

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES O & S COMMITTEE

29TH JANUARY 2013

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| SUBJECT: | WIRRAL CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP ANNUAL REPORT |
| WARD/S AFFECTED: | ALL |
| REPORT OF: | ACTING DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR & ASSET MANAGEMENT |
| RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER: | COUNCILLOR BRIAN KENNY |
| KEY DECISION? | NO |

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to:
- Provide an update on the work of the Wirral Climate Change Group from 2012 including progress with the creation of a replacement climate change strategy for Wirral.
 - Seek agreement that the Council make a commitment to action on climate change through the Local Government Association's 'Climate Local' initiative.
- 1.2 Wirral Council has a long held commitment to action on climate change. It supports the Wirral Climate Change Group as a partnership forum to co-ordinate action in this area. Last year the Group's planned work to develop a replacement climate change strategy was endorsed by committee (Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, January 2012, minute 67). The Group has since implemented much of the planned consultation programme to support and inform the development of this strategy and a draft strategy is expected to be available by summer 2013.
- 1.3 Wirral Council's original commitment to action stems from being a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. The Nottingham Declaration has now been superseded by the Local Government Association (LGA) 'Climate Local' initiative launched on June 2012. Councils are invited to reaffirm their pledge to action by signing a Climate Local Commitment. Making such a commitment is compatible with current activity and reporting arrangements.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Local actions have a critical role in determining how we meet national and global emission reduction targets designed to mitigate damaging climate change. Much climate-related pollution is influenced by local decisions such as the way we heat and power buildings and travel around. Some changes in the climate are unavoidable as a result of pollution already in the atmosphere. It is

therefore important that we take appropriate and timely action to identify, mitigate and adapt to potential changes in the climate and the effects that they could have.

- 2.2 The Council made a public commitment to local action on climate change by signing the 'Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change' in 2001 (Council, 13 February 2006, Minute 91). This ultimately led to the adoption of a Wirral Council climate change strategy in 2007 (Cabinet 20 June 2007, Minute 99) and the formation of the Wirral Climate Change Group as a forum to co-ordinate action.
- 2.3 The original strategy has now run its course; the strategy's main target was met early. Work to develop a replacement strategy via the Wirral Climate Change Group was endorsed a year ago (Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, January 2012, minute 67). This programme envisaged an online questionnaire and workshops to gather views on a way forward, the production of a revised framework for formal consultation and its adoption by the Council and partner organisations
- 2.4 **Wirral Climate Change Group:** The Wirral Climate Change Group had four meetings in 2012. Meetings were well attended with regular contributions and actions from partners. During the year, the group's membership was expanded to include representation from two local environmental charities: Energy Projects Plus and the Wirral Environment Network.
- 2.5 The main focus for the Wirral Climate Change Group's work during 2012 was the replacement strategy consultation programme. Two online surveys were devised and implemented. The first was run through June and August and themed around cutting climate pollution. This survey attracted 667 responses. The second survey, concerning climate adaptation, was delayed to allow for the Council's 'What Really Matters' consultation and was eventually run between October and December. This attracted 576 responses. In November, a workshop on cutting climate pollution was held attracting 44 participants from partner, voluntary, community, faith and private sector organisations. A workshop on adaption is now being planned for spring 2013 with a draft strategy anticipated by summer 2013.
- 2.6 In addition to its work to develop a replacement climate change strategy, the group received reports and presentations on:
 - The work of local charity Energy Projects Plus
 - The 'Joint Strategic Needs Assessment' (JSNA) and the health impacts of climate change
 - The implications of the new National Planning Policy Framework for climate change
 - A Liverpool City Region (LCR) bid on health and climate adaptation made to the regional CLASP fund
 - The new LCR Sustainable Energy Action Plan
 - The work of Invest Wirral in support of the green economy
 - The work of local charity the Wirral Environment Network; and
 - Wirral Council's energy awareness programme

There were also regular progress reports on the CRed Wirral community carbon reduction campaign. During 2012, the number of participants in CRed Wirral grew by 305 and the number of carbon reduction pledges by 638.

2.7 Climate Local: In June 2012, the LGA launched 'Climate Local' as a successor to the 'Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change'. Climate Local aims to support the work that local authorities are undertaking to reduce carbon emissions and improve resilience to a changing climate and extreme weather. Climate Local involves:

- *Making a public declaration* Council leaders or mayors are asked to sign a Climate Local Commitment (see Appendix) on behalf of their councils as a public pledge to address climate change and build on existing achievements;
- *Identifying more detailed actions* - Within six months of signing-up, councils are expected to set out their specific climate-based commitments and actions. The scheme is not prescriptive but the LGA have produced a series of topic-based guides and templates to assist if needed;
- *Sharing of learning and experiences with other councils* - It is expected that signatories to Climate Local will share practice with others via an on-line forum on the LGA Knowledge Hub; and,
- *Sharing progress* – Signatories are expected to report once a year to enable the wider community to follow progress with commitments made.

