

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Gateshead Climate Change Emergency and proposed Climate Change Strategy

**REPORT OF:** Peter Udall, Acting Strategic Director Economy, Innovation and Growth

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### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Cabinet of progress against the commitments made in the climate emergency motion, and to seek Cabinet approval to produce a climate strategy and action plan following an independent audit of the Council's and the borough's carbon emissions and environmental credentials.

### **Background**

2. For more than a decade Gateshead Council has recognised and been responding to the effects of Climate Change, examples of which include:
  - In 2010 we created a dedicated team comprising of seven energy and sustainability officers to lead the borough's efforts against Climate Change.
  - Later in 2010 we published our Climate Change Strategy, seeking to reduce borough-wide carbon emissions by 40% by 2025
  - We signed the EU Covenant of Mayors on Climate Change in 2011, and published our Sustainable Energy Action Plan in 2012
  - The Council adopted its own Carbon Management Plan in 2010, which sought to cut the borough's carbon emissions by 35% by 2016. This has been achieved and a new target of 50% by 2020 adopted
3. Over the last decade the Council has invested sixty million pounds installing and building energy saving and low carbon systems for its own operations and for the community. This has led to a 50% reduction in the Council's own carbon emissions.
4. However, throughout 2018 and 2019, the international significance of Climate Change and the need to accelerate action has become far greater. In particular, the UN Emissions Gap Report identified some alarming facts, including: current plans to reduce global emissions by 2030 will not be sufficient to halt temperature increase to 1.5 degree Celsius, and; global emissions continue to grow and show no sign of peaking.
5. In response to this Gateshead Council declared a Climate Emergency at its Council meeting on 23 May 2019 and set out a number of commitments by 2030 (as outlined in the appendix 1 to this report).

6. To ensure that the Council responds effectively to the emergency, a refresh of the Climate Change Strategy is to be carried out, and an action plan prepared.

## **Proposal**

7. The Council has made a commitment to ensure its own operations and policies will lead to carbon neutrality by 2030, and whilst undertaking this, it seeks to influence its partners to do the same.
8. A cross-council working group is to be established with the objective of ensuring that every aspect of the Council's operations and actions consider the climate emergency. The working group will identify and seek to implement the actions required in the refresh of our Climate Change Emergency Strategy and Action Plan.
9. To inform preparation of the Climate Change Emergency Strategy, it is suggested that an independent audit is undertaken by Investors in the Environment to assess the carbon emissions associated with the Council's policies and operations and where necessary make recommendations.
10. In recognition of the important role trees play in reducing the build up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (Woodland Trust – appendix 2), whilst an ambitious target of 100,000 trees being planted by 2030 has been set, the council will look to continuously review this, in conjunction with our partners, to see whether this can either be accelerated or increased.
11. Given the imperative to respond to the climate change emergency, consideration will be given to how the Council resources activity relating to this area in its forthcoming budget planning cycle. Regional working is ongoing between the North East councils, business, the voluntary sector and other partners, in recognition that the greatest impact will be achieved if we work together at a local and regional level on this.
12. An important consideration in the development of our action plan will be the voice of our residents. Two-way dialogue with residents and our partners is imperative in developing our response to the Climate Emergency and ensuring realistic and ambitious steps are set in our action plan.
13. Discussions have begun with the Council's key partners on how we might work together to address the climate emergency, which has included community interest groups. This is only the start of this journey and a further programme of engagement activity is being developed, and will be designed to ensure that all interested parties are involved in the development of our strategy and action plan.
14. It is proposed that a series of workshops covering all aspects of climate change are be arranged with experts, residents, businesses, schools and representatives of the youth parliament. The youth parliament and schools will have an important role to play in scrutinising our progress. It is also proposed to encourage residents and businesses to complete a survey to identify their own

areas of concern and how they might respond to the challenges we face. The survey and workshops will ensure the whole community can be involved in tackling the climate change emergency and formulating a strategy and action plan. Regular updates as to our approach will also be provided in Council news.

15. It is proposed that Cabinet will be regularly updated as progress is made.

### **Recommendations**

16. Cabinet is recommended to:

- i. Agree to the commencement of a borough-wide audit of carbon emissions
- ii. Agree to the production of a Climate Change Emergency Strategy and Action Plan
- iii. Agree to the development of a programme of engagement; and
- iv. Agree to receive further updates as this work progresses.

For the following reasons:

- i. To ensure an independent view of the action required is provided quickly
- ii. To ensure that a clear set of actions and broad objectives to drive change is agreed by the Council and its community
- iii. To ensure engagement of our partners and community to ensure a Gateshead-wide approach to the issue.

