

Report for: Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	20 th April 2023
Subject:	Draft Climate & Nature Strategy 2023-2030
Key Decision:	Yes – affects more than two wards
Responsible Officer:	Dipti Patel – Corporate Director, Place
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Anjana Patel - Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Living Harrow: The London Borough of Harrow's Climate and Nature Strategy 2023 to 2030 (draft for consultation, including Strategic Action Plan Appendix) Equalities Impact Assessment

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report presents a draft Climate & Nature Strategy for approval for public consultation.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Approve the attached Draft Strategy for public consultation
2. Note that the results of public consultation will be considered and reported back to Cabinet with the final Strategy for approval.

Reason: (for recommendations)

To provide a strategic framework for the Council and the Borough to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enable the recovery of the natural world that supports us all.

Section 2 – Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2019 full Council debated a motion to declare a Climate Emergency and to resolve to 'Aim to make the London Borough of Harrow carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption of emissions. The motion was approved for referral to the Executive and subsequently agreed at the meeting of Cabinet in September 2019.
- 1.2 In March 2020 the Council's cabinet agreed an Interim Strategy and Action Plan, setting out initial short-term areas of action on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction.
- 1.3 A range of emissions reduction projects have since been planned and delivered by the Council, including an initial programme of energy and carbon saving measures across our schools, corporate buildings and housing, and the adoption of a Low Carbon Procurement Charter, Policy and Toolkit, in order to drive emissions reduction via our supply chain. Details of key work to date are set out in section 2 of the draft Strategy.
- 1.4 However, an effective response to the significant risks posed by climate change and the depletion of natural ecosystems requires a long-term strategic framework around which both the Council and our communities in Harrow can take concerted action. This report introduces a draft Strategy for the period 2023 to 2030 and accompanying strategic action plan, for consultation with residents and businesses within Harrow.

2. Options considered

- 2.1 Do nothing: this option is not recommended. Recent scientific assessments are clear that rapid reductions in greenhouse gases are needed to mitigate the worst effects of climate change, along with action to protect natural ecosystems, and concerted local action on these issues is essential.
- 2.2 Agree the draft Climate and Nature Strategy for consultation: to provide a long-term strategic framework for action both as an organisation and a borough.

3. Background

An urgent need for action

- 3.1 The burning of coal, gas and oil (together known as fossil fuels) in huge quantities is increasing the concentration of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere, causing global heating and significant disruption to our climate.
- 3.2 The most immediate consequences of this are the extreme weather events that have been experienced worldwide over recent years – including heatwaves, droughts, flooding and fires. In the summer of 2022 for example, the UK witnessed its first ever 40°C day, with some of the hottest temperatures nationally occurring in West London. Left unchecked, climate change has the potential to destabilise our planet's ecosystems and life support systems, posing a serious risk to societies here and around the world.
- 3.3 At the same time, the extractive land use practices and pollution associated with our high carbon lifestyles and economy are also contributing to the depletion and weakening of those same ecosystems upon which we depend for the essentials of life, including clean air, water and food. A 2021 study by the Natural History Museum estimated that global biodiversity and ecosystem intactness is only around 75% overall, significantly below the 90% threshold that scientists believe is safe. In the UK that figure is 53%, putting us in the bottom 10% of countries worldwide (Natural History Museum, Biodiversity Trends Explorer).
- 3.4 This is why climate change and the crisis in our natural world are two sides of the same coin and must be tackled together.

Harrow's Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- 3.5 The Council's measured emissions relate to the gas burned across its estate of corporate buildings and maintained schools, the electricity used in those buildings and the fuel used within its fleet of vehicles. Together these have reduced by around 40% since 2014, comprising 13,247 tonnes CO₂e in 2021/22. In addition, notwithstanding that comprehensive utility data on emissions is not available, the Council

has influence over reductions from its housing stock of 4900 homes and also via its extensive supply chain.

