

WIRRAL COUNCIL

Regeneration and Environment Policy and Performance 22 September 2014

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| SUBJECT: | Wirral Climate Change Strategy 2014-2019 |
| WARD/S AFFECTED: | All |
| REPORT OF: | David Armstrong |
| RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER: | Cllr Bernie Mooney |
| KEY DECISION? | Yes |

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report introduces a new climate change strategy for Wirral. The strategy sets a framework for action over the next five years to reduce green house pollution and to help ensure Wirral adapts to unavoidable changes in the climate. The strategy has been developed via the Wirral Climate Change Group in accordance with a previous council decision.
- 1.2 It is recommended that the strategy be endorsed as the agreed framework to encourage, develop and co-ordinate local climate-related action in Wirral.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Wirral Council has a long-held commitment to action on climate change. The Council was an early signatory to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change (Council, 13 February 2006, Minute 91). It recently reaffirmed this commitment by signing up to the Local Government Association's 'Climate Local' initiative (Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 29 January 2013, Minute 63). This entails a public commitment to cutting emissions and adapting to unavoidable changes in the climate.
- 2.2 In support of its public commitment to action the Council adopted its first strategy on climate change in 2007 (Cabinet, June 2007, Minute 99.) Work to develop a replacement strategy was agreed in 2012 (Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, January 2012, Minute 67).
- 2.3 The creation of the new climate strategy has been overseen via the Wirral Climate Change Group. This partnership group was set up by Wirral Council to help coordinate climate action. The group includes officers and elected members as well as representatives from various public bodies, community, voluntary and faith interests.
- 2.4 The new strategy (see appendix) was shaped through various consultation stages. An initial 'working' draft was produced for summer 2013. This drew on the outcomes from an earlier programme of public consultation activities. The

'working' draft was refined through consultation within the Wirral Climate Change Group. A consultation draft was then published publicly in December 2013 with comments invited by February 2014. A final draft – taking on board comments made - was agreed in July 2014. The Wirral Climate Change Group's recommendation is that partner organisations endorse this as the framework to encourage, develop and co-ordinate local climate-related action and investment.

2.5 The strategy's goals are to substantially cut climate pollution associated with Wirral, and to adapt Wirral to unavoidable climate change. To cut pollution the strategy aims to:

- Reduce demand for energy and make Wirral more energy efficient
- Generate and source more of our local energy needs from 'renewable' sources;
- Use more sustainable modes of transport, more fuel-efficient vehicles and less polluting means of getting around; and
- Reduce the indirect negative impacts that our decisions have for climate pollution in Wirral and elsewhere;

To adapt to unavoidable change the aim is to:

- Identify the risks and vulnerabilities from expected changes and bring forward plans and actions to limit negative impacts and improve resilience

In support of both goals the aim is to:

- Build capacity for action by strengthening local networks and partnerships and by developing wider awareness and education initiatives.

For each of the aims, the strategy signals the 'direction of travel' needed, highlights the context for action and identifies a set of objectives to be met.

2.6 To reduce demand for energy the strategy promotes efforts to secure investment in energy efficiency improvements. It recognises the opportunities to link such investments with the development of local skills and to promote local businesses. It highlights the potential for investment in heat networks and flags up the opportunities presented by the Wirral Waters development. The strategy also advocates the sharing of existing resources and expertise about energy efficiency and related awareness campaigns.

2.7 To encourage renewable energy the strategy promotes the formation of a co-operative to pool local investment. It advocates identifying potential sites for solar investment and promoting other technologies. It recognises the importance for further investment to develop Wirral as a centre of excellence for wind energy. It also flags up opportunities to link investments with the development of local skills and the promotion of local business.

2.8 To encourage more sustainable transport the strategy advances measures to promote active transport - cycling and walking. It advocates improvements to public transport both integration and ticketing. It promotes the development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the uptake of alternative fuelled vehicles.

2.9 To reduce indirect climate impacts the strategy advocates the promotion of green procurement and local supply chains. It envisages the further development of the embryonic Wirral food movement to encourage the

cultivation and consumption of local and seasonal produce. It promotes initiatives to reduce waste and encourage the re-use of materials. It also advocates greater use of sustainability appraisal to encourage more climate sensitive decision making

- 2.10 To advance climate adaptation the strategy advocates engaging key stakeholders in a risk assessment process and the promotion of the Environment Agency's 'Climate Ready' programme. It encourages the creation of community-specific adaptation information and steps to build community capacity to respond to weather events. The strategy also highlights a need for health planning to take climate issues into account. It flags up the importance of the natural environment in ameliorating climate impacts and directs support for initiatives to increase green infrastructure. It advocates water saving practices and rainwater harvesting as well as promoting permeable surfaces to reduce rainwater run-off. The framework highlights the opportunity to promote local businesses who offer goods and services related to adaptation.
- 2.11 To build capacity for action the strategy promotes the creation of an independent partnership, network and campaign to encourage widespread action. It advocates the spread of low carbon community and 'transition town'-type groups to foster community action. It also promotes the development of exemplar eco-buildings and the sharing of existing good practice. Education is seen to have a key role with links made to eco schools work, lifelong learning and vocational training.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 3.1 Without an effective up-to-date framework in place, Wirral could be disadvantaged when trying to take advantage of the various opportunities associated with the transition to a low carbon economy. Wirral may also be ill-prepared to manage the risks associated with changes in the climate, for example, to cope with the consequences of more extreme weather.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Prior to producing the replacement strategy the Wirral Climate Change Group considered and rejected the option to disband. The group recognised the advantages of sharing resources and expertise. It also recognised the benefit of a common framework to help co-ordinate local action.

