

**Public  
Key Decision - Yes**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title:** Climate Strategy

**Meeting/Date:** Cabinet – 24 January 2023  
Council – 22 February 2023

**Executive Portfolio:** Executive Councillor Climate & Environment  
– Councillor Lara Davenport-Ray

**Report by:** Assistant Director Strategic Insight & Delivery  
– Neil Sloper

**Ward(s) affected:** ALL

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### **Executive Summary:**

This report presents the formal recognition of a Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency in Huntingdonshire and the adoption of a Climate Strategy that sets out the priorities to achieve the commitment of a net zero carbon Council by 2040.

Tackling climate change and caring for the environment is a key strategic objective of the Council which is committed to **proactively tackling the climate crisis and ecological emergency**. The Council agreed a Cost of Living and Climate Change motion on 12 October 2022, recognising that the current cost of living and climate crises require joint attention to support the wellbeing of residents and businesses.

Informed by the evidence and consultation presented, the strategy identifies the priority actions for the Council to **be a positive example** through its own actions by reducing the consumption of energy and fossil fuels, replacing what we use with alternatives that reduce carbon emissions:

- Make improvements to Council buildings to improve their energy efficiency and by 2040 stop using gas for heating.
- Look for opportunities to install renewable energy generation and consider renewable energy supply and resilience.
- Establish a plan that reduces Council vehicle emissions to zero by 2040.

The Council will **be a positive example** responding to the ecological emergency by delivering increased biodiversity across its own and managed land:

- Management of amenity grass for the benefit of nature and carbon capture
- Developing and implementing plans across parks and open spaces (in addition to Countryside Sites), with our communities, to increase the tree canopy and biodiversity. This will include supporting others to do the same.

The Council will be **an enabler**, supporting action within our communities and across our partners to deliver climate action across Huntingdonshire by:

- Supporting development of sustainable communities through our Local Plan review to provide lower carbon places for people to live and work
- Supporting schemes that help communities and businesses reduce their emissions and use renewable energy
- Seeking funding and working with partners to enhance the infrastructure for sustainable and low carbon travel
- Improving information, knowledge and advice to achieve >60% diversion of waste from landfill and improve the quality of the recycling material

The Council will also act as **an encourager**, promoting actions amongst communities and businesses that will reduce carbon emissions across Huntingdonshire:

- Use Sustainable Business Awards to recognise and promote great practice.
- Sharing guidance and advice to residents and businesses to improve energy efficiency, insulation, switch to low carbon heating and renewables
- Promote the health benefits of active travel and alternative travel choices for the environment and climate
- Support and celebrate re-use and recycling schemes

The Strategy sets out the way in which the Council will monitor and regularly review actions, recognising that new technology and approaches will develop through the lifetime of the strategy. Establishing an annual Climate Conversation will:

- ensure our partners, businesses and communities to share and learn best practice
- allow the Council to show what it has achieved, the progress towards the Council's net carbon zero target
- check our priorities and actions, ensuring they reflect changes in technology, the environment and amongst our communities.

The outcomes will be reported including an update of the Council's Climate Action Plan.

### **Recommendations:**

Cabinet is to

### **RECOMMEND to Council**

the approval of:

- A) The formal recognition of a Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency
- B) The adoption of the Council's Climate Strategy in response to the Climate Emergency
- C) The adoption of the initial Climate Action Plan proposed, endorsing its annual refresh in association with our communities, businesses and partners through the Climate Conversation.

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Formal recognition of a Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency and the Council's response.
- 1.2 To present the evidence and consultation that has informed the Council's Climate Strategy.
- 1.3 To present the Climate Strategy for adoption so that the Council is:
  - **a positive example** through its actions to be a net carbon zero Council by 2040.
  - an **enabler** supporting action within our communities and across our partners
  - an **encourager** to those that live, work and visit Huntingdonshire to take climate action and reduce carbon emissions.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council has considered the importance of the environment in its past activities:
  - The **Huntingdonshire Local Plan 2036** (HLP2036) - sets out 8 key policies which better shape our future environment for the benefit of nature and the reduction of carbon emissions.
  - Waste minimisation strategy and action plan in 2020 – targeting over 60% recycling rates
  - Tree strategy and action plan 2020 - managing 9000 individual trees, tree groups, shelterbelts, and woodland – a 400Ha tree canopy
  - Enhancing nature and environment introducing pictorial meadows and site management plans in award winning parks - 1,534 hectares of green space, 42.8 hectares of woodlands.
  - Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> from energy consumption in buildings – 790 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>
  - Proactively managing fuel efficiency – saving 17,000 litres of fuel and 44 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>
  - Enhancing our electric vehicle charging offer within car parks to 13 chargers that enabled 100,000 miles of emission-free travel.
- 2.2 The Council adopted a set of environmental principles in October 2021 that established the Council's net zero carbon target of 2040 for its own operations and:
  - To encourage carbon emission reduction across the district
  - To protect, enhance and restore existing nature areas (green space) and create new ones (where it is viable to do so).
  - To pursue the ambitions of 'A green Future: Our 25 year Plan to Improve the Environment' and that new development should be designed with a view to minimising and mitigating the effects of Climate Change.
  - Ensuring existing and new communities see real benefits in their well-being from living in Huntingdonshire.
  - Using natural resources wisely.

