

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 10th October

Wards: ALL

Subject: Climate Accreditation: embedding Merton's climate commitments through senior staff and councillor training

Lead officer: Interim Director of Environment and Regeneration, Adrian Ash

Lead member: Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate, Cllr Natasha Irons

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Recommendations:

- A. That Cabinet approves the commitment of senior council staff and cabinet members to undertake carbon literacy training provided by APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence). Training undertaken by the Chief Executive and Directors will enable the council to achieve 'Bronze Level Carbon Literacy Accreditation'.
 - B. That Cabinet approves the commitment of Commercial Services staff and those most involved in contract management and commissioning to undertake procurement specific carbon literacy or climate change training.
 - C. That Cabinet approves volunteering officers to achieve carbon literacy accreditation.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to justify the commitment of
 - Senior council staff, (the Chief Executive, Directors and Assistant Directors, totalling 17 staff)
 - Cabinet members (all 10 Cabinet members)
 - Up to 20 volunteering officers and
 - Commercial Services, contract management and commissioning colleagues to undertake climate change training.
- 1.2. This approach to training is necessary to:
 - embed Merton's climate commitments in council decision making in line with Merton's Climate Strategy & Action Plan;
 - support the achievement of the council's organisational net zero target for 2030;

- ensure the council has the legitimacy and technical understanding to support residents on the journey to a net zero borough by 2050; and
- for senior staff to lead colleagues by example, encouraging wider organisational change

1.3. Approved by CMT, the development and delivery of carbon literacy training is a priority action in the Climate Delivery Plan for 2022 and was allocated funding by CMT in 2021.

2 DETAILS

2.1. In order to deliver the council policy priorities detailed in section 1, Merton's climate change team are looking to appoint APSE to deliver climate change training for council staff and councillors in key lever positions.

2.2. Though there is no uniform definition, 'climate change training' is a broad categorisation for training which covers, but is not limited to the following:

- improves the awareness of council officers and councillors regarding the causes, costs and impacts of climate change;
- helps officers and councillors identify opportunities for reducing carbon emissions and deliver a multitude of co-benefits in their own area of work at the council and beyond; and
- encourages ambitious pledges and commitments through continued engagement and, or accreditation.

2.3. Due to budget and resource constraints, training initially needs to be delivered through identifying 'key levers' i.e., those in positions of significant responsibility, with the most influence who can create a cascade of positive change in their service areas.

2.4. These are identified as:

- Cabinet Members - to ensure those with decision making powers are carbon literate, understand the council's net zero ambitions and can make informed decisions that align with improving sustainability and reducing emissions.
- The Chief Executive Officer, Directors and Assistant Directors– to positively influence decision making to embed sustainability across all services and lead colleagues by example.
- Commercial Services, commissioning & contract management colleagues - to embed carbon reduction, as well as social and environmental value into new contracts and work with suppliers to make council services more sustainable.
- Staff climate champions – individuals who have significant enthusiasm to act as a point of contact in their team to help other colleagues embed more sustainable practices and work on changing council processes in their area of work, to align with net zero (similar to the role of Mental Health Champions.)

- 2.5. Notably, once senior leadership complete carbon literacy training, the council receives a 'Bronze Level Carbon Literate Organisation' accreditation, further demonstrating council commitment to net zero, to our residents.
- 2.6. 18 members of staff (including one assistant director and one head of service) who responded to a recent survey indicated that they would like to undertake accredited training (appendix 1).
- 2.7. In addition to senior staff, the volunteering officers should also be a priority as this provides a useful pilot to test and review the utility of the carbon literacy training content for officers.
- 2.8. This will enable the climate team to consider the extent to which this or similar training should extend to all officers, with an accompanying increase in allocated budget, if necessary.
- 2.9. Although commercial services colleagues, contract managers and commissioners are identified as key levers, the first tranche of carbon literacy training will not specifically target them.
- 2.10. Over the coming months, the Climate Team and the Commercial Services Team will be working in partnership with the London Responsible Procurement Network, to consider a joint approach for reducing carbon through London local authority contracts.
- 2.11. Consideration will be given to adopting a joint approach where it aligns with the council's priorities and supports in maximising our officer time and financial resources.
- 2.12. Concurrently the Climate Team and Commercial Services will develop a more specialised approach to training colleagues who are responsible for high value contracts with high carbon impacts.

