

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-076-2020/21

Date of meeting: 20 April 2021



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Planning & Sustainability – Cllr. N Bedford

Subject: Draft Climate Change Action Plan

Responsible Officer: Nick Dawe (01992 562541).

Democratic Services: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To agree that the Draft Climate Change Action Plan be approved for public consultation for a six-week period in June 2021; and

(2) To agree that the Planning Services Director, in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder be authorised to make minor amendments to the Draft Climate Change Action Plan.

Executive Summary:

The draft Climate Change Action Plan states the steps to be taken to deliver on the Climate Emergency that was declared on 19 September 2019 with the motion to do everything within the Council's power to make Epping Forest District Council area carbon neutral by 2030. The plan aligns with the corporate objectives of keeping the district moving sustainably and enabling residents to access new opportunities for employment, and to reduce the carbon footprint across the district and within our council. There are also links to the environmental and sustainable travel Policies T1, DM 2 and DM15-22 in the Emerging Local Plan.

This report provides members with a summary of the objectives and purpose of the Climate Change Action Plan. The intention is that following public consultation and any updates arising that, the final action plan will return to Cabinet to endorse adoption of the plan.

For context, human activities have already caused global temperatures to rise by 1°C from pre-industrial levels. The IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, published in October 2018, describes the impacts that a 2°C rise is likely to cause compared to a 1.5°C rise. These impacts include higher average temperatures and more extreme weather events such as droughts, flooding, heat waves and storms. A 1.5°C may still be possible but ambitious and coordinated action across all elements of society is required for this to be achieved.

The Climate Change Action Plan examines the main sources of carbon emissions both within the Council's own operations and across the District. It outlines direct action the Council are taking to reduce emissions of its own activities. As well as steps that can be taken to facilitate and influence emissions reductions in the wider District, enabling the area to become carbon neutral by 2030.

Reaching this target will be a considerable task involving collaboration and engagement from staff, residents, businesses, suppliers, and partners, along with policy support from the UK Government. The plan will be regularly updated to account for further developments in national legislation, regulation, technology, and policy. Where activities and monitoring are to be confirmed these will be updated following consultation feedback.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure that members are kept up to date on the progress of the draft Climate Change Action Plan

Other Options for Action:

Not to agree the draft Climate Change Action Plan can be published for a 6-week consultation, which would mean that a delay in providing a plan to address the declared Climate Emergency.

Report:

1. The draft Climate Change Action Plan states the steps that will be taken to deliver on the Climate Emergency that was declared on 19 September 2019 and included a motion to do everything within the Council's power to make Epping Forest District Council area carbon neutral by 2030. The plan aligns with the corporate objectives of keeping the district moving sustainably and enabling residents to access new opportunities for employment, and to reduce the carbon footprint across the district and within our council. There are also links to Policies T1, DM 2 and DM15-22 in the Emerging Local Plan.
2. Climate change action requires a whole organisation approach therefore development of the Climate Change Action Plan has involved officer input from many different service areas across the council. The action plan reflects this by looking at several themes, the initial Council Operations section focuses on the Council's own emissions from buildings, business practices and staff travel. The subsequent themes examine emissions from travel, buildings and waste in the wider District. Actions to address the related themes of air quality, natural greenspace and climate change mitigation are then explored.
3. The scope of the plan is split into the Council Operations and the wider District. This is to acknowledge the level of control that can be exerted over the emissions within each boundary. More direct action can be taken to address emissions of the Council however in the wider District the Council's role will be to facilitate the reduction either through direct initiatives, partnerships, using statutory powers or by influencing behaviour change.
4. The scope of the Council's operations are to include Qualis as a fully owned subsidiary of Epping Forest District Council. The Council will work closely with Qualis representatives to collate the necessary emissions data and to set clear boundaries to avoid double counting of emissions.

5. To become a carbon neutral District is a challenging task and this will require communities and businesses to also take responsibility for their own significant emissions reductions. It will also require a large shift in behaviour change from society to change the way we consume and travel. Changes in national policy and financial intervention from the UK government, as well as advances in technology and decarbonisation of the national grid will be key to enable this.

