendations to guide the region to deliver net zero by 2050. The report highlights urgent action is needed – well before six years is up- both to reduce emissions and to prepare for the impacts of climate change. It highlights that if we cannot deliver this change the impacts of climate change become much more severe. This is especially important if we are to protect the most vulnerable in society and deliver a just transition ensuring no-one is left behind as we decarbonise our communities, businesses and homes. These recommendations put forward by an expert panel provide additional evidence to inform action.
- 1.6 Updating the CCES enables the above points to be fully considered and integrated into the Council's approach to tackling the Climate and Biodiversity Crises while acknowledging the rapidly evolving policy context and increasing desire from our communities to engage in climate action.
- 1.7 The outcome of this report is for Committee to recommend the revised Climate Change and Environment Strategy for adoption by Council at their next meeting.

## 2 Main Issues

### 2.1 Why review the Strategy now?

The existing CCES was a crucial first step for the Council to raise the profile of the climate and biodiversity crises in Cambridgeshire. The scale and extent of the crises are more widely understood as many countries have experienced severe weather impacts and the loss and costs this brings to society. At the same time evidence, policy and best practice is being widely shared amongst the public sector, business and communities and supporting areas to speed up our response and implement change.

- 2.2 Public awareness and interest in the climate crisis have significantly increased in the UK. A survey conducted with over 6500 people in 2020 found that 83% of respondents felt that 'climate change was a concern' and over half expected climate change to affect their local area 'to some extent'. 78% of participants strongly or somewhat supported the countries net zero target (HM Government, Research Paper, April 2021). With the UK hosts of the International Conference on Climate Change (COP26) public awareness and concern is at an all-time high.
- 2.3 Reviewing the Strategy now allows the Council to reflect on the learning from the last two years, assess new evidence and policies now available to identify a strategy that focuses on mobilising the pace and scale of change to minimise the severity of future impacts of climate change on our communities. As there remains significant uncertainty on how to decarbonise all sectors of society, a strategy that guides action in those areas where we know what to do but also allows us to learn and adapt and respond proactively to opportunities is needed.

2.4 This Strategy is the product of on-going dialogue with Members, County Council officers, District Councils, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, communities, businesses and the third sector. Several webinars and meetings were held across these groups to share understanding of the issues, enable this Strategy to integrate with those of our partners while maintaining the council's ambition. A broad range of evidence and insight has been considered to produce a Strategy that acts as an enabler for collaboration and dynamic change, clearly signalling the Council's intent on this agenda.

#### 2.5 A New Approach: Bringing to life and actively use our Strategy

Increasing the pace and scale of carbon reductions in Cambridgeshire requires collaboration and cooperation between organisations, businesses, communities, and residents to act sooner. We need to be clear with communities and business about what is needed and how we are going to do it. We all need to provide reliable information and signpost communities to good practice by others.

2.6 Aligning our ambitions and work programmes with our district partners, the CPCA and wider public sector will make it easier for communities to understand what the public sector can achieve. Our impact can be amplified if we work together to deliver the recommendations of the Independent Commission on Climate for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and ultimately deliver change at lower cost for everyone in Cambridgeshire.

#### 2.7 Strengthening internal ownership of the challenge:

Just as collaboration and cooperation is needed across the county this is also required within the Council to drive change. Increased ownership of the challenge is needed by everyone. Consideration and delivery of action on climate must become part of how we deliver our services rather than an activity for set teams or individuals to deliver. The Strategy has been designed to provide a framework within which all Council activities can sit – it provides a structure for officers and members to develop activities within services that fits into the wider net zero ambition.

#### 2.8 Key Updates to the Strategy

The draft Strategy (Appendices 1-3) now comprises:

- Part 1: A high level strategy summarising our ambition and approach and providing the framework to manage the changes we face. This is targeted at the public, businesses, and partners.
- Part 2: A Technical Report for those that want or need greater detail on targets and priorities to inform their work.
- Part 3: A dynamic action plan which guides the types and areas of action to deliver the strategy. This can be updated as we know more and can react to the work and action plan evolving from the CPICC recommendations.

2.9 There are also a range of supporting documents that sit alongside. These include the Annual Carbon Footprint report; the Communications and Engagement Plan; and the Net Zero and Improving Nature Programme and Resourcing Plan (to be completed by March 2022).