- 2.3 The Council's Joint Administration set out its objectives in May 2022 to work towards a greener and fairer Huntingdonshire. This set out 5 key objectives of focus including **tackling climate change and caring for the environment**, recognising the need to declare a Climate Emergency and set out a clearly prioritised Climate Strategy.
- 2.4 The Council passed a Cost of Living and Climate Change motion on Wednesday 12 October 2022. This recognised the importance and positive impact of action for the benefit of climate and the environment in tackling the rising costs of living by reducing consumption of natural resources, shifting to renewables and reducing carbon emissions.

### 3. CLIMATE STRATEGY

#### 3.1 Policy Context

The UK Government amended the Climate Change Act 2018 in 2019 by introducing a target of at least a 100% reduction in the net UK carbon account (i.e., reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, compared to 1990 levels) by 2050. This is otherwise known as the national 'net zero' target.

The Government's 25 year Plan to Improve the Environment – A Green Future published in 2018 sets out long term targets and approach to protecting and enhancing natural landscapes and habitats in England for the generation – its goals are:

- cleaner air and water
- plants and animals which are thriving
- a cleaner, greener country for us all.

The Environment Bill completed its passage through Parliament in November 2021 where it was confirmed that requirements would be set for biodiversity net gain for new nationally significant infrastructure projects in England.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF - 2021) included a number of amendments and updates relating to climate change mitigation for new development including reference to UK signing up to “17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.”

#### 3.2 Huntingdon Futures

Huntingdonshire Futures is a new Place Strategy that is a shared vision for the future of Huntingdonshire for the next 30 years - considering its unique features, location, planned future growth, infrastructure requirements and technological advancements.

At the heart of Huntingdonshire Futures is understanding what is most important to residents, communities and stakeholders within our key towns and rural areas across Huntingdonshire. The specific insight

relating to the Environment (Appendix 3), one of the four themes, has been used to inform the Climate Strategy and Climate Action Plan to ensure it delivers on the Environmental vision for Huntingdonshire. These have been combined with the results of specific consultation regarding our Climate Strategy derived from Huntingdonshire's Climate Conversation.

### 3.3 Climate Conversation

A Climate Conversation consisting of a series of engagements with residents and communities between February 2022 and October 2022 was undertaken to establish the priorities of the Climate Strategy:

Resident Survey	Establishing Climate Priorities	February to March 2022
Parish Forum	Test and Refine Climate Themes	July 2022
Councillor Workshops	Test and Refine Climate Themes	August 2022
Student Research	Engagement with younger adults	September 2022
Stakeholder Engagement	Confirmation of final themes/priorities	September to October 2022

The Climate Conversation indicated a strong support from residents for the Council acting on climate change. Residents thought it is most important that the Council support them to reduce their emissions, but there is also strong support for the Council prioritising reduction of its own Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. The Conversation identified six key themes (Section 4.6) for the Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

### 3.5 Additional Research

The Council has commissioned two sets of research through Cambridgeshire County Council's academic partnership with Cambridge University, to support the development of the strategy (Appendix 4).

#### Climate Change Challenge Consultation – September 2022

To understand how young people in the district can be encouraged to take climate-positive actions and be part of a wider ambition for the district to be carbon neutral. Work has been undertaken, to understand how young people can be engaged with climate issues at a District wide level.

#### Climate Change Challenge Consultation – November 2022

Using their researching and scoping skills to help us to discover what may be the best practices to help with the implementation of the climate strategy and tackling carbon emissions as a community.

This work is an initial phase to develop a toolkit of actions to test with our communities to enable and encourage them to contribute to achieving a net carbon zero Huntingdonshire by 2040. The second phase will begin early in 2023.