Objectives

6. The principle objective of the Climate Change Action Plan is to demonstrate actions being taken by Epping Forest District Council to deliver on the pledge to do everything within our power to be carbon neutral by 2030 and address the declaration of the Climate Emergency. The document focuses on the identification of carbon emissions and the actions to reduce them both within the Council and across the wider District area.
7. Within this objective the plan also looks to highlight existing policy, strategy and initiatives within the Council that aim to reduce carbon emissions from our own service provisions, new development, and through the provision of more sustainable travel options. It also captures the Council's ambition to provide a sustainable network of high-quality, multifunctional green spaces that will complement emissions reduction by giving an opportunity to capture carbon, increase biodiversity and improve air quality.
8. The largest source of emissions in the District is from on-road travel both from the local network and from the national network, M11 and M25. A comprehensive section of the plan therefore looks to increase the share of journeys made by sustainable means. Actions in this area look to increase active travel, address public transport provision, reduce the need to travel and facilitate conversion to electric vehicles.
9. The Council will work with partners at all scales including with local communities, farmers, large landowners, the Conservators of Epping Forest, Essex County Council and through cross boundary initiatives such as the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and the Green Arc Partnership to improve the sustainability of activities across the area and encourage further climate action to both meet our climate targets and protect the Epping Forest SAC.
10. It is important to recognise the co-benefits that climate action is known to deliver such as valuable social and economic benefits in terms of new jobs, economic savings, market opportunities and health benefits. These are likely to improve the standard of living and promote the notion of making Epping Forest District a good place to live, work and visit.
11. Identified actions within each theme of the plan will require long term management, the portfolio holder for each action is to be specified to give continued accountability through to 2030. The action plan will be regularly updated to capture further developments within the Council's service provision and as further data is gathered on the state of emissions. Revisions will also account for developments in national legislation, regulation, technology and policy. Where activities and monitoring are to be confirmed these will be updated following consultation feedback.
12. The intention is for the Climate Change Action Plan to be the subject of public consultation prior to adoption by the Council. Following public consultation and any

updates arising, the final action plan will return to Cabinet to endorse adoption of the plan, which will show how the Council is taking steps to address the Climate Emergency.

Programme for consultation

13. Early engagement on the Climate Change Action Plan has taken place with officers from a variety of service areas including planning, housing, community, countryside, technical and regulatory services. Officers gave input at a workshop, follow up sessions and provided feedback on the draft document.
14. Members have been engaged on the draft Climate Change Action Plan, to provide early comments and queries in order to shape the document. An EFDC Member workshop was held on 18 February 2021. Further engagement with members will be scheduled during the public consultation period.
15. The original motion to declare the Climate Emergency stipulated the involvement of the Youth Council in the development of the action plan. The Youth Council were engaged on 08 December 2020 on the theme of sustainable travel. The themes of the Climate Change Action Plan were explored in a Youth Council meeting on the 02 February 2021 and participants asked questions and provided feedback on topics important to them.
16. In accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), the Council is required to consult stakeholders and the general public on the draft Climate Change Action Plan. The proposed period of consultation in line with the SCI is six weeks. All those on the Council's relevant databases will be notified, information including the documents and an online survey/ questionnaire explaining the document will be made available on the Council's website and by notification to statutory consultees. Following the consultation, the results will be collated and where appropriate amendments made to the plan. The plan will then be brought back to Cabinet for formal endorsement for adoption of the plan.
17. Depending on the roadmap of lifting restrictions there could be some restrictions on in-person engagement due to COVID-19. In person events will take place where possible but it may be that the audience will be reached primarily through digital means.
18. Consultation arrangements will be put in place and will be advertised ahead of the consultation, in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement.

