

## **CABINET**

**Thursday 4 January 2024**

**Climate Change Programme six-month update June to November 2023**

**Report of: Corporate Services**

**Cabinet Portfolio:** Climate Change and Corporate Services

**Key Decision:** No

**Confidentiality:** Non-Exempt

### **Purpose of report**

1. This report updates Members on the progress made with the Climate Action Plan between June-November 2023 and highlights current progress and identified risks for delivery
2. This report makes recommendations for the next set of priorities to support the delivery of the adopted approved action plan and requests further budget approvals for identified projects to support the plan.

### **Recommendation**

3. The climate change programme update is reviewed and noted.
4. Cabinet is requested to review and approve the proposed projects list and associated cost allocations set out in paragraph 39 to be funded from the approved 2023/24 climate budget.

### **Background**

5. The climate change action plan was adopted at Cabinet on 6 July 2023. A formal process for reporting progress on delivery of this plan was announced by the Portfolio Holder at Full Council on 27 July 2023. This update would include reports to Overview and Scrutiny in December and June of each year, with corresponding reports to Cabinet in January and July.
6. This report is the first progress report following adoption of the Climate Action Plan. It provides details of projects formed to support delivery of actions from the action plan, in relation to financial support approved at Cabinet.
7. The progress of the Climate Action plan was reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 December 2023. Other than some specific questions about projects at the Civic offices, the update report was noted by the committee with no further comments or amendments being proposed to Cabinet.
8. The proposals included in this report link to agreed actions within the plan and this is referenced in the table under 'financial and resource implications'.

### **Project update overview**

9. Appendix 1 shows progress made in the Climate Action Plan. This is a four year plan with a 12-year operational target and 17-year district target. Of the actions

in the plan, 37 actions are being actively investigated and are currently on target.

### Live projects – highlight report

10. Currently, there are nine live projects. Activities identified as part of major projects have been compiled into projects to be monitored at project board.

Project Title	Overview	Reference from Action Plan
Electrical Charging Infrastructure – Hart car parks	Electric Vehicle Charge Points to be installed across car parks in the district	T1
Carbon and Biodiversity Offsetting Opportunities – Phase 2	Design for biodiversity net gain projects across 6 sites that will increase carbon sequestration opportunities, dependent on emerging secondary guidance from central government	D6
Building Energy Efficiency	Energy audits and decarbonisation of Hart buildings, including leisure centres	B1-B13
Tree Strategy	Map canopy cover across District and identify strategy to increase connectivity and cover and store carbon	D5
Sustainable Rebranding, including microsite	Create bespoke local sustainability brand to focus resident engagement and encourage behaviour change as a District	D9
Resident Housing Retrofit Scheme	Provide information and support for residents and landlords to help upgrade their homes, including thermal imaging camera lending scheme	D3, D9
Renewables Project – Hart land and buildings <i>(not yet submitted to project board)</i>	Evaluate renewable energy potential on council buildings and land and implement for viable projects	E1-E7, E11
Green Grid Framework	Improving sustainable transport links to reduce District emissions	D8
Waste vehicles – conversion to hydrotreated vegetable oil	Serco waste vehicles to be converted to hydrotreated vegetable oil to reduce emissions by up to 98%	T12

