



Signed off by	Head of Corporate Policy, Projects and Performance
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To	Executive
Date	Thursday, 1 February 2024
Executive Member	Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability

Key Decision Required	Y
Wards Affected	(All Wards);

Subject	Response to Motion: Climate Change
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Recommendations
<p>That the Executive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Recognises the continuing need for urgent action on climate change and nature recovery, and is committed to maintaining an up-to-date Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan which will provide the basis for its work at a Council level and within Reigate & Banstead Borough; (ii) Is committed to continuing to work closely with Surrey County Council and Surrey district and borough authorities to achieve shared climate change and environmental sustainability objectives; and (iii) Agrees that the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Sustainability write to local MPs informing them of the Council's approach to taking action on climate change and nature recovery, and requesting to meet to discuss how the Government's future approach to policy and legislation can assist in this.
Reasons for Recommendations
To confirm the Council's position in respect of the two main topic areas covered by the Motion, that is, climate change and nature recovery.
Executive Summary

At the Full Council meeting on 30 November 2023, Cllr Essex proposed a Motion about climate change, seconded by Cllr Booton. The motion requested (in summary) that the Council declare a climate emergency, fully endorse the Surrey County Council Climate Change Strategy and Local Transport Plan 4, and support the Climate and Ecology Bill; writing to local MPs to confirm the above.

This report considers the Motion requests in turn. It recommends:

- On the basis of our previous approach, that the Executive should confirm its previously stated position; that is, to recognise the need for urgent action on climate change, and its commitment to maintaining and implementing an up-to-date Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan.
- In relation to the Surrey County Council Climate Change Strategy and Local Transport Plan 4, that, while full endorsement is not appropriate due to some inconsistency in detail, the opportunity should be taken to reassert our commitment to joint working with Surrey County Council and other local authorities to deliver shared climate change objectives. There are also other SCC documents that have - and will continue to - inform our local approach, not just those referenced in the Motion.
- That the Executive should also confirm its commitment to supporting nature recovery in its Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan, in recognition of the relationship between climate and nature (which the Climate and Ecology Bill draws attention to); and
- That the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Sustainability should communicate the Council's position on the above to local MPs with an offer to meet and discuss these important topics in more detail.

Executive has authority to approve the above recommendations

Statutory Powers

1. Under the Local Government Act 2000, the Council has a duty to promote the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of its area. The Council also has related statutory duties around environmental health and planning.
2. The Council's Constitution allows for Motions relating to the function of the Council or the Borough to be submitted to Ordinary Council meetings, and for these to be referred to the Leader or relevant Committee for consideration and recommendation to Council (if appropriate).

Background

3. At the Full Council meeting on 30 November 2023, Cllr Essex proposed a Motion about climate change, seconded by Cllr Booton.
4. The full text of the Motion is available to view [here](#). In summary, it requested that Council resolve to:
 1. Declare a Climate Emergency itself and reflect this in the update of its Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

2. Fully endorse the Surrey Climate Strategy and associated Local Transport Plan in its update of its own Environmental Sustainability Strategy
3. Join the 237 other councils who have resolved to support the Climate and Ecology Bill and write to the organisers of the cross-party campaign for this bill, expressing Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's support.
4. Write to the MPs with constituencies in our borough council area, informing them that this motion has been passed, and urging them to sign up to support the Climate and Ecology Bill
5. The Motion was referred by the Mayor for consideration by the Executive.
6. This report considers each request within the Motion in turn and makes associated recommendations.

The Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy

7. The Council's Environmental Sustainability (ES) Strategy is referred to within the Motion. The current ES Strategy (available [here](#)) was approved by the Executive in 2020. The Strategy covers not only climate change (ie the reduction of carbon emissions) but also wider environmental sustainability challenges, including the use of natural resources ('low impact consumption') and protecting and enhancing the natural environment and biodiversity.
8. We report annually on our progress in delivering the ES Action Plan. The most recent annual report was provided to the Executive in September 2023 and is available on the [Committees section of the website](#). We continue to take positive action to become a more sustainable Council and Borough, and to reduce our carbon emissions. More recent progress (since the 2022/23 annual report was published) has included:
 - Agreement to fuel our refuse collection vehicles with hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), which will reduce our total council carbon emissions by around 25%; and the purchase of our first electric bin lorry.
 - Inclusion in our latest draft capital programme of over £1m which (along with CIL funding) will enable us to reduce carbon emissions from gas and electricity use within our operational buildings.
 - Installation of solar panels on temporary and emergency housing owned by the Council, plus the highest number of 'Solar Together' registrations of any Surrey local authority, with installations already taking place meaning residents benefit from lower energy bills and our borough-level carbon emissions are reduced.
 - A dedicated Active Travel Officer, working with local schools and our community development workers, to increase the uptake of walking and cycling and reduce reliance on the private car.
9. Following agreement from the Executive in September 2023, a light touch review of the ES Strategy is in the process of being undertaken. An updated Strategy and Action Plan is on the Forward Programme to be reported to both the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Executive in March 2023.

