

Report of the Strategic Director – Corporate Resources to the meeting of Executive to be held on 24th March 2020

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Subject:

Climate Emergency Update: Sustainable Development Action Plan 2020-21

Summary statement:

This landmark report sets out proposals to adopt a Sustainable Development Action Plan in order to respond to the challenges and opportunities for sustainable, clean and inclusive economic growth, a fairer society and a healthier environment presented by the Climate Emergency. It follows the Climate Emergency declaration at Full Council and the Council's decision to join the Leeds City Region Climate Coalition. The Sustainable Development Action Plan sets out clear direction and guiding principles for the Council and District building on existing activity and stated commitments. The plan reviews current activity and proposes actions for 2020-21 for business, public sector partners, communities, citizens and investors to take forward positive action at pace and scale. Those actions include delivering progress on emissions reductions, improving communications and community engagement and the developing of a comprehensive evidence base and performance framework. The plan includes establishing a new Sustainable Development Partnership for the Bradford District.

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Portfolio:
Leader with
Healthy People and Healthy Place

Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Regeneration and Environment

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The climate emergency is the defining issue for local government over the next ten to twenty years.
- 1.2 Effective climate action presents significant challenges but also offers significant opportunities to generate sustainable, clean and fair economic growth, improve health and well-being and environmental quality and to increase and enhance civic and democratic participation.
- 1.3 Following the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in January 2019 and its decision to join the Leeds City Region Climate Coalition it is proposed that a Sustainable Development Action Plan is approved and implemented recognising that this represents a dynamic programme of work that will evolve to reflect both proactive activity and the District's response to external announcements and events.
- 1.4 The plan builds on a significant body of existing work and is underpinned by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and guiding principles. Key actions include a new Sustainable Development Partnership to be established for business, public sector partners, communities, citizens and investors to take forward positive action at pace and scale, progress on emissions reductions, improve communications and community engagement and the development of a comprehensive evidence base and performance framework.
- 1.5 Council capacity to deliver what is needed to address the challenges, implement budget decisions and shape and seize the opportunities arising from climate action and sustainable development is currently limited and implementation of the plan in full will require a commitment to additional resources.
- 1.6 Executive is asked to approve the plan, the terms of reference of a new Sustainable Development Partnership and the allocation of reserves in order to support its delivery over 2020-21 with a view to mainstreaming base budget resources from April 2021.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Climate Emergency is the defining issue for local government over the next ten to twenty years and will require urgent and significant steps to limit our collective impact on climate breakdown and ecosystem damage and improve the resilience of Bradford District and its organisations, communities and households.

In January 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency recognising the threat posed by climate change and the need for action and investment to be taken locally to help reduce its extent and to adapt to its impact. In doing so it set out its commitment to taking positive action to tackle and adapt to climate change in ways which also support green job creation and inclusive economic growth, improvements in health and well-being and reductions in household energy bills.

- 2.2 In June 2019 the Leeds City Region (LCR), in which Bradford plays a leading role, also declared a Climate Emergency. Bradford is a member of the LCR Climate Coalition which is committed to delivering a net-zero carbon city region by 2038 with significant progress made by 2030. LCR research into emissions reduction is under way and is expected to provide recommendations for interventions and investment for buildings, transport, power, land and industry.
- 2.3 Storms Ciara and Dennis underlined the need to reflect adaptation – including environmental resilience and flood alleviation - alongside significant emissions reduction as part of the health, economic and community response to the emergency.
- 2.4 In his 11 March 2020 budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a number of measures designed to tackle and adapt to climate change and generate green economic opportunities. These include a Green Gas levy to fund the use of greener fuels, an increase in the Climate Change Levy that businesses pay on gas; investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure to ensure that drivers are never more than 30 miles away from a rapid charging station; £532m of consumer incentives for ultra low emission vehicles and reduced taxes on zero emission vehicles. Funding of £304m was pledged for local authorities to reduce nitrogen dioxide emissions and improve air quality. Increased funding for flood defences and recovery will also be made available.
- 2.5 West Yorkshire Council leaders have secured a devolution deal which will bring significant new powers and resources to the region. These include £38 million per year for 30 years into West Yorkshire Investment Fund with significant freedoms to spend on local priorities, work to develop a modern mass transit system through access to a new five-year integrated transport settlement and £317 million to invest in public transport, cycling and walking through the Transforming Cities Fund with local flexibility on delivery.

3. The challenge

- 3.1 In 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) advised that global warming should be limited to a 1.5 degree centigrade increase. While a 1.5 degree increase would present risks to health, livelihoods, food security and water supply a rise to 2 degrees would be catastrophic. The report warned that there are 12 years in which to take action and avoid the worst impacts of global warming.
- 3.2 Responding to the Climate Emergency will require deep reductions in emissions, fundamental changes in the way we work and live, and significant adaptation to a changing world. It represents a shared challenge in which everyone across all sectors of activity and in all communities must play their part. It also offers opportunities for fair, clean and sustainable economic growth, healthier lives, better environmental quality and greater public engagement and participation.
- 3.3 Council leadership will be key to harnessing and co-ordinating local assets and resources to deliver effective and urgent climate action and realise the social, economic and environmental opportunities that it presents.

