

This Report will be made public on 15 March 2022

Report Number **C/21/94**

To: Cabinet
Date: 23 March 2022
Status: Non key Decision
Responsible Officer: Charlotte Spendley, Director of Corporate Services
Cabinet Member: Councillor Lesley Whybrow, Cabinet Member for the Environment

SUBJECT: THE DISTRICT WIDE CARBON PLAN – PROJECT PROPOSAL

SUMMARY: This report outlines the proposed District Wide Carbon Plan (DWCP) and proposal for consultation in response to the Climate & Ecological Emergency Declaration Resolution: “*to develop a strategy for Folkestone and Hythe District Council (the Council) to play a leadership role in community, public and business partnerships for our Carbon Neutral 2030 commitment throughout the district*”.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To enable work to begin on a District Wide Carbon Plan for Folkestone & Hythe, to meet the high-level action identified within the adopted Corporate Action Plan 2021-2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/21/94.
2. To give approval to set up a Carbon Innovation Lab (CI-Lab) (see Section 5 of this report).
3. To note the 5 priority areas to be addressed in the District Wide Carbon Plan (see Section 6 of this report).
4. To note that draft consultation plan will be brought back to Cabinet at a later date.
5. To note that a final version of the District Wide Carbon Plan will be brought to Cabinet for adoption towards the end of 2022.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Full Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency on 24 July 2019. There were nine points within the declaration and progress has been made on the majority of these points, including the adoption of a Carbon Action Plan dealing with carbon emissions from the council's own estate and operations.
- 1.2 Point 5 of the declaration is that the council develops "a strategy for the Council to play a leadership role in promoting community, public and business partnerships for this Carbon Neutral 2030 Commitment throughout the District".
- 1.3 The draft proposed structure, engagement strategy and project timeline were presented to the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Working Group (CEEWG) for comments on the 25th of November 2021.¹ Comments from the Working Group meeting have been incorporated into the revised proposal included with this report.

2. PROPOSED ROLE OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- 2.1 The decarbonisation of the district will rely on the entire district, its community and businesses, being involved and taking positive action to change behaviours and implement actions over the coming years to deliver net zero.
- 2.2 It is therefore proposed that, for the DCWP, the council supports a collaborative leadership style that encourages the active community groups and leaders to come together and adopt net zero behaviours and actions by engaging in regular dialogue to share the objectives, informal discussions and signpost both the actions and resources available to unlock the community drive to be net zero. The DWCP needs to recognise that the council would not be able to enforce many actions that will be needed, but must encourage and provide information and support to people to make changes for themselves.
- 2.3 This leadership is envisaged to include bringing together and chairing a regular informal meeting with leaders and representatives from business, education, community and special-interest groups to act in concert to deliver the plan.

3. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS AND STRATEGIES

- 3.1 The DWCP will sit with the framework of the Corporate Plan 2021-30, 'Creating Tomorrow Together'. The Corporate Plan sets out guiding principles and service ambitions looking beyond recovery from the pandemic

¹ Paper available to view at: <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/g5023/Public%20reports%20pack%2025th-Nov-2021%2014.00%20Climate%20and%20Ecological%20Emergency%20Working%20Group.pdf?T=10>

to how recovery can be sustainable. The DWCP would meet a number of the Corporate Plan's ambitions, including:

- Service ambition 1: Positive community leadership; and
- Service ambition 2: A thriving environment.

It would also be guided by the Corporate Plan's principles:

- Sustainable recovery: We will do all we can to ensure a strong recovery for the district from the effects of Covid;
- Greener Folkestone & Hythe: We will encourage and create a more sustainable district consuming fewer natural resources;
- Transparent, stable, accountable and accessible: We will be financially sustainable and communicate effectively with our communities in an accessible way; and
- Working effectively with partners: We will engage with partners to understand the vital role they play and work collaboratively with them to ensure the best outcome for our residents.

3.2 The DWCP is also identified as a high level action within the Corporate Action Plan 2021-2024 (adopted 20 October 2021, see report C/21/40), where external stakeholders are identified as residents, businesses within the district, Kent County Council and town and parish councils.

