

Report to Cabinet

Thursday, 23 March 2023



By the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Rural Affairs

DECISION REQUIRED

Not Exempt

Draft Climate Action Strategy for the Horsham District

Executive Summary

This report includes an overview of the draft Climate Action Strategy for the Horsham District, with a recommendation to approve the Strategy for promotion, consultation, and targeted engagement. This is not just a Strategy for the Council. Some of the actions in the Strategy fall outside of its responsibilities. It will not be possible for the Council to address climate change on its own. Area wide action to reduce carbon emissions and adapting to the changing climate requires action by key organisations, as well as residents and businesses across the District.

The draft document consists of a Strategy and an action plan. The target date for becoming carbon neutral is 2050, as this reflects the national, legally binding, target. However, early action is essential. The draft Strategy builds on many actions that are already taking place and will provide the step change that is required to take immediate action on climate change, as well as drawing in other key organisations and the wider community.

The draft Strategy is divided into key sectors, such as energy and buildings, as well as enablers, such as governance and finance which will underpin the interventions in the key sectors. The actions are categorised under leadership, partnership, and community, emphasising the fact that it is not just the Council that will need to implement the Strategy.

The draft Strategy has been produced in collaboration with two consultancies, Useful Projects, and One Planet. One Planet use an innovative tool to map the draft Strategy and it can be used for ongoing monitoring. The process for developing the draft Strategy involved interviewing officers in key Departments within the Council which captured existing projects and any lessons learnt. This was followed by a workshop with these officers, as well as an additional one with a “panel of experts”. This included West Sussex County Council, Sussex Nature Partnership, South East Climate Alliance, Greater South East Net Zero Hub, the National Farmers Union, and Southern Water. This workshop was used to identify further potential actions.

The draft Strategy identifies other benefits that could be achieved beyond those related to climate change, such as health and wellbeing, and job creation. It gives indicative costs for implementation, carbon savings, costs per tonne and suggested timescales, including

quick wins. A detailed Strategy has been produced for internal use that will help with implementation and there is also a more concise document, with more graphics, which will be used for promotion, consultation, and engagement.

Up to this point the draft Strategy has not involved input from local stakeholders, such as Parish/Neighbourhood Councils, businesses, or community groups. In order for the Strategy to have credibility in the community, and to obtain wider buy-in, it is important to carry out wider promotion, consultation, and targeted engagement. This process may also identify further actions that could be included in the Strategy. Cabinet is asked to approve the draft Climate Action Strategy for the consultation and engagement process to commence.

Recommendations

That the Cabinet is recommended:

- i) To approve the draft Climate Action Strategy for the Horsham District for promotion, consultation, and targeted engagement.
- ii) To note that a further report to Cabinet will be produced with amendments to the Strategy as a result of the consultation and engagement process

Reasons for Recommendations

The draft Climate Action Strategy is an important part of the Council's response to tackling climate change. The draft Strategy provides a first step in drawing together the actions required to reduce carbon emissions and prepare for a changing climate. Wider community input and targeted engagement is required before the final Strategy is approved. This will give the Strategy greater endorsement and buy-in from the wider community and key organisations.

Background Papers

- Horsham Carbon Audit - District Wider Carbon Reduction Study and Carbon Audit of the Local Plan Review (July 2021) AECOM
- Draft Climate Action Strategy for the Horsham District (2023) Useful Projects
- Risk Assessment for the Draft Climate Action Strategy for the Horsham District (created December 2022)

Wards affected: All

Contact: .

