

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 DECEMBER 2018

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

REPORT OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To update Members on the work undertaken by the Climate Change Task and Finish Group, following its review of Climate Change activity within East Herts:
- To seek committee support for the task group's recommendations set out below; and
- To set out the timeline for those recommendations being put before the Executive (ERP E).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY: That the Committee accepts the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, as follows:

A	That ongoing work of the Council to tackle climate change, as detailed in Essential Reference Paper 'C' , is recognised and the continuation of these activities be endorsed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
B	That the new ideas and proposals to tackle climate change detailed in Essential Reference Paper 'D' are worthy of more detailed consideration and that Overview and Scrutiny recommends that these ideas and proposals be forwarded to the appropriate Lead Members and Heads of Service for consideration when drawing up revised service plans and priorities; and
C	That because of the potential importance the climate change policy principles set out in Essential Reference Paper 'E' to

the health and wellbeing of East Herts residents, the Authority should consider adopting the matters as overarching policy principles and Members are invited to recommend to the Executive that they are adopted.
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1.0 Background

- 1.1 East Herts Council first adopted a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan in December 2009. The Strategy was 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 been implemented. Given this, the Environment Scrutiny Committee agreed that a Climate Change Task and Finish Group be established to consider climate change and its associated effects on East Herts, including wider policy areas over which the Council has a level of influence.
- 1.2 The Membership of the Task and Finish Group has been: Cllr Deering (Chairman); Cllr Pope; Cllr Radford; Cllr Stevenson; Cllr Woodward. The late Cllr Freeman attended early meetings of the Group. Its first meeting took place on 16 October 2017. In all nine meetings have been held, together with a smaller sub group meeting, with each meeting considering specific themes in some depth and, where appropriate, receiving expert advice from invited guests.
- 1.3 This is the final report of the group which builds on its interim report, considered by Overview and Scrutiny at its meeting on 17 April 2018, where it was agreed that the Task and Finish Group consider a number of additional factors including renewables, investment opportunities and public awareness.
- 1.4 **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** provides details of the previously agreed Terms of Reference for the Group. Meanwhile **Essential Reference Papers 'C', 'D' and 'E'** set out the findings and recommendations of the Group.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The Group 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. A UK reduction of 43% has been achieved (2017 UK data), whilst the national economy has grown by two thirds over the same period (Committee on Climate Change November, 2018). Much of this national reduction has been achieved through decarbonisation of the national grid. The Government also set in law four initial carbon budgets, covering the period to 2027, to assist with the delivery of the national target, with a fifth budget now taking the UK into the 2030s. The first two budgets have been achieved and the nation is on track to meet the third (2018-22). Greenhouse gas (carbon) emissions continue to be reported on an annual basis per district area, with East Herts area-wide emissions remaining above average.
- 2.2 The remaining two budgets are likely to be harder to achieve. It is clear that 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. Policy decisions and actions by local authorities will have significant implications in these areas and the Government fully recognises this, with the likelihood that it will expect local authorities to increase local action to assist with meeting national targets.
- 2.2 Policy objectives relating to carbon reduction are closely intertwined with sustainable transport, air quality, fuel poverty

and economic development opportunities. The Government's Clean Growth Strategy, published in October 2017, establishes some of these links and also the key role local authorities have to play in terms of policy direction/community leadership and acting as exemplars.

2.3 Carbon reduction activities shown in **Essential Reference Papers 'C' and 'D'** are set out under five key themes to aid clarity:

- *Carbon reduction*
- *Clean growth, carbon efficiency and energy generation;*
- *Community development and communication;*
- *Cleaner transport; and,*
- *Energy affordability and home energy efficiency.*

2.4 The Group is of the view that in the case of council projects, all recommended activities should be deliverable and meet the appropriate business case standards. When the recommended initiatives are developed in detail they will need to be assessed as such on a case by case basis.

2.5 For each theme, the task group has identified:

- Ongoing activities which have been considered and scrutinised by the Task and Finish Group: It is suggested that work already underway in these areas is recognised and the continuation of these activities is endorsed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee (**Essential Reference Paper 'C'** refers) .
- New ideas and proposals to tackle climate change that are worthy of more detailed consideration: The Task and Finish Group recommends to Overview and Scrutiny that these ideas and proposals are forwarded to the appropriate Lead Members and Heads of Service for consideration when drawing up revised service plans and priorities (**Essential Reference Paper 'D'** refers).

