

Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 26th January 2021

Agenda item: Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan

Wards: All

Subject:

Lead officer: Director of Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

Lead member: Cabinet member for Regeneration, Housing and Climate Change, Martin Whelton

Forward Plan reference number: None

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Recommendations:

- A. That the HWBB note and comment Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan and the Climate Change Delivery Plan - Year 1.
 - B. That the HWBB support delivery of the climate objectives through their partner organisations.
 - C. That, if resources allow, 5 short term and 2 medium term actions are taken forward in 2021, which go beyond the *Climate Change Delivery Plan - Year 1* and take forward both the health and climate agendas.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report sets out the main areas of common ground between *Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan* and *Merton's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2021*. It recommends taking forward further actions in 2021 that go beyond the current plan and further both the health and climate agendas.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. In November 2020 Council adopted *Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan* [1], which sets a strategic approach and high level actions to meet Merton's net-zero targets of 2050 for the borough and 2030 for the Council.
- 2.2. Cabinet have recently adopted the *Climate Delivery Plan – Year 1* [2], which sets out how Merton Council will work towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change, within the borough and within the Council's buildings and services in 2021.
- 2.3. Both the overarching strategy and the delivery plan recognise that there are many natural synergies between the health and wellbeing of Merton's citizens, and the mitigation of and adaptation to the impacts of climate change in Merton. Joint action in this area is likely to produce significant co-benefits which are in keeping with *Merton's Health and Wellbeing Strategy*

2019-2021 [3] and support the council's response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 2.4 Where health-climate synergies exist within the borough, the delivery plan has identified some areas where progress will be made, and identified others as gaps. Areas where significant progress is being made includes moving away from petrol and diesel vehicles towards more active and sustainable travel through travel policies and plans [3] and the air quality action plan [4]. The Covid Transport Strategy [5] has been an opportunity to accelerate some actions, such as the implementation of 26 school streets, 4-6 low traffic neighbourhoods and the improvement of cycling infrastructure. The Merton School's Neighbourhood Approach Pilot (SNAP) presents another opportunity for place based action with a range of co-benefits for both public health and climate change action particularly in relation to active travel and sustainable food environments.
- 2.5 Action has also been taken to support emission reduction in the CCG and primary care trusts through the development of Merton Climate Champions and the promotion of the RCGPs Green Impact for Health toolkit. Also, a bid to the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme boosted funding through the Warmer Homes project by £2.5 million across Greater London to support fuel-poor households. A portion of this funding will be delivered in Merton through the pre-established 'South London Healthy Homes' project. This project will support Merton residents over the age of 65 on a low income or with a long term health condition or disability to improve their health, creating warmer homes through the installation of energy saving measures, offering impartial advice on utility bills/savings in addition to signposting to other sources of support.
- 2.5 Of the c60 actions contained within *Annex 4* of the *Climate Delivery Plan – Year 1*, only a few are specific to the health/climate agenda. One seeks to add climate change ambitions into the *Merton Borough Health and Care Estates Strategy*, currently being finalised. One seeks to consider whether we should continue with the "green and healthy guardian's group" which was set up to foster a healthy and sustainable work place with Council Staff but was put on hold following the first lock-down in March 2020. One seeks the continuation of support for externally-funded active travel projects. There are also a range of actions where public health can play a role, including the instigation of Merton's Climate Action Group (first meeting on 27th January) [6] and the climate comms plan for 2021. The climate comms plan aims to encourage local residents and businesses to take action to reduce their carbon footprint, through climate change pledges, and focussed on sustainable diets in January [7].
- 2.6 In addition to the agreed actions, we believe there is a significant opportunity to jointly advance the health/climate agenda. The section below sets out further actions which could be undertaken in 2021 to support climate/health priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board to consider.

3 DETAILS

- 3.1. The Council are directly responsible for around 2% of the borough's emissions, but have powers or influence over around 1/3 of the borough's emissions, including in matters of public health [8]. The main areas with significant opportunity for further action in the health/climate agenda, are:
- a) Protecting the health of Merton's citizens impacted by poor-quality buildings and/or fuel poverty.
 - b) Improving air quality through the replacement of gas boilers/cookers (responsible for around 1/5 of NOx emissions in Merton [9]) with efficient electric heating.
 - c) Protecting local residents from the health effects of more intense and prolonged spells of hot weather and flood risk caused by climate change.
 - d) Ensuring that public health services are in keeping with net-zero targets, and supporting the decarbonisation of NHS services, who have also set a net-zero target.
 - e) Encouraging behaviour change in Merton's residents and businesses by supporting climate/health projects or improved engagement on topics like saving energy, active travel, low-meat/healthy diets, protection from overheating and improved mental and physical well-being in connection to nature.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS FOR HEALTH/CLIMATE ACTION in 2021 THAT GO BEYOND THE CURRENT CLIMATE DELIVERY PLAN

