

TITLE OF REPORT: **Climate Emergency Strategy, Environmental Audit review and Climate Update.**

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

Purpose of the Report

1. Cabinet is requested to:
 - a. approve draft Climate Emergency Strategy and the commencement of consultation on it with partners, stakeholders and residents;
 - b. note the outcomes of the first annual review of the independent environmental audit of the Council's activities, and the improvement reported; and
 - c. note the ongoing activities that are progressing towards our climate and environmental sustainability targets.

Background

2. Cabinet agreed to the preparation of a Gateshead wide Climate Strategy in November 2019. As an essential part of this involves engagement with business and residents, the development of this Strategy was delayed through the pandemic. The Climate Strategy has been drafted (appendix 3) and it is proposed that consultation with partners and residents take place between December 2021 and February 2022.
3. The Council have received the first annual review of the Investors in the Environment Audit of their operations. The Council is achieving Silver level accreditation and has improved its rating from 70% to 75% since the first audit in 2020 despite resources being diverted during covid19 in many services. The Audit is attached as appendix 4.

Proposal

4. It is proposed to undertake consultation with the public and stakeholders on the Strategy. is attached at appendix 3. The aim of this consultation is to initiate the conversation about climate action with partners and residents with the intention of forming a detailed action plan, which will form part of the strategy that all Gateshead residents and business can sign up to.
5. A digital mapping tool will be used to assist consultation. Once actions have been collated it is intended they will form individual practical ward level action plans, placing councillors and communities at the heart of helping to tackle the climate emergency.
6. Officers will continue to explore and implement projects that will contribute towards

addressing the Climate Emergency while also complementing Thrive objectives. Further detail on this is provided in appendix 2.

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (i) approves the commencement of consultation with partners and the public on the draft Climate Emergency Strategy; and
- (ii) approves the publication of the Environmental Audit review.

For the following reasons:

- (i) To progress towards the Council's net zero carbon commitment for Gateshead
- (ii) In respect of the Audit to show progress towards the Council's net zero carbon commitment.

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Policy Context

1. The Council's strategic approach is to make Gateshead a place where everybody thrives. Climate Change has a direct link to the wider determinants of health which our Health and Wellbeing Strategy seeks to address. Of most relevance to this Strategy is the support of community based initiatives to ensure a more sustainable community approach to living and ensure communities are able to access and benefit from the natural environment by creating and developing sustainable places and communities.
2. 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 decision making 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.

Background

2. The Council declared a climate Emergency in 2019. The Climate Action Plan setting out how the Council will work towards net zero was published in 2021 and a Council wide Environmental Policy was adopted in 2021.

Consultation

3. The Strategy will be subject to public consultation December 2021 – February 2022. Consultation has taken place with the Leader and Deputy Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Environment.

Alternative Options

4. There are no alternative options.

Implications of Recommended Option

5. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that consultation related expenses can be funded from the existing Climate Emergency budget.
 - b) **Human Resources Implications** – None
 - c) **Property Implications** - None
- 6. **Risk Management Implication** - None
 - 7. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - The Strategy supports equality and diversity
 - 8. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – None
 - 9. **Health Implications** - The Strategy has positive health implications
 - 10. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - The Strategy has strong positive implications for climate and sustainability.
 - 11. **Human Rights Implications** - None
 - 12. **Ward Implications** - All

Background Information

Climate Change Strategy 2010

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

Sustainability Audit report

[iiE_silver_level_audit_report.pdf \(gateshead.gov.uk\)](#)

Environmental Policy

[Appendix 5. Environmental Policy Feb 2021.pdf \(gateshead.gov.uk\)](#)

Gateshead Council Climate Emergency Action Plan

[3336-MC-Climate_emergency_Action_Plan_v22.pdf \(gateshead.gov.uk\)](#)

Progress in the last 12 months towards climate change

Following the Climate Emergency Declaration made by Full Council on 23 May 2019, Cabinet agreed that officers should commence an environmental audit of the Council's activities. This audit was carried out in 2020 and resulted in the Council being awarded a Silver accreditation using the Investors in the Environment assessment framework. The first annual review of this audit has been undertaken by Capability North East/ Genee (report in Appendix 4). The review concluded that the Council was still achieving silver level accreditation but has improved its score from 70% to 75%.

The Council continues to explore and implement projects that will contribute towards addressing the Climate Emergency while also complementing Thrive objectives. The activities listed below are among those that have been taken forward in recent months across different Council services, with co-benefits for decarbonisation;

Transport

The Council developed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Birtley and East Gateshead and plan to build on this to improve the facilities in these areas.

The Council completed the following schemes and have more underway:

- Wardley cycle improvements (permanent closure of bridge)
- Wellington Street cycle improvements
- A195 Lingey Lane / Bowes cycleway
- Small scale public rights of way improvements
- Experimental measures in the town centre to support air quality, public transport and cycling

During the pandemic temporary measures to support social distancing for pedestrians and cyclists in local centres were introduced. Following national patterns cycling levels increased significantly during the pandemic with people finding more time to cycle and using it as an alternative mode to public transport. Levels of cycling remain high.

The Council worked with Go North East to see the introduction of electric buses on the 53/54 route and with partners seen the completion of the Clean Bus Technology Funded bus retrofitting to improve emissions on 100 buses.

The North East Joint Transport Committee of which Gateshead is a part has committed to enter into an Enhanced Partnership with the bus operators to improve services and grow patronage.

The Council are now engaging proactively in encouraging green travel plans. The Council are developing resources to support businesses in addressing employee travel patterns in their response to climate change. The Council has made improvements to the Council's Travel Plan and are adapting it to hybrid working.