2.9 The Strategy now reflects:

- A new ambition for Cambridgeshire to reach net zero emissions by 2045 through mobilising action to attract investment and increase the pace and scale of delivery. This will bring benefits to the area such as resource efficiency and a competitive edge to businesses.
- An organisational target for the Council to reach Net Zero by 2030. For those working for the Council, it is now a whole Council endeavour. All services will need to build knowledge and skills to deliver carbon emission reductions. The Strategy is a framework designed to enable this change to flourish. This aligns with the recommendations from the CPICC.
- Over half of carbon reductions are dependent on the choices communities and businesses make in their everyday life such as heating buildings, travelling to work or leisure, food, and clothes. The Strategy therefore focuses heavily on the need for the Council, and others, to engage, support and collaborate widely enabling others to make positive change themselves. Communications and Engagement has been included as new priority in the strategy.
- The financing of the transition to a low carbon future for everyone will cost less if we take action early and more if we delay. But there is still a lot of work to do across Cambridgeshire with partners to draw together the enabling financial framework to bring forward inward investment that will deliver the changes needed. It won't happen overnight as it is complex and multi-faceted. But 'value for money' is not achieved on any investment if it emits more carbon emissions and damages our environment.

### 3 Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do

The Climate and Biodiversity Emergencies negatively impact communities through heightened risks of flooding, overheating, drought, loss of nature. This will continue to impact the lives of our communities unless more is done during the next 10 years to reduce carbon emissions, rebuild natural capital and keep global warming under 2 degrees temperature rise as set out in the Paris Agreement.

3.2 A good quality of life for everyone

As above

### 3.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full

Young people have protested that Governments around the world need to do more to protect and enhance the environment and not leave the full cost to future generations. The programming of action to deliver Net-zero and Improve Nature is needed to ensure intergenerational fairness.

### 3.4 Protecting and caring for those who need us

The vulnerable in our communities will be more susceptible to the impacts and costs of climate change impacts. A 'Just' transition' is a better future for everyone. The Strategy proposes to bring forward the ambition for net zero in Cambridgeshire to minimise and avoid if possible, the more severe climate impacts.

## 4 Significant Implications

### 4.1 Resource Implications

There are significant resource impacts to deliver net zero emissions by 2045 but these will be even greater if we do nothing. Funding the transition to a low carbon future will require a range of actions across government, our partners, businesses, and our communities. For example, policy and regulation will drive investment; government grants will incentivise investment; private finance will look to invest in areas of lower risk where there are supportive institutional frameworks.

For the Council there will be a need to invest in people, service re-designs, low carbon projects and change management. Investment plans are already place for some areas of work ( e.g.retrofitting of low carbon heating into buildings) and business cases will be developed and come forward to Committees as the action plan progresses.

### 4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

Reducing the Council's carbon emissions to net zero will require change to procurement specifications and practice to secure supply chain emissions reductions.

### 4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

Cambridgeshire is vulnerable to climate impacts and its costs. If nothing is done to reduce carbon emissions or increase nature. The strategy is looking to set the framework to manage climate risk better and reduce its impacts.

### 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no negative EDI implications within the strategy, however action on the climate crisis will deliver positive outcomes for all Cambridgeshire, especially those with existing protected characteristics. Individual actions within the action plan may have their own implications which will be assessed and mitigated as those projects

develop. For further information, please see the appended Equality Impact Assessment.

#### 4.4 Engagement and Communications Implications

As part of the development of the Strategy several workshops, webinars and presentations were held internally with Members and staff and externally with partners, business and communities. Development of a Communications and Engagement Plan is a key action to support the strategy.

#### 4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

No significant impact.

#### 4.6 Public Health Implications

The Strategy will bring forward carbon reductions more quickly benefitting nature and health through improved air quality, mental and physical health.

#### 4.7 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas:

All the environment and climate implications listed below are positive. Each of these priority areas remains a key area of focus within the new Strategy, with targets and actions set out to deliver significant positive outcomes for each. Internal to the Council, the Strategy strengthens the mechanisms available to officers to deliver positive outcomes for these areas through enhanced ownership and collaboration – internally and externally.

4.7.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.  
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive

4.7.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.  
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive

4.7.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats, and land management.  
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive

4.7.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.  
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive

4.7.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability, and management:  
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive

4.7.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.  
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive

4.7.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.  
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes or No  
Name of Financial Officer: Eleanor Todd

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Yes or No  
Name of Officer: Henry Swan

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes  
Name of Legal Officer: Fiona MacMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes  
Name of Officer: Elsa Evans

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications? Yes  
Name of Officer: Amanda Rose

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health? Yes or No  
Name of Officer: Iain Green

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer? Yes  
Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

## 5 Source documents guidance

### 5.1 Source documents

- [HM Government paper - Climate Change and Net Zero - Public Awareness and Perceptions](#)
- [Climate Change and Environment Strategy - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)
- [Fairness, nature and communities - addressing climate change in Cambridgeshire](#)
- [Environment Act 2021](#)
- Government's [Green Finance Strategy](#) (July 2019)