

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -17 APRIL 2018

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE TASK AND  
FINISH GROUP

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UPDATE REPORT OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- To update Members on the work undertaken so far by the Climate Change Task and Finish Group, following its review of Climate Change activity within East Herts and to propose potential key strategy areas.

<b><u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY: That:</u></b>	
<b>(A)</b>	<b>the Group meets further to complete its review of climate change activity within the district;</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>the Group prepares a draft Strategy for discussion at the September meeting of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee;</b>
<b>(C)</b>	<b>officers facilitate the establishment of a 'forum' that meets periodically to enable local environmental groups and other interested organisations to coordinate climate change activities and undertake joint working with the council;</b>
<b>(D)</b>	<b>officers ensure opportunities continue to be explored for carbon reduction and energy efficiency measures to be reflected within relevant policy areas such as planning policy; and,</b>
<b>(E)</b>	<b>officers develop a draft communication strategy to</b>

<b>effectively promote climate change resilience activities, energy efficiency and carbon reduction demonstrating the community leadership role of the authority.</b>
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## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 East Herts Council first adopted a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan in December 2009. This document has been subject to annual review by the former Environment Scrutiny Committee in order to monitor progress. The original plan concentrated on internal activities within the council's own estate, with the vast majority of actions having now been implemented. Given this Environment Scrutiny Committee agreed, at its meeting on 13 September 2016, terms of reference for the establishment of a Climate Change Task and Finish Group to consider climate change and its associated effects on East Herts. Members expressed the view that the work of the Group should not only focus on the council's own estate but also on wider policy areas over which East Herts has influence (**Essential Reference Paper "B" refers**). It was further confirmed that the Climate Change Group be established at a time in 2017 following the outcome of the Sustainable Transport Task and Finish Group, to permit the findings of that Group to inform the work of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group.
- 1.2 The first meeting of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group took place on 16 October 2017. In all six meetings have been held, together with a smaller sub group meeting, with each meeting considering specific themes in some depth. The Group considers that it still has further work to undertake and wishes to continue to meet over the next couple of months in order to complete its review and to prepare a draft strategy and action plan
- 1.3 The group established six questions that it wished to investigate. These may be summarised as follows:

- what potential initiatives, actions, planning and other policies can contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in East Herts, not only for the council but wider partner organisations and the community? (this question acted as a “golden thread” through all discussions)
- what renewable energy technologies are available to assist with carbon reduction?
- what initiatives are already taking place in the local community to reduce carbon emissions and how can the council support them?
- what specific measures can be implemented to assist the reduction of carbon emissions through energy use, from commercial and residential properties, including the fuel poor?
- what can the council do in terms of sustainable transport and modal shift to contribute to carbon emission targets?
- both for the council and the wider community, to what extent is funding available and what potential is there for income generation.

1.4 Membership of the Task and Finish Group is : Cllr Deering (Chairman); Cllr Freeman; Cllr Pope; Cllr Radford; Cllr Stevenson; and, Cllr Woodward.

## 2.0 Report

2.1 At its first meeting Members recognised that Climate Change remains a key issue at national and international level, with the UK government striving towards an agreed target in the Climate Change Act of an 80% cut in carbon emissions by 2050 (based on a 1990 baseline). This target is based on an appropriate UK contribution to global emission reductions consistent with limiting global temperature rise to around 2 degrees centigrade. To date, a reduction of 38% has been achieved, mainly through decarbonisation of the national grid. The Government has also set in law four carbon budgets,

covering the period to 2027, to assist with the delivery of the national target. Carbon reduction will become more challenging over time with the remaining balance to reach the national goal of 80% potentially difficult without radical changes to energy use and efficiency, particularly in the domestic and transport sectors.

- 2.2 The Group agreed that local authorities are seen as important players in contributing towards the national objective, both in terms of reducing their own energy use but also with regards to their role as local service providers and policy makers and the influence that their policy objectives relating to carbon reduction may have on sustainable transport and air quality, fuel poverty and economic development opportunities in their local areas. Greenhouse gas (carbon) emissions continue to be reported on an annual basis per district area, with East Herts area-wide emissions remaining above average.
- 2.3 Members welcomed the publication of the Government's Clean Growth Strategy, in October 2017. This document estimates that the low carbon economy could grow by 11% a year between 2015 and 2030, four times faster than the projected growth of the economy as a whole, making important links between economic development and carbon reduction.
- 2.4 The Strategy further outlined the important role local authorities have to play in climate change and carbon reduction as community leaders and also their ability to act as exemplars. The Task and Finish Group endorsed this aspect.
- 2.5 The Government is proposing a voluntary target on local authorities to achieve a 30% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020. The Group welcomed East Herts' achievement in achieving a 17% cut in emissions since 2009, based on actions within its own estate, with a target to achieve 25% by 2020/21. Positive action will need to continue in order to achieve the new target.