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## Policy Context

1. On a local level, the proposal has potential to directly contribute towards several objectives within the Thrive agenda, as follows:
  - *Put people and families first.*
  - *Tackle inequality.*
  - *Invest in our economy.*
  - *Opportunities for employment, innovation and growth.*
  
2. In addition, the scheme will contribute to other key priority areas for the Council:
  - Climate Emergency
  - Air quality

## Background to Climate Change Action in Gateshead

3. Gateshead Council has recognised the emergency caused by Climate Change for more than a decade, and has acted as follows:
  - We created in 2010 a Climate Change Team comprising 7 energy / sustainability officers, to lead the borough's efforts against Climate Change.
  - Later in 2010, we published our Climate Change Strategy, seeking to reduce borough-wide carbon emissions by 40% by 2025
  - We signed the EU Covenant of Mayors on Climate Change in 2011, and published our Sustainable Energy Action Plan in 2012, with an interim target of 20% reduction by 2020 - and have been delivering against those actions since then.
  - As an organisation, the Council adopted its own Carbon Management Plan in 2010, which sought to cut carbon emissions by 35% by 2016. This was been achieved, and a new target of 50% by 2020 adopted
  
4. Regarding key progress as an organisation:
  - The Council has invested over £60m installing and building energy saving and low-carbon systems, for its own operations, and for the community, and it continues to grow its Energy Services Team (now comprising 10 staff) which grew out of the Climate Change Team
  - The Civic Centre is a leading example of progress in our buildings- energy efficiency investment has seen its energy use fall by around 28% in the last 10 years - and since 2018, 100% of its heat and power is served by low-carbon sources - a 200kW PV array installed on the roof, and all other heat and power supplied via underground pipes and wire from good quality combined heat and power, generated at Gateshead Energy Centre.
  - Gateshead's streetlights, thanks to investment in LED lighting and dimming, now use 60% less electricity than they did 10 years ago.

- The Council's vehicle fleet, which has won numerous green transport awards, now uses 25% less fuel than it did 10 years ago.
- We installed 2MW of solar panels across 35 buildings and schools, and solar energy now provides 5% of power for all Council buildings and schools.
- As a result, in 10 years, the Council's own carbon emissions from all its operations and services has fallen by 55% since 2010, and continues to fall.

5. Regarding key progress as a borough:

- For housing, the Council has invested significantly in regional partnerships, such as the Warmzone, and more recently, Warm Up North. This has seen over 40,000 insulation measures installed in homes across Gateshead
  - As a social housing provider, the Council's Decent Home programme and energy efficiency work has seen major investment in new boilers, new windows and solid wall insulation to Council homes.
  - As an example, the Council recently invested £22m in the Gateshead HEIGHTs scheme to install new low-carbon heat networks to 620 high rise homes.
  - As a result, the investment in home energy conservation has seen the number of homes classed as energy efficient increase from 15% in 2003 to 56% in 2018 - our target is 100% by 2030. Housing emissions have reduced by 39% since 2005.
  - Employers account for 30% of carbon emissions in Gateshead., Energy use and emissions from employers has reduced by 46% over the past 15 years, but without any drop in jobs and employment.
  - There are many examples of leadership from employers in the area, for example:
    - Lanchester Wines operate one of the region's largest minewater energy schemes, to provide renewable heat for their wine storage warehouse
    - Henry Colbeck collect and recycle waste cooking oil each year, to supply as renewable fuel blends into aviation industry
    - Intu Metrocentre are investing in a 0.5MW solar PV array for the Metrocentre, to reduce their carbon emissions
6. The Council and the Gateshead Energy Company are now a generator and supplier of low carbon and renewable energy, supplying this to Council buildings, homes and other buildings across the town centre, through a 4km heat and power network.
7. The transport network has seen emissions fall by 16% since 2005 due to a number of reasons. The rise in traffic volume that has occurred in previous decades has ceased, with traffic volumes falling 2% since 2005, due to sustainable transport initiatives. The efficiency of vehicles has increased, thanks to UK policies and improvements from vehicle manufacturers. And all UK transport fuels now contain 3% biofuels, which continues to increase.
8. The Council has agreed to support the planting of 100,000 trees by 2030. Children will be involved in supporting this.

