

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference: C-050-2021/22**

**Date of meeting: 11 April 2022**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio: Planning and Sustainability - Nigel Bedford**

**Subject: Endorsement of the Climate Change Action Plan**

**Responsible Officer: Nick Dawe (01992 562541).**

**Democratic Services: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246).**

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**To endorse the adoption of the Climate Change Action Plan**

### **Executive Summary:**

The 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.

The Climate Change Action plan also has direct and indirect links with further policy and projects throughout the Council for example the Roding Valley and North Weald Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace projects that will be brought forward in Summer/Autumn 2022 and also further review of the Waste contract.

This report provides members with a summary of the objectives and purpose of the Climate Change Action Plan and a summary of the changes made following the public consultation period.

For context, in August 2021, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published the Climate Change 2021 Report: The Physical Science Basis. The report gives evidence to show the 'widespread and rapid' changes to our climate that have occurred as a result of human influence. It then gives further evidence on the wide-ranging and severe impacts of global warming where temperatures reach 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. In November 2021 the Glasgow Climate Pact was agreed at the COP26 Climate Change Conference. The aim of the pact is to keep alive the hope of limiting the rise in global temperature to 1.5C, as previously agreed in the 2015 Paris Agreement, and increase climate ambition and action from countries.

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 policy is in place to support the declaration of a Climate Emergency in September 2019 and the pledge to do everything within our power to become a carbon neutral District by 2030.

#### **Other Options for Action:**

Not to agree the adoption of the Climate Change Action Plan, this 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 Councils ambition to provide a sustainable network of high-quality, multifunctional green spaces that will compliment 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 Councils 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.

## **Consultation**

12. The Council undertook some informal engagement prior to the development of the draft Climate Change Action Plan. Following approval at Cabinet on 20th April 2021, these documents were published for formal consultation for a six-week period from 12<sup>th</sup> October to 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021. The delay in release was so as not to overlap with the Local Plan Main Modifications consultation and the school holiday period.

13. The early engagement included whole-document reviews as well as specific topic-focused workshops with relevant officers across the Council. An EFDC Member Briefing

workshop was held on 18th February 2021.

14. The formal consultation took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, consequently involved both digital and non-digital means. The following list provides a summary of the engagement methods used during public consultation.

Digital engagement:

- Consultation notice via email to EFDC databases, statutory consultees and other stakeholders.
- Dedicated email address for enquiries and consultation response submissions.
- Dedicated consultation page on EFDC website, including PDFs of documents and a frequently asked questions page
- Social Media campaign
- Staffed online Q&A sessions and event attendance
- Online Community Q&A
- Youth Council Q&A Session

Non-digital engagement:

- Hard copy of the Climate Change Action Plan available on request and in the Civic Offices.
- Leaflet/ poster information to provide summary and link to online document.
- Postal address set up for responses
- Event attendance at the Stay Well Event, Youth Council Climate Action Conference and a Members Briefing in person
- Leaflets at Epping and Waltham Abbey Markets

15. Overall, the Council received comments from 839 respondents, through the main survey (121 responses) and youth survey (707), emails (9) and postal comments (2).

16. The consultation survey included general questions around individual and community behaviours to understand the level of engagement with climate change in the District and to inform a behaviour change strategy for the future. The survey also asked questions related to businesses, travel and the Climate Change Action Plan itself.

17. The comments received that related to the Climate Change Action Plan can be broadly categorised into the following themes:

- General (62 Comments)

Feedback on the overall plan varied across respondents with equal weighting between the plan needing more detail and others saying it was comprehensive. The general points to improve the plan included:

- Getting agreement on target proposals
- Changes to the language to make it stronger on action
- Text revisions to mention COP26, Essex wide climate policy and some minor text revisions for clarity.
- Further detail to be provided on actions

- Waste (447 comments).

This was the most common theme to be commented on especially in the youth questionnaire. Ideas to improve this area included:

- providing more bins/recycling bins in public places
- influencing the amount of packaging in shops
- enforcement of littering

- more emphasis on reducing waste

- Travel (328 comments)

The most prevalent response for the barriers was the cost of electric vehicles, which is likely to require national government policy or a change in market conditions to address. Recurring themes throughout the questions related to both areas that are under EFDC control but also areas under ECC jurisdiction for example public transport.

