

Committee(s): Environment Enforcement & Housing Committee	Date: 7 March 2022
Subject: Environment Strategy	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Greg Campbell, Corporate Director – Environment & Communities	Public
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Summary

Brentwood Borough Council has been undertaking positive action in moving forward its carbon reduction agenda including the implementation and procurement of electric vehicle chargers, creation of a car club, fleet change over to electric or alternative fuels, the launch of Brentwood Environmental Business Alliance (BEBA) and the planting of woodlands. However, the Council want to further their carbon reduction agenda and create a direction of travel towards carbon neutrality that ties in with the Council's aspirations and government targets.

This report therefore discusses the creation of an Environment strategy for consultation that will align the actions taken so far, focus on the needs of the borough and assist residents, businesses and other interested groups to be able to take active part in delivering the borough targets.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- R1. Approve the strategy for consultation.**
- R2. Consider feedback response of consultation to the next Environment, Enforcement & Housing Committee.**
- R3. Review the strategy annually.**

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. The Climate Change Act (2008) highlights the UK's aim to become carbon neutral by 2050. Following the government's announcement, Brentwood Borough Council declared its aim to be carbon neutral within its own activity by 2040 and borough wide by 2050.

2. The Council have been very active in delivering tangible projects that will have a direct and indirect effect on the amount of carbon produced and the amount of carbon captured. This work has included liaising with partners in order to deliver these outcomes and using funding where possible. These partners include Essex County Councils, Thames Gateway, Thames Chase, the Forestry Commission and CORE (CO2 Reduction Essex), Essex Wildlife Trust, Parish Councils. The Council is also involved with the Council wide Climate Officer and Member group.
3. The Council have considered its actions so far and have now brought together a direction of travel in a strategy ready for consultation – See Appendix A. This document will assist to align the Council's long-term aspirations. The background to this strategy is set out below.

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

4. Brentwood Borough Council have begun to land projects that will make real difference and influence its own Carbon footprint. However, Councils only have a direct control over 2-5% of the carbon produced in its borough and 30% influence over the remainder of the borough.
5. Therefore, it is important that the Council create a strategy that will reach out to a wider audience and influence as much as possible so the Council can have real influence on the boroughs CO2 emissions moving forward.
6. There are also two very clear and different targets. One is the Council's target to reach carbon zero (2040) and the other is for the borough (2050). The Council's target is considered easier to deliver as it is within the Council's own operation and therefore control. However, to deliver carbon neutrality for the borough is far more difficult as it requires buy in and commitment from groups that we have no direct control and only some limited influence over.
7. Brentwood Council have already begun to make inroads on both targets in that it has begun to change its fleet to electric, install electric vehicle chargers in the borough and has recently gone out to procurement on a further roll out phase of EV Chargers, introduced a car club and created Brentwood Environmental Business Alliance (BEBA) launched last year, along with the planting of woodlands and proposed larger woodlands later this year.
8. Although everything so far delivered -or in process of being delivered- in Brentwood is a positive, the Council needs to stitch together a strategy that underlines the work that has been occurring and how it is important to the organisation and the residents which aligns with the Council's direction as it moves forward. This strategy has been brought together by our Carbon and

Sustainability Officer who has been working with colleagues in the organisation, local businesses and other authorities to determine the strategy so far.

9. Baseline information has been used in the strategy that will enable the authority to determine how successful the Council are at achieving the target of carbon neutrality by 2040 and 2050 which are included in the strategy.
10. The strategy identifies key targets and objectives to ensure the Council is on track to meet its long-term aspirations of carbon neutrality by 2040 & 2050 respectively. Ensuring the individual projects are delivered will result in the overall outcomes and objectives being met.
11. The Environment strategy for Consultation brings together and highlights the different environmental themes that are most environmentally influential in the borough. These themes have been identified using data on the Borough's largest carbon emitters. These themes are transport, air quality, the built environment, waste, energy, and behavioural changes. These themes and the projects within them will be considered year on year to ensure they match the direction and aspiration of the Council. Each theme will have a number of actions that will contribute towards the overall performance of the strategy and its objectives. The strategy will be reviewed each year along with targets that will be reported annually to the Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee.
12. The next step is to put this Strategy out for consultation in order for residents, businesses or other interested groups and stakeholders to comment. This engagement will be through the most environmental possible means and although a small number of the strategies will be created in environmentally sourced paper format the majority of the consultation will be IT led using social media, QR codes etc to gauge opinion and comments which would further inform the direction of the strategy.
13. Particular stakeholders apart from our residents will include local action groups and community groups, Parish council's, Members, businesses, other local authorities and appropriate groups.
14. This report therefore requests members to:
 - a) Approve the strategy for consultation
 - b) Consider feedback response of consultation to the next Environment, Enforcement & Housing Committee
 - c) Review the strategy annually

Reasons for Recommendation

15. The Council seek to implement a Strategy that confirms the direction of the organisation aligning and affirming with the actions already taken. Create a document that communicates to residents of Brentwood, business and other interested groups the Councils proposed direction. The Strategy is an evolving document that will need monitoring and amending as new projects and technology and ideas arise to tackle climate issues and therefore this strategy will be put out to consultation and comments received will be considered and taken on board.

Consultation

16. The plan has so far been discussed with the following groups:

- a) Parish Councils
- b) Brentwood Climate Action Group
- c) Essex County Council
- d) Essex Wildlife Trust

References to Corporate Plan

17. The Carbon Neutral Strategy contributes to corporate objectives by:

- a) Protecting the Environment
- b) Promote the Environment and recognise its importance in the decisions we make.
- c) Encourage a clean, safe and environmentally friendly place to live, work and visit
- d) Support and engage the community to protect their environment

Implications

Financial Implications

Name/Title: Phoebe Barnes, Corporate Manager – Finance (Deputy S151)

Tel/Email: 01277 312500/phoebe.barnes@brentwood.gov.uk

18. Costs incurred for the consultation can be met from within existing budgets. As part of the Budget for 2022/23 the Council is earmarking £200k into an Environmental Initiatives earmark reserve which can support the short-term delivery whilst the strategy is consulted on and then endorsed.
19. The strategy will help to inform financial resources required within the Council's future Medium Term Financial Strategy, HRA Business Plan and Capital

Strategy. Aligning these strategies allows the Council's finances to support the delivery of the Council reaching carbon net zero.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Amanda Julian, Corporate Director (Law & Governance) and Monitoring Officer

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20. In June 2019 The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019, the UK became the first major country to legislate for a net-zero target for carbon emissions by 2050.

21. The Council by implementing this strategy will be working to assist to reach the legislative goal to become carbon net zero by 2050.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Corporate Director (Planning and Economy)

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22. Efforts to consider environmental initiatives and tackle climate related issues, such as carbon neutrality, are now intrinsically linked to the wider economy. As businesses, buildings and projects aim to improve their carbon footprint it is important that the Council provides local leadership to drive efforts to become carbon net zero by 2050. Identifying a strategy will help the Council to drive climate related improvements and help local residents and businesses to do the same. This can help deliver efficiencies and other benefits that indirectly benefit the local economy.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

None

Background Papers

None

Appendices to this report

Appendix A: Environment Strategy