

# COMMENTS ON DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN AND DELIVERING WARMER HOMES (HECA)

## REPORT SCRUTINY LEADS ENVIRONMENT & ENTERPRISE

### INTRODUCTION

This report constitutes the view from the scrutiny leads for Environment & Enterprise on the Climate Change Action Plan and Delivering Warmer Homes (HECA) report and serves to provide the Overview and Scrutiny committee with a starting point for their contribution to the consultation process.

We'd like to thank Andrew Baker for his support in our consideration of the drafts.

**Councillor Sue Anderson** - Performance Lead for Environment & Enterprise  
**Councillor Stephen Wright** - Policy Lead for Environment & Enterprise

### BACKGROUND

The Draft Climate Change Action Plan and Delivering Warmer Homes (HECA) report has been discussed at Cabinet on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2012. The draft has also been discussed in the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2012. Meanwhile a public consultation on these draft documents has been undertaken from 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012 till 27<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

While the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in December mostly focused on the details and specific data included in the consultation document, this report has been produced to provide comments on the overall strategy of the documents.

### OBSERVATIONS

We agree with the need for Harrow to have a Climate Change strategy and agree with the draft report's general direction. We especially support the Delivering Warmer Homes strategy as we all want to prevent our residents from becoming unwell due to a lack of insulation of their homes. In addition, we were very pleased to hear that the council's bid to DECC funds has been accepted to develop new approaches to encourage consumers to buy energy cheaper and also to develop new approaches to increase uptake of the subsidised insulation of homes.

However, we do have some specific comments on the strategy, mostly regarding the implementation and the measurement of progress, and our comments are outlined below.

### MEASURING PROGRESS

Both the Climate Change Action Plan and the Delivering Warmer Homes Strategy include a table of actions with a measurement and timescale.

While it is important that the strategy includes targets against which to map progress, we feel the measurements themselves could be improved upon. The timescale for most

actions doesn't identify a deadline by which point an assessment would be made whether the action was yielding success. In addition, the measurements do not seem to be very specific to the each action. For example, in the draft Climate Change Action Plan one action states that street lighting will be replaced with LED lighting. The measurement used is the general aim to reduce the overall carbon footprint by 4% per year, while the timescale states 'ongoing'. This means it is difficult for us to know how much this specific action is expected to contribute to reducing the overall carbon footprint and to know in a year's time, whether this action has been successful. This is just one example, but overall, this lack of precision means it is difficult to assess whether targets are reasonable and achievable.

In addition, the financial implications of the strategy as a whole or the actions contained within it are absent. Given the budget constraints the council faces this raises questions about the feasibility of some of the proposals. One action is to plant 500 trees in the public realm, but given the reductions in public realm services, we wonder how the maintenance of those trees will be sustained.

## IMPLEMENTATION

As stated in the Draft Climate Change Strategy, the commitment from Harrow is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in Harrow by 60% between now and 2025 and to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide by 4% per year. The council's target is to reduce carbon emissions by everyone in Harrow, residents, businesses and council alike. Whilst we are happy to see that specific actions are identified to address the seven key areas of carbon emission reduction, we have some concerns regarding the plans for implementing these actions.

The strategy mentions that the heating of homes accounts for 66% of the carbon emissions in Harrow. The Delivering Warmer Homes (HECA) report states that the council owns 6% of the homes in Harrow. The rest of the housing stock is mostly divided between 70% owner occupied and 20% privately rented. This means the council has a direct influence over only 6% of the carbon emissions of homes in Harrow. To achieve the target of reducing overall carbon emissions by 60% in 2025, a strategy is needed to reduce carbon emissions from the home of everyone in the borough. Though the Climate Change Strategy contains individual actions that would encourage private home owners to insulate their homes, such as providing landlords with advice about legal requirements for thermal efficiency as part of the inspection process, in our mind it lacks a general Communication Plan to advertise existing free and/or subsidised insulation schemes to private home owners and businesses. This is especially relevant in light of the fact that the Delivering Warmer Homes report mentions previous difficulty in creating large uptake of such subsidies. In this context we'd like to highlight the recommendations of the scrutiny review of the Private Sector Rented Housing undertaken in 2012 and accepted at the October Cabinet meeting. Recommendation L is particularly relevant for the Climate Change Strategy as it states that:

"We recommend that the Private Sector Strategy and forthcoming Climate Change Strategy be explicitly linked in order to ensure that tenants in the private rented sector can also benefit from energy efficiency and fuel poverty initiatives".

This link does not appear to have been made.

There is one specific area in which we feel the council could be more ambitious in its plans. In recent years, England has seen unusually dry summers combined with significant

sudden downpours. In these circumstances, the Water and Flooding section of the Draft Climate Change Action Plan might want to look further ahead and include plans to utilise rainwater in times of drought. The council could consider providing households with water butts in a similar way as it has provided households with recycling bins. The water collected in these could be used to water plants and gardens instead of tap water. It is also worth exploring the use of water reservoirs for this purpose. Some houses in the council are highly water efficient, such as Ewart House, where rain water is collected, purified and subsequently used throughout the building, with the obvious exception of drinking water in for instance kitchens. It would be interesting to consider more of such developments supported by the council, especially as part of a longer term strategy.

Finally, the responsibilities for implementing the Climate Change strategy are divided between the directorates Enterprise and Environment, Children and Families and Community Health and Well-being (page 7, draft Climate Change report). We feel that the council must make one director responsible for coordinating the progress made between the different directorates.

#### **DATA**

A final comment regarding the quality and accuracy of the draft documents presented to us. The data, terminology and links between the different plans were at times challenging to us as councillors and lead members for Environment and Enterprise. We feel this is especially worrying given that these documents have been presented to the public for consultation. For future reference, we feel that reports produced should contain less jargon to be more understandable to members of the public.

#### **CONCLUSION**

We welcome the council's work on a Climate Change Strategy and appreciate the opportunity to comment on it. We hope our comments help in the effective implementation of the strategy.

**Councillor Sue Anderson**  
**Councillor Stephen Wright**

**- Performance lead Environment and Enterprise**  
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