

WIRRAL COUNCIL

REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 15 SEPTEMBER 2015

CABINET – 8 OCTOBER 2015

SUBJECT	CLIMATE CHANGE ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT AND ACTION PLAN
WARDS AFFECTED	ALL
REPORT OF	DAVID ARMSTRONG – ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDERS	CLLR BERNIE MOONEY – ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY
KEY DECISION?	YES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report presents a summary of progress to implement the new climate change strategy for Wirral. It documents the activities of the Wirral Climate Group, introduces the first annual progress report and details the current action plan in support of the strategy.

1.2 It is recommended that progress be noted and the first annual report and ‘rolling’ action plan be endorsed for public reporting purposes.

1.3 As part of the Council’s five year plan, the proposals in this report support the following pledges covered in the plan:

- Providing an attractive local environment for Wirral residents
- Wirral residents live healthier lives
- Thriving small businesses
- Assets and buildings are fit for purpose for Wirral’s businesses

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 Climate change presents challenges globally, national and locally. We need to limit pollution that exacerbates climate change and simultaneously adapt to unavoidable change from pollution already in our atmosphere. Much local climate-related pollution is linked to the amount of fossil fuels we use for heat, power and travel. It is also linked to decisions that we take that influence how others use fossil fuels. If we operate more efficiently and are more mindful about the wider impacts of our decisions we can help reduce the danger of climatic disturbance. Extreme weather already impacts on our activities. It is important to be better prepared and adapt so that we become more resilient to such disruption. Many of the actions needed in response to the climate agenda help

advance other agendas too, e.g. less pollution, better health and economic opportunities.

2.2 Local authorities have an important role to play in the climate agenda and many including Wirral Council have a long-held commitment and track record of action. Wirral Council is a signatory to the Local Government Association's (LGA) 'Climate Local' initiative (Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 29 January 2013, Minute 63). This commits the council to set out its actions to both reduce climate pollution and to adapt to unavoidable change. Climate Local also requires the public reporting of progress with respect to these actions.

2.3 The Council's first submission under Climate Local detailed actions to complete a new climate change strategy for Wirral through the Wirral Climate Change Group. This new strategy was endorsed by cabinet in October 2014 and now forms the basis for co-ordinating and encouraging actions across Wirral. The strategy proposes a 'rolling' action plan and annual public 'score card' to document progress. These have been developed via the Wirral Climate Change Group and are introduced in this report.

2.4 When Cabinet endorsed the new climate change strategy it requested an annual report on climate change. This report aims to fulfil this request. It is directed first via the Regeneration and Environmental Policy and Performance Committee in order to fulfil the agreed process for meeting our reporting obligations under Climate Local.

3.0 Wirral Climate Change Group

3.1 The Wirral Climate Change Group is a forum set up by Wirral Council to help co-ordinate climate action. The group includes officers and councillors as well as representatives from various public bodies, community and voluntary interests. Taking a partnership approach acknowledges the importance and value of working together and that climate change demands a response from all quarters.

3.2 The Wirral Climate Change Group developed the new climate change strategy for Wirral. It agreed the final version of this strategy in July 2014 and recommended it be endorsed by the partners involved. It has since been working to advance implementation of the strategy.

3.3 Since developing the strategy the Wirral Climate Change Group has met three times: in November 2014 and March and June 2015. It has helped to:

3.3.1 Develop launch events for the climate strategy. Two events took place in December 2014 at Wallasey Town Hall. A climate workshop for schools and a public launch 'party' to celebrate the creation of the strategy. The school event introduced themes from the strategy as a series of practical workshops using real-world examples. Participating schools were challenged to develop these projects back at school and present their findings to other schools at a Climate Convention. The convention took place in July 2015 at Kingsway Academy. The public launch 'party' introduced themes from the strategy

through a series of festive activities and displays. This 'drop-in' event featured a 'market place' to showcase local organisations and projects. It was opened by the Mayor and featured a performance of Christmas tunes by a school choir accompanied with instruments made from waste materials.

3.3.2 Organise a public event to promote community renewable energy. This event took place at Magenta Living's headquarters in Birkenhead in March 2015 with support from the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). It attracted over 40 people and featured presentations from three community renewable energy projects and the launch of the LEP's community energy brochure. Seventeen people came forward to express interest in setting up a community renewable energy initiative in Wirral. Work to establish such an initiative is now being progressed via local fuel poverty charity Energy Projects Plus – a partner in the Wirral Climate Change Group.