## 4. CLIMATE STRATEGY

### 4.1 Vision and Objectives

The objective of a net carbon zero Council by 2040 was adopted by the Council in October 2021. The Council's Vision and objectives to achieve this was set out within the Joint Administration's Agreement.

Climate Vision:

***We will be a Council that proactively tackles the climate crisis and ecological emergency. Working closely with partners, we will become a carbon net zero Council by 2040. Through leading by example, we will encourage and enable people across our district to take action.***

Climate Objectives:

We will achieve our vision to respond to the climate crisis and ecological emergency by:

- Achieving net zero carbon for the Council's own operations by 2040
- Designing Council policies that enable reduction of emissions and provide positive examples for businesses and residents
- Demonstrating that we consider environmental impact in all policymaking and our stewardship of council assets and resources
- Influencing our updated Local Plan to reflect the priorities outlined in our Climate Strategy
- Maximising the opportunities to work with others collaboratively to address environmental issues

The Climate Strategy (Appendix 1) and Climate Strategy on a Page (Appendix 2) articulate the approach and priorities that the Council will adopt to deliver its vision and objectives. These will be delivered through a Climate Action Plan (Appendix 5).

### 4.2 A Net Carbon Zero Council

The Council will **be a positive example** through its approach to making decisions with due regard to environmental impact and how it continues to improve its operations to achieve the net carbon zero target.

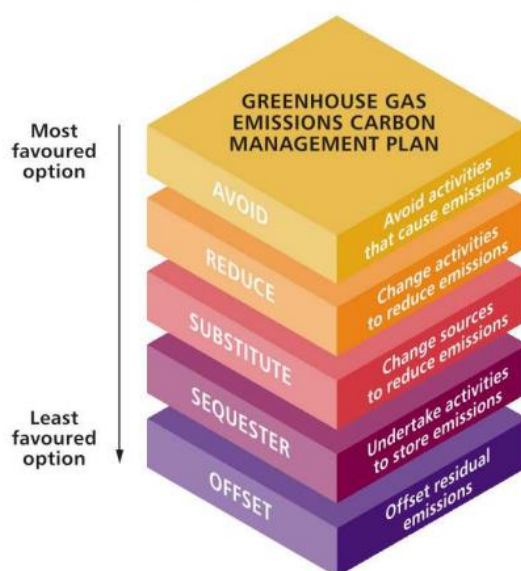
The Council has worked with Local Partnerships, a joint venture between HM Treasury, the Local Government Association and Welsh Government. Local Partnerships developed a tool to calculate local authority carbon emissions, and this has been used to identify the key sources of carbon emission, set out the pathway we need to follow to achieve our net zero carbon target and establish a mechanism to continue to monitor our emissions.

Council owned vehicles generate the largest proportion of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (36.7%), then heating (34.8%) and then electricity (25%).

The carbon emissions of the Council set clear strategic priorities:

- **Fuel**, the amount used in our operations to deliver Council Services given the rural nature of our district.
- **Energy**, the amount of electricity and use of gas to deliver our services, particularly buildings including Leisure Centres.
- **Procurement**, to achieve net carbon zero for any services we buy.

The Council's Strategy will follow a hierarchy of action as set out below:



The Council will follow a hierarchy of action, prioritising reduction in emissions through changing activity and demand for energy and fossil fuels, then replacing fossil fuels. Recognising the importance of carbon sequestration and the high value placed on our natural and biodiverse environment, the Council will increase the natural capture of carbon through changed land management regimes and tree canopy enlargement. The Council will only consider carbon offset as a very last resort as this does not address the need to reduce and adapt consumption that the Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency require.

Additional actions are underway across all services and are reflected in the full action plan (Appendix 5), where every service has a recognised action that supports our net carbon zero target. This responds to the view of our communities that there is also strong support for the Council prioritising reduction of its Green House Gas (GHG) emissions.

#### 4.3 Pathway to Net Zero Carbon for Huntingdonshire District Council

A pathway to achieve a net carbon zero Council has been set out. This considers the changes in technology and the supply of renewable energy.

Whilst the Council would like to move its fleet to renewable fuel, the technology, practicalities of service provision in Huntingdonshire and costs of this mean that this must be planned as the market and technology develops. For example: an electric refuse freighter would be unable to

perform the service that a fossil fuelled vehicle does in rural Huntingdonshire today. Actions have therefore concentrated on fuel efficiency, lower carbon impact fuels and starting to develop a plan for phasing to non-fossil fuel.

