

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 19th February 2024

Wards: All Wards

Subject: Climate Delivery Plan – Year 4

Lead officer: Executive Director for Environment, Civic Pride & Climate, Dan Jones

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

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Recommendations:

- A. That Cabinet adopts the Climate Delivery Plan – Year 4.
 - B. That delegated authority is given to the Executive Director for Environment, Civic Pride & Climate in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate to make minor amendments to the Climate Delivery Plan – Year 4.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.0. Merton's *Climate Delivery Plan – Year 4* sets out how we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change across the borough and within the Council's buildings and services over, the next 12 months. This Delivery Plan also provides a review of progress over the last 12 months against Merton's Climate Delivery Plan - Year 3 priority actions.
- 1.1. It demonstrates progress to delivering Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan 2020, which sets targets of the council reaching net zero by 2030 and the borough by 2050.

2 DETAILS

- 2.0. Merton's *Climate Strategy and Action Plan* [1] was adopted by Council in November 2020. Cabinet was appointed to oversee its implementation. One of the commitments in Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan was the formation of a Delivery Plan which is updated annually and is able to monitor progress.
- 2.1. Merton's Climate Delivery Plan - Year 1 [2] was adopted by Cabinet in January 2021, and set out the Council's priority actions for the first year of delivery of Merton's Climate Strategy & Action Plan (2021).
- 2.2. To support delivery and expand climate considerations to every part of the Council, 8 workstreams were set up. The Year 1 Delivery Plan set the baseline against which future years could be compared, and the Year 2 and

Year 3 Delivery Plans were approved by Cabinet in February 2022 [3] and February 2023 [4] respectively.

2.3. The Year 4 Delivery Plan reviews progress in 2023 and sets priority actions for 2024.

2.3.0 *Section 1* of the Delivery Plan sets the scope of the plan, which covers major activities that the Council intends to do to support emissions reductions across the borough, and within the Council's buildings and services.

2.3.1 *Section 2* of the Delivery Plan 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 track performance against the baseline, highlights progress against the priority actions identified in the Year 3 Delivery Plan and sets out priorities for Year 4. This provides an overview of projects delivered by the Council in 2023 and projects planned in 2024, which help tackle climate change. These cover all areas, and actions are benchmarked against progress needed to be in keeping with the net-zero targets.

2.3.2 *Section 3* of the Delivery Plan takes wider factors into account, to assess the likelihood of meeting the net-zero targets. This includes an overview of emissions in Merton's council and borough-wide greenhouse gas inventories which were updated in 2023 [5].

2.4. Some of the key areas of progress in 2023 are summarised below. This is not an exhaustive list, and more detail is provided in the Climate Delivery Plan – Year 4 (Appendix 1).

2.5. In 2021 and 2022, Cabinet allocated two pots of approx. £2million, to support the delivery of Merton's Climate Strategy & Action Plan, which includes some of the projects highlighted below.

2.6. **Workstream 1 – Sustainable consumption and low carbon economy**

2.6.0 Successfully delivering this workstream will require significant behaviour changes from Merton's residents, businesses and organisations, to drive sustainable consumption habits and enable a transition to a low carbon economy. Council activities in 2023 included:

2.6.1 **Community Climate Action Fund** – As part of the 2022 climate funding allocation, [Cabinet allocated £500,000 \(£166,000/year over three years\) for Merton's new Community Climate Action Fund to support community-led climate mitigation and/ or adaptation projects in Merton](#). The first round of the Community Climate Action Fund launched in autumn 2023, and was open to applications from residents, community groups, etc. in parallel with Merton's "Civic Pride - Investing in Neighbourhoods".

2.6.2 **Merton's Climate Action Group** – Officers continue to support Merton's Climate Action Group, a partnership between the community and the council launched in January 2021 to develop and deliver community-led climate

action projects. Key successes include three projects funded by successful bids to the council's "*Civic Pride – Investing in Neighbourhoods*" fund:

(i) **Merton's Energy Matters** project which aims to upskill the next generation of energy champions in Merton schools. Since the Climate Action Group secured "*Civic Pride – investing in Neighbourhoods*" funding in 2021, the project has reached over 1,000 pupils in Merton, teaching them about energy saving and climate change, so they can take lessons home. The project is also empowering teachers in Merton to handle climate anxiety, and tough conversations around climate change.

