

Cabinet – 23 March 2020

Report Title

Responding to the Climate Emergency

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Shokat Lal, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 30 October 2019. Following the declaration work has been undertaken to produce a draft policy document “Rotherham Council Responding to the Climate Emergency”, setting out the Council’s commitment to tackle climate emergency. The draft policy document is attached (Appendix 1) to this report.

A Member Working Group has been established to consider the Council’s response to the climate emergency and to propose a target for the Council’s carbon reduction. Arising from this work it is proposed that the following targets are adopted:

- RMBC: Council’s carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2030
- Rotherham: Borough-wide carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2040.

The purpose of these dual targets is to recognise the borough’s carbon budget (a carbon budget is the cumulative amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions permitted over a period of time to keep within a certain temperature threshold), alongside the Council’s carbon budget and acknowledge the need for the Council to lead by example in securing commitments and pledges from other organisations.

Overall, the approach sets out themes for the policy together with targets for 2030 and 2040 and actions for 2020/21. It is proposed that the Member Working Group will continue to develop the policy and actions for future years to meet the target outcomes.

Recommendations

1. That the progress to date following the declaration of the climate emergency be noted
2. That the continuation of the work of the Climate Emergency Member Working Group be agreed
3. That approval be given to set the following targets:
 - a RMBC: Council's carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2030
 - b Rotherham: Borough-wide carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2040
4. That the seven policy themes of Energy; Housing; Transport; Waste; Built and natural environment; Influence; and Engagement be endorsed
5. That the 2020/21 plan of action be approved.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Rotherham Council: Responding to the Climate Emergency
Appendix 2 Initial Equality Screening Assessment.

Background Papers

A number of reference documents and reports have been considered as part of the development of this policy report:

- Met Office's "State of the UK Climate" report 2017
- IPCC Special Report on Global Warming 2018

For background on carbon budgets on net zero targets:

- The Tyndall Centre's report for Rotherham (<https://carbonbudget.manchester.ac.uk/reports/E08000018/>)

For sustainable development as a principle:

- The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)

For documents relevant to the actions:

- SCR's Transport and Energy Strategies
- Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham Joint Waste Plan
- BDR's 2016 Carbon Assessment for reference to current emissions from waste
- The Core Strategy and Sites and Policies document of the local plan for how some environmental considerations are already made in Rotherham's planning framework

For additional context:

- The draft national Environment Bill
- The current 25 Year Environment Plan.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 18 March 2020

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Responding to the Climate Emergency

1. Background

- 1.1 National government has set a target for the UK to be at net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and are considering policy and legislative changes to support this. This concern is reflected locally with many councils acknowledging the need for meaningful action against climate change and declaring “climate emergencies” as platforms to initiate interventions for carbon emission reduction.
- 1.2 Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) has already made headway in its carbon emission reduction and over the past decade has been in the top 20% of councils in the Yorkshire & Humber region for carbon reduction. However, in recognition of the need for further action, the Council joined other local authorities in declaring a climate emergency on 30 October, 2019. A Member Working Group was established to develop an informed Council carbon reduction target and supporting carbon action plan to meet these goals.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 A policy direction statement has been developed which is attached (Appendix 1). This sets out three components; the proposed carbon reduction targets for the Council and the borough, the seven themes for carbon reduction action and the plan of actions for 2020/21.
- 2.2 The high-level targets for the policy are:
 - RMBC: Council’s carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2030
 - Rotherham: Borough-wide carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2040.
- 2.3 The purpose of these dual targets is to recognise the borough’s carbon budget (a carbon budget is the cumulative amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions permitted over a period of time to keep within a certain temperature threshold), alongside the Council’s carbon budget and acknowledge the need for the Council to lead by example in securing commitments and pledges from other organisations.
- 2.4 The seven themes are outlined below. Further detail about the kind of actions that could be considered and how these would be measured are included in Appendix 1:
 - **Energy** focuses on the energy used in Council operations and services provided, and energy used by contractors
 - **Housing** refers to emissions associated with domestic energy usage. This may be social housing or private housing

- **Transport** includes emissions from the Council's fleet and "grey fleet", and from public and private transport usage across the borough
- **Waste**, working across the South Yorkshire authorities through the South Yorkshire Waste Strategy, RMBC will explore extending sustainable waste processing and reducing waste
- **Built and natural environment** incorporates considerations of CO2 typically associated with planning and the urban environment, as well as CO2 capture by green infrastructure (i.e. trees)
- **Influence** recognises that to have a meaningful impact on borough-wide emissions, the Council must work alongside other organisations operating in the Borough to secure commitments on reduction and specific pledges to act on this. Alongside this work is a commitment to lobby regionally and nationally to inform policy developments
- **Engagement**, this recognises that the overwhelming majority of emissions from Rotherham are not related to Council activities. Therefore an effective engagement strategy is required to commit residents to climate reduction.

2.5 Action for 2020/21 is based around the following, as set out in section 7 of the policy document appended:

- Produce carbon impact assessments for all significant Cabinet decisions
- Address gaps in data collection regarding CO2 emissions
- Explore feasibility of renewable energy self-generation
- Commit to requiring efficiency standards for private housing developers that is in line with net zero targets
- Carry out assessment of Council's operational buildings to determine feasible energy efficiency upgrades
- Develop timeline for EV fleet conversion
- Develop awareness training for the Council's work force around energy use behaviours
- Promote sustainable transport across the workforce including cycling and ULEV leasing
- Strengthen South Yorkshire partnership commitments to reduce emissions associated with waste
- Complete energy efficiency improvements to street lighting.