The Pathway to Carbon Net Zero by 2040 (Appendix 1) shows the anticipated timing and impact of the changes we plan to make. Progress will be tracked annually and adjusted to take account of the cost and availability of technology. If opportunities arise to achieve this sooner, within the financial considerations of operating the Council's services, they will be taken.

**FUEL** Work is underway to identify the steps and business case for de-carbonising the Council's fleet which will set out the options and current business case for investment in alternative fuels and reducing 'tailpipe emissions'.

**ENERGY** The Council has recently concluded a de-carbonisation programme of our main office and sports centres. The latest work will reduce carbon emissions by a further 440 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every year. The options to extend the use of renewable electricity are now being developed with plans for the elimination of gas for heating to follow.

**PROCUREMENT** Sustainability in procurement is already identified as a key action for the Council. This will be developed further to ensure the carbon impact of contracted services is fully reflected in any purchasing decisions.

#### 4.4 Huntingdonshire – An Ambition for District-Wide Climate Action

Whilst the Council's own emissions are a very small – less than 2% of the Carbon Emissions for Huntingdonshire as a place, the Council has a key role as an **enabler** to support action within our communities and across our partners and an **encourager** to ensure the efforts of those that live, work and visit our district help reduce Huntingdonshire's carbon emissions.

The strategic priorities for **enabling** and **encouraging** positive action are:

- **REVIEW AND RENEW THE LOCAL PLAN** - supporting the response to the climate crisis and ecological emergency
- **MORE BIODIVERSITY** – implementing environmentally positive land management to increase the natural capture of carbon through changed land management regimes and tree canopy enlargement that also increases biodiversity in response to the ecological emergency.
- **SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT** - work with partners to identify and encourage solutions that reduce 'tailpipe' emissions.

These are evidenced by the sources of carbon emissions for Huntingdonshire (Appendix 1) as calculated by the department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Transport represents the most significant source of controllable emissions (34%), followed by Land Use Changes (21%) and Domestic Energy (13%).



Our consultation identified community priorities of:

- Supporting residents with advice about insulation
- Tree planting/restoring nature
- Advice about recycling/waste reduction
- Encouraging sustainable development through planning

#### 4.5 Climate Adaptation

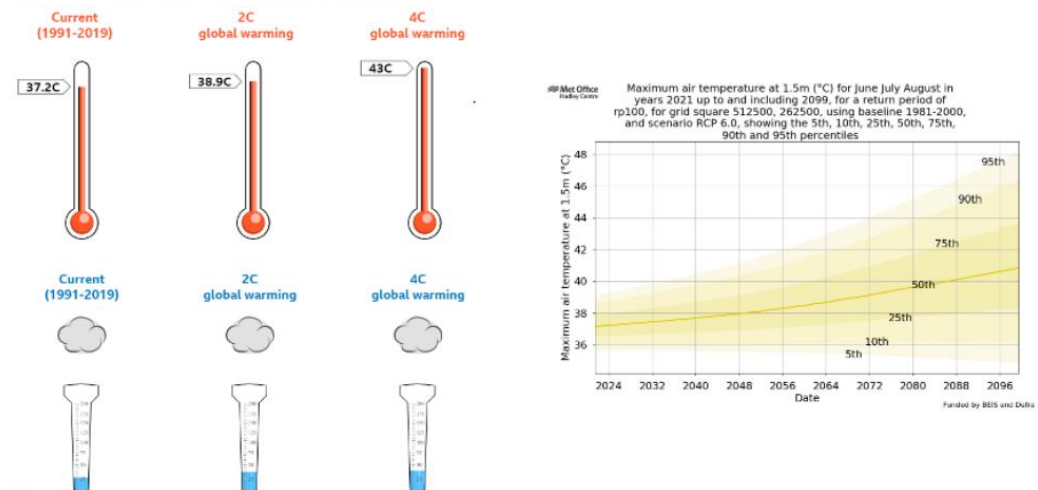
The Council will set a positive example by reducing its carbon emissions whilst **enabling** positive actions and **encouraging** positive choices to support climate action across Huntingdonshire.

There are however, approximately 60 identified risks for the UK (Independent Assessment of Climate Risk CCRA3) which local authorities in their role as place shapers and providers of key services and infrastructure have a role in, that result from the changing climate. For example, the response to extreme weather events and how they affect our service delivery.

The Met Office has identified the regional impacts of the global rise in temperatures – warmer wetter winters, hotter drier summers. The predicted impact that Huntingdonshire’s hottest Summer day could be 38.9°C has already been reached when residents experienced a temperature of 39°C in July 2022.