3.3 The framework set out in the following sections also reflects the policies, and acknowledges the support, announced by the Government in the 'Net Zero Strategy: Building Back Greener' (Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, October 2021)².

4. BASELINE POSITION

4.1 The starting point for the district-wide plan will be the baseline position for the emissions that could be attributed to activities within the district. After discussion at the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Working Group, a sub-set of emissions published by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) was identified as being the most appropriate measure to use; BEIS identifies this data-set as being within the scope of local authorities to influence. The total emissions are reported as being 385.1 ktCO₂ (kilo tonnes of carbon dioxide) for Folkestone & Hythe district for the year 2019 (the most recent year reported)³.

4.2 The council's own emissions from its estate and operations for 2018/19, as reported in the adopted Carbon Action Plan (February 2021), were 1,536 tCO_{2e}. While officers are currently updating this figure for the subsequent monitoring years, this suggests that emissions attributable to the council's own buildings and activities only make up around 0.4 per cent of emissions

² Available to view at: net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

³ Available to view at: <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/723c243d-2f1a-4d27-8b61-cdb93e5b10ff/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2019>

from the entire district. This demonstrates that collaborative working across the district is essential if we are to meet our net zero target.

5. PROPOSAL FOR CONSULTATION

- 5.1 A key aim of the plan is for the council to be an influence for change and support local communities, key partner organisations, businesses and the public to implement measures to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change in a way that reflects local circumstance and future aspirations.
- 5.2 It is proposed that the council establishes and chairs a regular 'Carbon Innovation Lab' (CI-Lab) to be an informal and inclusive group of invited representatives from key stakeholder groups from the community, business, special interest groups and academics. The CI-Lab will be a forum to promote a collaborative dialogue, work in partnership, be an influencer of change, ideas exchange, agree priorities and encourage the local actions to deliver the net-zero objectives. The CI-Lab is an informal ideas forum and collaboration (rather than a formal consultation) that will bring the community together to share the challenge and take actions to reduce carbon emissions. This approach builds on a similar group that has been successfully pioneered for around 2 years at the London Borough of Hounslow and is now delivering its own carbon reduction actions alongside and supporting the councils own plans.
- 5.3 The CI-Lab will report to the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Working Group on a regular basis, providing updates on its activities within the community (perhaps quarterly to begin with, then moving to six-monthly). The CI-Lab could provide the impetus for the community itself to jointly draft the actions and identify their own resources (including applying for funds and existing grants targeted at the community initiatives) to deliver the actions.
- 5.4 The aim is that the CI-Lab would be short to medium term light-touch initiative convened by a council-appointed chair, with a secretariat provided from our existing resources to prepare the agenda, circulate the minutes and papers, maintain a simple action log, collate the feedback and report to the working group as necessary.
- 5.5 We will work with the corporate communications team and key stakeholders to ensure a good representation from across the district for the CI-Lab. In addition, there will be public drop - in events at selected locations across the district (Folkestone, Hythe, North Downs and Romney Marsh), online public consultation, a dedicated email address and social media presence for comments and feedback as well as commissioning Canterbury City Council to undertake a targeted consultation (as used to get feedback from a representative sample of the district's residents on the Corporate Plan). The results from all these will be summarised for consideration by the CI-Lab.
- 5.6 Recommendation 2 of this report is therefore that Cabinet gives its approval to set up the CI-Lab to guide work on the District Wide Carbon Plan.

6. PRIORITY AREAS

- 6.1 Based on the district emissions profile, it is evident that the council will have different levels of control and/or influence over how emissions are reduced across the district.
- 6.2 Five areas of activity (referred to as Pillars) are proposed to structure the DWCP. This will inform how we could encourage, engage and empower local communities, key partner organisations, businesses and the public to achieve our net zero target.

