

Committee: Council

Date: 3rd of February 2019

Wards: All

Subject: Strategic Theme – Merton’s Climate Strategy and Action Plan

Lead officer: Director for Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

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

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Recommendations:

- A. That Council consider the content of the *Climate Change Delivery Plan – Year 1*.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Each meeting of Council receives a report updating progress against one of the Council’s strategic themes. The theme for this report is Merton’s Climate Strategy and Action Plan [1].
- 1.2. The report focuses on the *Climate Change Delivery Plan – Year 1* [see Appendix], adopted by Cabinet on 18th January, which sets out the Council’s plans to address to the climate emergency in its first year of implementation following the adoption of the *Merton’s Climate Strategy and Action Plan*.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Council adopted Merton’s Climate Strategy and Action Plan in November 2020. It provides a strategic approach and a long-term set of actions which need to be delivered in order to meet our net-zero carbon targets of 2050 for the borough and 2030 for the Council.
- 2.2. Whilst *Merton’s Climate Strategy and Action Plan* is clear about what needs to be done, how that is achieved in practice is complex, resource dependent and requires an integrated approach which stimulates action from individuals, services providers and businesses. To ensure that Council is playing its full part in meeting the net-zero targets, it has created the *Climate Change Delivery Plan – Year 1*, which will be updated on an annual basis to track progress and respond to changes in funding, legislation and markets. The focus of the first delivery plan is to set strong foundations in all areas from which major carbon reduction projects can grow. All actions agreed are within the Council’s current resources and in keeping with *Merton’s Climate Strategy and Action Plan*.

3 THE WIDER CONTEXT

- 3.1. Since Merton's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019, there has been increasing momentum at local level to tackle climate change. The council's partnerships, policies and enforcement could potentially influence around 1/3 of emissions, but a lack of co-ordination with central government and long term funding will act as a barrier to progress [2]. The Council will continue to put the case for faster change and provide more support at a local level. Despite these challenges, 300 Councils have now declared a climate emergency [3] and are in various stages of developing climate action plans.
- 3.2. There are strong links between action to tackle climate change and making sustainable choices to support a recovery from the Covid pandemic. Merton Council is taking an active role in the development of the Mayor of London recovery plan, which includes implementing a Green New Deal aiming to double the size of London's green economy by 2030. The Director of Environment and Regeneration is leading the sub regional work with South London Partners to identify opportunities to work on multi-borough projects where economies of scale can deliver greater results.

4 CLIMATE CHANGE DELIVERY PLAN – YEAR 1

- 4.1. *Section 1* sets the scope of the *Climate Change Delivery Plan – Year 1*, which covers major activities to decarbonise Council's buildings and services. It does not include actions that need to be taken by others (for which we cannot control), but does include activities that the Council intends to do to support emissions reductions within the borough.
- 4.2. *Section 2* considers the Council's progress in meeting its part in *Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan* in relation to the pace and scale of change needed. It uses a set of indicators to serve as a baseline from which future years can be compared. *Section 3* takes wider factors into account, to assess the likelihood of meeting the net-zero targets.
- 4.3. To support delivery, 8 workstreams have been set up within the Council. These cover all areas, and actions are benchmarked against progress needed to be in keeping with our net-zero targets. *Section 4* sets out the priority actions that we intend to take within these workstreams. It demonstrates our intention to expand climate considerations to every part of the Council and is in keeping with the agreed strategic approach to show leadership, focus resource on major transitions, and deliver co-benefits.
- 4.4. Where action to reduce carbon emissions is already occurring, the plan seeks to accelerate action to meet our carbon reduction commitments. Examples where accelerated action has already taken place since the declaration of a climate emergency includes securing a 100% renewable electricity tariff for the Council, the consultation for 26 school streets this autumn, and the consultation for Merton's Local Plan; where key policies have been reviewed based on emerging evidence to support a net-zero carbon borough.
- 4.5. Where there has been an absence of activity to date, the *Climate Change Delivery Plan – Year 1* commits to investigate options for filling gaps, and gain additional resource through lobbying or application for external funding.

