

## Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

6 October 2020

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Climate Change Strategy</b>
<b>Contribution towards Vision 2030:</b>	
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### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council be recommended to approve the Climate Change Strategy (2020-2041).

#### 1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek approval for the Climate Change Strategy document as set out in Appendix A. The Strategy includes ambitious targets for the council to become carbon neutral by 2030 and for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2041. This report seeks to draw attention to these target dates and the challenges involved in meeting them.

Once approved, an implementation programme based upon the Strategy's Action Plan will be produced to include indicative costs for implementing the Action Plan over the next five years.

The Strategy was considered and approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 12 August 2020.

## 2 IMPLICATION FOR VISION 2030

<p>Ambition 1</p> 	<p>Sandwell is a community where our families have high aspirations and where we pride ourselves on equality of opportunity and on our adaptability and resilience.</p>	<p>Adaptation and resilience to the impacts of climate change is key for our future.</p>
<p>Ambition 2</p> 	<p>Sandwell is a place where we live healthy lives and live them for longer, and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for.</p>	<p>Climate change is a key threat to the health of our population and a driver of health inequalities.</p>
<p>Ambition 3</p> 	<p>Our workforce and young people are skilled and talented, geared up to respond to changing business needs and to win rewarding jobs in a growing economy.</p>	<p>Green jobs are an opportunity for growth and increasing investment in this area will help build a reputation of Sandwell as a clean, healthy borough.</p>
<p>Ambition 4</p> 	<p>Our children benefit from the best start in life and a high quality education throughout their school careers with outstanding support from their teachers and families.</p>	<p>Young children are at particular risk of emissions in the borough, both short-term (e.g. air quality) and longer-term (e.g. climate change).</p>
<p>Ambition 5</p> 	<p>Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Addressing climate change will reduce health inequalities and increase the perception of Sandwell as a clean, safe borough.</p>
<p>Ambition 6</p> 	<p>We have excellent and affordable public transport that connects us to all local centres and to jobs in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, the airport and the wider West Midlands.</p>	<p>Improved, cleaner public transport will have a significant impact on lowering our carbon emissions.</p>
<p>Ambition 7</p> 	<p>We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.</p>	<p>We need to adapt our new and existing housing stock for future climates to reduce emissions, fuel poverty, over heating in summer and improve indoor air quality.</p>
<p>Ambition 8</p> 	<p>Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.</p>	<p>Developing more walkable and cyclable places will reduce carbon emission and produce more desirable places to live.</p>
<p>Ambition 9</p> 	<p>Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.</p>	<p>Investment is increasingly drawn to places that are seen as clean and green and we need to ensure future risks in industry, such as flooding and heat waves are minimised.</p>
<p>Ambition 10</p> 	<p>Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people's lives and communities.</p>	<p>Our reputation will be increasingly linked to our action on climate change and clean air.</p>

### 3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Following approval at Cabinet in January, the Climate Change Strategy was subjected to a Public Consultation earlier this year. This comprised of two aspects: an on-line survey and a series of public meetings. There were 787 responses to the on-line survey and 650 people participated in the public meetings.
- 3.2 The questions in the on-line survey were taken from the Friends of the Earth publication “33 Actions Local Authorities can take on Climate Change” and participants were asked to rank a series of options in order of preference. At the public events, participants were given a chance to learn about the proposed Climate Change Strategy and in some cases participated in a real time survey using Mentimeter.
- 3.3 The public consultation showed that there was significant support for the council to tackle climate change as well as the issue of poor air quality. Furthermore, support was expressed for investment in renewable sources of energy, improved energy efficiency, dealing with waste and recycling, investing in public transport and infrastructure to support walking and cycling. A summary of the results is included as Appendix B.
- 3.4 The Strategy also now includes detailed information about the borough’s emissions and sets out broadly the significant reductions that must be taken if the council is to meet its target for the borough to become carbon neutral by 2041.
- 3.5 The actions the council need to take are divided into six categories:
  - Council estate and operations
  - The Built Environment (homes and businesses)
  - Transport
  - Waste and Recycling
  - Adaptation and Resilience
  - Natural Capital

Further detail for each of the above can be found in the Strategy, however it is important to note that the chapter on the council’s own operations are designed to meet the challenging target date of the council being carbon neutral by 2030. This means that our buildings (including leisure centres), our fleet, and our schools will all have to be carbon neutral. Significant investment will be required to enable this target to be met.

## **4 THE CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 In light of the public consultation, the Climate Change Strategy has been updated and now reflects the overall results. Furthermore, the Strategy has also been amended and now compares strongly with the Strategies of other UK local authorities.
- 4.2 The Strategy confirms that as a borough, we have a carbon budget of 9.1million tonnes for the period 2020 to 2100 which will require a 13.4% annual reduction in emissions through to 2050. Based on current emission levels, the carbon budget will be used up within 7 years. The actions within the strategy however, are designed to ensure that we stay within our carbon budget.