The Pillars are:

- **Pillar 1:** Road transport (includes emissions from A-roads and minor roads only)
 - **Pillar 2:** Residential buildings (includes emissions from domestic electricity, domestic gas and other fuels)
 - **Pillar 3:** Commercial and industrial buildings and processes (includes industrial and commercial energy use (electricity, gas and other fuels) and agricultural fuels)
 - **Pillar 4:** Other activities (includes treatment of waste, food production and other elements)
 - **Pillar 5:** Land use absorption (includes land use, such as forestry and woodland planting).
- 6.3 Recommendation 3 of this report is that Cabinet notes these five pillars, as a way to structure the DWCP.

7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 This report sets out the strategic element of the DWCP to deliver the commitment made in the climate emergency declaration for the council to play a leadership role in community, public and business partnerships for our Carbon Neutral 2030 commitment throughout the district.
- 7.2 If Cabinet gives approval to establish the CI-Lab, officers will set up this group and hold an inception meeting. While some training may need to be given to participants, it is anticipated that the work would soon focus on sharing ideas and drafting the DWCP.
- 7.3 When a draft plan has been prepared, it will be taken to Cabinet for approval for a period of formal consultation, likely to be in summer 2022. While it is hoped that the participation of the CI-Lab will ensure that there is wide community support from the beginning, a period of formal consultation would allow other interested parties and statutory bodies to comment. A questionnaire will also be sent out to a representative sample of district residents, as was done during the preparation of the Corporate Plan, to ensure that any proposals have wider support throughout the district.
- 7.4 Following the formal consultation, there would then be a period when consultation comments are assessed and the draft plan is amended. The final DWCP would be taken back to Cabinet for adoption, towards the end of 2022.

7.5 It is anticipated that the CI-Lab would continue to meet after the adoption of the plan, to monitor the actions in the plan and to review it as necessary.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

8.1 The risk management issues are set out in the table below.

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Conversation with the CI-Lab members is ineffective / unfocused	M	L	Membership will be by invitation, clear objectives, evidence-based collaboration with conclusions and semi-formal minutes
Disengagement over time	M	M	Identify and deliver quick wins; task and finish groups for small projects, involving the community in voluntary actions and communicate successes
Consultation not clear and inclusive	M	L	Efforts will be made to identify all relevant groups and early buy in from the CI - Lab
Length of Consultation	L	L	12 weeks consultation window, drop-in events and dedicated emails for comments and feedback
Understanding key issues and aspirations of the wider community	H	M	Early engagement and different types of consultation being employed
Implementation of action plan towards achieving net zero	H	H	Encourage ownership, buy in and partnership working among local communities, key partner organisations, businesses and the public across the district

9. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

9.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

However, with increasing public pressure to take action on the threat of climate change, a strategy demonstrates how the Council will deliver on the climate emergency declaration and may protect the Council from future legal challenge.

9.2 Finance Officer's Comments (LW)

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report although Cabinet is reminded that £5m has been provided in the Climate Change Reserve to meet the cost of initiatives that will help meet the Council's carbon neutral commitment.

9.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)

There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report, a consultation is proposed to take place with key stakeholder groups at an early stage to develop the plan and to guide its long-term implementation.

9.4 Climate Change Implications (OF)

The Climate Implications arising from this report will overall be positive. The report seeks to develop a District Wide Carbon Plan that will encourage active partnership across the district to adopt net zero behaviours.

10. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

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References:

¹ Achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-enshrines-new-target-in-law-to-slash-emissions-by-78-by-2035>

2) Folkestone & Hythe District Carbon Action Plan, February 2021
<http://sdc-intranet/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FHDC-Carbon-Action-Plan.pdf>

3) Kent & Medway Emissions Analysis and Pathways to Net Zero, December 2020
https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/122898/Kent-Emissions-Pathway-Report.pdf

3) Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy, June 2020
https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/112401/Kent-and-Medway-Energy-and-Low-Emissions-Strategy.pdf

4) Zero Carbon Strategy, South Cambridgeshire District Council, 2020
<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/15058/scdc-zero-carbon-strategy-web.pdf>

5) Dover District Council Climate Change Strategy, January 2021
<https://www.dover.gov.uk/Environment/Climate-Change/Climate-Change-Strategy-January-2021-web.pdf>

6) Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, October 2021
[net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101424/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf)