

ITEM NO. 12

REPORT TO THE COUNCIL MEETING OF 24th June 2019

Meeting: Council
Date: 24th June 2019
Subject: Declaration of a Climate Emergency
Report of: Elaine Bird – Regulatory Services Manager
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Bateman
Status: Approval
Relevant Ward(s): All

1 Purpose Report

- 1.1 To consider the declaration of a “Climate Emergency” and the establishment of a working group to develop an action plan for how the Council will work towards a carbon neutral target by 2030.

2 Recommendations:

2.1 It is recommended that:

- i) Council declares a “Climate Emergency” with an aim to make Harborough District Council activities as far as practical carbon neutral by 2030.
- ii) a Climate Change working group is established to develop an action plan to ensure all Council functions and decision making is in line with the shift to carbon neutral by 2030.
- lii) the action plan is brought back to Council within 12 months for approval and implementation.

3 Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The Council has already demonstrated its commitment to tackling climate change by signing the Climate Local Commitment in 2013 and developing an action plan.
- 3.2 The Council has already reduced its carbon emissions by 30% since 2008 but recognises that a review and refresh of the action plan is required if the Council is to work toward reaching a carbon neutral target by 2030.

3.3 Declaring a “Climate Emergency” sets out the Councils commitment to looking at all its activities, policies and decision making to ensure they are all aligned to working towards achieving this target.

4 Impact on Communities

4.1 The impact of climate change is a global issue however to minimise the local impact, the Council leads by example and works with all stakeholders to work towards reducing carbon emissions.

5 Key Facts

5.1 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report in October 2018 looking at the impact of climate change on the planet. The IPCC is a UN body looking at the science behind climate change.

5.2 For a Council to call a “Climate Emergency” the words must have been used in a motion or Council decision and look to set a target date to aim to be carbon neutral, or be considering setting one, in line with the timeframes of the IPCC report of 2030 and 2050.

5.3 A number of local authorities have declared or are considering declaring a “Climate Emergency”.

5.4 Harborough District Council recognises the risks associated with climate change. It has committed to action through Climate Local, which was a Local Government Association initiative; set up to inspire local authority action on climate change.

5.5 The Council signed the Climate Local Commitment on 22nd April 2013 in recognition of the important role that local authorities have in tackling climate change. The Council published an action plan in 2015 and has reported annually on progress against the objectives identified in the action plan.

5.6 The Council has already implemented a number of changes in its own operations and since 2008 has reduced emissions from its own estate by over 30%. More information on what steps the Council is taking to reduce emissions can be found in Appendix A.

5.7 Emissions from the district as a whole have also declined from 10.1 tonnes per head of population in 2005 to 6.9 tonnes per head of population in 2016. The emissions are still above the English average and are declining more slowly than in some areas. Over half of all emissions within the district are due to transport.

5.8 In March 2019, students from the Welland Academy met with the then Leader of the Council, Councillor Bannister and the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Knowles to discuss the effects of climate change and what steps can be taken by the Council to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and plastic pollution.

- 5.9 The Council does recognise that it must continue to work towards a carbon neutral target however there are known limitations as to how much the Council can do within the current constraints of operating from a listed building. For example the listed exterior of The Symington Building does not enable the windows to be readily changed to more efficient ones and the installation of renewable energy generation is restricted.
- 5.10 That aside, the Council will continue to support initiatives and projects across the district which aims to be carbon neutral. It is also recommended that a working group is established to review and develop what further actions the Council can consider to move towards carbon neutral status. The working group will engage with stakeholders such as schools, businesses and the local community to promote changes in behaviour to tackle climate change.
- 5.10 The commitment to review and implement a refreshed aspirational target on carbon emissions should be integrated into the Council's commitment and leadership to parish councils, business and strategic partners, to deliver widespread carbon reductions across the district but it would also require Central Government to provide the necessary lead and resources to make local action on climate change easier and more achievable.

6 Legal Issues

- 6.1 There is no legal requirement for the Council to declare a "Climate Emergency".

7 Resource Issues

- 7.1 There is no specific budget for this piece of work and the development of the action plan will be undertaken within existing resources. The action plan will identify resource implications for implementation of any identified actions and there is the recognition that without Central Government investment and funding there may be issues in attaining the local carbon neutral target.

8 Equality Implications

- 8.1 None identified through this report however an equality assessment will be undertaken as part of the development of the action plan.

9 Impact on the Organisation

- 9.1 The establishment of a Climate Change working group will be across all services to ensure that all strategic decisions, budgets and policies are in line with the shift to a carbon neutral status by 2030.
- 9.2 The report covers many cross cutting business and operational priorities including:
- Keeping the District a great place to live

- Quality homes for all
- Support Vulnerable People

10 Community Safety Implications

10.1 None identified in this report

11. Carbon Management Implications

11.1 The declaration of a Climate Emergency and development of an action plan will set out the Council's commitment and approach to working towards carbon neutral status by 2030.

12. Risk Management Implications

12.1 The impact of climate change locally could include increased frequency and intensity of adverse weather episodes resulting in the increased risk of localised flooding events.

12.2 Managing energy usage of Council assets helps to inform on progress and identify potential savings for the Council and improvements for the communities it serves. It helps to avoid possible reputational risk, if the Council was suspected of being unprepared for the challenges of climate change.

13 Consultation

13.1 No consultation was carried out with regards to this report however engagement with all stakeholders will be required as part of the development of the action plan.

14 Options Considered

14.1 Not to declare a Climate Emergency and develop an action plan to work towards achieving carbon neutral status by 2030 – this is not considered appropriate as it does not demonstrate the Council's commitment to tackle climate change

15 Background Papers

15.1 Details of the Council's Climate Local Plan and annual updates are available on the Council's website

https://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory_record/1163/climate_change_action_plan

Previous report(s):

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure:

Ward Members Notified:

Appendices:

Appendix A – Steps the Council has taken to reduce emissions from its activities