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Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Council has set two targets for reducing the emissions from its buildings, fleet, and supply chain. It is making good progress on the approved Carbon Reduction Action Plan (April 2022 to March 2025) towards achieving these targets. This is important in itself and is vital in demonstrating a leadership role in tackling climate change. However, the Council's emissions only represent approximately 1% of the total emissions for the whole District. A Strategy is, therefore, required to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the changing climate for the Horsham District.
- 1.2 During 2021, a Stakeholder Group, consisting of representation from businesses, Parish Councils, a community group, a college, West Sussex County Council, and a Housing Association was formed to help produce a Climate Change Plan for the District. This was chaired by a Cabinet Member. However, the approach was unsuccessful in producing a Plan. This was partly because this needed to be a Plan for the whole District and not just the District Council. The Stakeholder Group was disbanded, and a new approach was agreed, involving input from a panel of experts to advise the Council on interventions to tackle area wide climate change. The work was led by two consultancies, Useful Projects, and One Planet. One Planet has developed an innovative tool for mapping and then monitoring the final Strategy.
- 1.3 This report outlines the details of a proposed draft Climate Action Strategy for the Horsham District. This is not just a Strategy for Horsham District Council, as it cannot address climate change on its own. Other partners and the wider community will also need to take action on this important issue. The report recommends that the Draft Strategy be approved for consultation and wider engagement. This will give reassurance that the Strategy resonates with the local community and also starts the process of obtaining buy-in from partners, residents, and business.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan 2019-2023 recognises the importance of taking action on climate change. A Cared for Environment is one five goals in the Plan, and this states that the Council will "*prioritise the protection of our environment as we move to a low carbon future*". It goes onto state that "*we will work with partners, businesses, and residents to help develop a practical carbon reduction plan for the District.*"

3 Details

- 3.1 The UK Government has set a legally binding target to be net zero carbon by 2050. The draft Strategy proposes that the target for the District mirrors this. Although there is much that can be achieved at the local level, larger scale changes and interventions will be required at a national level to significantly reduce carbon emissions. Although the Strategy sets a longer-term target, it is imperative that action is taken in the short term. To stay within the temperature targets that have been agreed internationally will require action to be taken now and not left until closer to the target date.

3.2 The carbon emissions for the District have fallen over the last 15 years (see figure 1), but this is primarily due to an increase in the use of technology that generates electricity and emits less carbon, such as off-shore wind and gas-fired power stations. This process will continue at a national level but if no local action is taken, emissions will not fall at the pace and scale that is required to avert catastrophic damage from a changing climate.

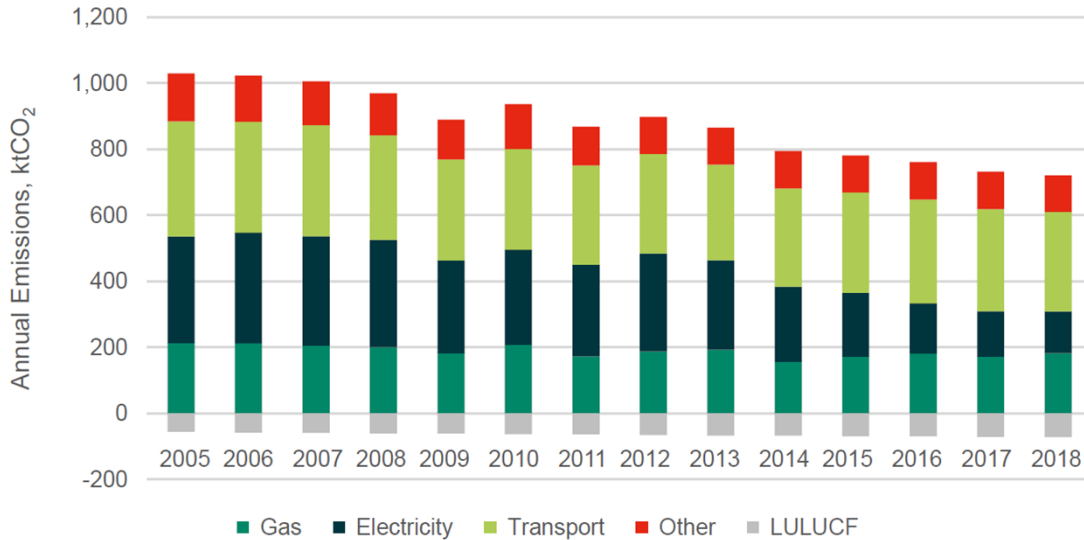


Figure 1 – Trends in Carbon emission in the Horsham District (2005-2018) from AECOM report

3.3 In order to set an overarching strategy and identify appropriate actions it is important to understand the source of most local carbon emissions. This is shown in figure 2. This illustrates that transport and domestic buildings are responsible for the largest proportion of emissions.