Resource Implications:

The work to support the draft Climate Change Action Plan is covered by the Climate Change Officer and the Sustainable Transport Officer with valuable input from other teams. A sum of £500,000 was identified in the 2021/22 Budget to fund approved projects.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Climate Change Action Plan has been reviewed by legal colleagues and no implications have been raised.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The draft Climate Change Action Plan seeks to drive down carbon emissions across the District to become carbon neutral by 2030. Actions will include measures to increase the provision of sustainable development, energy efficiency and consideration of the natural environment.

The largest proportion of emissions in the District arise from on-road transport therefore, activities within the plan look to increase modal shift towards active travel and put in place measures to increase the uptake of electric vehicles. The co-benefits of these actions such as reduced fuel poverty, enhanced health and wellbeing and provision of jobs promote the notion of making Epping Forest District a good place to live, work and visit.

Activities to tackle carbon emissions will also help to improve air quality in the District, which will help with human health concerns and address the impacts of air quality on the Epping forest Special Area of Conservation.

Consultation Undertaken:

Informal engagement has been undertaken with officers, the EFDC Leadership Team, EFDC Councillors and the Youth Council

Background Papers:

None

Risk Management:

If the Council does not demonstrate that it is taking a pro-active approach to developing an approach to addressing the Climate Emergency this would lead to reputational damage. A delay to implementing the draft Climate Change Action Plan would put a risk on achieving the identified carbon reduction target of reaching carbon neutral by 2030.

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, when making decisions, Epping District Council must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, ie have due regard to:
 - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
 - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
 - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage/civil partnership
 - pregnancy/maternity
 - race
 - religion/belief
 - sexual orientation.
3. In addition to the above protected characteristics you should consider the cross-cutting elements of the proposed policy, namely the social, economic and environmental impact (including rurality) as part of this assessment. These cross-cutting elements are not a characteristic protected by law but are regarded as good practice to include.
4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document should be used as a tool to test and analyse the nature and impact of either what we do or are planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.
5. Use the questions in this document to record your findings. This should include the nature and extent of the impact on those likely to be affected by the proposed policy or change.
6. Where this EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.
7. All **Cabinet, Council, and Portfolio Holder reports must be accompanied by an EqIA**. An EqIA should also be completed/reviewed at key stages of projects.
8. To assist you in completing this report, please ensure you read the guidance notes in the Equality Analysis Toolkit and refer to the following Factsheets:
 - Factsheet 1: Equality Profile of the Epping Forest District
 - Factsheet 2: Sources of information about equality protected characteristics
 - Factsheet 3: Glossary of equality related terms
 - Factsheet 4: Common misunderstandings about the Equality Duty
 - Factsheet 5: Frequently asked questions
 - Factsheet 6: Reporting equality analysis to a committee or other decision making body

Section 1: Identifying details
Your function, service area and team: <i>Climate Change</i>
If you are submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team, specify the originating function, service area or team: N/A
Title of policy or decision: <i>Draft Climate Change Action Plan</i>
Officer completing the EqIA: Tel: 01992 564217 Email: fedmonds@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Date of completing the assessment: 10 th March 2021

Section 2: Policy to be analysed	
2.1	Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project? <i>No</i>
2.2	Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision): The report is to provide the justification, aims and objectives for a Climate Change Action Plan to support the declaration of a Climate Emergency and the motion to do everything within our power to become a carbon neutral District by 2030. What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (ie decommissioning or commissioning a service)? <i>To ensure members are fully briefed on the requirement for a Climate Change Action Plan and agreement that the draft Strategy can be approved for public consultation.</i>
2.3	Does or will the policy or decision affect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service users • employees • the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities? <i>The report is to provide an overview of the Draft Climate Change Action Plan to be approved for public consultation. This decision will not affect any group at this stage as it is being recommended that the draft guidance documents should be subject to consultation.</i> Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate? <i>No</i>
2.4	Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources? <i>No</i>
2.5	Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes? <i>This work supports policies in the emerging Local Plan in relation to the environment and sustainable travel. The plan aligns with the corporate objectives of keeping the</i>

	<i>district moving sustainably and enabling residents to access new opportunities for employment, and to reduce the carbon footprint across the district and within our council.</i>
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Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation¹

As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).

3.1	<p>What does the information tell you about those groups identified? <i>The current position affects the District as a whole.</i></p>
3.2	<p>Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision? <i>Early engagement has taken place to develop the Climate Change Action Plan. There has been extensive input from officers across various services and departments to gather information and feedback on a broad range of topics related to the plan. This has included a workshop, more topic specific discussions and feedback on the document, all of which have been used to shape the draft plan.</i> <i>The original motion to declare the climate emergency stipulated the involvement of the Youth Council in the development of the action plan. The Youth Council were engaged on 08 December 2020 on the theme of sustainable travel. The themes of the full Climate Action Plan were explored in a Youth Council meeting on the 02 February 2021 and participants provided feedback on topics important to them.</i></p>
3.3	<p>If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary: <i>Members have been engaged on the draft Climate Change Action Plan, to provide early comments and queries in order to shape the document. An EFDC Member workshop was held on 18 February 2021. Further engagement with members will be scheduled during the public consultation period.</i> <i>The Council intend to carry out a six-week public consultation in June 2021. This will be in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The Council is required to consult stakeholders and the general public on the draft Climate Change Action Plan. The proposed period of consultation in line with the SCI is six weeks. All those on the Council's planning policy database will be notified, information including the documents, an online survey/ questionnaire and potential video content explaining the document will be made available on the Council's website and by notification to statutory consultees.</i></p>

Section 4: Impact of policy or decision

Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.

Description of impact	Nature of impact Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	Extent of impact Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age	Adverse – potential for Covid-19 restrictions to make non-digital engagement more difficult. Potential for this to affect consultation with age groups (more likely children and the elderly) who are less digitally enabled.	M
Disability	Adverse - potential for Covid-19 restrictions to make non-digital engagement more difficult. Potential for this to affect consultation with those with disabilities that affect their ability to engage digitally.	M
Gender	Neutral – no impact	L
Gender reassignment	Neutral – no impact	L
Marriage/civil partnership	Neutral – no impact	L
Pregnancy/maternity	Neutral – no impact	L
Race	Neutral – no impact	L
Religion/belief	Neutral – no impact	L
Sexual orientation	Neutral – no impact	L

Section 5: Conclusion

		Tick Yes/No as appropriate	
5.1	Does the EqIA in Section 4 indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?	No	
		Yes	If ' YES ', use the action plan at Section 6 to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.

Section 6: Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

What are the potential adverse impacts?	What are the mitigating actions?	Date they will be achieved.
<p>Potential for Covid-19 restrictions to make non-digital engagement more difficult. Potential for this to affect consultation with age groups (more likely children and the elderly) who are less digitally enabled.</p>	<p>Utilise forums such as the authority’s Youth Council to engage the younger audience and where possible hold non-digital staffed event or drop in which is COVID-19 secure. Advertise consultation in non-digital manner (Town and Parish Council magazine, posters and leaflets). Ensure that online material is accessible for all and easy to read and feedback and questionnaires are simple to understand and complete.</p>	<p>May-June 2021</p>
<p>Potential for Covid-19 restrictions to make non-digital engagement more difficult. Potential for this to affect consultation with those with disabilities that affect their ability to engage digitally.</p>	<p>Where possible hold a non-digital staffed event or drop in which is COVID-19 secure. Advertise consultation in non-digital manner (Town and Parish Council magazine, posters and leaflets). Ensure that online material is accessible for all and easy to read and feedback and questionnaires are simple to understand and complete.</p>	<p>May-June 2021</p>

Section 7: Sign off

**I confirm that this initial analysis has been completed appropriately.
(A typed signature is sufficient.)**

Signature of Head of Service:

Date:

Signature of person completing the EqIA:

Date:

Advice

Keep your director informed of all equality & diversity issues. We recommend that you forward a copy of every EqIA you undertake to the director responsible for the service area. Retain a copy of this EqIA for your records. If this EqIA relates to a continuing project, ensure this document is kept under review and updated, eg after a consultation has been undertaken.