

Report to Cabinet

9th June 2022



Cabinet Member for the Environment and Rural Affairs

DECISION REQUIRED

Not Exempt

Development of a District wide climate change action plan

Executive Summary

The report recommends that a Climate Change Panel is established to assist with the development of a climate change action plan for the District. The Panel will consist of experts on a range of subjects associated with reducing carbon emissions and preparing for a changing climate. The Panel would be preceded by a workshop with Council officers to identify existing projects, as well as realistic new opportunities.

The information from this process and the ideas from a Horsham District Climate Change Group, which met during 2021, would feed into the discussion of the Climate Change Panel. Consultants would be used to facilitate the workshop with Council officers and run the meetings of the Panel. This will ensure a degree of independence and that there is a focused and structured discussion. The output will be an achievable and realistic climate change action plan for the District. The plan would go beyond actions for the Council and identify where other organisations need to take the lead and where wider engagement and action will be essential.

The report requests a revenue budget of £50k to procure the consultants and a further revenue budget of £20k for climate change communications. The latter will be important once the plan has been developed, to raise awareness of actions that businesses and residents can take. It will also be essential to obtain the buy-in of key partners to support the delivery of the plan.

Once the plan has been produced stakeholder events will be held to galvanise action but also capture more ideas from the community and other organisations. So the plan will need to continually evolve.

Recommendations

That the Cabinet is recommended:

- i) To approve the establishment of a Climate Change Panel which will input to the development of a District wide climate change action plan
- ii) To request that full Council approves a revenue budget of £70k in 2022/23 to support the development of the plan

- iii) To approve the procurement of a consultant to facilitate a workshop with Council officers, as well as the meetings of the Climate Change Panel, and assist with the production of a District wide climate change action plan

Reasons for Recommendations

- i) A new Panel of experts will give external input to the development of a District wide strategy and plan to generate new ideas and increase the legitimacy of the plan.
- ii) Budget is required to secure a consultant to facilitate the meetings of the Climate Change Panel, support the drafting of the action plan and the follow up engagement to gain support from partners and the wider community to deliver the action plan.
- iii) Ensure that the Councils procurement process are followed.

Background Papers

Cabinet report 24 March 2022 - New Council Carbon Reduction Plan (April 2022 to March 2025).

Horsham Carbon Audit – District wide carbon reduction study and carbon audit of the Local Plan Review. AECOM (2021)

Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Council has two approved targets for the organisation to become carbon neutral and at its meeting on 24th March 2022 Cabinet approved a three-year action. This will make significant progress to meeting its 2030 target for the Councils direct emissions to be carbon neutral. Direct emissions relate to those generated from the gas and electricity used in its operational buildings, and the fuel used in its fleet vehicles.
- 1.2 This demonstrates the Council is taking the lead to reduce its own carbon emissions and tackling climate change. However, its total emissions represent a small percentage (1%-2%) of the greenhouse gas emissions for the Horsham District. Whilst there are many projects taking place that will contribute to reducing the District wide emissions, an overarching strategy and action plan is required to drive forward action on reducing emissions and to prepare for changes to the climate. The Council cannot achieve this alone and will need to work with and inspire others to take action.
- 1.3 This report proposes establishing a Climate Change panel involving experts in subjects that are central to tackling this wide ranging issue, and to use consultants to facilitate this process. This will build on the work that the Council is already doing and set a framework for engaging with partners and the wider community. A revenue budget is required to employ consultants to help facilitate the production of the plan and to implement the engagement and communications, given the importance of this to encourage climate change action.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 The Cared for Environment section of the Corporate Plan 2019-2023 includes a priority to “*work with partners towards becoming a carbon neutral District*”. This report suggests a way forward in relation to this priority.

3 Details

The need for a climate change plan

- 3.1 The UK has a legally binding target to become net zero carbon by 2050. All levels of Government and sectors need to play their part in reaching this target. The emissions of gases that contribute to the changing climate across the Horsham District have fallen by about 33% over the last 14 years. However, much of this has been due to Government policy, particularly support to install renewable and low carbon technology, such as offshore wind farms. This has resulted in less reliance on coal fired power stations and a significant move towards the electricity grid being decarbonised.
- 3.2 Although many of the changes that are required to meet net zero are established at a national level, action at a local level is essential. The Committee for Climate Change estimates that “*around a third of the UK’s emissions are dependent on sectors that are directly shaped or influenced by local authority practice, policy or partnerships*”. Some of this is through direct action by reducing emissions from its

buildings and vehicles. The Council is showing leadership in this area through its carbon reduction targets and a three-year action plan. However, this only represents 1%-2% of the emissions for the whole District.