2.6 Any action will, in the first instance, focus on direct emissions from council activities and emissions associated with the authority's energy consumption. Consideration will also to be given to how the operations of the local authority's suppliers and contractors are addressed. Emissions associated with other items and commodities that the authority consumes may be considered at a later point.

- 2.7 The Council will lobby national government and use its influence with external and partner organisations to secure a shared commitment to Borough-wide emission reduction.
- 2.8 The RMBC target is ambitious and will require commitment across the organisation however it will build on firm foundations. The aim is to accelerate current activities such as the roll out of energy switching schemes and integrate carbon reduction into everyday business activities, ensuring that climate impact assessments are undertaken as part of Council decisions and emissions associated across all activities are accounted for.

Monitoring progress and reporting

- 2.9 In order to ensure effective monitoring of the climate response actions, it is proposed that the Member Working Group for climate action continues. Chaired by a Cabinet Member, the group will monitor progress, investigate the feasibility of further action, and report on an annual basis to Council.
- 2.10 The group will be supported by a dedicated climate action co-ordinator and a team of climate action champions, one for each of the themes.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Following the review of existing practice and the approach adopted by other councils, the recommended option is to adopt the “Responding to the Climate Emergency” policy and planned actions.
- 3.2 Option 2 would be to take no action, which would not be compliant with the Council’s declaration.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 In order to develop realistic actions to curb carbon within the Rotherham context, consultation has taken place with colleagues across services with relevant expertise to gather information.
- 4.2 Should approval be given further consultation will be undertaken with service providers and key partners such as the Rotherham Together Partnership and Health and Well-Being Board to inform the implementation and delivery of actions.
- 4.3 As part of the wider engagement strategy, residents and organisations operating in Rotherham will be consulted and involved in the production and implementation of a comprehensive sustainable carbon reduction strategy.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The implementation of the “Responding to Climate Emergency” policy and planned actions will be overseen by the Member Working Group.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 The recommended plan of action for 2020/21 can be delivered within the Council's approved budget.
- 6.2 Over the medium to longer term there will be budgetary implications, both revenue and capital in order to meet the 2030 target. The details of the budgetary commitments for future years action plans will be defined as part of the "Responding to Climate Emergency" policy work. These financial implications will need to be considered as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and longer term financial planning before any significant financial commitments are made.
- 6.3 There are no direct procurement implications associated with the recommendations detailed in this report. Where procurement activity is required to deliver against the commitments agreed, The Corporate Procurement Team will support services to ensure this activity is undertaken in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Environment Bill (currently passing through Parliament) will strengthen the legislative powers and duties placed upon the Council, especially in relation to services covering waste and air quality. The Bill proposes a number of amendments to existing legislation, including to the Clean Air Act 1993, as well as new provisions relating to burning fuels with enforcement duties placed upon the Council. The composting of food waste is also included in the Environment Bill.
- 7.2 The Council also has existing duties to plan and act in relation to flooding, arising from the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (c. 29), as a result of the impact of climate change.
- 7.3 In the absence of other legislation, other actions or policies that the Council may pursue in order to effectively deal with climate change can be undertaken using the General Power of Competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (c.20).

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 In order to reduce emissions relating to staff transport usage, it may be necessary to review related policies and practices.
- 8.2 It is proposed that energy-use behaviours of all staff are targeted through awareness training which will require HR input.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 Children, young people and vulnerable adults are more at risk from the health impact of climate change which is expected to increase the magnitude and frequency of extreme events like floods, droughts, and heatwaves. This includes vulnerabilities to dehydration, heat stress and respiratory disease during persistent hot episodes as well as experiencing profound effects on mental health and well-being. The potential impact and mitigations will be considered as part of the implementation and delivery of actions.
- 9.2 Engagement of young people is central to this agenda. Young voices have been central to international environmental movements so far, and it is the youngest generations who will inherit the future, which will be shaped by the success of our response to the climate emergency.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 An Initial Equality Screening Assessment has been undertaken, which is attached (Appendix 2).

11. Implications for Ward Priorities

- 11.1 The draft policy document “Rotherham Council Responding to the Climate Emergency” applies borough wide.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 As part of its response to the climate emergency, the Council has begun communicating its priorities and potential avenues of action to other organisations through the Rotherham Together Partnership. In order to drive progress towards the 2040 Borough-wide net zero target, RMBC should consolidate and expand its partnerships around environmental issues.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1. There is a risk that climate emergency commitments will be made but not delivered upon. To mitigate this, it will be important that the Council effectively monitors progress and uses all tools available to secure meaningful and effective change.
- 13.2 The debate about climate emergency is constantly evolving and the Council’s response must be dynamic and reactive as new ideas and technologies develop, and potential actions become subsequently more or less feasible. The climate report must therefore be treated as a “living document”, which identifies key priorities and potential strategies but can be adapted as necessary. Equally, the climate emergency report is currently still a work in progress, intended to provide information regarding the actions currently being considered and the principles guiding these actions.

14. Accountable Officers

Jackie Mould, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	09/03/20
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	04/03/20
Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Bal Nahal	04/03/20

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