



Key Decision [Yes/No]

Ward(s) Affected: All

## **The Principles Governing Climate Emergency Action for Worthing**

### **Report by the Director for Digital, Sustainability & Resources**

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#### **Executive Summary**

##### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to outline the Council's principles which underlie its responses to the Climate Emergency Declaration (July 2019) and to propose an extension to the Declaration by adding the Ecological Emergency. The principles are relevant to work in all portfolios.
- 1.2. The supporting pillars of the Council's response are taken from the Labour Administration's commitment to be 'Fair, Green and Local' in policy and action. This paper gives some examples as to what this means in practice.
- 1.3. The paper sets out clearly the Council's commitment to putting Climate and Ecological action at the heart of policy actions. This reflects an approach which is both addressing the need to decarbonise across a range of realms at the same time as mitigating the impacts of climate damage on nature.

- 1.4. In recognition of being 'A Council for the Community', the paper explores ways the Council can support different organisations and community groups to work together to adapt to and mitigate the adverse consequences of Climate Change, to be coupled with working together to relieve the crisis in the Ecological sphere.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. To expand the Council's July 2019 Climate Emergency Declaration to include the Ecological Emergency.
- 2.2. To agree 'Fair, Green and Local' principles to underpin policies responding to the Climate and Ecological Crises.
- 2.3. To develop the Council's capacities to be effective leaders in delivering the policies – setting targets and reporting regularly on progress to all Members and citizens.
- 2.4. To recognise that most responses to the Climate and Ecological Crises - which are not contained within administrative boundaries, - demand working in partnership with other local authorities and local interested organisations.
- 2.5. Continue to work in partnership with Adur District Council and others, in recognition that many climate and ecology issues fundamentally require cross-border responses and solutions.

## **1. Introduction and Background**

- 1.1. The Climate and Ecological emergencies present a critically urgent set of challenges to everyone of us, to every community and organisation, particularly to the custodians of land, coast and sea.
- 1.2. The UN's 2019 Global Assessment Report (IPBES Global Assessment) warned the world that nature is in freefall, with biodiversity declining

faster than at any other point in human history. As a result, we are now facing what scientists are referring to as the world's sixth mass die-off, with a million species facing extinction across the globe, many within decades. The ecological crisis, and the resulting collapse of vital life-support systems that nature provides through clean air, clean water, pollination, food and natural resources, also therefore threatens our local economy and our communities.

- 1.3. 'The UN's International Panel on Climate Change Working Group 11 states - ' This report recognises the interdependence of climate, ecosystems and biodiversity, and human societies and assesses climate change impacts and risks as well as adaptation. Human society causes climate change. Climate change, through hazards, exposure and vulnerability generates impacts and risks that can surpass limits to adaptation and result in losses and damages. .... Taking integrated action for climate resilience to avoid climate risk requires urgent decision making for the new built environment and retrofitting existing urban design, infrastructure and land use. .... Stabilising the climate will require strong, rapid, and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to reach net zero emissions.'
- 1.4. Furthermore, according to Henri Brocklebank, Sussex Wildlife Trust 'We're losing nature at an alarming rate, and this matters – not just because wildlife and wild places are valuable for their own sake but because we depend on nature for everything, from the food we eat to the air we breathe”.
- 1.5. Even more broadly, the Faculty of Public Health in Britain reporting in 2022 declared that Climate Change is the biggest threat to Public Health. In the 2022 heat wave in England three thousand excess deaths were directly attributable to the high temperatures. This reality requires close partnership working with Community Health and Well Being colleagues (as well as the Regeneration and Housing teams.) The built and green parts of our town will be developed and managed to ensure that all citizens are protected to the highest possible extent from heat waves, torrential rainfall, storms, polluted air and food insecurity consequent on crop losses here and abroad directly linked to Climate Change events.
- 1.6. Together, the Climate and Ecological crises require change to almost everything the Council does. There are massive challenges to finding the funding necessary to finance these changes, especially challenging

is the imperative to create a workforce with the skills and capacity to bring about the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy systems. Furthermore, business methods must be transformed together with core technologies and infrastructure.