3.3.3 Update the Joint Strategic Need Assessment (JSNA) climate and health paper. The climate and health paper forms part of the JSNA evidence base and it is subject to regular review. Wirral's demographics suggest certain population groups could be more susceptible to climate change events and at greater risk of the subsequent impacts. These include: residents experiencing multiple deprivation, older people, young children, people suffering from cardiovascular disease (CVD) or respiratory illnesses, those at risk of thermal illness and residents with poor mental health. Hotter, drier summers are expected to increase the risk of CVD, heat stroke, respiratory illness, and food poisoning and gastrointestinal diseases. Extreme temperatures may exacerbate mental health problems. Storms and flooding may lead to injuries, death, susceptibility to respiratory illnesses, gastro-intestinal illness, food poisoning and have a detrimental impact on mental health.

3.3.4 Produce an annual progress report on the climate change strategy. (Appendix 1). The strategy envisages an annual progress report or 'score card'. A first year progress report has thus been produced. This report highlights recent steps taken locally that help progress climate objectives. Its publication, at a relatively early stage in life of the strategy, aims to help raise awareness, build momentum and motivate further action. Future progress reports will likely evolve in style and content as actions progress or stall and more data is collected.

3.3.5 Develop the climate strategy action plan (Appendix 2). The strategy envisages a 'rolling' action plan updated 'in action' over its five year life. This approach recognises:

- (i) The scale of the agenda. It is not necessary or practical to seek progress with all 70-plus objectives at the same time.
- (ii) The need for flexibility. It is important to be able to respond to opportunities and adapt to changing circumstances.
- (iii) The importance of building momentum and encouraging widespread action. Implementation is not the responsibility of a single organisation.

As an early iteration of a 'rolling' plan, the initial action plan document seeks to capture actions from across the Wirral Climate Change Group. Later versions will also seek to capture actions pledged by those beyond.

3.4 The group has also received presentations on:

3.4.1 Carbon reduction at Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Trust - The Trust had secured £5.6M capital investment through the carbon and energy fund mechanism for Combined Heat and Power, energy efficient lighting and insulation. These measures will reduce carbon emissions by around six thousand tonnes per annum. The investment will be paid back from savings over a 15 year period and is expected to deliver an addition £3m savings over this time-frame.

3.4.2 'WARP-IT'- Cheshire and Wirral NHS Partnership Trust use the on-line Warp-it portal to manage surplus materials and furniture across the organisation and beyond. The service has helped the Trust limit waste and to encourage re-use at a time of estate rationalisation.

3.4.3 The carbon reduction work of Magenta Living - Magenta's property improvement work has helped raise the energy efficiency 'SAP' rating of its housing stock from an average 'D' rating to a 'C' rating.

3.4.4 The carbon reduction and resilience work of Cheshire West and Chester Council - The council is a signatory to 'Climate Local' and has developed an action plan via a 'Sustainability Commission' with a scrutiny panel to oversee progress. The focus is on mitigation and adaptation.

3.4.5 Better Food Wirral - The Better Food Wirral initiative supported by Public Health provides an opportunity to address food and climate-related issues, such as promotion of local, fresh and seasonal produce.

3.4.6 The local climate impact profile for Wirral - Following an update, the profile now covers the period January 2005 to May 2014. The media record is comprised of 185 news items documenting 82 weather episodes. It confirms continued weather disruption to services. The most common weather episodes reported are excessive rainfall and flooding, followed by wind, then frost, snow and ice. The most common impacts reported relate to damage to infrastructure – roads, railways communication networks etc., disruption to processes, damage to buildings or subsidence; and changes in use of facilities or services.

3.4.7 The Resilient Parks Project - This pilot project was made possible due to a successful bid to CLASP (the local authority and public sector sustainability support service for the NW of England) for a small grant. This grant was used to commission a study of five local parks to help consider how we might need to adapt parks in the face of a changing climate. The sites chosen reflected a variety of circumstances and existing weather-related impacts from flooding to wild-fires. The project aimed to get interested parties including parks staff and user groups to think about the implications of warmer wetter winters and

hotter drier summers for parks management. The final project reports have now been published.

