

16 MARCH 2020

REPORT TITLE	A NEW CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY FOR WIRRAL
REPORT OF	Director of Delivery Services

REPORT SUMMARY

A new climate change strategy is needed. The Council’s resolution on the Climate Emergency of December 2018 called on the Cool Wirral Partnership to ensure the new climate change strategy included a challenging target for emissions reduction in line with the latest scientific guidance. It also asked it for ambitious recommendations to address this challenge. A new strategy has since been prepared by the partnership. It takes on board the latest evidence and changes in policy globally and nationally. The new strategy has been created using newly available tools. It has also involved a series of engagement events and a public consultation. The new strategy - Cool 2 - was finally agreed by the Cool Wirral Partnership in December 2019. Partners have been asked to each endorse the new framework and to develop actions in support. The new strategy was considered by Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2020. The committee recommended that the strategy be endorsed and that others be encouraged to play their part by developing locally determined contributions in support of it. A separate report will detail the Council’s climate emergency action plan which will form the council’s principal contribution to it.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION/S

To:

1. Note the new strategy and the steps taken by the Cool Wirral Partnership to create an up to date framework that reflects the climate emergency.
2. Endorse the strategy in line with the recommendation of the March 2020 Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
3. Note the issues raised by Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee concerning potential council actions to support the strategy for consideration as part of the emerging council climate emergency action plan.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Council endorsed the previous climate change strategy for Wirral, called Cool, in 2014. This covered the period 2014 to 2019. The Cool strategy indicated that a new strategy should be prepared during its final year to ensure a 'seamless transition' in work. Much has changed since the original Cool strategy was adopted. In the light of alarming new evidence presented in the wake of the UN Paris Agreement, the Council asked the Cool Wirral Partnership to take this into consideration when developing the new strategy. A new strategy, Cool 2, has now been agreed by the Cool Wirral Partnership. Partners have been asked to endorse the strategy and develop actions in support. The new strategy was considered by Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2020. The committee recommended that the strategy be endorsed and that others be encouraged to play their part by developing locally determined contributions in support of it. The Council has already committed to develop a climate emergency action plan and work is underway on this which will set out the actions being taken in support of the strategy.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 One option is not to endorse the new Cool 2 strategy, however, the council has already made several commitments on climate change and requested that the new strategy addresses the climate crisis. Officers and members have also played an active part in shaping the new strategy, through participation in and support for the work of the Cool Wirral Partnership. Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee has recommended the strategy be endorsed.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Council has had a longstanding interest in and commitment to act in the face of climate change. Unlike some councils, it did not abandon work to support local climate action in the face of challenging financial conditions. To help fulfil its commitments it has worked in partnership with a host of local organisations to develop a local climate change strategy and to encourage action in support of this. There have been regular annual reports on climate work to council via this Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.2 In recognition that the original climate change strategy was approaching its end date, work began on its replacement towards the end of 2018. The Council's climate emergency resolution of December 2018 recognised that in the light of more recent global evidence more urgent action is necessary. Council therefore asked the Cool Wirral partnership to take the latest information on board when developing the new framework and to ensure the new strategy included ambitious recommendations to address the challenge.
- 3.3 Since the original strategy was adopted there have been several significant developments. The UN's Paris Agreement on Climate Change (UN, 2015) formally came into force in 2016. This sets out the globally agreed approach to mitigating carbon emissions and adapting to unavoidable change. The global goal is to limit average rises in temperature to 'well below' 2⁰C above the preindustrial level and pursue efforts to limit the rise to 1.5 ⁰C. Under this agreement nations are required

to develop their own Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) setting actions to help achieve the global goal. The agreement includes a 'ratchet mechanism' designed to encourage progressive improvement in these NDCs which must be updated periodically and reported to the UN. At present the NDCs submitted do not yet put us on a safe path.

- 3.4 In the wake of the Paris Agreement and subsequent review by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of evidence concerning the impacts of 1.5°C warming (IPCC, 2018), the UK Government's own independent Climate Change Committee has made recommendations to Government (CCC,2019). As a result, the UK Government has now tightened its legally binding target for emissions reduction. The target is now to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Previously it was an 80% reduction in emissions compared to 1990 levels. More work will now be needed to keep within future legally binding carbon budgets.
- 3.5 The Cool Wirral Partnership began work to develop a new strategy in the latter part of 2018. The creation of the new strategy has involved: a review of the existing strategy; consideration of more recent policy developments and the latest evidence available; local data sets; use of newly available models and tools; and partner and public engagement activities and public consultation on a draft strategy (detailed on part 8 below). In response to the Council's request to consider the latest evidence, the work has drawn on the UK Climate Change Committee's report on net zero emissions (CCC, 2019) and has used the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change's Local Carbon Budget tool. The carbon budget tool was used as the basis for the new emissions reduction goal based on an independent assessment of what Wirral's fair share of the global emissions reduction burden is.
- 3.6 The new Cool 2 strategy (Appendix 1) sets two goals:
- (i) To stay within a local emissions 'budget' of 7.7 million tonnes (Mt) of CO₂ between 2020-2100 and to reach 'net zero' pollution as early as possible before 2041.
 - (ii) To ensure a climate resilient Wirral adapted to cope with existing change and further unavoidable disruption this century.

In support of these goals the strategy sets 11 objectives for:

- i. **Leaner use of energy:** To reduce the overall demand for energy in Wirral across residential, commercial and industrial sectors making sure all homes currently below Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C that can be upgraded are improved to this level or better by around 2030.
- ii. **Clean energy:** To generate and/or source all our local energy needs from zero carbon and renewable sources by around 2041.
- iii. **Clean Travel:** A complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030.
- iv. **Wiser decisions:** To use resources – materials, land and food - in a sustainable way so that our collective decisions do not add indirectly to the burden of climate damaging pollution in Wirral or elsewhere – cutting waste, changing land uses and our diets.