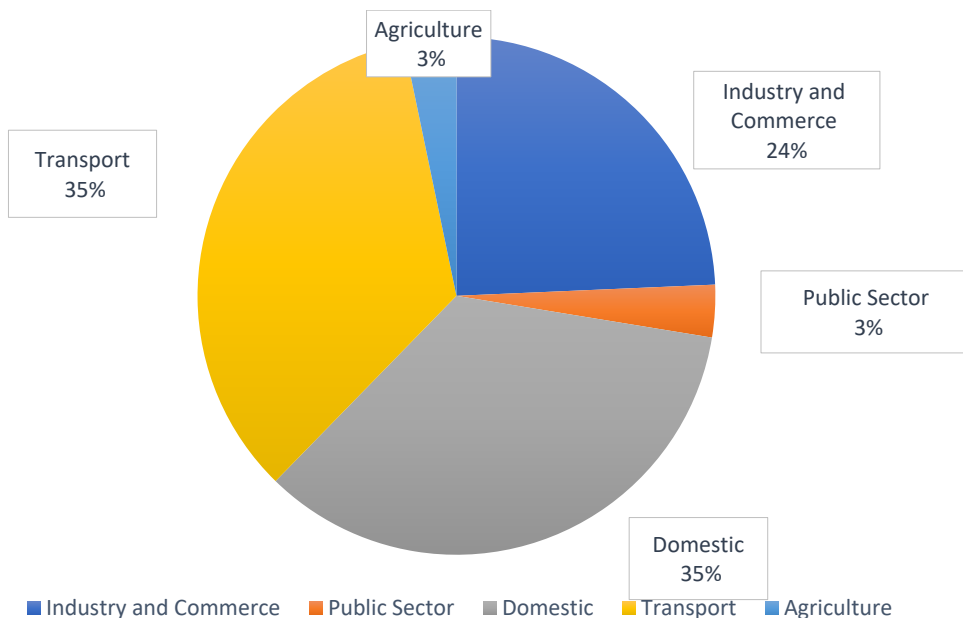


Figure 2 – Carbon emission in the Horsham District by sector (2020)

(Source: Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy)

- 3.4 The consultants that produced the Strategy carried out further analysis on the District's emissions and identified "carbon hotspots". This has dictated where the actions in the Strategy are focused and influenced the way that it has been structured. These hotspots are: -
- **transport**, due to a significant number of journeys being by car (higher than the national average);
 - **buildings**, due to 82% of the District's buildings being residential and with this sector generating a high amount of carbon emission;
 - **energy**, due to the District having a low proportion of energy generated by renewable or low carbon forms of technology. Meaning that there is potential to increase the use of this technology;
 - **land use**, due to the District being a carbon sink for agriculture and forestry, as opposed to a net emitter. There are opportunities to increase this carbon sink, whilst also benefiting wildlife and helping to adapt to the changing climate.
- 3.5 As well as addressing these carbon hotspots, actions on increasing climate resilience are weaved into the draft Strategy. Another important issue is water. Actions relating to reducing water consumption and flooding, as well as improving water quality are also incorporated into the Strategy.
- 3.6 Underpinning the systems actions are enablers, such as governance structures, policies and plans, finance, and education/behaviour change. Implementing these will ensure that actions under each carbon hotspot or system can be progressed.
- 3.7 The proposed Strategy is not just for the Council. Action is required by all residents, businesses, and organisations in the District. The Council cannot achieve the widespread changes that are required on its own. This is reflected in the way that the Strategy is put together. The actions fall within the following categories: -
- **leadership**, where the Council has more responsibility and influence and will take the lead on initiatives;
 - **partnership**, where other partners, such as West Sussex County Council, will need to take the lead or work in partnership with the District Council;
 - **community**, where the wider community, including residents, businesses, community and voluntary groups and other organisations have a key role to play.
- 3.8 Identification of new interventions, and aspects such as how to prioritise these, were determined in consultation with Council officers and external stakeholders and experts, such as representatives from West Sussex County Council, the Sussex Nature Partnership, the South East Climate Alliance, the Greater South East Net Zero Hub, the National Farmers Union, and Southern Water. The consultants led this process. They carried out interviews and ran two workshops (one internally and one with some external stakeholders and experts) to capture existing actions and identify a range of new initiatives.
- 3.9 Two draft Strategies have been produced. One contains more detail on implementation and the other is a more concise public facing document. The latter can be found [here](#).
Examples of some of the actions included in both documents are: -
- launch a residential retrofit programme (under buildings)