An example is our commitment to considering options to reduce emissions from existing and future procured services.

5 OPPORTUNITIES FOR BOROUGH INVOLVMENT IN 2021

- 5.1. Building on the cross-party support for Merton's Climate Change Strategy, Councillors are encouraged to drive changes to encourage carbon reduction in their areas of responsibility and within their wards, promote the main themes within the climate strategy, and use available funding to support projects that align with the objectives of the climate change policy and co-benefits.
- 5.2. Councillors, service delivery partners and the voluntary sector are encouraged to actively participate and promote the following activities to amplify and accelerate action across the borough.
 - a) A communication plan [4] created jointly by the Council and organisations across the borough, which aims to increase in awareness and information that residents, businesses and other organisations can use to make changes and reduce emissions.
 - b) Cabinet member for Regeneration, Housing and Climate Change has set up a Climate Action Group [5], to support community-led carbon reduction projects and support an expansion of engagement to typically under-represented groups.
- 5.3. Local groups and individuals are also encouraged to join Merton Council's efforts in shaping the national and regional policies to facilitate the meeting of local net-zero targets, as well as taking opportunities to input into borough plans and policies.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1. None for the purposes of this report

7 CONSULTATION AND KEY DECISIONS TAKEN

COMMITTEE DECISIONS

- 7.1. In July 2019, Merton Council unanimously supported a declaration of a climate emergency which included a commitment to set net-zero targets and develop a climate action plan. In July 2020, Cabinet recommended *Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan* for adoption by Council.
- 7.2. The council also unanimously adopted *Merton's Strategy and Action Plan* in November 2020, and cabinet approved the *Climate Change Delivery Plan – Year 1* in January 2021.

ADVICE/RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELEVANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

- 7.3. Prior to its adoption by Council, the *Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan* was reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in June 2020 with the following recommendations, which were all accepted by the Director of Environment, Chris Lee as part of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel in September 2020 [6]:
- a) The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan be embedded in all Merton's policies where relevant, just as the equalities policy is now.
 - b) The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel should be asked to monitor delivery of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and successor plans for the next 30 years.
 - c) Delays in the adoption of the Local Plan be used to check that its policies reflect the ambitions of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, including in relation to the promotion of low car and no car environments for new housing developments.
 - d) The role of the voluntary and charity sector, including Sustainable Merton, in encouraging individual actions to mitigate climate change is recognised and supported by the Council.

CONSULTATION

- 7.4. Extensive consultation was undertaken to support the formation of *Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan*. These included the commissioning of a greenhouse gas inventory and zero carbon pathway, an evidence review, a public consultation and the formation of a Climate Emergency Working Group to supply additional challenge, expertise and community reach.
- 7.5. Most of the evidence, ideas and suggested actions [7], including final recommendations from the Climate Emergency Working Group [8] were taken on board and used to develop the high level actions and strategic approach.
- 7.6. Overall, there was strong support for the Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan amongst engaged stakeholders, who will be looking for evidence that the Council will put in place strong action to combat climate change and have consistently high standards in all areas of the Council.
- 7.7. The evidence and consultation used to develop Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan formed the basis of discussions with Officers to form the *Climate Change Delivery Plan – Year 1*

8 TIMETABLE

- 8.1. Whilst the net-zero targets may take decades to achieve, the *Climate Change Delivery Plan – Year 1* aims to operate within a single year, enabling delivery to be responsive to the many changes in funding, policy, innovation, and markets. It is expected that priority actions set out in the Delivery Plan will be complete by December 2021.

- 8.2. The Delivery Plan will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. The updated plan will use the indicators and wider evidence to focus efforts which make the most significant impact towards meeting out net-zero targets.