Key Information

Motion request 1: That the Council declare a climate emergency and reflect this in the update of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy

10. Over 300 single tier, county and district Councils in England & Wales have declared a climate emergency, including Surrey County Council and all other Surrey districts and boroughs, as well as our other neighbouring councils.
11. A declaration of a climate emergency does not come with any necessary action or resourcing attached, rather it is a public statement or recognition of the current and immediate climate challenge facing us globally.
12. The Council's Executive considered a previous Full Council Motion to declare a climate emergency at the same time the current Environmental Sustainability Strategy was presented to it for agreement in July 2020¹. At that time, the Executive did not declare a climate emergency, but noted that – in preparing the Strategy – the Council had already made a clear commitment to take action to tackle the global climate challenge. The Executive therefore agreed a recommendation to:
“recognise the need for urgent action on climate change and environmental sustainability issues”
13. Subsequently, councillor questions to Full Council meetings have revisited the suggestion, including in December 2022 and most recently in July 2023. In July 2023, in a written answer to a councillor question raised by Councillor Booton, the Leader re-affirmed that he was:
“committed to taking action – both to tackle climate change via a reduction in greenhouse gases, and to ensure that our Borough and communities are supported to adapt to the changing climate.”

Options

14. As recognised in the Motion, the option remains for the Council to declare a climate emergency. If the Executive wishes to take this option, this could then be reflected in the updated Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan which is due to be considered for adoption in March.
15. The alternative option – suggested here on the basis of the Executive's previous approach – is for the Executive to reassert the position of the 2020 Council Executive by focusing on the continuing need for urgent action on climate change, including by maintaining - and implementing - an up-to-date Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan (see Recommendation (i)). Some examples of the positive progress that is being made are set out in the earlier section of this report.

Motion request 2: That the Council fully endorse the Surrey Climate Strategy and associated Local Transport Plan in its update of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy

The Surrey Climate Change Strategy

16. Surrey County Council (SCC) agreed its Climate Change Strategy in April 2020 ([Surrey's Climate Change Strategy 2020 - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://reigate-banstead.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=137&MIId=1413&Ver=4)).

¹ Executive report available to view at <https://reigate-banstead.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=137&MIId=1413&Ver=4>

17. The Surrey Climate Change Strategy recognises that it “provides a joint framework for collaborative action on climate change across Surrey’s local authorities and other partners”. Soon after it was agreed by SCC, the Reigate & Banstead Borough Council Executive adopted the current ES Strategy, and also agreed a recommendation to:

“support the overall approach within the recently adopted Surrey Climate Change Strategy and commit to continue to work with the County Council and other Surrey boroughs and districts to develop a jointly owned action plan and achieve shared climate change objectives.”

18. At that time (July 2020), full endorsement of the SCC Strategy was not considered appropriate because further work was necessary to finalise a joint action plan and agree individual authorities’ contributions to Surrey-wide targets. Subsequently, in October 2021, the SCC Cabinet agreed a [Delivery Plan](#) to accompany the strategy, covering the period 2021-2025. This Delivery Plan included about 70 actions which reflected and built upon action already being undertaken by Surrey local authorities, including Reigate & Banstead.

19. In November 2021², this Council’s Executive was updated on the publication of the SCC Delivery Plan, and took the opportunity to:

“reassert its commitment to working in partnership with Surrey County Council and other Surrey districts and boroughs to achieve county-wide climate objectives.”