4 Sustainable Development Plan 2020-21

4.1 The Sustainable Development Action Plan set out at Appendix A represents a dynamic approach recognising the need for the plan to evolve in response to progress on key areas of activity and to external developments such as national policy and budgets, the next Comprehensive Review, development of the local evidence base and the emergence of a new Sustainable Development Partnership.

4.2 While climate action presents significant challenges requiring deep reductions in the emissions of harmful greenhouse gases, action to adapt to a changing climate and changes in the behaviour of businesses, organisations and citizens, it also offers opportunities to generate sustainable, clean and fair economic growth, improve health and well-being, cut costs and extend civic and democratic participation.

Meeting the challenges and shaping and exploiting the opportunities presented by climate change will require significant interventions over and above current activity and must underpin strategic thinking, resource allocation, operational delivery and practical action.

The Sustainable Development Action Plan identifies and builds on a considerable body of existing work and activity. However much of this work has not been designed, delivered or monitored with the explicit intention of securing dramatic reductions in emissions, adaptation resilience or systemic environmental improvements. Nor does current activity deliver at the rate and on the scale required by the scientific evidence and the stated ambitions of the Council and City Region.

Much more remains to be done in every area of activity. We'll have to go further and faster, get the message out to more and more people and provide local leadership on global issues. This needs to be developed and delivered at pace and scale.

4.3 The Climate Action Plan sets out the challenges and opportunities presented by the Climate Emergency and recognises the considerable amount of current and on-going activity. It identifies action to be taken in three key spheres of activity:

- Leading by example
- Leading with our partners
- Making the case for change

4.4 Key actions include progression of the Council's significant revenue and capital investments in climate action; extended and enhanced communications and community engagement; measures to embed climate action and environmental stewardship into all Council service planning and delivery; "greening" of key projects; development of a meaningful performance framework and evidence base to measure progress.

- 4.5 The Action Plan will establish a new Sustainable Development Partnership to lead and co-ordinate strategic policy and direction across organisations and sectors. The Proposed Terms of Reference are at Appendix B. Dr Stewart Davies has agreed to chair the Partnership and will work with the Portfolio Holder to establish it with the ambition of holding a first meeting in June 2020. Dr Davies is Chief Executive of Xiros Ltd, a company which manufactures and sells synthetic ligaments for use in surgery. He has also chaired and been a member of a number of environmental organisations, including the UK Sustainable Development Commission.
- 4.6 The Action Plan is guided by the following principles.
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and fair society
 - Living within environmental limits
 - Achieving a sustainable economy
 - Using sound science responsibly
- 4.7 The Action Plan and subsequent strategies and plans will also be underpinned by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) many of which align with existing Council and District strategic objectives and activities.
- 4.8 The Sustainable Development Action Plan will:
- Deliver a reduction in Council carbon emissions
 - Increase recycling and re-use and reduce items going into the waste stream.
 - Expand the use of renewable energy
 - Improve air quality and health and well-being
 - Achieve greater community engagement including at ward level on climate biodiversity and environment quality and stewardship
 - Promote reductions in the use of cars and greater safety on our streets
 - Generate improved communications presence and capacity including online.
 - Establish a new strategic partnership
 - Align Climate Action with the new Council plan and 2040 vision
 - Build the evidence base around interventions, performance and outcomes
 - Inform and progress a long-term strategy aligned to the budget process.

5 FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 5.1 The Council has made revenue and capital resources available through its Financial Plan for 2020/21 to support work on climate action, decarbonisation and environmental stewardship. However, meeting the challenges and maximising the emerging opportunities will require significant interventions over and above current activity and for sustainability to underpin strategic thinking, resource allocation, operational delivery and practical action.
- 5.2 Current dedicated officer capacity across the Council is insufficient to deliver enhanced progress, improved communications and engagement, long-term strategy, delivery of capital projects, greening of key projects, design guidance, development of a performance framework including carbon budgeting and the sourcing of external funding opportunities.

There is a current and medium-term risk that the Council will be unable to deliver against the commitments already made and those proposed in the Action Plan with potential impacts on its reputation and its ability to move at pace and scale to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

- 5.3 In mitigation of that risk, Council resources will be required to support the progression and implementation of the proposed Action Plan in 2020-21 and in future years.
- 5.4 Looking ahead, the Council and its partners need to seek to maximise the external fund coming into the District to support work on this agenda including resources from Government, LCR/WYCA, public sector bodies, business, charities, philanthropists, social investors and community crowd funding/citizen spending power.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 HM Government has recently amended the UK Climate Change Act 2008 to mandate the UK Net Zero Carbon target for 2050. HM Government is progressing significant reform to environmental and land-related legislation, regulation and enforcement via the Environment Bill. The Secretary of State for the Environment has written to Local Authority Chief Executives recognising the critical role of local authorities and outlining ways in which the Bill will strengthen the role of local leaders in tackling environmental issues.
- 6.2 Calls are now also being made for local government to be given explicit legislative responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions reduction, as a potential extension of the UK Climate Change Act (see Commons Science and Technology Committee, August 2019).
- 6.3 At present, the Sustainable Development Action plan is not a legislative regulatory or administrative requirement. It does not therefore require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Should the Environment Bill (or regulations made under it) require the Action Plan in the future, the plan may need to undertake an SEA.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 7.1 Corporate climate and environment crisis risk is included and managed through the Corporate Risk register. The Strategic Director Corporate Resources is leading on this work for the Council Management Team.
- 7.2 The proposed Sustainable Development Partnership will assume responsibility for District-wide co-ordination of strategic leadership on climate action and sustainable development.