3.4.8 Investigation into small scale wind power - The climate strategy includes an objective to 'establish a small scale wind trial'. An investigation to provide some context has thus been undertaken. This found that since 2000 there have been 19 planning applications for wind turbines in Wirral with around two-thirds approved. At present there are five sites hosting nine turbines. All turbines are small in size with none rated over 15kW. Turbines have been developed for a variety of reasons beyond reducing bills and carbon emissions. These reasons include: as a temporary supply of power, for off grid power, educational reasons, to access grant funding, and as part of a wider ecological ethos. Since the investigation was reported to the group the Government has issued a Ministerial Statement which indicates that planning permission should only be granted for one or more wind turbines if the site is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan and the proposal is backed by the local community. This would cast doubt over the prospect of establishing a small scale wind trial.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

4.1 A failure to publicly report progress and identify actions in support of commitments for climate action could pose reputational risk for the Council. Failure to develop an appropriate response to climate change in Wirral will increase the risk of negative impacts from climate change in Wirral and beyond. Climate impacts are likely to be more severe for vulnerable groups.

5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None. This report has been prepared to fulfil a request from cabinet and to meet the reporting requirements of the Climate Local programme.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The annual progress report and action plan have been developed in discussions with partners in the Wirral Climate Change Group. The climate change strategy 2014-2019 to which these reports relate was developed through a wider public consultation process.

7.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

7.1 N/A

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 Climate change poses challenges and creates opportunities for all sectors.

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

9.1 The action plan does not commit the Council to any additional expenditure, IT, or staffing resources.

9.2 The Council's asset strategy acknowledges the importance of responding to the climate agenda and managing assets accordingly.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no legal issues foreseen associated with recommendation to endorse the progress report and action plan beyond those set out in the body of this report.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

(a) Yes and impact review can be found at the link below

<http://bit.ly/transEIA>

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The action plan accords with the climate change strategy and it reflects the Council's existing carbon reduction ambitions.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The action plan is compatible with the emerging planning framework for Wirral that supports the transition to a low carbon economy and anticipates the need to adapt to climate change. It includes actions to improve pedestrian, cycle and driver safety and security.

13.2 Recent changes to planning guidance concerning onshore wind turbines make further progress with the strategy objective to 'Establish a small-scale wind turbine trial' unlikely without changes to the Council's Core Strategy Local Plan, which does not currently seek to promote sites for onshore wind power. Draft Policy CS43 would currently only support the micro generation of renewable energy where the energy generated can be used at source.

14.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 The annual progress report and climate strategy action plan be noted and endorsed and used as the basis for public reporting to meet commitments under Climate Local.

15.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

15.1 The Council is a signatory to Climate Local which requires public reporting of action and progress.

15.2 As part of the Council's five year plan, the proposals in this report support the following pledges covered in the plan:

- Providing an attractive local environment for Wirral residents
- Wirral residents live healthier lives
- Thriving small businesses
- Assets and buildings are fit for purpose for Wirral's businesses

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Annual report: Cool Steps - Progress implementing the Wirral Climate Change Strategy, July 2015

Appendix 2:

Climate Change Strategy Action Plan, August 2015 version

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Cool: Wirral Climate Change Strategy- 2014-2019

[\[http://www.wirral.gov.uk/downloads/7555\]](http://www.wirral.gov.uk/downloads/7555)

Wirral JSNA Climate and Health

[\[http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/ourjsna/climate&health.html\]](http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/ourjsna/climate&health.html)

Wirral Local Climate Impact Profile 2005-2014

[\[http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/document_uploads/Downloads/Wirral_Local_Climate_Impact_Profile_2005_2014.pdf\]](http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/document_uploads/Downloads/Wirral_Local_Climate_Impact_Profile_2005_2014.pdf)

Wirral resilient parks pilot project [\[http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/leisure-and-culture/parks-beaches-and-countryside/parks-development-and-maintenance/resilient-parks-project\]](http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/leisure-and-culture/parks-beaches-and-countryside/parks-development-and-maintenance/resilient-parks-project)

Transforming our Assets and Asset Management - Strategic Asset Management Plan 2014 – 2017 [\[http://www.wirral.gov.uk/downloads/7129\]](http://www.wirral.gov.uk/downloads/7129)

BRIEFING NOTES HISTORY

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SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny	January 2013
Policy and Performance - Regeneration and Environment Committee	September 2014
Cabinet	October 2014