- Improvement to bus services consisting of improved frequency, cost and routes to key hubs
- Better cycling and walking provision with increased safety, clearer signage, more cycle/walking paths to school and employment centres and to fix the roads.
- More electric charge points
- More emphasis on a reduction in car travel

- Buildings (192 comments)

Comments related to buildings were more general in nature siting reductions in energy use, less fossil fuel use and more renewable energy generation. More specific comments related to:

- More solar production
- Paving over of driveways and the subsequent loss of drainage and biodiversity
- Further consideration of embodied carbon, with retrofit of buildings favoured over demolition and rebuild.
- Promotion of community energy projects

- Behaviour change (141 comments)

This topic was particularly common in the youth questionnaire when asked what the council can do for climate change, across the two surveys the same recurring themes were:

- Awareness raising sited as being very important especially education and provision of information.
- Collaborative working needed with organisations including voluntary organisations, community organisations and businesses. Schools were seen as especially important for collaboration.
- Visible volunteer community activities eg. litter picking

18. Key updates and changes to the Guidance documents, to respond to the above consultation and comments, include:

- Update of targets, these will continue to be updated as more data becomes available.
- Text revisions to mention COP26, Essex wide climate policy and some minor text revisions for clarity.
- The Priority Actions in 2021/22 section has been updated to Progress in 2021/22.
- Update of the waste chapter to account for comments made and to show further action being taken. These include actions related to the litter strategy, litter picking equipment, information on reducing waste and providing a waste education video.
- Further detail added to the Council Operations chapter to include more specific projects, social housing regeneration, social housing stock review and building energy surveys.

- In the Travel chapter a new section has been added to show actions related to reducing travel and more detail on actions related to electric vehicle charging points.
- Actions added to the Natural Environment section to involve the local community in tree planting activities and to provide information on sustainable growing and home composting.
- Actions added to the behaviour change section and additions made throughout to mention of schools as a point of collaboration. The subjects included have also been expanded to include sustainable food and diet.

### **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 £250,000 is identified in the draft 2022/23 Budget to fund approved projects up to 2026/27.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

No legal 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:**

For the Climate Change Action Plan informal engagement has been undertaken with officers, the Youth Council and EFDC Councillors.

A 6-week formal consultation was then undertaken from 12<sup>th</sup> October to 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

### **Background Papers:**

Climate Change Action Plan  
20<sup>th</sup> April 2021 Cabinet Report

### **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

<b>Section 1: Identifying details</b>
Your function, service area and team: <i>Climate Change</i>
If you are submitting this EqlA 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>Climate Change Action Plan</i>
Officer completing the EqlA: Tel: 01992 564217 Email: fedmonds@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Date of completing the assessment: 24 <sup>th</sup> March 2022

<b>Section 2: Policy to be analysed</b>	
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 updates to the Climate Change Action Plan following consultation and that the plan be approved for adoption by the Council.</i>
2.3	Does or will the policy or decision affect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• service users</li> <li>• employees</li> <li>• the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities?</li> </ul> <i>No</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 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>

### Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation<sup>1</sup>

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 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, 02 February 2021 and 30 November 2021 with participants providing feedback on topics important to them.</i> <i>The general public were consulted through a consultation that ran from October to November 2021. All comments were reviewed, and the document has been updated to reflect themes identified.</i> <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 occurred on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021 during the consultation period.</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: N/A</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.

<b>Description of impact</b>	<b>Nature of impact</b> Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	<b>Extent of impact</b> Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age	Neutral – no impact	L
Disability	Neutral – no impact	L
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 X	
		Yes	If ' <b>YES</b> ', use the action plan at <b>Section 6</b> to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.

**Section 6: Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts**

<b>What are the potential adverse impacts?</b>	<b>What are the mitigating actions?</b>	<b>Date they will be achieved.</b>

**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.