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

“Ensuring a strong, healthy and fair society” is one of the key principles guiding this work. The development of the evidence base will allow us to be clear about the best options for securing a just transition to a carbon free District, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

9.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

This work is fundamental to securing sustainable development, effective climate action and enhanced environmental stewardship. It reinforces the commitment to long-term well-being, prosperity and resilience.

It reflects and accepts the UN Sustainable Development Goals and key principles as the basis for guiding future progress and resource allocation.

Over the coming year work will be undertaken to produce a 2040 Vision for the Bradford District. This and related strategies are all developing to secure the long-term future of the District and a positive legacy for future generations.

9.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

Reducing District and Council harmful greenhouse gas emissions are central priorities and measures for this work.

It is acknowledged that much more work and resource is required to develop the metrics, monitoring, performance management and delivery of such an ambitious contribution to agreed political priority, city region ambitions and national legislation.

9.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

No direct issues arising from this report.

9.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

No direct issues arising from this report.

9.6 TRADE UNION

No direct issues arising from this report.

9.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

The Interim Action Plan will deliver community activity and investment in all wards. Development of the evidence base will seek to better understand the geographical, social issues and opportunities that Bradford District faces as a whole and also a locality level.

9.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

No direct issues arising from the report.

9.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

No direct issues arising from the report.

10. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

11. OPTIONS

11.1 Option 1. The Executive could choose to delay the implementation of a Sustainable Development Action Plan while it awaits the outcome of the West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire Pathways Studies, the detail of any new policy direction from Government and the development of a wide ranging strategic response before committing to additional work on Climate Emergency. This will run the risk of real or perceived failure to deliver on stated commitments and potentially lead to damaging increases in emissions or adverse impacts from climate change that could otherwise have been avoided. Activity will lack co-ordination and strategic oversight. Issues around limited organisational capacity to deliver on commitments, improve communications and provide strategic and performance management support will continue to go unaddressed.

11.2 Option 2. Adoption of the Sustainable Development Action Plan. Adoption of the Sustainable Development Action Plan will cut carbon, deliver progress towards new jobs in a clean and circular economy, improve health and well-being, engage communities in all parts of the District, improve strategic co-ordination of activity and the deployment of resources and support the development of a performance framework through which progress can be monitored.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The Sustainable Development Action Plan (2020-2022) including its guiding principles is approved and endorsed and the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources instructed to implement its proposed actions.

12.2 The establishment of a Sustainable Development Partnership for the District and terms of reference as set out at Appendix B is approved.

12.3 That the Director of Finance and Strategic Director of Corporate Services are instructed to identify appropriate resources to meet the costs associated with the communication, co-ordination and delivery of the Climate Action Plan in 2020-21, with a view to funding being built into the Council's base budget requirement from April 2021.

12.4 That partners, businesses, not-for-profit and community organisations, residents and visitors be thanked for their efforts to date and encouraged to work with the Council to accelerate practical action.

- 12.5 That public communication and engagement are undertaken, in line with the 2040 Vision, to seek views, advice and contributions to the next version of the action plan and our shared efforts in sustainability and that partners working on UN Child Friendly status and City of Culture 2025 are requested to ensure that their engagement activity connects to climate action and environmental stewardship.
- 12.6 That effective environmental management and performance be developed including rapid and significant reduction in harmful greenhouse gas emissions.
- 12.7 A dedicated report on the key developments in UK environmental legislation and environmental protection be brought to the Executive in autumn 2020.
- 12.8 That as a matter of urgency support, training and guidance is provided to elected members, officers, suppliers, contractors and partners and citizens on taking forward sustainable development and climate action 2020-2025.
- 12.9 That an annual progress report be brought to the Executive.

13. APPENDICES

Appendix A Sustainable Development Action Plan

Appendix B Sustainable Development Partnership Draft Terms of Reference

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Bradford Council – Full Council Minutes January 2019, 15th October 2019

WYCA, Climate Emergency, 10th October 2019

WYCA – Addressing the Climate Emergency Report to WYCA 10th October 2019 including Clean Growth Policy, Action Plan and initial actions.

WYCA Climate Emergency Declaration and LCR Coalition pledge – July 2019

Local Government Association, Climate Change Declaration and Endorsement to the Sustainable Development Goals, July 2019.

The UK Government - 'Five Principles of Sustainable Development', Shared Framework for Sustainable Development, March 2005

HM Government – COP26 announcement, February 2020