(ii) **The Wheel** which promotes and supports the development of a circular economy in Merton. In partnership with Sustainable Merton, the Wheel launched the Preloved Studio at Canons House and Grounds in summer 2023 to repair and upcycle textiles.

(iii) **Merton Garden Streets** which has gone from strength to strength, reaching thousands of residents through community planting days, with the aim of improving biodiversity, climate resilience and civic pride in Merton.

2.6.3 **Green skills, jobs and supply chains** – Throughout 2023, the council has collaborated with the South London Partnership (SLP) and its academic partners to promote the development of the local skills, jobs and supply chains required to deliver Merton's transition to net zero. Officers attended green skills events at Merton College in June 2023 and AFC Wimbledon in November 2023, as well as the BIG South London Innovation Summit on 10th November 2023.

2.6.4 Officers also launched **Merton's Green Schools Network** in March 2023 to support Merton schools on their journey to net zero. This includes pledges and actions around embedding climate change in the local curriculum.

2.6.5 **Green Economy Lead** – As part of the 2022 climate funding allocation, officers have created a new Green Economy Lead role to lead on the development of green jobs and skills in Merton, supporting businesses towards net zero, and promoting a circular and low carbon economy in Merton. This role is currently out for recruitment for the second time.

2.7. **Workstream 2 – Retrofit of the residential and non-residential building stock**

2.7.0 Successfully delivering this work stream will require significant uptake of good quality domestic and non-domestic retrofit by homeowners, business owners, and private and social landlords in Merton. As well as reducing energy demand and carbon emissions, this will help tackle fuel poverty and build climate resilience in the borough. Council activities in 2023 included:

2.7.1 **Home Energy Efficiency Loan** – As part of the 2022 £2million climate funding allocation, [£300,000 was allocated for a loan scheme to help residents improve the energy efficiency of their homes](#). As approved by Cabinet on 18th December 2023, a contract has been awarded to a Financial Conduct Authority accredited broker to administer this loan scheme which is due to launch in early 2024.

- 2.7.2 **Retrofit guidance for homeowners** – Officers are collaborating with neighbouring boroughs and the SLP to scope a digital tool to support homeowners on their retrofit journey. In parallel with this, Merton is developing a retrofit guide for homeowners which is due to be published in spring 2024.
- 2.8. **Workstream 3 – Future new build and regeneration**
- 2.8.0 Successfully delivering this work stream will require that all new developments in Merton, and Merton’s energy infrastructure, are compatible with our climate commitments and adaptable to a changing climate. Council activities in 2023 included:
- 2.8.1 **Local Plan** – Following Merton’s declaration of a Climate Emergency, ambitious climate change policies were introduced in our Draft Local Plan to ensure that all new development in Merton is fit for the future and aligns with our net zero commitments (i.e. is ultra-energy efficient and climate resilient, and maximises low carbon and renewable energy generation). [Merton scored 82% on Planning and Land Use matters in Climate Emergency UK’s 2023 Council Climate Action Scorecards.](#)
- 2.8.2 In 2022, following changes to Part L of Building Regulations, Merton formed part of the steering group for a consortium of 18 London boroughs who commissioned a review of London energy planning evidence. [The Delivering Net Zero study was published in May 2023.](#)
- 2.8.3 **Local Area Energy Planning** – Decarbonising Merton’s 86,000 homes, businesses and council facilities will involve switching away from gas towards electric (e.g. air source heat pumps, electric vehicle charging points). Merton is collaborating with its neighbouring south London boroughs, the Greater London Authority, London Councils and UK Power Networks to develop a sub-regional Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) for South London. This will help identify any sub-regional opportunities and constraints on the local grid infrastructure relevant to the decarbonisation of buildings and transport, and will inform Merton’s borough-wide LAEP and retrofit strategy.
- 2.9. **Workstream 4 – Transport infrastructure and modal shift**
- 2.9.0 Successfully delivering this work stream will require everyone who works, lives and studies in Merton to shift from fossil fuel-based modes of transport towards more active and sustainable travel, and ensuring that the supporting infrastructure is in place to enable this modal shift. Council activities in 2023 included:
- 2.9.1 **Walking, Cycling and Kerbside Strategy & Action Plan** – In July 2023, Merton commissioned consultants to develop a Walking, Cycling & Kerbside Strategy. This will create a vision for active travel in Merton and a long-term action plan for infrastructure to increase levels of active travel in the borough. This was funded through the 2021 climate funding allocation and is due to be published in spring 2024.