The Surrey Local Transport Plan

20. Preparation of a Local Transport Plan (LTP) is best practice for Highways Authorities such as SCC. The latest [LTP \(version 4\)](#) was agreed by SCC in July 2022. It covers a 10 year period and focuses on action needed across transport networks in the County to achieve net zero by 2050. It explains:

“We are keen to work with district and borough councils, stakeholders, partner organisations, local groups, businesses, communities and residents to deliver the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and jointly achieve our ambitious objectives.

We will lead on the delivery of the LTP4 going forward, as part of our statutory responsibility to maintain and develop transport and highways at a local level. However, many of the measures identified within LTP4 will require the involvement of other organisations, particularly our district and borough authorities, sub-national transport body and central government.”

21. As a document prepared and owned by the Highways Authority, lower tier authorities are not required to formally endorse the LTP, and we have not received a request from SCC to do so. RBBC submitted comments on the draft LTP4 at the consultation stage, although it is understood that the consultation responses received by SCC did not result in changes to the proposed measures or overall approach. Joint working between SCC and the districts and boroughs to deliver shared objectives within the LTP4 is nonetheless important.

Options

² Executive report available to view at <https://reigate-banstead.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=137&MIId=1810&Ver=4>

22. The Motion recommends 'full endorsement' of the SCC Climate Change Strategy and the LTP4 via the update of the Council's updated Environmental Sustainability Strategy.
23. The updated ES Strategy is due to be considered by the Executive at its meeting in March. It is suggested that this process should not be 'pre-empted' by making the commitment proposed in the Motion at this February meeting.
24. It should be noted that there are some elements within the SCC documents referred to in the motion that are not entirely consistent with our own position and/or are unlikely to be deliverable for us at the borough-level. By way of example, when it comes to the SCC commitment for 'all council-owned vehicles... to be zero carbon by 2030 or sooner, we do not currently have sufficient certainty locally that vehicle technology will have evolved sufficiently for us to do this.
25. However, members can be reassured that both the Surrey Climate Change Strategy and the LTP4 are documents that we will continue to work with SCC and other boroughs and districts to collectively deliver.
26. There are also other relevant SCC documents that are not referred to in the Motion that have, and will continue to, inform our work – for example the Climate Change Delivery Plan and the Surrey Adapt Strategy. Collectively, these documents will help inform not only our ES Strategy work but also other activity, for example the development of borough-level planning policy documents.
27. Recommendation (ii) is therefore proposed as reflects this wider commitment to ongoing cross-authority working across a wider range of areas of shared interest.

Motion request 3: That the Council support the Climate and Ecology Bill

28. The Climate and Ecology Bill was first introduced to Parliament as a Private Members Bill by Caroline Lucas MP (Green) in 2020. The Bill was re-introduced (this time as the Climate and Ecology (No 2) Bill) in the 2022/23 Parliamentary Session by Olivia Blake MP (Labour) and received its first reading on 10 May 2023. It has not yet progressed to its second reading.
29. The Bill has a reasonable amount of cross party support. As of May 2023, 126 MPs from across 11 political parties were supporting it.
30. A group called Zero Hour ([Climate and Ecology Bill - Back the CE Bill Campaign \(zerohour.uk\)](https://zerohour.uk)) is campaigning for the Bill. Local Councils that have signed up to this campaign can be viewed [here](#). It should be noted that the term 'local councils' include unitary councils, county councils, district councils and town / parish councils. Of the 319 councils signed up at the time of writing, around 80 are local authorities (including Mole Valley, Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge, Surrey Heath and Woking) – the others are town or parish councils.
31. As noted above, the Bill has not yet made any progress through Parliament. It seeks to bring together both climate and nature targets and implement a joined-up approach to achieve those targets. The proposed climate and nature targets are, respectively:
 - Cutting UK emissions at a rate consistent with limiting the global mean temperature increase to 1.5°C; and

- Halting and reversing the UK's overall contribution to the degradation and loss of nature in the UK and overseas.

32. The joined-up approach includes:

- Giving the relevant Secretary of State a duty to implement a strategy to achieve stated climate and nature targets in a joined up way
- Establishing a Climate and Nature Assembly to advise the Secretary of State in creating the strategy; and
- Giving duties to the Committee on Climate Change and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee regarding the strategy and its targets.