2.8 The actions required to participate in Climate Local fit well with the existing climate change work programme and monitoring arrangements. The Council is already committed to develop a replacement strategy that will help to identify future actions. The existing annual reporting process could be utilised to publicly report progress.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 There are a number of risks associated with a failure to respond to the climate change agenda. Without an up-to-date local framework for climate change there is the danger that Wirral will be ill-prepared to manage the risks associated with likely changes in the local climate, for example, more extreme and frequent weather events that could have an adverse impact on the Borough, residents and the economy. There is also a risk that Wirral will be ill-prepared to take advantage of the anticipated economic, environmental and social opportunities associated with adaptation and the transition to a low carbon economy.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 The other option would be to do nothing and not replace the outdated climate change strategy. This would mean that Wirral would not have a robust framework in place to respond to the potential challenges and opportunities of climate change. The need for a replacement climate change strategy for Wirral has previously been acknowledged. At a time when the Council is facing unprecedented budgetary constraints, the Wirral Climate Change Group provides an important mechanism to deliver this strategy based on the sharing of expertise and resources for mutual advantage.

4.2 The creation of a Liverpool City Region (LCR) Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) has prompted some LCR local authorities to make a commitment under the EU's 'Covenant of Mayors' (CoM). The CoM only covers part of the climate change agenda – that relating to sustainable energy. It also follows a more prescriptive format than the voluntary and locally driven approach utilised in Climate Local. However, endorsement for Climate Local is compatible with the EU CoM should the Council be minded to pursue such a commitment at a later date. Discussions about how Wirral Council will work in support of the LCR SEAP are ongoing.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 Work to develop the replacement climate change strategy is based on a consultation programme and the active involvement of a range of public and private sector partners and organisations.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

6.1 The voluntary, community and faith sectors have an important role to play in the local response to climate change. This role has been recognised with an expanded range of partner organisations represented in the Wirral Climate Change Group. The group includes representation from VCA Wirral, Faiths4Change, Energy Projects Plus and Wirral Environment Network.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

7.1 There are no direct financial implications.

7.2 There are no IT implications.

7.3 There are no additional staffing implications.

7.4 There are no direct implications for the Council's assets. However, as with the initial strategy, the development and implementation of initiatives and projects concerning the efficient and effective use of energy and measures to improve the Council's adaptation response will likely have a positive benefit on the future management of the Council's assets.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Local responses to climate change may have different implications for different sectors of the community. Accordingly, an equalities impact assessment will be conducted as part of the strategy development process.

9.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

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| (a) Is an EIA required? | Yes |
| (b) If 'yes', has one been completed? | No |

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Wirral Climate Change Group provides a key forum for the co-ordination of local efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Its work thus assists the Council to meet its corporate objective to reduce its carbon footprint. It also assists the promotion of carbon reduction through partner organisations and in the wider community. In a similar way, the sharing of good practice with other authorities through Climate Local is also likely to help towards carbon reduction ambitions.

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct planning or community safety implications. Planning, police and fire service are represented in the Wirral Climate Change Group.

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 It is recommended that:

- The activity of the Wirral Climate Change Group from 2012 including progress with the programme to develop a replacement climate change strategy be noted; and
- Wirral Council participates in the LGA's 'Climate Local' initiative with the Leader of the Council asked to sign a Climate Local Commitment on behalf of the authority.

13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 The Wirral Climate Change Group is the partnership forum where action on climate change, adaptation and mitigation is developed and coordinated. In January 2012, the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Wirral Climate Change Group's proposed work to develop a replacement strategy.

13.2. The Council is a signatory to the 'Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change'. The LGA has completed its review of the 'Nottingham Declaration' and invited councils to reaffirm their commitment by making a commitment through a new 'Climate Local' initiative.

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APPENDICES

Climate Local Commitment, LGA

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change – Appendix A to Item 3 of Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee 12th October 2006 ‘Nottingham Declaration Council Motion – ‘Update Report’

Wirral Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan – Appendices to Item 17 of the Cabinet Meeting of 20th June 2007 ‘Environment – Nottingham Declaration Update Report No.2’

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Item 8, Wirral Climate Change Group Annual Report | 30 th January 2012 |
| Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Item 9, Reducing Wirral’s Carbon Footprint | 8 th March, 2010 |
| Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Item 9, Carbon Reduction - Progress Update Report 2 | 14 th September, 2010 |