- increase and incentivise investment in small-scale renewable energy generation and battery storage (under energy)
- explore opportunities/feasibility of creating a Mobility Hub in Horsham Town Centre (under transport)
- explore opportunities to create a sharing economy e.g. expand existing repair cafes (under waste)
- support urban greening across the District (under land use).

3.10 Other benefits in addition to tackling climate change are highlighted, such as health and wellbeing, job creation and biodiversity improvements. This is a good way to draw the community and organisations into this process that may not have a focus on climate change. A broad cost range is included in the detailed Strategy, alongside a potential a cost per tonne of carbon. This, combined with the ease of implementation, is used to suggest timescales for progressing the actions, including where it would be possible to achieve some quick wins. Not all of the actions are the responsibility of the Council. Other organisations, as well as businesses and residents have a role to play.

3.11 In recognition of the importance of other organisations taking action, the Council held some workshops for Parish and Neighbourhood Council's to help them to draw up their own Climate Change Action Plans. Several of the Councils have formed a network to continue to share ideas and resolve issues. The District Council, along with the Horsham Association of Local Councils, will provide ongoing support. This is complemented by the Community Climate Fund which has been in place for over two years. This gives small grants to community and voluntary groups, as well as Parish/Neighbourhood Councils, which have climate change projects that require funding.

4 Next Steps

4.1 There has been input to the production of the Strategy from external stakeholders, primarily those with expertise in important areas related to climate change, such the Sussex Nature Partnership and the Greater South East Net Zero Hub. However, there has not been any input from the wider community. This is important in terms of the credibility of the Strategy and also to obtain buy-in for what it is seeking to achieve. A programme of consultation and engagement will, therefore, take place over the next few months to gain these wider views. This will involve the organisations that have regular contact with the Council on environmental issues. It will also draw in residents and businesses that do not usually engage on climate change. This will ensure that the Strategy incorporates these wider views. It will also inform the Council, and other partners, on whether we are going in the right direction and incorporating the appropriate actions to tackle climate change across the District.

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

5.1 The Environment and Rural Affairs Policy Development Advisory Group received two presentations on the draft Strategy. In the early stages of the production of the Strategy in November 2022 and fuller details when the Group met on 13th March

2023. There was lengthy debate on the draft Strategy and several useful points were made at the meeting. The Members at the meeting supported the approach taken and the proposed actions in the Strategy.