- 3.3 The Council can have a direct influence on tackling climate change across the District through delivery of its duties and services, such as planning, building control and economic development. Procurement is another powerful way to leverage influence, by supporting businesses in its supply chain to reduce their carbon emissions. Many of these will be local companies. Councils are also very familiar at working in partnership and can bring organisations together to help move to a low carbon world. Another important role for Councils is in terms of engagement and communications on climate change. Horsham District Council has increased its communications on climate change issues which is essential in raising awareness.

Action to date

- 3.4 There are many projects and initiatives being undertaken across the Council that are helping to reduce emissions and prepare for a changing climate. However, there is no overarching strategy and action plan for the District. Such a plan will identify further actions that the Council can take but it will also be important for partners to be part of the delivery and for businesses and residents to be engaged to take action.
- 3.5 A Horsham District Climate Change Group was formed last year with stakeholders from a range of sectors, including businesses, Parish Councils, community groups, the education and social housing sectors. Whilst the Group suggested some useful ideas, these were mostly directed at the Council and not actions others could lead on or implement. Some single issues, such as Gatwick Airport, dominated the discussion. There was a mixture of technical and non-technical people on the group, and it became clear that a realistic and achievable plan was not likely to be produced from this approach.
- 3.6 A consultant, AECOM, was commissioned to analyse the existing energy use, carbon dioxide emissions, and low and zero carbon energy generation in the Horsham District. Although focused on information that supports the development of planning policy on these issues, the study provides useful information on these issues and what interventions could be used to reduce energy use and carbon emissions, as well as the potential to increase low and zero carbon energy generation across the District.

Proposed new approach

- 3.7 This report recommends establishing a Climate Change Panel consisting of experts in the areas where action needs to be taken, such as reducing energy use and increasing the take up of renewable and low carbon technology. The first step would be to hold a workshop with officers from across the Council to identify existing projects but also realistic new opportunities. This information combined with the ideas from the previous Climate Change Group, will feed into the discussion of the Climate Change Panel. The data and potential scenarios from the AECOM report will also provide useful information for the Panel.
- 3.8 The Panel meetings will be facilitated by a consultant, which will give some independence to the process and ensure that there is focused and structured discussion. The output will be an achievable and realistic action plan.

- 3.9 The advantage of this approach is that it is likely to generate new ideas, using a facilitator will give some independence to the process and an action plan can be developed quickly.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 Once the Council has approved the plan, an extensive stakeholder engagement process will be undertaken to galvanise action in the community and obtain the support and involvement of key partners. This will involve in depth approaches, for example, using focus groups and workshops, as well as newly emerging participatory techniques. The climate change plan will need to continually evolve and so ideas that come forward from this engagement process can also be included in the plan.

5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 The Environment and Rural Affairs Policy Development Advisory Group received a presentation on the proposal in this report on 16th May. The Group had some initial reservations about the approach, as it wanted to ensure that there would be adequate resident and business engagement. However, the additional budget would cover the costs of initial engagement once the plan is produced. The plan would continually evolve and could incorporate ideas and actions suggested throughout the engagement process.
- 5.2 The Monitoring Officer made minor amendments to the report and the Interim Director of Resources comments are included in section 7 of this report.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 The first option that was rejected was not to develop a Climate Change Action Plan for the District. However, the Council's Corporate Plan recognises that it needs to work with partners for the whole District to become carbon neutral. A plan would be an ideal way to draw in partner organisations to implement climate change actions. It would also provide a framework to draw together the current and future actions.
- 6.2 The Council could develop a plan itself, drawing on internal expertise and expanding on the work that already contributes to reducing carbon emissions and preparing for the impacts of a changing climate. However, external expertise will give the plan greater legitimacy and to obtain broader views and ideas, and ultimately buy-in from partners to deliver their responsibilities and the community to take action.
- 6.3 The Council could run a Climate Assembly to help inform the development of the plan. An Assembly usually consists of about 50 residents who reflect the local population in terms of age, gender, socio-economic, race and other factors and are selected at random. They would hear expert speakers on a range of climate change issues and would be able to question them. After a period of deliberation the Assembly would agree recommendations to the Council on the actions that they felt

are important in reducing carbon emissions and preparing for a changing climate. These would form the basis of a District wide action plan.