- 1.7. In pursuit of the aim to reduce Global Warming Gases and fossil fuel derived energy, national Government funding has been obtained to make Council buildings more energy efficient, with the installation of improved glazing, insulation and solar panel arrays. A Heat Network project is being pursued using private sector and national Government funding. Heat will be provided from renewable energy sources for the Civic buildings, the Worthing Hospital and other town centre buildings.
- 1.8. In pursuit of ecological improvements to parks and green spaces in the Borough, the Council is working with local people from various organisations and Friends groups to allow more natural landscapes to emerge side by side with the necessarily more managed areas for human activities.
- 1.9. However there is a great deal more to do and a need to significantly step up the scope, scale and ambition of the Council's work if it is to lead the whole Community into countering and mitigating the effects of the Climate and Ecological crises so as to fulfil the commitment to make the Borough net zero carbon by 2045.
- 1.10. The Administration's principles are contained in the statement to be 'fair, green and local' in all its policies. Climate and Ecological factors will be at the heart of every decision and sphere of action and need to be embraced by the whole community, partner organisations, businesses, schools and colleges.
- 1.11. The Council will act to ensure that the transition to a net zero Council and Borough is fair and just to everyone. This is an imperative at a time when the Cost of Living crisis is disadvantageous to many people, some of whom are now having to choose between heating their energy inefficient homes or putting food on the table.

## **2. Establishing our Principles**

Worthing Borough Council will establish fair, green and local principles in climate and ecology, and work to embed them in all projects and services, and

across its work with communities and businesses.

## 2.1. Fair

- 2.1.1. The Council will work to ensure a just transition for all, recognising that those on low income, from deprived neighbourhoods or from excluded groups will need to be represented and may need additional support to access solutions and opportunities.
- 2.1.2. The Council will work to balance what people need, with the imperative changes to counter adverse climate conditions and ecological degradation. The different solutions to ensure this balance will be worked out with local people's participation. It is acknowledged that there are other urgent needs such as social housing, food security, affordable transport and digital access as well as health and well being considerations.
- 2.1.3. The Council will work to ensure inter-generational justice, inspired by the work of the Future Generations Commissioner in Wales, examining the long term implications of policy and practice by actively involving young people in policy formation and decision-making.
- 2.1.4. The Council will work with the appropriate partners and will push for fair and accessible active travel conditions together with greatly improved affordable, reliable and green public transport. In addition EV infrastructure will be provided for those people with an electric vehicle.
- 2.1.5. The Council recognises the significant public health impacts of the Climate emergency and we will ensure that this is reflected in our Public Health work going forward.

## 2.2. Green

- 2.2.1. The Administration aims to develop the 'Greenest town on the South Coast' by combining Regeneration with Climate Action. The Council's recently adopted 'New Economic Principles' paper sets out the Council's intention to support businesses, social housing providers, third sector organisations housing homeless people such as Turning Tides, private landlords and

homeowners as well as other public sector organisations to achieve net zero status.

- 2.2.2. The Council will work to restrict carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions to ensure a net zero result in all its new and repurposed building developments, projects and services. The Council will encourage net zero developments through the planning system and ensure as a minimum compliance with the policies of the new Local Plan and latest Building Regulations to ensure sustainable development. New developments and the regeneration of existing buildings will be expected to incorporate renewable energy sources, SUDS drainage schemes, green roofs, and high quality landscaping to offer shade, rainwater absorption and an environment to enhance the health and well being of the people living in and visiting the developments.
- 2.2.3. The Council will work towards measuring whole life carbon cost across its building developments, projects and services, making them carbon neutral by off-setting remaining emissions using local projects such as tree planting and resilient nature restoration where needed by 2030.
- 2.2.4. The Planning department will use the new Local Plan policies to ensure that developers contribute to increasing biodiversity in line with the Environment Act. If this is not possible on site developers will be required to make financial contributions to ensure biodiversity net gain can be achieved elsewhere in the Borough.
- 2.2.5. The Council will pursue policies to reduce air pollution and to improve water quality in its own projects and services and more widely throughout the Borough.
- 2.2.6. The Council will survey and evaluate the Borough's adaptation requirements in the light of increasingly frequent severe weather events such as heat waves, droughts, storms, heavy rainfall and flooding with a view to devising a long term strategy with participation by local residents and relevant local and regional partners.
- 2.2.7. The Council will collaborate with schools, colleges and local community organisations to educate and inform residents of all

ages about the Climate and Ecological Crises and to let individuals and groups know about the positive contributions they can make in response.