- 2.9.2 **Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy & Action Plan** – In July 2023, Merton commissioned consultants to develop an Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Strategy to review demand for EV charging across the borough and to create an action plan for the delivery of a range of charging solutions from 2024-2030. This strategy was funded through the 2021 climate funding allocation and is due to be published in spring 2024.
- 2.9.3 **Electric Vehicle charging point installation** – Over the course of 2023, over 500 lamp column EV charge points have been installed across the borough. Merton now has over 700 EV chargers available for public use. Merton has also been awarded additional Government funding for EV charging as part of a borough consortium. This will help address any gaps in the existing network where lamp columns need to be upgraded to support EV charge points and also deliver fast charge points including to electrify car club bays.
- 2.10. **Workstream 5 – Green infrastructure**
- 2.10.0 Successfully delivering this work stream will require increased tree planting and green infrastructure projects by the Council and private landowners, and increased public participation in community planting. Council activities in 2023 included:
- 2.10.1 **Tree Strategy** – Merton’s Tree Strategy was published in June 2023. This sets out how between 2023 and 2029 the council will manage and enhance trees in the borough and includes a goal to increase the borough’s tree canopy by 10% by 2050.
- 2.10.2 **Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)** – The council continues to design and install Green and Blue Infrastructure SuDS features across the borough to build resilience to the impacts of climate change and to reduce flood risk, while improving biodiversity, water quality and the public realm. Those constructed and proposed include: Coombe Lane/ Pepys Road, Wimbledon Chase, Wimbledon Hill and Three Kings Pond in Mitcham Home Park Road/ Kenilworth Green.
- 2.11. **Workstream 6 – LBM estate and fleet management**
- 2.11.0 Successfully delivering this work stream will require the decarbonisation of the Council’s operational buildings and fleet, street lighting and community schools. Council activities in 2023 include:
- 2.11.1 **Fleet Decarbonisation Strategy** – In summer 2023, the Public Space team, commissioned consultants to develop a Fleet Decarbonisation Strategy for council transport, funded through the 2021 climate funding allocation. This includes the council’s operational fleet, grey fleet and key procured services, such as the waste collection fleet. This review will consider different technologies to inform Merton’s approach to decarbonising its fleet and any supporting infrastructure needs. The strategy is due to be completed in 2024.
- 2.11.2 **Civic Centre decarbonisation** – In 2023, £3million in government grant funding was successfully secured through the Public Sector Decarbonisation

Scheme to decarbonise the Civic Centre. This will involve replacing the existing gas fired boilers with a low carbon variable refrigerant flow air conditioning system.

2.11.3 **Wider estate decarbonisation plans** – In 2023, officers commissioned a review of the heating systems in community schools, to inform the council's estate decarbonisation plans. The council also commissioned reviews of the lease arrangements and Energy Performance Certificates for the council's non-operational buildings to understand the council's powers and opportunities to decarbonise its leased out properties. These reviews were funded through the 2022 climate funding allocation.

2.11.4 **Streetlighting upgrades** – In FY 23/24 the council is converting a further 1,400 lanterns to LED on its streetlighting assets across the borough. The council has now converted over 90% of Merton's streetlighting to LED bulbs which helps reduce the council's energy demand and carbon emissions.