- 3.6 In the wider borough, for which 2019 figures are available, it is estimated that the direct emissions occurring in Harrow are around 558,000 tonnes CO₂e per annum, 30% of which are from road transport, with the remainder primarily from gas heating of buildings, of which residential buildings are the largest proportion. In addition, there are an estimated 140,000 tonnes CO₂e of annual emissions from electricity use in the borough, over 60% of which are associated with residential buildings.
- 3.7 Further details of the emissions data for the Council and the borough, including the consumption carbon footprint of the average Harrow resident (which includes out of borough emissions), are contained within section 1 of the draft Strategy.
- 3.8 Overall the data reinforces a focus, both for the Council and the wider borough, on significantly reducing the greenhouse gas emissions associated with our buildings, transport and the things that we use and consume, particularly food.
- 3.9 Sustainable consumption habits, for example buying more re-used and remanufactured products, adopting climate friendly diets and minimising waste, will also make space for nature and reduce the pressure on ecosystems from the extraction of natural resources. Locally there are significant opportunities for the Council and residents to adopt more sensitive management practices that enable the recovery of nature both in our parks and opens spaces and across the borough's extensive network of gardens and private land.

Overview of the draft Strategy

- 3.10 The draft Strategy has three parts. Section 1 sets out the background and context, both nationally and locally. Section 2 introduces the four main thematic action areas:
 1. *Clean Energy Used Efficiently* – how we can heat and power our homes and buildings in low carbon ways;
 2. *Green Mobility* – how we can reduce our reliance on fossil fuel vehicles;
 3. *A Waste Free Economy* - how we can minimise waste and grow a sustainable and circular economy; and
 4. *Healthy Places for Us and Nature* – how we can make space for nature in our borough and build a healthy and resilient local environment.

Finally, section 3 looks at the approach to implementation of the strategy, focussing on the importance of engagement, finance and decision making, along with issues of social justice.

- 3.11 The Appendix to the draft Strategy then sets out the key strategic actions that have been identified across each of the four themes, in each case split by actions for the Council as an organisation and also actions that will influence emissions reduction and nature recovery in the wider borough.
- 3.12 The draft Strategy affirms the Council's aim to reach carbon neutrality as regards its measured organisational emissions by 2030, although recognises that this approach will require significant levels of investment in our buildings and fleet in a climate of changing technologies, for which new funding approaches will need to be developed and which will require an element of external investment. For the wider borough, the Strategy recognises that the majority of greenhouse gas emissions are beyond the Council's direct control and that achieving significant reductions in emissions across Harrow as a whole will therefore require concerted action from all of Harrow's residents and businesses. Whilst it will be extremely challenging to achieve a carbon neutral position for the borough as a whole by 2030, the Council has a key role to play as a convener and via its statutory services in order to encourage and support positive change across our communities. The consultation on this draft Strategy provides an opportunity to begin that process with our residents, businesses and partner organisations.

The co-benefits of action

- 3.13 The draft Strategy also identifies, within each thematic area, the many co-benefits to our communities of taking action on climate change and enabling nature to recover. These include the extensive business growth, innovation and skills opportunities arising from the net zero agenda, as well as increased local resilience to climate change and other global shocks. There are also significant public health benefits, from improvements to air quality to more active lifestyles, healthier diets and better mental health. Taken together, there is increasing evidence that the human and economic costs of inaction on climate change and nature recovery will significantly exceed the costs of taking action now.

Engagement on the Strategy

- 3.14 The Council has an important role to play in meeting these challenges, both in terms of minimising our own emissions and impacts as an organisation, and as a key provider of public services within the borough. However, with the Council's own emissions only comprising a small percentage of the borough's as a whole, it is clear that an effective response also requires the active involvement of all in Harrow. It is therefore important that the strategy reflects our community and their needs. It is proposed that the Council consults on the draft

Strategy over the summer of 2023, to include surveys of both our resident and business communities. This will help to raise awareness of the issues and identify both the current barriers and also the opportunities for change. Engagement will also enable the Council to better understand and map the good work that is already going on in our communities, and how this can be supported and further scaled up.