- v. **Storing more carbon:** To capture more carbon naturally by increasing woodland cover in line with national recommendations and by protecting soils and natural habitats.
- vi. **A clear view of climate risk:** To identify vulnerabilities in the face of present extreme weather and further, already unavoidable, changes in the climate and sea levels this century.
- vii. **Adaptation:** To put in place policies, practices and infrastructure, including natural 'green and blue' infrastructure, that help limit negative impacts from existing and future changes in the climate.
- viii. **Wider climate understanding:** To educate and raise awareness about the climate emergency and about the opportunities and benefits of taking climate action, together with the risks and threats of inaction across Wirral to make sure we understand the problem and have the right skills in place to do what needs to be done.
- ix. **Adequate resourcing:** To secure increased investment to match the scale of the challenge.
- x. **Stronger partnerships and networks:** To ensure climate action is given the priority it needs and is developed in a collaborative and co-ordinated way with key organisations, interests and networks involved to provide mutual support.
- xi. **Evidence informed action:** To build a better picture of where we are at, what needs to be done and the impact of our actions through the ongoing collation and examination of the evidence and data available to include the identification of indicators and associated targets.

3.7 The strategy signals the direction of change needed to move towards for each of the objectives. It calls on all who back the strategy to develop action plans in support and share these 'locally determined contributions' (borrowing from the UN's approach) with the partnership. It also details a series of 19 early steps where action by more than one partner will help accelerate progress. These steps range from developing an adaptation programme to producing a tree strategy; and from establishing a zero carbon buildings taskforce to ensuring the policies of the local plan reflect climate concerns. Several of the early steps involve providing support and encouragement to different sectors to develop locally determined contributions. The council has already resolved to develop a climate emergency action plan. This will be its locally determined contribution to the wider strategy.

3.8 A report on the new strategy was considered by the March 2020 Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Issues raised included: ensuring the Birkenhead Regeneration was an exemplar of climate friendly development and the need to ensure that Growth Company developments set high standards; the importance of the Local Plan in raising standards for development; the need to improve recycling performance in the context of pending waste legislation; the need for clarity on what the proposed council 2030 net zero target included and excluded and the limitations of off-setting; the challenge and costs of raising energy efficiency performance in existing town halls and older council buildings; and the need to locate council meetings in locations that are accessible by public transport.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications to endorsing the new strategy, although the changes that it anticipates will have implications as they are translated into action. It should be noted that taking no action is not cost neutral and the lack of a

local response is likely to be more costly in the long run. In addition to costs from inaction, there may be potential savings from efforts to cut the use of fossil fuels for heat, power and transport. The approach adopted based on partnership work is considered most prudent.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications foreseen because of the recommendations of this report. It should, however, be noted that the adequacy of national and local government action is under scrutiny by environmental interests with the threat of potential legal challenge in some areas.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no direct resource implications to endorsing the strategy. Work to support the partnership comes from within existing resources. There will be resource implications from the associated Climate Emergency Action Plan which will be the subject of a separate report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 Unnatural climate change presents an existential threat. There are already many direct risks associated with existing and unavoidable change locally including disruption and damage from more frequent extreme weather events including storms, heat waves and flooding. The actions needed to prevent more dangerous change demand a response from all parties from global to local. Having a robust up to date local strategy in place is an important mechanism to mitigate risk and play a part in wider efforts to address the problem.

7.2 The Council has made a series of public commitments to act on climate change, most recently declaring an Environment and Climate Emergency in July 2019. A failure to act proportionately presents a reputational risk

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 There were a series of engagement activities to help shape the new strategy with both partner organisations and the wider public. The first public engagement event held in Seacombe, took place in December 2018 to coincide with the UN's climate Conference of the Parties held in Katowice, Poland. Further engagement activities included: a partner workshop in Birkenhead; public events at Hulme Hall in Port Sunlight and an event for schools at Port Sunlight River Park. These engagement activities were used to help shape a draft strategy. This draft was published on the Council's website in August 2019 alongside a consultation survey. The consultation generated 185 responses. Issues identified from the consultation were then used to shape the final version.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

(a) The Equality Impact Review is attached via link below:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2017/delivery>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Environment and Climate Emergency Declaration was resolved with all party support at Council in July 2019 due to 'extreme concern' about the impact of climate change and the urgent need for action. The Council has been developing a Climate Emergency Action Plan which responds to the declaration and the transformation the Council and its provision will undertake. This report provides Committee with an overview of the Cool 2 Strategy developed for Wirral by the Cool Wirral Partnership. The Council's Climate Emergency Action plan will be the Council's contribution to the Cool 2 Strategy and partners and other Wirral organisations will be urged to establish their own plans and contributions to the Cool 2 Strategy. Therefore, the actions and planning set out in this report are designed to have a positive effect on the environment and climate.

All reports and briefing notes produced on behalf of the Council now set out the environmental and climate implications of the recommendations or advice being put forward.

The content and recommendations contained within this report are expected to:

- Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Cool 2 Strategy

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Climate Change Group (2014) [Cool: Wirral Climate Change Strategy 2014-2019](#)

UN (2015) [Paris Agreement](#)

IPCC, 2018: [Summary for Policymakers](#). In: *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*

CCC (2019) [Net Zero: The UK's contribution to stopping global warming](#)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee	12/03/2020
Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee	24/9/2019
Council - Extraordinary Meeting	15/7/2019
Council	6/12/2018
Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee	28/11/2018
Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee	31/01/2018