11. Positive progress has been made with legal agreements for the installation of EVCPs in car parks across the district, with plans to begin installation late December/early January and complete in 2024.
12. Draft decarbonisation reports have been completed for both leisure centres, the Council's head office and Harlington building. This has enabled applications to be submitted to seek grant funding via the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund (PSDS) to support replacement of fossil fuel boilers at Frogmore Leisure Centre, Civic and Harlington, as well as grant funding through the Swimming Pool Support Fund Phase 2 for solar panel installation at Hart Leisure Centre. The boiler at Hart Leisure Centre doesn't qualify for PSDS funding at this time.
13. At July's Full Council a motion was agreed to further investigate the feasibility of solar panels and a data centre at Hart Leisure Centre. As part of the decarbonisation report for the site, consultants have engaged with stakeholders to investigate the viability of these two items. This will form part of the final decarbonisation report and will inform decisions on progressing to a more in-depth feasibility study. This feasibility study is currently on track for delivery before the end of March.
14. The tree strategy is currently in development. We are engaging with external stakeholders to look at feasibility of potential tree planting projects.
15. Due to increased staffing resource in September and the appointment of a Climate Change Projects Officer, the team has been able to focus on developing a resident housing retrofit project. This will support residents to identify potential home energy savings and access grant funding and/or support from reliable industry experts. This project includes plans to roll out the thermal imaging camera lending scheme that was piloted last winter.
16. The switching of street cleaning and grounds maintenance vehicles to hydrotreated vegetable oil has been completed. Following a pilot period, the switching for the waste vehicles is on target for completion in 2024. This is a significant part of the council's identified vehicle emissions and make a significant contribution to reducing the Hart's transport emissions. hydrotreated vegetable oil is predicted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up 98% compared to fossil fuels (plan ref: T9-T12).
17. The replacement of car parks with LED lighting has been completed across six Hart car parks and three parish/town council car parks. This has an estimated energy reduction saving of 50-60%. As well as reduced running costs, there is an additional cost saving in replacement of lighting. LED lighting replacement is expected to be 25 years in comparison with the previous lighting, which was on replacement period of 3-4 years (plan ref. E14).
18. Hart's vehicle fleet replacement programme has been reviewed and two vehicles have been replaced with electric alternatives for the Parking and Countryside teams.

## **Communications and Engagement**

19. For the period between March and October 2023, the council's climate change social media posts reached 84,448 individuals and had direct engagement with 4,771 of those individuals.
20. The stakeholder group has been reviewed and broadened with a range of stakeholders to include parish and town councils, as well as key environmental groups. The first meeting was held in September and has resulted in additional engagement with individual participants to discuss support for local projects. These meetings will be held quarterly, and the next meeting is scheduled for January 2024.
21. The Council Climate Action Scorecard results have been released. While these should not be used as a direct comparison of progress between authorities, they are a useful tool to indicate areas where additional progress can be made. The results are being addressed as part of the internal officer's working group to help inform prioritisation of activities. Select staff and councillors have undertaken additional workshops with the Climate Academy to identify best practice examples and increase climate change network opportunities with other councils.
22. Members of the internal officer's working group and those identified for future work on a climate adaptation project have been invited to undertake carbon literacy training in December and into 2024 to enhance understanding of climate change activities and inform continued work in this area.
23. Suitable courses have been identified to enable roll out of climate training that will be offered to District Councillors, with the potential to support external stakeholders. This will be part of the communications and engagement plan, with a view to empowering attendees to be a catalyst for positive change.
24. Branding and content are being developed to enable the launch of a new sustainability microsite. This will be aimed at encouraging behaviour change and provide support to enable local residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint. The launch for this website is planned for January 2024.

### **Additional projects planned this financial year**

25. The following additional projects are proposed for delivery this financial year:
  - Additional building energy audit for Springwell Lane Depot and an in-depth decarbonisation plan for Heathland Court in Yateley, to complement any other proposed projects at that site
  - Thermal imaging drone pilot study to initiate business engagement in reducing their carbon footprint
  - Initial exploration of the potential opportunities for Heat Delivery Networks in the district

- Conversion of Hart's electricity supply to 100% renewable, where financially viable
  - Set up a Community Climate Fund to enable local community groups and organisations to apply for funding to help deliver local projects, which are aimed at helping to reduce the district's emissions
  - Engage with departments across the council to help embed climate reduction measures within policies, with an initial key focus on procurement and planning.
26. In order to help promote the variety of home retrofit energy grants that are available, through Ofgem, we propose to publish a statement of intent that should increase awareness and uptake of home insulation and retrofit grants by residents.