### What will the climate be like in Huntingdonshire in the future?

#### UKCP18 outputs for Huntingdonshire



The Council has developed a climate adaptation risk register (Appendix 6) with mitigating actions to ensure continued adaptation to the changing climate. This will be included within the Council’s service planning process and refreshed in line with our action plan.

## 4.6 Climate Themes

Combining the main sources of carbon emission for the Council, our district and the priorities identified by our communities led to the identification of six themes within the Council's Climate Strategy (Appendix 1)

- Created Environment

*78% of residents said the Council should change the rules so new developments meet sustainability standards*

The buildings and infrastructure around us shape how we live, our health and our wellbeing. They are also a significant source of emissions. For the Council, 60% of our emissions come from heating and using electricity in our buildings.

- Energy Consumption & Renewables

*73% of residents said the Council should develop renewable energy*

Energy is one of the most significant contributors to our emissions. Factors outside of our control, such as recent energy prices rises and the war in Ukraine, highlight the need for us to increase the resilience of our local energy supply, and reduce our consumption.

- Natural Environment

*83% of residents said the Council should restore nature and plant trees*

Nature benefits health, as well as being a haven of biodiversity, and important natural processes. Huntingdonshire has a wealth of green spaces and natural assets, rich in biodiversity providing a home for many native species and a link to the natural environment for our residents.

- Travel & Transport

*Residents feel they are unable to take some of the actions, most commonly reducing their travel by car. 46% of residents said that the Council should switch to electric vehicles.*

We need to consider how we travel and how the food we eat and the products we buy reach us. We will work with our partners, the highway and transport authorities to support more environmentally sustainable choices through the infrastructure they provide.

- Waste, Recycling & Resource Management

*80% of residents said the Council should improve recycling rates.*

We generate waste as a by-product of almost all activities. Resource management describes how we can work together to consume less,

reduce waste and recycle the valuable resources we have more. Huntingdonshire residents already recycle more than 50% of their waste, but the recycling rate has plateaued.

- Community

*The activity identified by residents as most important for HDC was to support them to reduce their emissions. The action which residents most want to receive advice is about recycling / waste reduction and home insulation.*

The many communities of Huntingdonshire have a significant role in responding to climate change. The Council must work with our communities to build resilience to future extreme weather events, support community initiatives to benefit the climate and ecology whilst enabling more positive impact to achieve net carbon zero

The key actions of the Climate Strategy have been listed under these themes. The role of the Council is also identified (**to be a positive example** by its own actions, an **enabler** to support action within our communities and across our partners and an **encourager** to make the case for positive change).

## 5. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 5.1 The Panel discussed the Climate Strategy at its meeting on 5th January 2023. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) Panel were also invited to attend the meeting and to address the meeting on this Strategy given its anticipated impact across the Council.
- 5.2 Councillor Shaw enquired how the Climate Co-ordinator role would be funded and the Panel heard that this was a planned expense for a fixed term role with bidding for a permanent role anticipated and would therefore not draw on the reserves mentioned within the report. Following a further question by Councillor Gleadow, the Panel heard that the role would include monitoring and reporting responsibilities but that any financial decisions would still be made in line with usual Council procedures. The role is seen as a vital part of the Council's journey to net zero carbon, co-ordinating work across service areas as required.
- 5.3 Following a question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel heard that the Climate Strategy had a dual role in both allowing the Council to implement specific changes and also influence others. The Panel also heard that, once approved, the priorities of the Climate Strategy would be incorporated into all Council activities to ensure that any impact on the climate is considered, the development of a new Local Plan for Huntingdonshire was given as an example of where the Council's voice could be used to influence decisions and the impact of others.
- 5.4 In response to a question from Councillor Wells, the Panel heard that the Council had joined a fixed term energy tariff in Autumn 2022 which used 50% renewable energy, it was felt that this was the right decision at the

time. The Panel further heard that the creation of an Energy Strategy would enable the Council to continue to make appropriate decisions about energy use and procurement in line with its priorities.