- 2.6 *Domestic property and fuel poverty*: One area that the Task and Finish Group particularly focussed upon was that of domestic property which accounts for around 14% of wider district emissions. The Group reviewed existing initiatives relating to affordable energy in the district and noted that whilst East Herts has average levels of households in fuel poverty, the rate of fuel poverty is almost twice as high in parts of the rural north of the district. This due to the nature of the housing stock and the fact that much of this area is not connected to mains gas.
- 2.7 It was noted that last November the council launched 'Hertfordshire Warmer Homes', in partnership with other districts across the county. This aims to direct and utilise Energy Company Obligation funding to provide a package of energy efficiency measures to vulnerable households. This builds on the existing capital grant scheme that the council operates which provides 50% funding towards loft and cavity wall insulation. The Group learned that the grant fund has in the past been poorly taken up due to free energy efficiency measures available nationally although these have now ceased.
- 2.8 The Group expressed the view that in order to be effective a fresh package of grants be established which could include greater assistance for loft and cavity wall grants; extension of the scheme to cover solid wall insulation and secondary glazing; consideration of a higher grant to homes with particularly poor energy performance ratings, for example 'E' or below and/or potentially taking a geographical focus towards homes in the rural north / off mains gas areas of the district. In particular it was considered that work with the private rented sector could be enhanced to help improve energy efficiency of these properties and to assist with the implementation of new government energy efficiency regulations from April 2018.
- 2.9 The Group looked at the available types of renewable energy technologies in some depth and how their use may be further encouraged (especially for off-gas properties), including the

option to extend local grant funding or creation of a loan option; local economic development opportunities/apprentice schemes as well as co-benefits for other environmental issues like biodiversity through the creation of a local wood fuel network.

- 2.10 Members agreed that consideration could be given to the creation of a “show home” or perhaps an energy efficiency exhibition in a vacant shop unit, or market stall, as a potential action to highlight the range of energy efficiency and renewable technologies/ grants available.
- 2.11 *Planning:* The Group met with Planning Policy officers to discuss opportunities to utilize the planning process to deliver carbon reduction and resilience to climate change through enhanced methods of design and construction, both domestic and commercial. Such measures could include further improvements to the requirements of electric vehicle charging provision in new developments; building design, orientation and physical fabric.
- 2.12 *Local Energy Mapping:* The group learnt of the role of East Herts in working with the Hertfordshire Local Economic Partnership (following funding from the Business Energy and Industrial Strategy Department) on a project to prepare a local energy constraints report and map for the Eastern region. The initiative is aimed at highlighting local area energy grid vulnerabilities and options, as additional demands are placed on the national grid in terms of moving to an increasingly low carbon future.
- 2.13 *Communication:* The Group recognised the importance of local community leadership with regard to climate change and carbon reduction, as highlighted within the Government’s Clean Growth Strategy. Members feel that consideration be given to the authority exploring options for further use of clean energy and potentially joining with those 70 other authorities who have pledged to shift to 100% low carbon energy by 2050. Further, the development of an effective communications strategy is key

and that social media, public meetings, and creation of a pop-up 'shop' all be utilised. The Group considers that the development of a low carbon 'vision' be considered and that Members may wish in the future to identify a climate change/carbon reduction councillor 'champion'.

- 2.14 The Group welcomed presentations from a range of local community environmental group operating in East Herts. The Task and Finish Group wishes to place on record the valuable role that such local groups have to play in developing actions against climate change. Indeed it was noted that some, such as Hertford Energy Now, had raised significant sums through crowd funding for carbon reduction/local energy generation projects. However, it was apparent that whilst the groups were generally operating on a range of similar projects there was little communication between them. There were also clear opportunities to be explored for joint working between the various groups and the council. To progress this and to build on the excellent work that is already taking place, the Group proposes that the council facilitates regular networking of the groups and East Herts, through the creation of a 'forum' that could meet periodically. In addition the Group considered that it may be beneficial to explore additional engagement with public facing external agencies such as the fire, police and social services in terms of climate change resilience planning.
- 2.15 *Investment Opportunities:* As mentioned above the Group considers that it has not yet fully completed its review of climate change. In particular it is of the view that there may be significant opportunities for the deployment of new low carbon energy technologies either directly by East Herts in terms of possible investment opportunities, such as battery storage, or through joint project working with the Hertfordshire Local Economic Partnership and local businesses. Such projects could include further electric vehicle schemes and the encouragement of domestic and small business sector energy efficiency initiatives.

2.16 *Climate Change Strategy Development – Next steps*: The Group proposes that once it finalises its review and prepares a draft strategy and action plan, that the document be presented to the September 2018 meeting of the Committee for further discussion. The Group currently considers that the draft strategy is likely to be based around five central priorities namely: Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction; Energy Affordability; Energy Generation; Clean Growth; and Community Development and Communication. Each priority area should also reflect both internal activity within the council's own estate and external activity (that over which the council does not necessarily have direct control but can exert influence or encourage and facilitate the action of others). The Group is also of the belief that in the case of council projects, all potential activities should be deliverable and meet the appropriate business case standards.

### 3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

#### Background Papers

Minutes of the meetings of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group: 16 October 2017; 24 October 2017; 17 November 2017; 14 December 2017; 9 January 2018; 26 January 2018.

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