4.Implications of the recommendations

Environmental implications

4.1 Environmental implications are integral to the subject matter of this report.

Risk Management Implications

4.2 Risks included on corporate or directorate risk register? Yes

Separate risk register in place? No

The relevant risks contained in the register are attached/summarised below. Yes

The following key risks should be taken into account when agreeing the recommendations in this report:

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
<p>A failure to take significant steps to address organizational and borough wide greenhouse gas emissions will contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks to health, well-being and productivity arising from high temperatures and more frequent droughts • The risk of increased flooding and property damage • Risks to global and local natural capital essential for the functioning of society, including 	<p>The draft Climate and Nature Strategy presented with this report provides a strategic framework under which the Council and the wider borough's communities can plan and take positive local action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help enable the recovery of the natural world.</p>	<p>Amber</p>

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
<p>ecosystems, soils and biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration pressures and international security issues • Economic contraction and instability • Increase in fuel and other types of poverty for residents 		
<p>The draft Strategy does not adequately identify and prioritise the key areas where action is required</p>	<p>A number of other London local authority climate strategies have been reviewed in the preparation of the draft Strategy, and the strategic actions have been developed with input from relevant council service areas. Key data sets around emissions as a council and as a borough have also been identified in the draft Strategy and directly inform the areas of action. The Strategy now requires input from our communities to help galvanize action and support, and to ensure it adequately reflects local challenges and opportunities. This is the purpose of the proposed consultation process.</p>	
<p>The draft Strategy is unaffordable</p>	<p>Many of the strategic action areas can be incorporated within, and supported by, existing Council service delivery. The strategy acknowledges the significant financing challenges that accompany the high-level of capital investment that is required over coming years particularly in building</p>	

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
	retrofit and electrification of vehicles. For the Council as an organisation this will require a significant element of external financing, building upon existing grant successes, as well as different approaches to the valuation of benefits (including whole life costings and consideration of avoidance of future costs).	

Procurement Implications

- 4.4 Responsible and sustainable procurement is integral to the delivery of the recommendations of this report. The Council has a considerable procurement spend and a very large third-party supply chain delivering works, goods and services. In recognition of this, in 2022 the Council introduced compulsory questions for major new procurements, to test bidders' ability to deliver emissions reductions through contracts.

Any procurement of works or services required pursuant to the action plan will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and, as applicable, The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or successor legislation.

Legal Implications

- 4.5 The Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended) imposes a duty on the government to ensure that by 2050 net carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are reduced by at least 100% when compared to 1990 levels. In other words, the UK has committed to reach a net zero carbon position by 2050. In April 2021 the government further committed to an interim target, as set out in the Sixth Carbon Budget, to reach a 78% reduction in emissions by 2035.

There is no specific legal requirement for local authorities to set their own local targets, although they are free to do so. However, they do need to comply with a range of environmental and planning legislation, which together contribute to meeting the government's national commitments. In addition, in London local authorities need to observe a range of mayoral policies, guidance and funding requirements which all contribute to the GLA's adopted 2030 net zero target for the capital as set out in the Mayor's London Environment Strategy.

Furthermore, the recommended actions set out in the draft Climate and Nature Strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enable the

recovery of the natural world will go a long way in helping the Council discharge its statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Financial Implications

