

Biodiversity and Climate Change Review

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resource Committee
Lead Director	Chief Executive
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

On 10 April 2019 Council approved a motion requesting that Policy and Resources committee undertake a review considering progress taken to address the twin threats to biodiversity and climate change. Council also requested that this review consider a target date of 2030 for the Borough to be carbon neutral and strengthen work on the protection and enhancement of habitats, species and ecosystems. The report recommends an approach to undertaking the review to achieve the request from Council.

This report was previously presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in June. At that meeting more work was requested on work that was going on elsewhere to tackle climate change and options for how to progress the review.

Purpose of Report

To decide how to progress the motion regarding biodiversity and climate change approved at full council on 10 April 2019.

This report makes the following recommendation to this Committee:

That:

1. A Climate Change Inquiry led by a working group as set out in section 4 of this report be agreed, with the aim to produce a report and action plan for approval by the meeting of Policy and Resources on 22 April 2020.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	26 June 2019
Policy and Resources Committee	23 July 2019

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1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Council's priority of Safe, Clean and Green sets an outcome by 2045 to have a Borough that is recognised as clean and well cared for by everyone. This includes an action to improve air quality under this priority.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	A review would support the achievement of the cross-cutting objective of Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Risk Management	Refer to section 5	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Financial	<p>Policy and Resources Committee allocated funding of £40,000 at its meeting on 26 June 2019 for a project entitled 'Climate Change Commission' with the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To produce a meaningful action plan, which will enable the cultural change required to address the long term and ambitious objectives of the project; - To support the Policy and Resources Committee/member working group to review and understand the issues and choices to be made on the subject; - To deliver the necessary project start-up documents to support the Council's actions on biodiversity and climate change; - To support the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance in bringing together multiple services across the authority who have the relevant expertise and will be responsible for contributing to and delivering the action plan. <p>The proposals set out in this report are within the scope of this budget allocation. The proposed working group will need to monitor</p>	Director of Finance and Business Improvement

	expenditure against the budget carefully to ensure that it meets the specified objectives and achieves value for money.	
Staffing	We will need access to extra expertise to deliver a review as requested by Council.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Legal	Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers as set out in the constitution.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Privacy and Data Protection	If the review requires additional collection of personal data this will be managed in accordance with the data protection act and any recommendations that require a change to systems or procedures in relation to the processing of personal data will require a data privacy impact assessment to be completed prior to approval.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations of the review could have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone if approved. A separate equalities impact assessment will need to be completed alongside any recommendations.	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	The recommendations of the review could have an impact on the health of the population or individuals within Maidstone. A separate health impact assessment would need to be completed for consideration alongside any recommendations.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Crime and Disorder	Crime and disorder is not within the scope of the review	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Procurement	No implications at this point in the process. Any procurement carried out as part of this project will be in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance / Director of Finance and Business Improvement

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 At Council on 10 April the following motion was agreed:

RESOLVED: *That this Council notes with concern the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on global climate change impacts and the recent Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reports on global species and habitat loss.*

Further to this, Council:

(1) Declares its recognition of global climate and biodiversity emergencies;

(2) Requests the Policy & Resources Committee to:

- undertake a short review of MBC governance policies and progress aimed at addressing locally these twin threats and to report on findings. This would include, inter alia, a review of the current provision of electric charging points throughout the Borough and bring forward an ambitious plan to make Maidstone Borough the friendliest place in the country for driving electric or hybrid vehicles.*
- consider a target date of 2030 for the whole of the Borough of Maidstone to be carbon neutral;*
- consider how the Council can strengthen local protection and enhancement of species, habitats and ecosystems services under available powers;*

(3) Requests the Chief Executive to (a) write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer stating the concern of the Council with respect to the above, the likely national impact on the economy and on the wellbeing of citizens, and requesting government funding be made available to implement swift appropriate actions in response and (b) include at the beginning of the proposed letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the following additional sentence:

"This Council welcomes the Chancellor's recent announcement that a "future homes standard" will mandate the end of fossil-fuel heating systems so as to "lower carbon and lower fuel bills too."

- 2.2 The Chief Executive wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer as agreed and the response is included at Appendix A for information. The letter sets out the actions that have been taken and are proposed to tackle climate change including a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.
- 2.3 Kent County Council on 23 May agreed a commitment of net zero emissions by 2050 and Canterbury City Council has agreed to reduce carbon emissions and become carbon neutral by 2050.
- 2.4 The Council has recently adopted a new Strategic Plan which sets an outcome to have an environmentally attractive and sustainable Borough, with a cross cutting objective that biodiversity and environmental

sustainability is respected. It does not go as far as setting a target that the Borough will be carbon neutral by 2030.