- Climate change policy principles that have been considered and debated by the Task and Finish Group: The Group has concluded that the potential importance of these matters to the health and wellbeing of East Herts residents is such that the authority should be considering adopting the matters as over-arching policy principles. The Task and Finish recommends that Overview and Scrutiny endorses the policy principles and recommends to the Executive that they are adopted by the authority (**Essential Reference Paper 'E'** refers). It is suggested that a report setting out these policy principles is presented to the February 2019 meeting of the Executive.

2.6 **Carbon Reduction** - The Group noted that the Government has proposed a voluntary target on local authorities to achieve a 30% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020/21. East Herts has achieved an 18.5% cut in emissions between 2009 and 2017, based on actions within its own estate, with an existing target to achieve 25% by 2020/21. However, given the Government target the Group suggests that it would be sensible to amend the Council's target and consider bringing it in line with the national local authority objective of a 30% cut. Positive action will need to continue in order to achieve this higher target.

2.7 **Clean growth, carbon efficiency and energy generation-** The Group looked at the available types of renewable energy technologies in depth from solar through to wood fuel and combined heat and power. There is clear opportunity for a measure of investment opportunity from renewables although this has reduced due to the reduction in feed-in tariff payments (and which will cease altogether at the end of March 2019). It is recommended that the Council is fully open to new technology and innovative opportunities. Currently there is much national interest in battery technology and the Group looked at this in some detail. Whilst this could be used as a potentially significant stand-alone investment opportunity it is

probably better deployed as part of other renewable technology and on-site energy demand shift management to make better use of cheaper night tariffs.

- 2.8 The Group met with Planning Policy officers and recognised the importance that Planning and Development control has in progressing energy efficiency and carbon reduction in new developments and suggests that every opportunity is taken to ensure that carbon reduction/energy efficiency measures within the remit of the authority. are as comprehensive and robust as can be achieved.
- 2.9 **Community development and communication** - The Government has emphasised the important role that local authorities have to play in community leadership in terms of carbon reduction and climate change action. In particular the Task and Finish Group recommends that local environmental awareness and the support of local community groups is harnessed to help in developing the low carbon message and providing advice on energy efficiency. The concept of community energy (such as that exemplified by Hertford Energy Now) is still a pertinent one and despite changes in the feed-in tariff there remains merit in supporting such community led approaches if and when they arise. It is noted that work is underway in developing a communication strategy in relation to energy efficiency and climate change and that this naturally links well with the promotional work already being undertaken on Clean Air locally.
- 2.10 **Cleaner transport** - This is a hugely expanding area of work and one that builds on the work of the Sustainable Transport Task and Finish Group in 2016. It has important links to energy use and air quality (of which the latter has been of growing public concern) along with the drive for lower carbon transport and the resultant move to electric vehicles and associated support infrastructure. It is suggested that the Council strives for the development of further EV charger points both directly within the council's control as well as on-street in key locations

(developing a strategy to achieve this) and incorporated in all new developments across the District. The work the Council has been undertaking with the Herts LEP and other authorities across the eastern region in establishing a regional energy strategy is of also of importance in this regard in helping to identify local areas of energy grid constraint.

- 2.11 **Energy affordability and home energy efficiency** - Domestic property accounts for around 14% of wider district emissions. The group recommends that future focus is especially on those homes within the district that are off mains gas (generally the more rural north of the district) and below Energy Performance rating C. Utilising the EPC rating of C brings the authority into line with national fuel poverty objectives, although from the point of view of extending a wider grant offer, it is probable this should be further focussed on EPC E homes and below. Whilst fuel poverty in East Herts is around average for Hertfordshire there are areas of significant underperformance in terms of energy efficiency which make sense to prioritise, especially as these are likely to be those same areas where fuel poverty could increase in the future as energy costs continue to rise. It is suggested that existing capital grants for loft and cavity wall are widened to provide greater assistance grants to cover solid wall insulation and secondary glazing in energy efficiency priority areas of the District. This could be achieved from within the existing capital budget as current loft and cavity wall grants are under-utilised by residents as funding for these measures has in the past often been available from elsewhere. An extension to the grant offer would also better complement those services offered through Hertfordshire Warmer Homes.

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.

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