Work with children schools includes the development of the Be Cool toolkit to help schools encourage active travel. Bikeability training is being delivered across Gateshead and Child

Pedestrian Training in six of the region's authorities. The Living Streets walk to school initiative is live in 17 schools. Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service helped to encourage parents not to cause congestion at schools and we trialled Walking Buses at two schools.

The Council are working with Love to Ride through their initiative and app to get more people cycling to work and for leisure. Last summer the Council organised a bike amnesty to pass on unwanted bikes to people who need them and developed guides for families to walk and cycle as part of Brighten the Day. This summer the Council are worked with Transport North East on GoSmarter, Go Active - a week of cycling and walking activities in Saltwell Park and itineraries/routes for days out on foot/bike. Our popular cycle maps have been updated and are now available online.

The Council are planning how to add to the electric vehicle charging infrastructure across Gateshead and are working with colleagues across the region and NEPO to procure a supplier.

Energy

Major capital funding has been secured for a number of energy efficiency, renewable energy and heat network schemes:

- The Council issued £7.4m commercial loan to Gateshead Energy Company, to complete a £14m funding package for installation of a 6MW minewater heating scheme to Gateshead District Energy Scheme, and to fund future connections for housing developments and Gateshead Quays
- A £7.5m grant was secured from Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) to fund 3MW of urban solar parks, and energy network connections to 4 more Council buildings
- A further £4.5m of PSDS grants were secured to fund energy efficiency measures in up to 13 schools
- Grants of £6.3m were secured to fund up to 600 solid wall insulation measures to homes in Chopwell

The Council also set out its ambitions for Zero Carbon Heat by 2030, in a strategy approved at Cabinet in June 2021, with ambitions to

- Install a further £240m of heat networks, to connect up to 15,000 Council homes to zero carbon heat networks
- Support the development of Northern Gas Network's Integrel site, as an energy system demonstrator, and to create conditions for Gateshead to become a first UK pilot for hydrogen distribution in the public gas network

New staff members

New members of staff have been appointed to assist in the implementation of our Climate targets within the Transport and Communications Teams. These officers will work alongside the climate Emergency Team.

Human Resources

Climate Emergency and how this is the responsibility of all staff and teams within the Council has been included within the induction pack for new starters at the Council. In addition, the A and D procedure is being reviewed and how staff are contributing towards out zero carbon targets will be included within A and Ds.

Ways of Working

The Ways of Working group continue to progress towards a Council policy for new ways of working. Any new way of working proposed will have been assessed for its contribution to carbon reduction targets, building upon any savings already made through the increased level of working from home during 2020/2021.

Cabinet report Sustainability Implications assessments

A Sustainability Implications Assessment has been agreed at SMG which will start to be required for Cabinet Reports where a negative implication for sustainability has been identified in the report or when an Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out and identified negative implications.

Woodland

The Council has established a working group – Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and Durham Wildlife Trust and commissioned RDI Associates to produce an Action Plan “More and Better Woodland”. The Action Plan will set out how the Council can improve the management and sustainability of the Councils Woodland approx. 500ha and identify areas for woodland planting of over 0.25ha on Council owned land to deliver its targets – 100,000 trees by 2030 and 17% woodland coverage in Gateshead. The Council is working with adjoining authorities is in the process of creating a North East Community Forest. The Council has also recently submitted a joint expression of interest with our neighbouring authorities to the Treescape fund to fund amenity tree planting of some 90 heavy standard trees in Gateshead in parks, public open spaces, cemeteries. If the bid is successful there will be opportunities to plant the trees in association with celebrations to commemorate the Queens Jubilee. The Council has been successful working with its partners in creating the North East Community Forest and the Treescape Fund application.

Partner engagement

The Council continues to work with the Gateshead Climate Alliance. Partnership working is ongoing through numerous energy, economic and transport projects. Engagement with our health partners has commenced and priority actions that can be developed in partnership are being explored.

InTEGReL

Northern Gas Networks, Newcastle University, Northern PowerGrid, Northumbrian Water, Siemens and Three Mobile are founding partners of InTEGReL; an Integrated Transport Electricity Gas Research Laboratory. A unique research and innovation facility, InTEGReL is a space for industry, academia, SMEs and government to collaborate at a dedicated site in Low Thornley, Winlaton Mill.

Partners work together to develop, test and demonstrate new strategies and technology that will reduce energy consumption and lower climate emissions by powering homes,

workplaces, public buildings and transport with clean, affordable and reliable electricity, gas, water, and communications.

Hydrogen House and HyDeploy Trials

Northern Gas Networks received a £250k grant directly from BEIS to accelerate development of domestic hydrogen use in the home. They have built a replica house which will be fitted with hydrogen fed appliances to demonstrate how this low carbon fuel will replace natural gas for heating, hot water and cooking in homes connected to the existing gas network.

Gas customers in Winlaton Mill, Gateshead, will become the first on a public UK gas network to use blended hydrogen for heating and cooking. NGN anticipates that it will be possible to roll out a hybrid gas supply to homes and businesses in Gateshead by the end of 2023.

While the Council hasn't invested any money in the scheme, we had a significant role facilitating planning permission and development of the hydrogen house based on the InTEGReL site at Low Thornley, Winlaton. We're also piloting the UK's first live hydrogen trials in a local housing community (Winlaton).

The Economic Strategy

The Economic Strategy has a focus on climate change with a focus on green jobs and ensuring help and support to meet the changing landscape. The strategy also considers connectivity and placeshaping as key themes and also the new skills necessary for a changing green economy.

APPENDIX 3 Draft Climate Strategy

APPENDIX 4 IIE Audit 2021