

**CABINET  
12 JANUARY 2021**

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**CLIMATE CHANGE – UPDATE**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Heather Scott, Leader of the Council**

**Responsible Director -  
Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on the climate change work and progress of the Council's journey to carbon neutrality and to respond to the motion approved at the Council meeting of November 2020.

**Summary**

2. At the Cabinet meeting in July 2020, the Climate Change Strategy was approved.
3. The strategy builds on achievements already delivered and sets out the principles for achieving a carbon neutral Council.
4. Work is ongoing to develop a Climate Change Action Plan.
5. Lead Officers are engaged in developing the action plan and a draft will be placed in front of Members for comment at the earliest opportunity.
6. Since July the following actions have been completed:
  - (a) guidance notes for Cabinet/decision papers update.
  - (b) guidance note for scrutiny committees produced
  - (c) Climate champions regular meetings have begun
  - (d) Mandatory training module available on Academy 10
  - (e) Business Resilience Manual produced.
7. Cabinet Members will each assume individual responsibility for assessing and implementing Climate Change opportunities in their portfolio.
8. At Council in November 2020, members wanted Cabinet to set out its plans for the future of the Cross-Party Working Group.

## Recommendation

9. It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- (a) note the update of the progress on climate change.
- (b) confirm its continued support for the Climate Change Working Group

## Reasons

10. The recommendations are supported to enable Council to achieve a net carbon neutral status for Darlington Borough Council.

**Ian Williams**  
**Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services**

## Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report **OR detail of background papers.**

Margaret Enstone : Extension 6229

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications for crime and disorder in connection with this report.
Health and Well Being	Working towards net carbon emissions has a positive impact on health and well being for all.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	The work of the Members working group will have a positive impact on carbon reduction and climate change.
Diversity	Equality and diversity is not relevant to the proposal in this report.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	No groups are affected by the proposals in this report
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Reduction in CO2 emissions and improvements in air quality support a place to live and thrive
Efficiency	This report will not deliver any efficiency savings
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	There are no issues in relation to Looked After Children and Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

11. In July 2020, Cabinet approved the Climate Change Strategy, which set out the four principles under which the Council will work towards carbon neutrality by 2050:-
  - (a) Reduce our overall energy consumption
  - (b) Reduce our demand for fossil fuel-based energy
  - (c) Contribute to a greener grid
  - (d) Sequester carbon
12. The Strategy builds on work already carried out to improve our energy efficiency leading to carbon reductions:
  - (a) Our streetlighting has been upgraded and this has formed the bulk of our emissions reduction to date.
  - (b) Solar panels have been installed on the Town Hall roof.
  - (c) Electric vehicles have replaced some of the internal combustion engine vehicles in our fleet.
13. We continue to look for ways to deliver on the four principles and are putting mechanisms in place to enable us to take advantage of opportunities as they arise:-
  - (a) We have set aside funds to match funding bids
  - (b) Funds have been ringfenced for works to improve our poorest rated council homes
  - (c) We have employed consultants to review our fleet and possibilities for further electric vehicles with EV playing an increasing role
  - (d) A car finance pay offset scheme is to be implemented, encouraging staff to choose low emission vehicles
  - (e) Agile and home working will be accelerated
  - (f) The Local Plan includes clear ambitions on both mitigation and adaptation to climate change, including policies on sustainable drainage
  - (g) We are examining the potential for battery storage and have arranged a Members' Briefing Session on 13th January
  - (h) The Trees and Woodland Strategy has been refreshed with a clear replacement and enhancement policy

- (i) We have committed to planting 10,000 trees over the next three years, with an aspiration to double that figure
14. Officers have been progressing to develop the supporting action plan and the Lead Officers identified in the Strategy are senior officers tasked with finding ways to reduce their carbon footprint in relation to their department's assets, operation and behavioural changes. They have been working closely with the Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer to develop actions.
  15. An early first draft has been shared amongst Lead Officers and the Cross-Party Working Group for comment.
  16. It is important for Lead Officers to see the draft plan as a whole so that areas of cross-working can be identified.
  17. More work is needed before the final action plan can be placed before Cabinet. The plan is likely to highlight:
    - (a) Actions that we have funding for
    - (b) Actions that will be guided by government directives that are on the horizon, but we don't yet have funding for
    - (c) Blue-sky actions that we have no funding for and/or technology is not yet available for.
  18. Some of the activities identified in the Strategy have already been completed or are underway:
    - (a) The guidance notes for the carbon section of Cabinet/decision papers have been updated.
    - (b) A guidance note for Scrutiny Committees has also been produced. This was sent to all Councillors for interest.
    - (c) Climate champions have been identified across the council and regular meetings have begun. An idea from one of the champions for used battery collection has been implemented.
    - (d) The training module has been updated in light of feedback from the Climate Champions and is now available on the mandatory section of Academy 10, with a hardcopy available for staff without access to the system. At 8 December 2020, 471 staff have completed it.
    - (e) A guidance manual for businesses to help them become more resilient has been produced and is available on the Council's website and will be shared through the Business Development Team's contacts.
  19. Government funding is being released to support this agenda. We are taking all opportunities to apply for this funding as it becomes available. A bid has been submitted to the LAD 1b for improvements to our council house stock.

20. The Tees Valley Combined Authority placed a regional bid to receive funding under the LAD2 programme. A decision is anticipated during December 2020, which will include development funds to support data quality improvements. Once the decision has been made, TVCA will notify the local authorities of our individual allocations.
21. We have also been successful in our bid to the Low Carbon Skills Fund to develop opportunities for the decarbonisation agenda and to provide potential projects for the public sector decarbonisation fund.

### **District Heating System**

22. Funding has been received from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy for a Techno-economic Feasibility Study. We are partners with the Tees Valley Combined Authority and have some match funding from them. Procurement Board has approved the recruitment of an external project manager and an inaugural meeting has been held. Work will begin on this project shortly.

### **Cross Party Working Group**

23. The Cross-Party Working Group continued to meet this financial year, with a change in membership from Councillor Howarth to Councillor McEwan.
24. At the time of writing five meetings have been held this financial year. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, meetings have been held virtually with a more informal approach. Notes of the meetings are attached at **Appendix 1** (October notes are draft and still to be approved).
25. Group members discussed renewable energy and the potential use of hydrogen as an energy source.
26. Councillor Snedker gave a presentation on the Propensity to Cycle Tool and the benefits of increasing cycling in the North East.
27. Following the Council meeting of November 2020, it is agreed that the Working Group will continue and remain focused on the agreed Council resolution and in supporting the preparation of the Action Plan.