2.12. **Workstream 7 – LBM procurements and investments**

2.12.0 Successfully delivering this work stream will require the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from Merton's procurements and pension investments, whilst balancing the need to reduce emissions with the potential additional costs of services. Council activities in 2023 include:

2.12.1 **Procured services** – Merton's climate team has engaged with several contract managers to measure emissions from and embed carbon reduction in Merton's procurements (including Merton's school meals contracts, highways maintenance contract, green spaces contract, waste collection and waste processing contracts, IT disposal contracts). As part of the 2022 climate funding allocation, officers have created and advertised a new role to lead on the decarbonisation of Merton's procured services. This role was out for recruitment in October 2023 with no candidates for interview. Job is due to be re-advertised from late November to early January.

2.12.2 **Pension investments** – The decarbonisation of Merton's pension investments is ongoing. The council continues to move its pension fund to low carbon investments, whilst balancing the fund's requirements to ensure investments deliver the expected returns to meet members' benefits and to keep the employers' contribution stable.

2.13. **Workstream 8 – Communication, outreach and LBM corporate procedure**

2.13.0 Successfully delivering this work stream involves raising climate awareness in Merton and empowering residents, businesses, organisations, council staff and councillors to act to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Council activities in 2023 included:

2.13.1 **Carbon literacy training** – Over the course of 2023 the Leader and all Cabinet Members, the Chief Executive, all Executive Directors and other colleagues, senior officers and elected members have undertaken the council's Carbon Literacy Training sessions, delivered by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE). Training is designed to help colleagues

understand the costs, causes and impacts of climate change, including how we can use our roles and responsibilities at Merton to mitigate and adapt to climate change. APSE have now been contracted for a further two years, to deliver regular training sessions, open to anyone across the council. This has been funded through the 2021 climate funding allocation.

- 2.13.2 **Canons Summer Fair 2023** – In July 2023, officers ran the second iteration of Canons Summer Fair, a family-friendly fair at Canons House and Grounds to celebrate climate action and encourage sustainable behaviours in Merton.
- 2.13.3 **Climate Comms & Engagement** – Throughout 2023, the council has run ongoing climate communications and engagement through Merton’s monthly Climate Action Newsletter (with >11,000 members) and other council newsletters, socials, community forums and other in-person events. [Merton scored 85% on matters relating to collaboration and engagement with residents and communities in Climate Emergency UK’s 2023 Council Climate Action Scorecards.](#)
- 2.13.4 **Climate Delivery Plan Summary Report** – In January 2023, officers launched the first Climate Delivery Plan Summary Report for 2023, to help residents and businesses engage with Merton’s climate programmes.
- 2.13.5 **Carbon in all decisions** – Officers have also considered various options to support council staff in embedding carbon reduction in all major council decisions. The intention is to pilot a tool for a year in FY24/2 which provides prompts, guidance and case studies to help officers consider the carbon impact of any given proposal and inform decision-making.
- 2.14. [In 2023, Climate Emergency UK assessed all UK councils on the actions they've taken towards net zero. Merton has one of the highest scores of all local authorities in the UK \(top three\).](#)
- 2.15. It may be appropriate to make minor changes to the Delivery Plan, for example where there are changes to delivery risks throughout the year. We seek delegated authority to the Executive Director for Environment, Civic Pride & Climate in consultation with Councillor Natasha Irons Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate to make these minor amendments.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Recommendations A& B (Climate Delivery Plan)

- 3.0. Option 1 - No Delivery Plan: This option would undermine a key commitment set out in Merton’s Climate Strategy and Action Plan. Without a delivery plan, it would be harder to understand whether activity to reduce carbon emissions undertaken by Merton Council is focused where it will have the greatest impact.
- 3.1. Option 2 - A more ambitious delivery plan: This is not a realistic option because the Delivery Plan presented represents the most ambitious plan to deliver Merton’s Climate Strategy and Action Plan 2020 that can be