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The strategy's production is based on:
- An online survey on cutting climate pollution (July – August 2012)
 - A public workshop on cutting climate pollution (November 2012)
 - An online survey on adapting to climate change (October - December 2012)
 - A public workshop on adapting to climate change (April 2013)
 - Consultation between partners within the climate change group on a working draft (summer 2013)
 - Publication of a consultation draft for public comments via the Council's website (December 2013-February 2014)

6.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

6.1 N/A

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 Climate change poses challenges and creates opportunities for all sectors. The strategy highlights potential actions that groups from the community sector can take. The consultation draft was praised by Community Action Wirral for doing so.

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

8.1 The new strategy does not commit the Council to any additional expenditure, IT or staffing resources. Work to develop a supporting action plan is ongoing and will be submitted for approval in due course. It is anticipated that this action plan will form the basis of the Council's future submission made to the Climate Local programme.

8.2 The Council already has a corporate target compatible with the new strategy's goal to substantially reduce climate pollution. The target is to reduce corporate carbon emissions 60% by 2025. This target is supported by a carbon budget process that anticipates year-on-year reductions of 5% and associated investments in energy efficiency. A recent estimate of the financial impact of reducing emissions in line with the carbon budget indicated this could yield potential savings of £1,026,901 between 2013/14 and 2015/15 (Budget Cabinet, February 2014). The savings anticipated come from reduced gas and electricity consumption and a reduction in payments for allowances required under the government's mandatory Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme (CRCEES).

8.3 The Council's asset strategy approved by Cabinet on 19 June 2014 already acknowledges the importance of the climate agenda for assets, noting:

The implications for the Council's land and buildings are considerable. There is a need to plan and manage our assets to reduce energy use – for heat, power and travel – and also for the potential to harness renewable energy from the estate. Both these steps to reduce our carbon footprint present opportunities to limit revenue expenditure. Crucially we must also adjust our approach to managing property to increase resilience to future climatic change. Here we will need to assess the risks and adapt the portfolio accordingly. Severe weather events can damage assets and disrupt service delivery. It will be important to adapt to the prospect of more extreme weather to ensure business continuity

The vision contained in the asset strategy looks to a future in which:

Assets are managed efficiently. They are well maintained, energy efficient, adapted to climate risks and exploit renewable energy wherever this is feasible.

- 8.4 Generally the adoption of the strategy is considered to present positive opportunities for Wirral in that it:
- Provides an up-to-date foundation for funding bids
 - Provides a platform to encourage investment in Wirral.
 - Promotes efficient resource use for both energy and water;
 - Helps limit vulnerability to extreme weather impacts

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no legal issues foreseen associated with recommendation to endorse the strategy beyond those set out in the body of this report.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review is attached – (*insert appropriate hyperlink*).

<http://bit.ly/CXEIA>

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The strategy accords with the Council's existing carbon reduction ambitions with a substantial part of the strategy focused on reducing green house gas emissions.
- 11.2 The draft strategy was subject to a sustainability appraisal in July 2014 and found to be broadly compatible with sustainability.

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The strategy is compatible with the emerging planning framework for Wirral which supports the transition to a low carbon economy and anticipates the need to adapt to climate change. In particular it lends support to the draft plan's objective for sustainable development and its policies on:
- Sustainable energy in the Wirral Waters development;
 - The development of priority sectors including offshore wind and the low carbon economy;
 - Sustainable transport;
 - Green infrastructure;
 - Flood risk and coastal protection;
 - Drainage; and
 - Design, heritage and amenity.
- 12.2 The strategy supports several measures to improve pedestrian, cycle and driver safety. It advances the benefits of developing the cycle route network; promoting cycle skills, maintenance and cycle security measures; introducing 20MPH zones in residential areas; discouraging pavement parking; and promoting smarter driving techniques.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 That the strategy is endorsed by the Council as the agreed framework to encourage and co-ordinate local climate-related action in Wirral.

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 Wirral Council has long-held and public commitments to climate action. The strategy presents a framework to help advance these commitments. The Wirral Climate Change Group was tasked with developing a replacement climate change strategy. This has now been produced. The group recommends that it be endorsed by the partner organisations involved.

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APPENDICES

Cool: Wirral Climate Change Strategy - 2014 – 2019

BACKGROUND PAPERS/REFERENCE MATERIAL

[Report of Cutting Climate Pollution Workshop](#)

[Report of Adapting to Climate Change Workshop](#)

[Report cutting climate pollution survey](#)

[Report adapting to climate change survey](#)

Summary of comments on the Wirral Climate Change Strategy Consultation Draft, response and modifications proposed

Rapid Sustainability Appraisal of the Wirral Climate Change Strategy – July 2014

Carbon Budget 2013/14 - Budget Cabinet, 12 February 2014

Transforming our Assets and Asset Management - Strategic Asset Management Plan 2014 – 2017

BRIEFING NOTES HISTORY

| Briefing Note | Date |
|---------------|------|
| - | - |

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|---|--------------|
| Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny | January 2013 |
| Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny | January 2012 |