### 2.3. Local

- 2.3.1. The Council will work with community groups, schools, colleges and businesses to promote engagement with our natural spaces, green and blue, connecting people with nature and improving health and well-being.
- 2.3.2. The Council recognises and will harness the expertise and passion of our local community leaders, and work to involve residents in the development of projects, in volunteering opportunities and citizen science, working together to create the greenest coastal town in the UK.
- 2.3.3. The Council will develop relationships with farmers, landowners, fishers and business people to inform them about the Climate and Ecological Crises and will urge them to reduce carbon emissions and other pollutants which contribute to rising global temperatures and ecological degradation.
- 2.3.4. The Council will pursue policies to grow the circular economy and build community wealth. In particular it will work closely with local and regional leaders in the educational sector to ensure that courses are available locally to skill people who will be needed in increasing numbers to work in green trades such as retrofitting homes and business premises to become energy efficient together with the installation of green renewable energy systems.
- 2.3.5. The Council will work closely with Adur District Council to collaborate with partners from further afield on larger scale projects having a local impact such as The Sussex Bay scheme. Strategic partners include Sussex Wildlife Trust, Sussex Local Nature Partnerships, the Environment Agency, Sussex Inshore Fisheries Association, Shoreham Port, Living Coast Biosphere and all coastal local authorities.

### **3. Building the Worthing Climate & Ecological Emergency Action Plan**

- 3.1. A Climate and Ecological Emergency Response Group (the Response Group) will be set up as part of the Council for the Community approach outlined in the recent committee paper. This would comprise a number of committed and willing individuals from different local environmental community groups, and other local organisations who would offer a broadly based leadership to develop and pursue the Council's 'green fair and local' agenda in respect of the Climate and Ecological emergencies.
- 3.2. The Response Group will bring together the different aspects of the action plan which cuts across a number of executive portfolios and will bring together work on decarbonisation of the built environment, action on the ecological emergency, interventions with public health as well as active travel.
- 3.3. The Response Group group will tackle the challenges the two emergencies present to us all. They will identify opportunities to influence relevant regional policies, to advocate for funding for local projects and to galvanise and support urgently needed grass-roots action.
- 3.4. In terms of the Council's commitment to make the Borough net zero by 2045, the Response Group will explore the wider issues relating to the built environment both domestic and commercial, transport, waste, industrial activity and local renewable energy supply. It will look for opportunities to work with other Local Authority networks such as UK100. It may also choose to 'get on' and set up effective local interventions and solutions.
- 3.5. A link to the local economy agenda will be considered possibly through a Green Growth sub-group and other sub-groups may emerge to focus for example on carbon reduction, nature improvements, the circular economy and the Sussex Bay project.
- 3.6. The Council will renew its commitment to act urgently in response to the Climate and Ecological crises. The new Response Group will give support to projects already underway, some of which are crucial in the context of the 2045 net zero goal.



#### **4. Embedding the climate and ecological emergency in Council operations**

- 4.1. Work on the Climate and Ecological Emergencies is being embedded throughout the Council's organisation. Officers will have opportunities to expand their knowledge about the Emergencies and will be invited to contribute to policy development to make sure that Climate and Ecological considerations are always included.
- 4.2. The staff volunteering programme enables officers to engage in community projects, working alongside residents and businesses to create a greener, healthier town.
- 4.3. Addressing the climate emergency is one of the mission areas for Our Plan. This reflects the fact that throughout the Council there are staff who are passionate about climate and ecology issues.
- 4.4. Work on the climate emergency will be embedded throughout the organisation by a community of practice that will enable managers to consider opportunities to transition their decision making and operations towards climate and nature positive models. These considerations will also be embedded in learning and development and service planning approaches to ensure they are understood and actively considered.
- 4.5. Staff will be provided with opportunities through the staff volunteering programme to get involved in community projects, and work alongside our communities and businesses to create a greener, healthier town.

#### **5. Issues for consideration**

- 5.1. The Council needs to accelerate its work on climate change and ecological recovery to reflect the imperative need for urgent action throughout the organisation.
- 5.2. Driving area-wide change will be challenging given national, regional and local policy and funding constraints.
- 5.3. The formation of the Climate & Ecological Emergency Response Group will be critical. It is recommended that it be a "coalition of the willing", of organisations and groups who have a clear and active commitment to the agenda and can join forces to create a movement for change.

Organisations that can **pledge** themselves to action.