9 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. *Annex 4* of the Delivery Plan sets out all priority actions that the Council intends to take over the first year of implementation of the Climate Strategy and Action Plan. Officers responsible for the individual actions have confirmed that these can be implemented without additional resources; despite the delivery risks identified.
- 9.2. *Section 4.1* of the Delivery plan considers the extent to which the actions committed to by the Council are sufficient with respect to the Council's responsibilities set out in the Climate Strategy and Action Plan. This is straightforward when considering the Council's action to reduce its own carbon emissions, but harder to judge when considering the Council's actions to support emissions reductions that need to be undertaken by others. This section does identify gaps in activity and /or funding that will need to be met in future years, but in most cases, the scale and timing of the funding need has not yet been identified; nor how these funding needs will be met.
- 9.3. *Section 3.1* also acknowledges funding gaps that the Council is not expected to fill but will be needed by others to meet the 2050 net-zero target. These include the additional capital costs to support low carbon retrofit of Merton's homes and non-residential buildings.
- 9.4. *Section 2.1* of the Delivery Plan estimates that £2.1m of Council spend was allocated to projects that reduced emissions inside and outside the Council in 2019/2020. Despite challenging financial conditions, spend on climate projects is predicted to increase in this financial year.
- 9.5. New capital schemes and additions to any existing capital schemes in relation to the climate change delivery plan will only be added to the approved capital programme as additional funding is identified.

10 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There is no statutory requirement for Local Authorities to set climate targets, or produce a Climate Strategy or an Action Plan set out in the Climate Change Act 2008. Local Authorities are, however, obliged to be in keeping with the objectives of policies implemented by the Greater London Authority and National Government through obligations set out in grant funding agreements, under regulatory arrangements such as through air quality reviews and monitoring under the Environment Act 1995 and national planning law including the Planning Act 2008 and in development of local plans under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, where the local planning authority must have regard to national policies.

- 10.2. In order to carry out the investments and actions required of this report the Council must follow, where appropriate, the Council's contract standing orders and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 in relation to entering into public contracts. From December 31st 2020 this may include call-off contracts from existing frameworks and if tendered after 31st December 2020 will require publication of relevant notices on the new government service Find a Tender Service (FTS).
- 10.3. Conditions attaching to the letting of public contracts should be non-discriminatory and compliant with any applicable grant conditions.

11 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. *Section 2* highlights that intended actions are consistent with the strategic approach set out in the Climate Strategy and Action Plan. These 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.
- 11.2. Workstream 8, considers communication, outreach and LBM corporate procedure. Within this workstream, *section 4.1* sets out our intention to support and empower communities to act through the development of a Climate Action Group. This is in keeping with the key aims of Merton's community plan to increase social capital.
- 11.3. The spread of activity within the Delivery Plan makes it difficult to undertake a meaningful equality assessment of the plan as a whole. Individual equality assessments will be undertaken as individual actions form key policies and decisions.

12 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. None for the purposes of this report.

13 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. Delivery risks relating to annual priority actions have been assessed both at an individual level (*Annex 4 of the Delivery Plan*) and for the whole workstream (*in section 4.1*). These consider the likelihood that the action will take place and the impact this might have in the Council meeting its obligations set out in *Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan*.
- 13.2. *Section 3.1*, assesses the likelihood that the net-zero targets will be met, taking into account that 2% of emissions that are the direct responsibility of the Council, actions taken by the Council to enable emission reduction for the borough target, and the wider financial, political, behavioural and market forces in play.
- 13.3. Risk management and health and safety measures for individual actions will be undertaken by the Officer responsible for the action.

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

14.1.1 Climate Delivery Plan – Year 1

15 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1. [1] Merton Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/Draft%20Climate%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%20-%20Council%20V2.pdf>

[2] 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/>

[3] Climate Emergency Org, January 2021

<https://www.climateemergency.org/>

[4] More information about the Communication Plan

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

[5] More information about the Climate Action Group

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

[6] Cabinet Paper, section 4.8 sets out responses to the recommendations put forward by the overview and scrutiny commission.

<https://mertonintranet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MIId=3690&Ver=4>

[7] Results of evidence review and consultation used to develop Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

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

[8] Climate Emergency Working Group Recommendations

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

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