- 5.5 Councillor Cawley enquired whether there was any plan to offset carbon emissions prior to 2040 and the Panel were directed to the Hierarchy of Action diagram on page 9 of Appendix 1. It was advised that as 2040 approaches the Council may need to consider offset options once all other options had been exhausted.
- 5.6 Councillor Alban enquired why carbon offset was being seen as a last resort rather than looked at immediately for a quick win. The Panel were advised that the Council's most important role was to set an example to the wider community and that only by wisely using funds to address the source of the issue can a long term sustainable outcome could be achieved.
- 5.7 Councillor Cawley further observed that the planned £100,000 reserve was not a large sum of money considering the aspirations of the Strategy and enquired if there were plans to review the amount. The Panel were advised that in line with the Council's usual financial processes, reserves were able to be carried forward and the Medium Term Financial Strategy would also provide an annual opportunity for review. It was further stressed that the reserve funds were to enable opportunities rather than implement them.
- 5.8 Following praise for the joint responsibility and ownership being taken by Officers and Executive Councillors, Councillor Cawley enquired whether or not there was a Plan B. The Panel were advised that a pathway of change was being established. The opportunities for how money is spent would inevitably change alongside the solutions available, but business cases would continue to be reviewed annually in order to help maximise opportunities. The Panel were further appraised that regular progress monitoring would ensure that the right technology be employed at the right price.
- 5.9 Both Councillors Hunt and Alban enquired where the quoted residential statistics in Appendix 1 came from. The Panel were advised that the figures were taken from the responses received to a survey of residents and businesses conducted in February 2021 and that the Strategy would be updated to reflect this. It was noted that whilst the response in 2021 had been reasonable, further support from Councillors for future surveys would be appreciated to drive engagement.
- 5.10 In response to an enquiry from Councillor McAdam, the Panel were advised that whilst there had already been an encouraging amount of engagement from Town and Parish Councils, this would continue to be developed to ensure best practice be shared as well as including stakeholders within the annual Climate Conversation. The Panel were further advised that the Council had worked alongside CAPALC to engage with local Town and Parish Councils to ensure involvement from the outset.

- 5.11 Following a question from Councillor Alban on fleet management and replacement, the Panel were advised that the Operations team had strong skills in maintaining the current fleet through good maintenance and recycling parts from decommissioned vehicles into the current fleet.
- 5.12 In response to a further question from Councillor Kerr on the potential move to electrical vehicles in the future, the Panel heard that research is underway to monitor electrical fleet within neighbouring districts and thereby establish best practice for the Council. In addition, it was observed that reducing the amount of waste to be collected across the district would reduce the fuel and potentially fleet required to collect waste. It was clarified, following a question from Councillor Criswell, that no reduction of fleet or collections is planned or would be implemented until there was sufficient reduction in the volume of waste to be collected.
- 5.13 The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Criswell, that circular recycling is already in use by the Council and that residents benefit from sustainable solutions. The Council developed that relationship as part of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership of collection and disposal authorities (RECAP). The Panel were further advised that the Council would be asking the disposal authorities in RECAP to plan for future waste generated by new technologies such as lithium batteries from electrical vehicles.
- 5.14 Councillor Gleadow highlighted the three Council Key Priorities outlined in Appendix 1 and asked what Priority 3 *Procure Wisely* would look like. The Panel were advised that an action in the climate action plan is to update the Council's Procurement Rules so that consideration could be given to environmental impact alongside other priorities during the procurement process. The Panel were assured that this adjustment to the Procurement Process was already being developed to allow for implementation as swiftly as possible.
- 5.15 Councillor Alban further queried whether ethical considerations were also considered as part of the procurement process and the Panel were advised that the procurement process allowed Officers to make an informed decision. Where technical questions were unanswered, technical advice could be sought to ensure that the right advice was given at the right time.
- 5.16 Following a question from Councillor Lowe on the inclusion of solar panels in new developments, the Panel heard that the development of a new Local Plan was imminent, and that best practice from other authorities would be considered for inclusion within the new Local Plan.
- 5.17 Councillor Criswell requested that regular monitoring of progress and reporting be brought to the Panel. It was noted that carbon calculations could only be done annually. The Panel were assured that the team would continue to engage with the Climate Working Group and that all further Strategies would be brought through the Democratic Process once ready.

It was further noted that regular feedback would also be given on the Action Plan following its implementation.