- 5.4. The Response Group should be set up for 'action' , not just 'talk'. This will require a good understanding of when interventions are appropriate, whether these are lobbying, influencing, promoting, obtaining funding and initiating projects to inspire local innovation and action.
- 5.5. In relation to the Council's own actions, there are capacity and resource constraints in the current funding environment. The dependence on external funding presents challenges and risks to the pace and scope of policy development and project delivery.
- 5.6. The Council is experienced in securing external funding in the climate and ecological arenas and this will remain a priority to support relevant Council and wider community activities.
- 5.7. Policy and legal imperatives will demand pragmatism and compromise from time to time. One example is the imperative to deliver truly affordable net zero constructed and operational social housing.

## 6. **Engagement and Communication**

- 6.1. The proposed Response Group will shape the community engagement and participation approach with support from the Council's participation, sustainability and communications teams. This will be done as part of the Council for the Community roadmap.

## 7. **Financial Implications**

- 7.1. The Council already has capital and revenue budgets in place for agreed initiatives.
- 7.2. Where possible, the Council will seek external funding to alleviate the pressure on the Council's own resources.
- 7.3. Any new unfunded initiative will be considered as part of the Council's budget setting process alongside any other requests for funding.

## **8. Legal Implications (draft)**

- 8.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 came into force on 27th June 2019 and increased the UK's 2050 net greenhouse gas emissions reduction target under The Climate Change Act 2008 from 80% to 100%.
- 8.2 The 100% target was based on advice from the Committee on Climate Change's Report dated 2019 'Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming.
- 8.3 The Climate Change Act requires the government to set legally-binding 'carbon budgets' to act as stepping stones towards the 2050 target. A carbon budget is a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK over a five-year period.
- 8.4 Budgets must be set at least 12 years in advance to allow policy-makers, businesses and individuals enough time to prepare. The CCC advises on the appropriate level of each carbon budget. The budgets are designed to reflect a cost-effective way of achieving the UK's long-term climate change objectives. Once a carbon budget has been set, the Climate Change Act places an obligation on the Government to prepare policies to ensure the budget is met.
- 8.5 The Climate Change Act requires the UK Government to produce a UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA). The CCRA assesses current and future risks to and opportunities for the UK from climate change. In response to the CCRA, the Climate Change Act also requires the UK government to produce a National Adaptation Programme (NAP). The NAP covers England, while the devolved administrations produce their own programmes and policies. The Act also gives powers to the UK Government to require certain organisations to report on how they are adapting to climate change. This is called the Adaptation Reporting Power. Read more about government policy on adapting to climate change.
- 8.6 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 8.7 s1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the Council to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation

## **Background Papers**

[Adur & Worthing Carbon Neutral Plan 2019](#)

[Adur & Worthing Climate Assembly Recommendations Report 2020](#)

[A Carbon Neutral Study for Adur & Worthing 2019](#)

## **Sustainability & Risk Assessment**

### **1. Economic**

Significant opportunities arise for the local economy through the development of a concerted climate and ecological response. These include 'green growth' opportunities, building a low carbon and nature positive economy. Linking across to the Council's economic principles, work to address the skills agenda is key (e.g. low carbon heating and renewable energy technologies) as is working with schools, colleges and universities to create new pathways for young people and those seeking career change.

Strategic work to encourage green inward investment, and to aim the Council's procurement and contracting spend to local, green companies will also drive the transition of our economy.

The work on Sussex Bay could develop a whole new set of coastal industries including aquaculture, seaweed products, a Sussex Bay local fish brand etc.

### **2. Social**

#### **2.1 Social Value**

There are significant opportunities for social inclusion with regard to community projects across the whole agenda. However there are also key challenges in ensuring a **fair** transition - that those on lower incomes are not excluded from opportunities to move to low carbon living, enjoying locally produced and Fair Trade food, accessing low carbon transport options and so on. It will be critical to ensure that projects and interventions actively design for inclusion.

#### **2.2 Equality Issues**

Participation and engagement approaches must actively address the need to engage and include all members of the community, including the use of language, timings and locations of activities, and specific and appropriate outreach to excluded groups.

#### **2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)**

Matter considered and no issues identified

#### **2.4 Human Rights Issues**

Issues of climate justice will need to be considered across all work streams

### **3. Environmental**

This work is of course central to delivering environmental outcomes

### **4. Governance**

Matter considered and no issues identified