- 6.4 A review of Climate Assemblies that have already taken place determined that this approach costs between £70k and £140k, largely depending on the number of residents attending the assembly. For example, the Climate Assembly for Adur and Worthing cost £70k and for Devon it was £140k. However, this does not include associated costs, such as communications which is essential to ensure that the assembly is effective. The estimated budget required for this would be an additional £20k. Furthermore, additional capacity would need to be required in the Communications Team which would add £50 to the cost. Overall the cost for implementing this option for the Horsham District would be a minimum of £160k.
- 6.5 In summary, Climate Assemblies deliver recommendations to form an action plan that are reflective of the local population which can help with buy-in and be used as a platform for communicating the issues to a wider audience. However, this is a very resource intensive process, both in terms of cost and staff time and is likely to deliver similar recommendation to other climate assemblies. The money spent on an assembly would be better used on implementation, such as grants and advice for business and targeted engagement with residents.
- 6.6 Another option is to reconstitute the Horsham District Climate Change Group which included external stakeholders from different sectors. This group met several times and suggested some useful ideas. However, the group was too focused on what the Council could do rather than a broader perspective on what actions other organisations, residents and businesses needed to take. A new Panel of “experts” will deliver this but the support and input of those involved in the original Group will still be essential in delivering the action plan.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 There will be staff implications from holding the Council officer workshop, establishing, and running the Climate Change Panel, as well as engagement after the action plan has been produced. An additional member of staff is being recruited to help deliver this work and a consultant would be used to facilitate the Panel meetings, reducing the impact on staff resources. This cost is already included in the 2022/23 budget.
- 7.2 There are financial implications from this report. An additional revenue budget is required for consultancy to facilitate the workshop with Council officers, as well as sessions with the external experts, to ensure that there is independent oversight. Consultancy advice and support will also be required for stakeholder engagement once the plan has been drafted. A £50k budget for consultants to facilitate a workshop with staff from across the Council and then the sessions of the Climate Change Panel which would involve experts on key subjects, such as energy, retrofitting buildings and transport. Given the importance of communication to raise awareness on the need to take action on climate change, a £20k budget is also requested for this work once the plan is produced.
- 7.3 The Interim Director of Resources is supportive of this approach. It balances a necessary cost of specialist input with the fact that money spent on consultants could be used on implementation. From a resource perspective, the Climate

Change Panel is viewed as better value for money than a Climate Assembly, with a much lower direct cost and is much less resource intensive.

8 Legal Considerations and Implications

- 8.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 introduced a target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. This is a legally binding target.
- 8.2 Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of their functions. Furthermore, section 2(1) of the Local Government Act 2000 introduced a power that permits local authorities to do anything that they consider likely to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 There is a risk that external experts will not want to be part of the Climate Change Panel. In order to reduce this risk different attendees from each subject area will be identified. Therefore, this is not considered to be a high risk. A medium risk is that the Panel will not produce actions that are appropriate for a District and/or are not deliverable and practical. This will be managed by using an experienced facilitator to guide the discussions.
- 9.2 The highest risk is during the engagement phase of the proposal, with the difficulty and impact of a lack of engagement from partners to deliver the action and from residents and businesses to take action. Expert input will be sought and best practice in this area will consistently be reviewed, in order to increase success on this difficult aspect of the project.

10 Procurement implications

- 10.1 The procurement of consultants to support the actions in this report will adhere to the Councils Procurement Code. As this is likely to be approximately £50k this will require a three quotes process.

11. Equalities and Human Rights implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

- 11.1 There is the potential for the impacts of a changing climate for have an unequal impact on society, with more vulnerable groups potentially being impacted the most. The development of the plan will need to ensure that the burden of implementing low carbon actions does not fall disproportionately onto those that can least afford to make the changes that will be required. It will be important for this to be central to the development of the action plan. Furthermore ongoing engagement will need to be inclusive to include all sections of society.

12 Environmental Implications

- 12.1 The primary outcome from the actions in this report is to produce a District wide climate change action plan which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In doing

this they will be other environmental benefits, such as a reduction in the use of natural resources, and improvements to local air quality.

13 Other Considerations

- 13.1 There are no crime and disorder implications from this report. The stakeholder engagement work will adhere to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Councils processes for distributing and storing information.