Accredited training options appraisal

- 2.13. In addition to a staff survey undertaken in May 2022 to understand staff preferences for training (further details in section 4 and appendix 1), a soft market testing exercise was undertaken in May 2022 to determine which training options would best suit Merton's requirements (see appendix 2).
- 2.14. The carbon literacy training delivered by APSE is the only training offer which fulfils all of Merton's programme requirements (see table 1), including dedicated courses for councillors, council leadership and management staff; more general training for all officers; and flexible evening or lunchtime training sessions.
- 2.15. APSE offers the best value for money compared to its nearest competitors, as Merton Council benefits from a discounted rate, by being member of APSE. This brings the cost per person down from £133.80 + VAT to £73.15 + VAT, if a group of 20 colleagues are trained at one time.
- 2.16. The soft market testing demonstrates that there is only one provider capable of performing the contract in a way that meets the council's programme requirements. As detailed in Section 6 of this report, the cost of the first tranche of training is £4,389. Therefore, the use of direct award to APSE is the preferred route to appointing a supplier in line with the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

	APSE – Carbon Literacy Training	Centre for Alternative Technologies – Carbon Literacy Training	IEMA – Sustainability Skills for the Workforce	IEMA – Pathways to Net Zero delivered by Astutis
Local Authority Specific	Yes	Yes	No	No
Learning Objectives Met	Yes	Yes	Partly	Partly
Accreditation Achieved	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interactivity	Yes	Yes	No	No
Flexible Delivery	Yes	No	Yes	No
Administration Managed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cost per person	£73.15	£140	£114.80	£430

- 2.17. Based on the number of places on a single course, engagement with council staff (Appendix 1) and desire for APSE Bronze Climate Literacy Accreditation, the first tranche of training should target the first three cohorts detailed in Table 2.

	Places Occupied	Spaces Remaining
1. Cabinet Members	10	10
2. Chief Executive, Directors and Assistant Directors	17	3
3. Volunteering Officers	16	4
4. Commercial Services, Contract Management and Commissioning Colleagues	See point 2.9 and 2.10	See point 2.9 and 2.10

- 2.18. Ideally spaces left open for the cabinet member session, should be filled by other interested councillors who are not cabinet members.
- 2.19. Spaces remaining in the senior staff session should be filled by interested heads of service.
- 2.20. Vacant spaces on the voluntary session should be filled by the climate team, and procurement leads in Commercial Services who will support in implementing future training opportunities for contract management and commissioning colleagues.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. Alternative options were considered in table 1 (contained in Section 2 of this report.)

- 3.2. Delivering accredited training in-house by tailoring free-to-use toolkits, such as the Carbon Literacy Toolkit for Local Authorities was also considered an option to train officers and councillors.
- 3.3. However, with only 2 FTE staff in the Climate Team, dedicating time to tailoring and delivering carbon literacy training workshops, or translating the training materials into e-learning modules, without first trialling a version of the training on a smaller cohort of staff, was not considered a proportionate use of officer time.
- 3.4. To optimise use of officer time, some London Local Authorities have therefore chosen to work with an external provider in the first instance, with a view to utilising feedback to inform and tailor future training phases, delivered either in-house or by external providers, online as e-learning modules, via workshops, or a combination of these methods.
- 3.5. To do nothing is not an option, as the development of staff training has been committed to as part of the council's Climate Delivery Plan for Year 2.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. A staff climate survey undertaken in November 2021 indicated that a lack of capacity, time, funding, awareness, training, expertise, senior buy-in and supporting infrastructure were some of the key barriers to staff delivering climate action in their work. Moreover, there was a high level of interest in climate training among LBM staff.
- 4.2. A follow up survey in May 2022, asking for staff preferences on climate change training options was answered by 40 colleagues, which helped inform the recommendations of this paper.
- 4.3. 18 colleagues indicated that they would want accredited training including one head of service and one assistant director, with the majority preferring flexible training arrangements, such as e-learning and virtual training spread over multiple sessions (see appendix 1).

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. All recommendations in this paper were approved by CMT on 30th August 2022.
- 5.2. The recommendations were approved at the Leaders Strategy Group meeting on Friday 23rd September.
- 5.3. The paper will also go to Cabinet on Monday 10th October for approval
- 5.4. The procurement process will begin in September.
- 5.5. If APSE is appointed, training is proposed to take place later in the autumn.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. £60,000 was allocated for climate training from council reserves in 2021/2022, to cover spend across 2022-23 and 2023-24.

- 6.2. This more than covers the initial three training sessions at an estimated cost of £1,463 per session, or £4,389 in total, with plenty remaining to use as the council's approach to expanding climate change training evolves.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Council's Contract Standing Orders (CSO) requires either a quick quote or a Request for Quote from any number of bidders but preferably 3 bidders.
- 7.2. As per the main body of the report, the Council is directly awarding a contract under CSO 16 to one supplier.
- 7.3. The Responsible Officer has, as per the report, been able to demonstrate that the supplier selected is the only one who can provide the service therefore CSO 16.2.2 provides a compliant route to market.
- 7.4. The Responsible Officer must be able to demonstrate that the direct award will offer Best Value to the Council.
- 7.5. Once the contract has been entered into this will need to be recorded on the Council's contract register.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None for the purposes of this report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None for the purposes of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The council is likely to face reputational risks if we cannot deliver the commitments set out in Merton's Climate Delivery Plan Year 2, by adequately training staff to embed climate change within their plans, policies, teams and communities.

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

1. Appendix 1 – Summary of Staff Climate Change Training Survey Results, May 2022
2. Appendix 2 – Draft Specification

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. [Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#)
- 12.2. [Merton's Climate Delivery Plan Year 2](#)