- 5.18 Following an enquiry from Councillor Gardener, the Panel were advised that climate and environmental goals would be considered in all Council reports going forward. The way this is presented will continue to evolve to enable Councillors to make informed decisions.
- 5.19 Councillor Bywater highlighted the importance of education and enquired regarding planned engagement with the younger generation, as well as engagement with local businesses. The Panel were advised that a Communications Plan was being developed to ensure engagement with communities. In particular, it was noted that the Economic Development Team were working with local businesses on how to be greener and providing details of available grants and funding.
- 5.20 Councillor Hunt echoed the need to engage with the younger generation and the Panel were advised that although links were already established with Anglia Ruskin University, the Climate Co-ordinator role would also assist in maximising communication with this demographic, with Youth Councils specifically being targeted for engagement.
- 5.21 It was observed by Councillor Alban that tree planting which had been implemented along the A14 had failed in places, the Panel were assured that the Executive Councillor would pass this along to the relevant agencies to action replanting to assist in carbon absorption.
- 5.22 Councillor Alban observed that following comments from the Panel, it would be good to establish yardsticks against which progress and timescales could be measured and requested that the Panel have sight of this to aid future scrutiny and structure. Whilst the Panel were advised that some yardsticks were already included within the report, Councillor Alban observed that this would not be an exhaustive list, he therefore proposed that an additional recommendation be added to encompass this.
- 5.23 In response to a question from Councillor Gardener about information and funding for Parish Councils looking to install Electric Vehicle charging points, the Panel were advised that the team were happy to share any knowledge on the subject and it was further advised that an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy was in development which would further educate and support on the subject. It was also observed that the annual Climate Conversation needed to include updated funding opportunities as it was recognised that these opportunities could be sporadic.
- 5.24 The report was highly praised by the Panel who thanked Officers and Local Partnerships for their diligence and hard work in the production of the Strategy.

5.25 The Panel request that the Cabinet consider adding the following recommendation to their report;

d) to establish a set of measures against which progress and timescales can be monitored through regular reporting to Overview and Scrutiny.

5.26 With the addition of this recommendation, the Panel were happy to encourage Cabinet to endorse the remaining recommendations within the report.

## **6. RISKS**

6.1 The Climate Strategy includes the creation of a Climate Adaptation Risk Register using the Local Government Association's Climate Adaptation Tool Kit (Appendix 6) which will set out the key risks and mitigations to the Council's services and district associated with climate change. This register will be produced and then reviewed alongside the Climate Action Plan.

6.2 The most significant risks are associated with the changing climate requiring adaptation to warmer and wetter conditions – the impact on nature, our businesses and communities.

6.2 The Council's specific project – Biodiversity for All – responds to the significant impact on nature of the changing climate by calculating biodiversity and then working through options to enhance it through changes which are supported by our communities. The project includes our own land and supporting others to do the same.

6.3 Changing the way in which amenity grass is managed is a significant action responding to the ecological emergency; increasing biodiversity, capturing more carbon from the environment and improving the ability of amenity land to respond the shift to a wetter climate.

6.4 The Council has been working closely with the Local Lead Flood Authority, Cambridgeshire County Council, to respond to issues which have made the impacts of localised intense rainfall more acute. This is supported by Community Flood Groups and we will continue to support community groups with help and advice to protect their homes from the increased risk to flooding.

6.5 The Council has consistently identified and responded to Environmental Sustainability as an Annual Governance Risk termed Environmental Pressures and Sustainability Challenges – specifically based on the long-term sustainability and attraction of our area. This is detailed in Appendix 7 – Annual Governance Statement Environmental Risk. This corporate risk has informed the work of the Council's services to ensure a sustainable and affordable approach to climate change was in place.

6.6 The risk of not achieving the Council's target of a net carbon zero Council by 2040 is addressed through the Climate Strategy priorities and actions.

The Climate Action Plan lists the actions recorded in service plans across the Council that support the achievement of the Council's strategic objective of **tackling climate change and caring for the environment**.

- 6.7 Given the changing nature of the climate crisis and ecological emergency, the Climate Action Plan and its priorities will be reviewed annually with our community within an annual Climate Conversation Event. Given the rapid development of technology, this is essential so that the right investment is made at the right time. This will ensure effort and impact remains focussed on the right priorities.

## 7. MONITORING PROGRESS

- 7.1 Our climate and environment are changing quickly. The solutions available to address carbon emissions are also changing at pace. Given this, an annual Climate Conversation is proposed which will:

- **Enable and encourage** our communities and partners to share their activity and success, to learn and support each other.
- **Enable and encourage** our communities to reflect on the priorities and actions to achieve a net zero carbon council by 2040.
- **Be a positive example** by sharing progress and achievements and revise the climate action plan as required.

- 7.2 An annual report will capture the outcomes of the Climate Conversation alongside the formal reporting of the Council's achievement against its action plan, including progress against the net carbon zero target for 2040.