Options

33. The Motion recommends that the Council support the Climate and Ecology Bill. The Executive may chose to follow this course of action, however while some of the principles behind the Bill are to be supported, there appears limited chance of it being enacted in this parliamentary period.

34. As such, it is suggested that the Executive should confirm its commitment to tackling not only climate change but also nature recovery, through its own ES Strategy, recognising that the updated Strategy will include updated actions in relation to the nature and biodiversity theme (see Recommendation (i)).

Motion request 4: Write to the local MPs, informing them that the motion has been passed, and urging them to sign up to support the Climate and Ecology Bill

35. This element of the Motion follows on from the first three requests, considered above.

36. Subject to agreement of the other recommendations within this report, it is suggested that the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Sustainability write to local MPs informing them of the Council's approach to taking action in relation to climate change and nature and requesting to meet to discuss how the Government's future approach to policy and legislation in this area can assist in the achievement of our objectives.

Summary

37. In summary, the suggested response to the Motion submitted to Full Council is not to fully accept the Motion requests; but to confirm - via the recommendations within this report - the Council's commitment to taking action on nature and climate change, working in partnership with other organisations, including Surrey County Council. This commitment will also then be able to underpin the updated Environmental Sustainability Strategy, which is due to be considered by the Executive next month.

Options

38. The following options are available to the Executive:

Option 1: Support the Motion as presented to Council in November 2023 in full. This option is not recommended because elements of the motion are inconsistent with the Council's current stated position.

Option 2: Agree the recommendations in this report, which – although not fully consistent with the Motion – confirm the Council's position in relation to the two key topic areas covered by the Motion, that is, climate change and nature recovery.

This option is recommended as it provides the opportunity to reassert the Council's stance on these important topics.

Option 3: Take no action. This option is not recommended as the referral of the Motion to the Executive provides the opportunity to reassert and confirm that Council's commitment to taking action on climate change and nature recovery – to take no action would be to miss the chance to do this.

Legal Implications

39. There are no legal implications directly arising from the recommendations within this report.

Financial Implications

40. There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations within this report.

Equalities Implications

41. No equality implications have been identified as arising from the recommendations within this report.
42. There are however equality issues in relation to climate change, including the ability of people from differing backgrounds and equality groups to access information about climate change, and the more vulnerable residents in our communities being most at risk from the impacts of a changing climate. Both these issues will continue to be considered as the Council implements its ES Strategy and Action Plan.

Communication Implications

43. There are no communication implications directly arising from the recommendations within this report.
44. Communication and engagement is (and will continue to be) a central element of the Council's environmental sustainability activity. It is identified in the current ES Strategy as essential for the effective implementation of the Action Plan.

Environmental Sustainability Implications

45. The Council is committed to taking action to address environmental sustainability and climate change issues. The current ES Strategy includes themes not only relating to reducing energy use and carbon emissions, but also reducing the consumption of natural resources and protecting and enhancing nature and the environment.
46. The recommendations in this report are consistent with our current ES Strategy and underline the Council's commitment to taking action – alone and in partnership - to tackle climate change.

Risk Management Considerations

47. No specific risk management considerations have been identified relating to the recommendations within this report

Procurement/Contract Management and Subsidy Considerations

48. No specific procurement, contract management or subsidy considerations have been identified relating to the recommendations within this report.

Consultation

49. Informal consultation with Executive Members has been carried out to inform the preparation of this report.

Policy Framework

50. The Council's Corporate Plan, Reigate & Banstead 2025 includes an objective about Environmental Sustainability, which is to "Reduce our own environmental impact, support local residents and businesses to do the same, and make sure our activities increase the borough's resilience to the effects of climate change.

51. The ES Strategy is subsidiary to the Corporate Plan – while not part of the formal Policy Framework as defined by the Constitution it provides more detail about how the Council will achieve its Corporate Plan objective. As noted in the earlier sections of this report, the ES Strategy is in the process of being updated having been in place for 3 years.

Background Powers

1. Corporate Plan 2025 - www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/rbbc2025
2. Environmental Sustainability Strategy - https://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/info/20065/environmental_sustainability_and_climate_change/1220/our_approach_to_environmental_sustainability
3. Council motion to Full Council, 30 November 2023 - <https://reigate-banstead.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s29703/23.11.30%20Climate%20motion%20docx.pdf>