- 2.5 This report sets out a proposed approach to part 2 of the motion above.
- 2.6 At the June meeting of Policy and Resources Committee, the committee requested additional information on the actions being taken by others to tackle climate change. As there has been a short period between reports a summary of work is provided below rather than an extensive desk top study, which would be undertaken as part of any review agreed by the Committee.
- 2.7 Actions undertaken by Local Authorities range from those aspects they have direct control over such as fleet vehicles, energy use in council owned buildings, plastic use in offices, reviewing approaches to contracts and commissioning through the lens of climate change, to seeking behaviour change through waste and recycling campaigns, food waste schemes and installing electric vehicle charging points. Some of the more interesting or relevant actions have been highlighted.
- 2.8 Kent County Council in partnership with Medway currently has out to consultation the "Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy" to support the delivery of the Kent Environment Strategy. This strategy sets out a vision that "by 2050 the county of Kent has reduced emissions to Net-Zero and is benefiting from a competitive, innovative and resilient low carbon economy, where no deaths are associated with poor air quality". This is an ambitious vision which will require change from everyone in Kent.
- 2.9 Bristol was the first UK city to agree a climate emergency declaration with a pledge to make the city of Bristol carbon neutral by 2030. They have committed to a whole council approach. The Mayor brought his response to climate change to Council in July 2019. A summary from the report to council is provided below:

"The Mayor's Climate Emergency Action Plan:

- Provides an initial high level assessment of the city's emissions, highlighting the main sources, such as energy, road transport, aviation, food and other goods and services we buy which may be made anywhere in the world.
- Describes the recent trend in direct emissions from energy and transport, showing the good progress made since 2005 with the city on track to have achieved its target of a 40% reduction in emissions by 2020. It also notes some of the challenges such as rising emissions from road transport in the city in recent years.
- Explores likely future emission scenarios for the next decade. It concludes that committed plans of the UK and Bristol could deliver a 28% reduction in emissions by 2030, and that the more ambitious plans set out in local and national strategies could deliver 46% reduction in emissions by 2030. This provides a basis for developing a new strategy to accelerate action and close the gap to achieve carbon neutrality.

- Demonstrates how the Mayor and Council are leading by example in reducing the council's emissions and sets a clear target for the City Council to be Carbon Neutral for its emissions by 2025 and to develop a plan to quantify and minimise its indirect emissions.
- Sets out the city leadership that the Mayor has demonstrated by creating and chairing the new Environment Sustainability Board as part of the City Office, bringing together key partners from around the to create a shared One City Climate Strategy for Bristol.
- Sets out how the city will benefit from the expertise in the Universities and other organisations by the creation of an Advisory Committee on Climate Change to advise on how we make the city carbon neutral and climate resilient.
- Describes the Mayor's recognition of the level of concern across the whole city about climate change and a commitment to engaging the whole community in the response to the climate emergency. This includes allocation of funding for a new community engagement programme, to engage and empower citizens, understanding the barriers and enabling everyone to contribute.

Sets out the existing and new action that the Mayor will take to:

- Create low carbon jobs and businesses
- Build and retrofit homes to make them energy efficient and affordable
- Provide for clean and sustainable travel, including mass transit.
- Generate clean, renewable energy in the city
- Reducing the carbon footprint of our consumption
- Describes how the Mayor will work with other cities and partners to share learning, knowledge and to create a clear and compelling call on Government to respond to the Climate Emergency and enable us to create a carbon neutral and climate resilient city."

2.10 The Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) have just produced a report "Local Authority Climate Emergency Declarations". Our own motion is included in the report as well as several others. The report summarises pledges made by other local authorities which range from a citizens assembly and a commitment to the council and the area being carbon neutral by 2030 in Carlisle to Leeds Council pledging to work with the Leeds Climate Commission set up in 2017.

2.11 The Leeds Climate Commission brings together key organisations from across Leeds to make a positive choice on issues relating to energy, carbon, weather and climate.

2.12 Manchester Council has published a paper "Playing Our Full Part on Climate Change", committing to developing a full action plan by 2020, committing to working with residents, businesses and other stakeholders to take action on climate change.

2.13 Nottingham has made a commitment to be a zero carbon city in 2028. This is driven by a low carbon strategy that covers areas including public transport, community owned solar schemes to housing with energy

efficiency technologies. Their report goes on to consider what tools are available to a council to tackle climate change:

Direct Action

Considering our own operations, landholdings and other activities, this could include energy efficient improvements in council buildings, introduction of electric and/or hybrid vehicles, reducing energy use and pushing behaviour change.

The Regulatory Role

Using our powers under current planning laws for example adopting housing standards above level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

Partnerships

Where an area wide target is agreed it will be important to work closely with businesses, residents and public sector partners to achieve change. We will need to consider how we work with Kent County Council in particular.

Government and EU funding

Funding is available for green initiatives from both the government and the EU. Several councils in the UK have benefited from EU funding to increase energy efficiency, deploy new renewable energy, sustainable transport and heat networks.