- 3.2. We recommend that in addition to the actions set out in *Climate Delivery Plan – Year 1* that the following actions, which are relatively low cost/low resource to action, be undertaken in 2021:
- a) Issue a cross-party commitment which recognises that a healthy place/healthy planet leads to healthy people.
 - b) Ensure improved co-ordination with the NHS who are seeking to meet their net-zero targets.
 - c) LBM healthy place officers and other NHS colleagues and other healthcare professionals to attend the newly-formed Climate Action Group to help foster community-led health/climate projects.
 - d) Develop shared climate/comms messages for publication as part of the comms strategy.

MEDIUM-TERM OPTIONS FOR HEALTH/CLIMATE ACTION in 2021 THAT GO BEYOND THE CURRENT CLIMATE DELIVERY PLAN

- 3.3. Looking to the medium to longer term, there is opportunity to develop and implement a number of major health/climate projects if resources become available. A number of recent attempts at seeking significant external funding for health/climate projects have not been successful. We think this is in part due to the fact that short timescales to meet application deadlines do not allow sufficient time for project development. To put Merton in a

position to win funding, we recommend that more time is spent on the development of the following significant projects, and that these are embedded into future climate delivery plans, to action rapidly when resource becomes available:

- a) Targeted prevention of fuel poverty in social housing, private rented sector and other at risk properties through the installation of energy efficiency, low carbon heating and on-site renewable energy. Energy in buildings makes up around 81% of emissions in Merton which require up-front capital investment that low income households will not be able to afford. Fuel poverty affects around [10%] of Merton residents and leads to exacerbated health issues.
- b) Engagement campaigns which target groups who are at high risk of obesity, particularly Merton's younger residents, to encourage healthier and more sustainable diets, and the use of active travel options. One in five children entering reception are currently overweight or obese in Merton, increasing to one in three by year 6 highlighting this as an important priority for joint public health and climate action.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. No further action beyond the *Climate Change Delivery Plan – Year 1* would still result in the continued collaboration of the health/climate agenda, but we may miss opportunities to maximise the health/climate benefits.
- 4.2. Going beyond the options set out above is unlikely to be possible without additional resource.

5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 5.1. These options have developed through discussions with Climate Change Officers in the Future Merton Team and Healthy Places and Public Health Officers (Adults and Older People) in the Public Health Team.

6 TIMETABLE

- 6.1. The *Climate Change Delivery Plan – Year 1* will be updated on an annual basis to be responsive to the many changes in funding, policy, innovation and markets.

7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None for the purposes of this report

8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None for the purposes of this report

9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The strategic approach set out in *Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan* and *Merton's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2021* embody an ambition for action on climate to have wider community benefits and ensure that neither the effects of climate change, nor the costs of reducing emissions disproportionately affect the vulnerable or those less able to pay. Medium-term options set out in para 3.3 that support the fuel poor and engage young people with a high risk of obesity are in keeping with supporting more at-risk groups.

10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None for the purposes of this report.

11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The main risks are the additional resource required to undertake actions that go beyond current plans at a time when the public health team are under particular pressure managing the impacts of the covid pandemic.
- 11.2. A separate risk assessment will be undertaken by any project that is taken forward as a result of this paper.

12 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- 12.1. [1] Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/Draft%20Climate%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%20-%20Council%20V2.pdf>
- [2] Climate Delivery Plan – Year 1

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [3] Merton's health and wellbeing strategy 2019-2024, LBM 2019:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20Strategy%202019%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf>
- [3] Air Quality Action Plan 2018-2023, LBM 2018:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/pollution/air-quality-and-air-pollution/local-air-quality-management>
- [4] Local Implementation Plan (LIP 3), LBM 2019:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/lip3#titleCol20>
- [5] Merton's Active & Healthy Travel Response to Covid-19, LBM 2020:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/Merton%20Covid%20Transport%20Strategy%207%20May%202020.pdf>

[6] Climate Action Group, LBM 2021:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/sustainability-and-climate-change/climate-action-group>

[7] Climate pledges – diet, LBM 2021:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/sustainability-and-climate-change/make-your-climate-change-pledges>

[8] Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget, Climate Change Committee, December 2020:

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget/>

[9] Merton – Source apportionment of NOx emissions 2013, graph from Air Quality Strategic Theme Report to Council, February 2019. Data from London Atmospheric Emissions 2016:

<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=142&MId=3077>

<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-atmospheric-emissions-inventory--laei--2016>