## **5 CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 In addition to the public consultation discussed in Section 3, key stakeholders across the council have been involved in the production of the revised Strategy, including Public Health, Planning, Transportation, Highways, Housing, Education, Waste and Recycling.
- 5.2 The Strategy has also been shared with several of our partners including the West Midlands Combined Authority, Transport for the West Midlands and Highways England. The Strategy recognises that on-going partnership working will be essential as we look to devise more detailed proposals to ensure we meet our 2030 and 2041 targets.

## **6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 6.1 The council have a statutory duty to have an Air Quality Action Plan so there are no alternative options. There is not the same requirement for a Climate Change Strategy but given the importance of the situation there also does not seem an alternative approach to the one that is being recommended.

## **7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Significant council resources will need to be dedicated to climate change interventions if we are to achieve the required step change in behaviour. In recognition of the level of resources which will be required, it is recommended that work needs to begin imminently to identify how the Strategy can be funded. However, many interventions are cost-saving, e.g. energy efficiency measures. Furthermore, proposals such as Workplace Parking Levies, that are being considered by neighbouring local authorities, will generate income that can be ring-fenced for the purpose of further carbon-emission reduction activity.

Finally, climate change is already impacting negatively on our economy so the 'do nothing' option is not cost neutral.

## **8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

Currently the Member Steering Group, chaired by Councillor Ali, is the overarching governance structure, with an Officer Working Group spanning multiple departments, which develops proposals that are submitted to the Member Steering Group for ratification. Monitoring of individual projects will be undertaken by council officers and project leaders and reported on regularly via the Officer Working Group. As the Action Plan is implemented and updated, new initiatives will continue to be submitted to the Member Steering Group for approval, and where necessary, to Cabinet.

Contributions of actions and interventions to the climate change and air quality targets will be monitored and reported to ensure that positive contributions are made to the WMCA target and the agreed role which Sandwell will play in meeting this target.

The council's Legal Department have been consulted regarding the Strategy and requested further involvement with the process of Action Planning as more detailed initiatives are produced.

## **9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 All studies show that climate change impacts affect the most deprived populations disproportionately, so action in this area will reduce inequalities. However, all activity needs to be assessed to ensure we mitigate short-term risks and maximise any benefits (for example of reduced excess winter mortality during warmer winters), particularly to vulnerable populations as well as to the wider population.

## **10 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS**

- 10.1 There will be significant resource implications of taking forward the actions we agree, in particular taking the necessary measures to meet our 2030 deadline for all council activities to be carbon neutral.

10.2 The wealth of climate change science is clear that the impacts of our changing climate have the potential to be deep and wide reaching if globally we do not work together to limit the rise in the earth's temperature to 1.5 degrees. Many of the activities in the Action Plan are based on securing a healthy and prosperous future for Sandwell residents, for example implementing new heating technologies and home insulation which will lift many people out of fuel poverty.

## **11 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)**

11.1 Climate change and air pollution have a significant impact on health and wellbeing. Climate change has been identified as the number one priority for public health this century by the World Health Organisation and air pollution as the key environment pollution source for the UK. As well as the significant impacts on health from the direct impacts of heat waves, flooding, increased UV radiation etc. the wider indirect impacts of climate change, such as impacts on the economy, food production, civil unrest etc. over the coming decades are predicted to have far higher health impacts.

11.2 Many of the hazards outlined above also have a significant impact on mental health and wellbeing, for example the impacts of flooding on communities goes far beyond the short-term physical impacts.

## **12 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND**

12.1 The implementation of this Climate Change Strategy will impact upon both council managed property and land.

12.2 We will need to ensure that the buildings we own and manage are retro fitted with the necessary insulation materials to minimise the loss of heat. The energy we use to heat, light and cool our buildings is highly likely to come from renewable sources of energy and low carbon technologies, such as heat pumps as well as from district heating.

12.3 Our response to the threats posed by climate change will cover a range of areas and land use will form a critical part of that response. We will need to safeguard and improve many existing green spaces, as their presence is crucial to how we adapt to a changing climate. We will need to consider other land we own which is unsuited to development and consider what role it could play in tackling climate change. We will also need to consider potential opportunities for enhancing our land in a way that reduces the 'urban heat island' effect, for example through extensive tree planting.

## 13 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 The level of carbon emission reductions that are required to meet our 2030 and 2041 targets are acknowledged as being significant in terms of their extent and the associated timescale.
- 13.2 The impacts of climate change are likely to be extensive and will detrimentally affect poorer people and so action must be taken to reduce that impact.
- 13.3 The Climate Change Strategy contains important objectives to ensure the future prosperity of Sandwell's residents and an implementation programme should now be forthcoming.
- 13.4 The wide-ranging actions required to tackle the impacts of Climate Change will have significant resource implications for the council and work should begin immediately to begin to identify what funding is required as well as likely sources of income.
- 13.5 It is recommended that Cabinet approve this report and the associated Climate Change Strategy.

## 14 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 none

## 15 APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Climate Change Strategy  
Appendix B – Results of Public Consultation

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