9. These local initiatives, supported by national policies, has seen the borough's carbon emissions fall by 36% since 2005, exceeding our target of 20% by 2020, and on target to meet the 40% target by 2025
10. Regarding updating our policies and targets to 2050, Gateshead Council, in partnership with all Tyne and Wear Councils, Durham and Northumberland, commissioned a new Low Carbon Strategy, to outline strategic opportunities to take the region to net zero emissions. This was completed in September 2019, and raised the following conclusions and opportunities:
- UK power supplies are expected to become net zero by around 2030.
  - However, emissions will remain significant from road transport fuels and heating fuels.
  - The region has a number of opportunities to achieve net zero emissions:
    - a. Ensuring new development is zero carbon as soon as possible, to limit emissions growth
    - b. Continuing to support domestic energy efficiency, through retrofit measures – solid wall insulation, underfloor insulation
    - c. Decarbonising heating, through electric heat pumps, and hydrogen boilers
    - d. Continuing to use sustainable travel to reduce vehicle use as far as possible
    - e. Supporting electric vehicle uptake, and infrastructure for residual transport needs
    - f. Continuing to develop major investments in renewable energy and energy infrastructure, such as heat networks

### **The new Climate Emergency**

11. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, signed in 2016 by all UN member states, was a major international step, committing countries to:
- Limiting global temperature increase to 2degC this century, and aiming for 1.5degC.
  - See global emissions peak as soon as possible, and start declining, so that net zero emissions are achieved as close to 2050 as possible.
12. The UK was the first member state to commit to legally binding targets to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050. Recently, the UK Government, following the advice of the Committee on Climate Change, has committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050.
13. However, throughout 2018 and 2019, the international significance of Climate Change and the need to accelerate action has become far greater. In particular, the UN Emissions Gap Report raised some alarming facts:
14. Current global plans to reduce emissions by 2030 are now not sufficient to halt temperature increase to 1.5 degC

15. Global emissions continue to grow and show now sign of peaking. Emissions by 2030 need to be 25% lower to remain on track to limit temperature increase to 2 degC, and 55% lower to reach 1.5degC
16. To respond to this, Gateshead Council declared a Climate Emergency at Council on 23 May 2019 which outlined the following commitments.
- Item 1. The declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' that requires urgent action.
  - Item 2. Make the Council's activities carbon neutral by 2030
  - Item 3. Achieve 100% clean energy across the Council's full range of functions by 2030
  - Item 4. Ensure that all strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to planning decisions are in line with a shift to zero carbon by 2030
  - Item 5. Support and work with all other relevant agencies towards making the entire area carbon neutral within the same timescale.
  - Item 6. Ensure that political and chief officers embed this work in all areas and take responsibility for reducing, as rapidly as possible, the carbon emissions resulting from the Council's activities, ensuring that any recommendations are fully costed.
  - Item 7. Work with, influence and inspire partners across the borough to help deliver this goal through all relevant strategies, plans and shared resources by developing a series of meetings, events and partner workshops
  - Item 8. Request that the Council and partners take steps to proactively include young people in the process, ensuring that they have a voice in shaping the future.
  - Item 9. Call on the UK Government to provide the powers, resources and help with funding to make this possible, and ask local MPs to do likewise.

## **Implications of Recommended Option**

### **17. Resources:**

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that the revenue resource implications arising from the strategy will be considered as part of the approach to budget and the medium term realignment and investment of targeted resource towards achieving thrive priorities and outcomes.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no human resources implications.

**c) Property Implications** – The development of a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan may identify actions that have implications for the operation of properties.

**18. Risk Management Implication** – There may be risks associated with the actions identified through the development of a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. Any risks will be considered through the preparation of the strategy as part of the options appraisal, and measures will be applied to minimise or manage any potential risks.

**19. Equality and Diversity Implications** – A programme of community and stakeholder engagement, carried out equitably, will have positive implications for equality and diversity in Gateshead. An equalities impact assessment will be prepared to accompany any new policies that emerge.

**20. Crime and Disorder Implications** – No crime and disorder implications have been identified.

**21. Health Implications** – Implementation of measures aimed at addressing and mitigating climate change will have positive health implications; for example, by improving resilience to extreme weather events.

**22. Sustainability Implications** – Preparation and implementation of a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan are anticipated to contribute to long-term environmental, social and economic sustainability by improving Gateshead's resilience to the effects of climate change.

**23. Human Rights Implications** – Implementation of some actions could impact upon the amenity of some residents. Effects will be minimised through engagement with residents, ward members and relevant stakeholders.

**24. Area and Ward Implications** – All wards will be affected.

## **Background Documents**

Climate Change Strategy 2010

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/media/2507/Climate-change-strategy-document/pdf/ClimateChangeBooklet2010.pdf?m=636391887477970000>