achieved within the Council's current resources, focused on the major transitions needed to achieve the net-zero carbon targets.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.0. The Delivery Plan operates under the long-term framework of Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan, and uses the extensive consultation and evidence review that was undertaken through its development in 2019 and 2020.
- 4.1. Ongoing engagement with Merton's Climate Action Group, Merton's Joint Consultative Committee, Merton's Youth Parliament, community forums, invitations from civic societies and residents' groups, feedback from the Canons Climate Summer Fair, and other outreach since 2019, when Merton declared a Climate Emergency, has highlighted the importance of climate action to people in Merton.
- 4.2. In Autumn 2023, residents and organisations in Merton have also had the opportunity to respond to a Climate Pulse Survey and a Climate Consultation for Organisations which helped inform the Delivery Plan for Year 4. Results from this consultation activity have also helped inform the Climate Engagement Strategy.
- 4.3. The Delivery Plan is limited to fulfilling the Council's part of the Climate Strategy and Action Plan, so has been discussed extensively with Council officers. The Delivery Plan has also been informed by a staff climate survey carried out in Autumn 2023.
- 4.4. Because delivery of our net-zero targets is so dependent on the action of others, the Delivery Plan highlights the importance of continued engagement, particularly with underrepresented groups, including residents that consider themselves to be from a Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic background.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.0. Whilst the net-zero targets may take decades to achieve, the Delivery Plan 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 2024.
- 5.1. 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.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.0. *Annex 4* of the Delivery Plan sets out all priority actions that the Council intends to take over the fourth year of implementation of the Climate Strategy and Action Plan. Officers responsible for the individual actions have

confirmed that these can be carried out with existing resources or funding already secured; notwithstanding the delivery risks identified.

- 6.1. *Section 2.3* 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.
- 6.2. *Section 3* 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.
- 6.3. *Section 2.1* of the Delivery Plan estimates that circa £3 million (Table 2.2) of Council spend was allocated to projects that reduced emissions and/ or helped build climate resilience inside and outside the Council in 2022/23 and that circa £5.5 million is currently forecast to be spent in 2023/24.
- 6.4. Merton's proposed Capital Strategy 2024-28 which sets the proposed approved capital programme to the financial year 2024/28, includes provision to convert the bulk of the waste fleet over this period. No provision has been made for the conversion of the remaining fleet and investment into transport infrastructure, it is envisaged that external funding sources will be identified to provide a substantial contribution to this cost.
- 6.5. A more accurate cost of decarbonising Merton's operational buildings needs to be established by surveys which are currently being undertaken then officers can start to identify funding sources to contribute towards these costs.
- 6.6. 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.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.0. There is no statutory requirement for Local Authorities to set climate targets, or to 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.

- 7.1. When carrying out the investments and actions which form the Council's Delivery Plan as outlined in this report, it must where appropriate, follow the Council's Contract Standing Orders and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 in relation to entering into public contracts. The Council should also ensure that it considers the issue of subsidy control with regards any grant funding it may give to commercial entities.
- 7.2. The delegation in recommendation 2 is permissible under Section 9E of the Local Government Act 2000.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.0. *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.
- 8.1. Workstream 8, considers communication, outreach and LBM corporate procedure. Within this workstream, *Sections 2 and 3* highlight progress in supporting and empowering communities to take action on climate through the development of Merton's Climate Action Group which was launched in January 2021; in keeping with the key aims of Merton's community plan to increase social capital. Section 2 sets out our intention to provide continued support for community-led action, and to extend engagement to groups which have been less represented to date, including residents that consider themselves to be from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- 8.2. 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.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.0. None for the purposes of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.0. Delivery risks relating to annual priority actions have been assessed both at an individual level (*Annex 4 of the Delivery Plan*) and for the workstream as a whole (*in section 2.3*). 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.
- 10.1. *Section 3*, assesses the likelihood that the net-zero targets will be met, taking into account the 2% of emissions that are the direct responsibility of the Council, actions taken by the Council to enable emission reductions for the borough target, and the wider financial, political, behavioural and market forces in play.

10.2. Risk management and health and safety measures for individual actions will be undertaken by the Officer responsible for the action.

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

- Climate Delivery Plan – Year 4

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.0. [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] Merton Climate Delivery Plan – Year 1

<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/s36416/Climate%20Delivery%20Plan%20Y1%20-%20Cabinet.pdf>

[3] Merton Climate Delivery Plan – Year 2

<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1324>

[4] Merton Climate Delivery Plan – Year 3

<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=21103>

[5] Merton Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report 2023

https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files/Merton%202023%20GHG%20inventory%20report_FINAL%20VERSION%20%282%29.pdf

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