- 4.6 Whilst it is increasingly recognised that the costs to our economy and public services of inaction on climate change and ecosystem recovery will significantly exceed the costs of action, in the short and medium term it must be acknowledged that the delivery of net zero, both nationally and locally, is dependent upon unprecedented levels of private and public funding that represent a significant challenge in the current financial climate.
- 4.7 The capital costs to the Council for example of moving to an electric fleet so far as possible in 2022 (excluding minibuses as vehicles were not readily available in the mainstream market) were estimated to be around £20 million. Similarly, a comprehensive programme of energy efficiency upgrades, solar PV installations and heat pump replacements to the majority of our maintained schools and corporate buildings would require a level of investment of at least £35 million at today's prices. As there is currently no provision in either the capital programme or the MTFS, the Council will need to carefully plan for progressive and prioritised investment in both of these key areas with detailed analysis of costs and benefits including analysis of full life costings, avoidance of other costs, energy efficiency savings, and levels of external investment.
- 4.8 To date the Council has successfully been awarded £2.4 million of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding that has been applied, together with match funding from our capital programme, towards a £4.2 million investment in seven school and corporate sites. In March 2023 we have also received notification of a successful bid for over £2 million of funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, to be used as part of a £5 million project towards our housing stock.
- 4.9 The Council currently has £500,000 per annum allocated in its capital programme for each of the coming three financial years directly to decarbonisation projects, mainly energy related projects to public buildings. Levels of investment in decarbonisation of our estate from 24/25 onwards, including prioritisation of projects according to current building condition and boiler age, will be informed by the development of the Strategic Asset Management Plan in 2023.
- 4.10 The Borough and Neighbourhood components of the Community Infrastructure Levy, collected via the planning process, also have significant potential to be applied to improve the borough's blue and green infrastructure and contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation. Making the most of future external funding opportunities, combined with strategic match funding through the Council's existing capital

programme, will be a key part of our approach to meeting this funding challenge going forwards.

Equalities Implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

- 4.11 The risks posed by climate change and ecosystem depletion have the potential to impact the most vulnerable in our societies disproportionately, as those individuals and groups can lack the means to adapt to the economic and physical impacts.
- 4.12 A draft Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been prepared, which accompanies this report. This shows that the elderly, disabled, and women, including pregnant women, may be particularly impacted by extreme weather events and other environmental impacts such as low air quality. The elderly and disabled can also be particularly vulnerable to issues such as fuel poverty when energy prices rise and may not be able to access green travel solutions such as walking, cycling and public transport. It will be necessary to ensure these groups are protected by for example ensuring their access to green vehicular options for travel and prioritising low income, fuel poor households for support on retrofit and energy efficiency works.
- 4.13 It is also clear, however, that helping to mitigate climate change and enabling the recovery of nature are universal issues upon which all individuals have opportunities to take action in their daily lives and within their own sphere of influence. Wide and meaningful participation in this common, shared endeavour also therefore represents a significant opportunity to help break down barriers and foster good relations between people from different groups.

5. Council Priorities

- 5.1 The draft Strategy presented with this report aims to deliver a just transition to a low carbon and Nature-positive borough. It will help deliver the Council's vision of *Restoring Pride in Harrow* by realising the opportunities of new jobs and investment, improved health, wellbeing and education, and a thriving environment for local people.
- 5.2 All four of the key action areas identified in the Strategy support the delivery of the Council's Priority of *A Borough that is Clean and Safe*, with the just transition supporting the Priority *A Place where Those in Need are Supported*.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Statutory Officer: Jessie Man

Signed on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Date: 30th March 2023

Statutory Officer: Abiodun Kolawole

Signed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 31st March 2023

Chief Officer: Dipti Patel

Signed off by the Corporate Director

Date: 11th April 2023

Head of Procurement: Nimesh Mehta

Signed by the Head of Procurement

Date: 31st March 2023

Head of Internal Audit: Susan Dixson

Signed by the Head of Internal Audit

Date: 6th April 2023

Has the Portfolio Holder(s) been consulted? Yes

Mandatory Checks

Ward Councillors notified: NO as it impacts on all Wards

EqIA carried out: YES

EqIA cleared by: Jennifer Rock

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Matthew Adams, Assistant Director - Climate Change & Natural Resources, email: matthew.adams@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Call-in waived by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee - NO