## **PROPOSALS**

27. To approve the projects and cost allocations as identified in 'Financial and Resource Implications'.
28. To approve Heathlands Court for an in-depth decarbonisation report as part of the wider proposal to redesign and improve the building for tenants. To approve Springwell Lane for a simpler energy audit report that will identify potential energy saving measures and associated costs for reducing emissions.
29. To approve budget to set up a climate grant aimed at enabling groups and organisations within the district communities to tackle emissions reduction and help reach the council's 2040 district target.
30. To approve £5k to fund a thermal imaging drone pilot study that will help identify energy heat loss for priority areas for local businesses and initiate engagement to help reduce emissions within the district.
31. To support plans to publish a statement of intent that should facilitate resident engagement and help reduce emissions within the district.

## **Financial summary**

32. Over the last two years, the allocated budget for climate change projects to date has been £450k (£250k in 22/23, £200k in 23/24). Of this, £379k has been allocated to specific projects and activities (£241.5k Aug 2022, £137.5k Aug 2023). The total spent or committed to spends is £301k, of which £211.5k has been funded from the climate change budget. A breakdown of the projects and spending is shown in the Appendix 2.
33. There will be a request for further £200k budget in the 24/25 budget.
34. This report requests approval for £43k to be assigned to specific projects from the 23/24 budget allocation. See 'financial and resource implications' below.

## **Alternative options**

35. Complete prioritisation of Council’s own portfolio and deter financial contributions towards district-wide target until we have completed our own portfolio work. This approach would be detrimental to delivering the district target by 2040 and should be worked on simultaneously, whilst still prioritising resources against council’s own operational target for 2035. Some financial commitment and early engagement with residents and businesses will help demonstrate council support and facilitate progress.

### Corporate Governance considerations

36. The projects and expenditure identified support the Climate Change Action plan, which in turn supports the Planet priority set out in the Corporate Plan and its primary objective is to guide Hart towards achieving its vision.

#### Service Plan

- Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan? Yes
- Is the proposal being funded from current budgets? Yes
- Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal? Yes

### Legal and Constitutional Issues

37. There is no statutory duty to report regularly to Cabinet on the Council’s performance. However, under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended) an authority has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. Regular reports on the Council’s performance in working towards meeting its carbon neutrality targets assists in demonstrating best value and compliance with the statutory duty.

### Financial and Resource Implications

38. The Council approved £200k in the 2023/24 budget to undertake climate related projects. The table below details a number of proposed projects together with the estimated cost of each.
39. The estimated expenditure of £43k can be funded from the remaining £71k approved budget allocation for 2023/24.

Proposed item/project	Action Plan ref	Responsible officers	Estimated cost
Set up community climate grant	D9, C7	Sustainability and Climate Change Officer	£15k
Business pilot study: thermal imaging drones	D9, C7	Sustainability and Climate Change Officer, Climate Change Projects Officer	£5k
Additional energy audits and decarbonisation	B1	Sustainability and Climate Change Officer,	£23k

plans – Heathlands Court, Springwell Lane Depot		Commercial Business Partner	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>£43k</b>

The project budgets will be monitored by the finance team who are invited to attend the climate change officer working group and the corporate project board for the larger projects.

### **Risk Management**

40. The risk in not going ahead with the proposed projects is that the council will be unable to make progress on the Climate Action Plan, or towards reaching our climate 2035 and 2040 targets. External funding will be explored to support delivery wherever possible.

### **Equalities**

41. The resident housing retrofit project may impact on equalities directly, where certain groups may be at an advantage or disadvantage to other groups or individuals. An initial impact assessment has been completed for this project and additional impact assessments are being carried out as part of this project plan.

### **Climate Change implications**

42. The proposals included in this report underpin the delivery of the Council's climate change action plan.

**Contact Details:** Liz Vango-Smith

### **Supporting papers:**

Appendix 1: Climate Action Plan – progress tracker Nov 2023

Appendix 2: Climate Change Programme – financial summary March - November 2023