## 8. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 The Corporate Plan 2022/23 sets out the Council's objectives:

- Tackling climate change and caring for the environment
- Enhancing employment opportunities and supporting businesses
- Supporting the needs of residents
- Improving the housing situation
- Strengthening our communities

Specifically, the objective to **tackle climate change and care for the environment** sets out that the District Council will proactively tackle the climate crisis and ecological emergency. We will act upon this by:

- declaring a climate emergency to help focus minds and urgently implementing a Climate Action Plan.
- designing council policies that enable cutting of emissions and provide positive examples for businesses and residents
- considering environmental impact in all policy-making and our stewardship of council assets and resources
- ensuring our updated Local Plan reflects the priorities outlined in our Climate Action Plan



## **9. CONSULTATION**

As set out in section 3 of this report.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no direct legal implications from this report.

## **11. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The delivery of the Climate Action Plan is supported by a new role of Climate Coordinator. This role will lead on the Climate Conversation, report service progress against the Climate Action Plan and refresh it annually.

11.2 A climate reserve of £100,000 is proposed to support Council services to accelerate the development and delivery of priority climate actions. Services will be able to use this reserve to develop the businesses cases for projects that deliver progress to net carbon zero, providing access to specialist services where needed ensuring the right investment at the right time.

11.3 At a time when all services are under inflationary pressures and some face growing demand to support residents and businesses, investments to deliver a net zero carbon Council and the aspiration of a net carbon zero Huntingdonshire will require business cases to ensure sustainable progress. Feasibility studies will be needed to ensure the right measures are taken at the right time whilst ensuring that the Council is still able to deliver efficient and effective services with a balanced budget. For example: whilst the Council would like to utilise fully electric refuse collection vehicles, they are currently unable to fulfil the role of the Council's existing vehicles. The annual refresh of the action plan will ensure consistent review and budget provision at the right time.

11.4 The Council is working collaboratively with other partners to secure external funding opportunities to support the delivery of a net carbon zero Council and our aspirations for Huntingdonshire. Recent successes include:

- Lottery Funding – Together Our Planet
- UK Shared Prosperity – Active Travel Feasibility Projects
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority Funding – Biodiversity for All and Electric Vehicle Charge Points
- Government Funding - Sustainable Warmth Scheme
- RetroFit Funding – Building De-Carbonisation

## **12. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 The positive impacts of a cleaner and greener place are well known. The Council's Healthy Open Spaces Strategy and action plan (2022) identified:

- 90% of our community believe parks, play areas and open spaces improve their mental health and well-being
- 78% actively visit them for this purpose
- 64% of our community say parks and open spaces are essential to their quality of life.

A Climate Strategy for Huntingdonshire will continue to support the Council's commitment to encourage a healthy and active community.

### 13. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 As set out in the report.

### 14. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

14.1 none

### 15. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

15.1 The adoption of the Climate Strategy and Action Plan is a response to the formal declaration of a climate crisis and ecological emergency.

15.2 The Strategy and Action plan set out how the Council will:

- **Be a positive example** through its own actions, becoming a net carbon zero Council by 2040.
- **Enable and encourage** climate action across Huntingdonshire, through its policies and activities with partners and communities.

### 16. LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Climate Strategy
2. Climate Strategy on a Page
3. Huntingdonshire Futures – Climate Opportunities
4. Cambridge University Research Proposals
5. Climate Action Plan
6. Climate Action Adaptation Toolkit
7. Annual Governance Statement of Environmental Risk

### 17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

*Environmental Principles – Cabinet Oct 2021*

<https://applications.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s117526/4.%20Environment%20Principles%20Report.pdf>

*OxCam Environmental Principles*

[Issue details - OxCam Environmental Principles\\*\\*\\* - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](#)

Huntingdonshire District Council - Healthy Open Spaces Strategy

<https://applications.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s111005/Appendix%20%20-%20HDC%20Healthy%20Open%20Spaces%20Strategy%20and%2010%20Year%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

CPCA Independent Climate Commission Report 2021  
[https://f.hubspotusercontent40.net/hubfs/6985942/CLIMATE%20COMMISSION%20REPORT\\_Final.pdf](https://f.hubspotusercontent40.net/hubfs/6985942/CLIMATE%20COMMISSION%20REPORT_Final.pdf)

Oxfordshire-Cambridgeshire Arc Spatial Framework  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-spatial-framework/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-an-introduction-to-the-spatial-framework>

Environment Bill 2020-21 and 2021-22  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-bill-2020>

25 year Environment Plan for England  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019  
[https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111187654/pdfs/ukdsi\\_9780111187654\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111187654/pdfs/ukdsi_9780111187654_en.pdf)

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