- 5.2 The Monitoring Officer and the Director of Resources were both consulted, and their comments are included in this report.
- 5.3 Members of staff from across the Council, such as Strategic Planning and Environmental Health, were interviewed by the consultants and a workshop was also held with them as part of the development of the Strategy. The Head of Strategic Planning, Head of Development and Building Control, Head of Environmental Health and Licensing, Head of Economic Development, Head of Housing and Communities, the Procurement Manager and the Parks and Countryside Manager were all consulted on the draft Strategy, as well as this report. Their comments have been incorporated into the report.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 The main course of action that was considered was not producing a Climate Change Strategy for the District. There are already numerous projects relating to climate change already taking place. However, to achieve the step change that is required to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to an already changing climate, the existing projects need to be drawn together in an overarching framework. The Strategy also sets out what other initiatives need to take place and indicates where other partners and the community have a role to play.
- 6.2 The second course of action that was considered was not carrying out any engagement on the Strategy. The Council could approve the Strategy and then work with its partners and the wider to community to deliver it. However, as the Council cannot deliver all of the actions on its own it is vital to have wider input and buy-in to the Strategy.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 As the Climate Action Strategy is in draft form, there are no financial implications at this time. The Council will not be responsible for implementing the whole Strategy. The draft Strategy gives a broad indication of the level of funding that may be required to implement each action but, in many cases, further investigation will be required to give a firmer figure.
- 7.2 There is already a budget of £20,000 in 2023/24 for traditional forms of communications and promotion, so that the public are aware of the draft Strategy. Funding will also be needed to work with consultants on some innovative forms of engagement. There is already a budget of £40,000 in 2023/24 available for this work.
- 7.3 There are no Human Resource implications from this report, as a Climate Change Support Officer joined the Council last year to work alongside the Environment Programme Manager. This has increased the capacity for this work. Early

discussions and planning with the Communications Team has ensured that there is capacity to deliver a communications plan associated with draft Climate Action Strategy.

8 Legal Considerations and Implications

- 8.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 forms the basis for the UK's approach to tackling and responding to climate change. The Act was amended by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 to change the target for the UK to become net zero carbon by 2050. This is a legislative requirement placed on the Secretary of State. Although the Act does not impose any duties or responsibilities on Local Government in achieving the net zero target, Councils have a crucial role to play in meeting the national target and helping their communities adapt to climate change.
- 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. In addition, section 1 (4c) of the Localism Act 2011 permits local authorities to do anything they consider is for the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 A risk assessment has been completed and one medium, as well as four high risks were identified. There is a risk to the programme if inadequate governance structure is not established. This will be complex given the number of Departments and external organisations involved in the delivery of the Strategy. This risk can be managed and is likely to reduce once the Strategy is approved. Two of the higher risks relate to Council staff and partners, a lack of capacity and knowledge which could impact on the delivery. Both of these are likely to be an on-going challenges but could be reduced through developing strong partnerships and links to organisations outside of the District.
- 9.2 The third high risk relates to unsuccessful delivery of behaviour change programmes. These will need to underpin many of the actions in the Strategy. However, behaviour change is hard to achieve in the short term. Drawing on expertise and strong partnership working will be vital in managing this risk. The final high risk to the delivery of the Strategy is the range of partners that will be required to deliver it and the complexity of the partnerships. The One Planet tool will assist with managing this, and again, drawing on experience from elsewhere.

10 Procurement implications

- 10.1 Consultants will be procured to run the engagement process. This will involve more innovative forms of engagement, beyond the usual Council approach of promoting the Strategy. Given the budget available the cost of this process will fall within three quotes thresholds in the Procurement Code (between £20,000 and £49,999). The procedures that relate to a three quotes process will, therefore, be followed.

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

- 11.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed before the engagement work commences, to ensure that a cross section of the community is involved. This will seek to ensure that the Climate Action Strategy does not have negative impacts on vulnerable groups and wider communities that share protected characteristics and that negative impacts are mitigated.

12 Environmental Implications

- 12.1 Once approved, the Climate Action Strategy for the District will make a contribution to the reduction of carbon emissions across the area and the necessary adaptations to the changing climate. Many of the actions will also have other benefits, such as improving air quality, improving wildlife and habitats, and reducing the use of resources and the generation of waste.

13 Other Considerations

- 13.1 The engagement process will be fully compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations and there are no crime and disorder implications from this report.