- 2.14 Maidstone Council in 2003 commissioned an extensive scrutiny review with several recommended actions to tackle climate change and a link to this is provided in the background documents to this report. The recommendations made by the Environment and Transportation Overview and Scrutiny Committee are attached at **Appendix B**. The recommendations cover: Cultural Change, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, Green Corridors, Planning, Resilient Design, Water Saving, Carbon Neutrality, and Energy Saving. This should be the first stage of any desktop project.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Policy and Resources Committee has a number of options open to it to address the three points made in part two of the above motion, all of which would incur resource implications unless no further action was agreed. Options for consideration are set out below. The scope of any work is as set out in the motion agreed by Council.

Committee Inquiry via a Working Group

- 3.2 As set out in the constitution all Committees may hold inquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development. The Committee has the power to set up working groups to conduct scrutiny type reviews. The actions above could be considered by a working group and findings reported to the Committee. A Working Group would not in itself be a decision-making body: findings would be referred to Policy and Resources for decisions to be made (subject if appropriate to input from other committees).

- 3.3 The nature of the subject and its ambition are such that extra resource and expertise would be required in order to deliver a meaningful review, with realistic scope, objectives, timescales, risks and action plan.
- 3.4 As part of this option key stakeholders could be asked to participate in the working group either as part of the group itself, as independent expert advisors or as expert witnesses giving evidence to the committee.
- 3.5 The inquiry could be politically balanced or be represented by members of each political group – for example one or two members from each group.
- 3.6 Policy and Resources Committee could appoint a Chairperson or Spokesperson from the membership. Alternatively, the Working Group could itself nominate a Chairperson/Spokesperson.

Desktop research and report

- 3.7 The Committee could request officers to carry out research and report back to a future committee meeting with proposals in relation to the three areas identified in the motion. Currently there is no staffing capacity to carry out this work, so if this option were agreed resource would need to be identified, probably of a similar level to that set out in 3.2.

Include item as part of committee business

- 3.8 Another option would be for the Committee to undertake an inquiry and review as part of its usual meetings and business with activities planned throughout the year to complete the review. As this is a complex subject it would be difficult to undertake a review in an in-depth fashion alongside the usual business of the committee. This approach is not therefore recommended.

Commission

- 3.9 The Committee could request that a climate change and biodiversity commission be set up to tackle the issues. This could be along similar lines to that in Leeds, where interested stakeholders across the city from public, private and third sectors come together to take action. The Leeds Commission is chaired by Professor Andy Gouldson (University of Leeds) the Commission is guided by a Strategy Group which is supported by working groups on low carbon development, climate resilience and public engagement and communications. The Leeds Climate Commission terms of reference is attached at **Appendix C** for information.
 - 3.10 The Committee could agree to take no further action although this would go against the request agreed at full Council to undertake a review.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is proposed that a working group is formed to undertake the review. The Committee will need to determine whether the group is politically balanced and/or represents all political groups on the council. The proposal is for a working group consisting of 9 Councillors subject to the rules of political balance, with group leaders being requested to nominate members on to the group.
- 4.2 As the subject matter is complex and cross-cutting it is recommended that the review group report back with conclusions by the last meeting of the municipal year 22 April 2020. Policy and Resources Committee could agree a different deadline and may also want to include on its agenda updates from the review group as the review progresses. A different number of councillors on the review group could also be considered by the Committee as well.
- 4.3 The review group, with officer support would set a scope for the review, to include the proposals put forward by Council on 10 April 2019, objectives and milestones. The review, on reaching conclusion, should propose actions to be agreed by Policy and Resources Committee. The constitution sets out that committees may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations. The review has been allocated a budget of £40,000 which would provide officer support and potentially a small budget for site visits and witness expenses. Any additional expenditure would require approval from the Policy and Resources Committee.
- 4.4 The benefits of a Councillor review will be the ability to call expert witnesses to give evidence, a clear dedicated resource to support it, and that fact that it will ensure member led policy development on this complex and cross-cutting topic.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The project risks are to be determined and the requested resource is required to determine them. However, the risk on the investment is that an appointment is made to support the delivery of the project and it is then abandoned. Given this is based on a motion agreed by full Council this is deemed to be unlikely.
- 5.2 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 As part of the review it is likely that some consultation will be undertaken and this will need to be determined in the scope for the project. Previous consultations relating to the subject matter will also need to be taken into account as well. It is likely that as part of the review expert witnesses will be called upon to give evidence. The review report and recommended actions will be submitted to Policy and Resources Committee.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 If a scrutiny type review is agreed a member working group will be appointed, meetings will be publicised and regular reports on progress can be given to this Committee.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Response from the Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation.
- Appendix B: Key recommendations from the 2003 Climate Change Scrutiny Review
- Appendix C: Leeds Climate Commission Terms of Reference

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Environment and Transportation Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
Addressing Climate Change – 2003-