

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	POLICY COMMITTEE		
<b>DATE:</b>	17 FEBRUARY 2020		
<b>TITLE:</b>	RBC ACTION SINCE DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY - AND FUTURE PLANS		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	CLLR PAGE	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
<b>SERVICE:</b>	CLIMATE CHANGE	<b>WARDS:</b>	BOROUGHWIDE
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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on action taken on climate change since the declaration of a climate emergency in February 2019, and to summarise future plans in this area, with a particular focus on financial commitments in the context of the draft budget to be put before Council on 24 February 2020.
- 1.2 The report illustrates that over the two first full financial years since the declaration of a climate emergency (2019/20 and 2020/21), subject to approval of the budget, the Council will have committed c£34million to capital projects which will contribute directly to reducing emissions, in both its own operations and the wider community. The report also illustrates how the Council has also made additional revenue commitments to develop and accelerate its response to the declaration.
- 1.3 Perhaps more important that these specific financial commitments, however, will be the action taken by the Council to ensure that all policy and spending decisions across the full range of its activities take account of their impact on emissions wherever possible, and that all staff are engaged in the process of working towards the goal of a net zero carbon Reading by 2030. A new Climate Action Programme Board was established in January 2020 to help achieve this and to ensure good governance in this area in line with best practice advice.
- 1.4 Appendices to this report:
  - Appendix 1: Summary of RBC Action Since Declaration of a Climate Emergency - and Future Plans

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the progress to date and endorses the future plans outlined in Appendix 1 to take forward the Council's commitment to achieving a net zero carbon Reading by 2030.

### **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The Council declared a climate emergency in February 2019 and committed to the goal of a net zero carbon Reading by 2030. Reports were subsequently taken to all key Committees in the summer of 2019 committing them to embed the action required to work towards this goal in the relevant services, activities and plans of the Council. In November SEPT Committee received an update on the Council's own carbon reduction plans and progress with development of a new Reading Climate Emergency Strategy for 2020-25, which is being led by the Reading Climate Change Partnership.
- 3.2 The Council has reduced its own emissions by 62.5% since 2008/09. The main vehicle through which this has been achieved is the Council's corporate Carbon Plan, the current iteration of which covers the period 2015-20. Officers have started the process of reviewing the Plan in parallel with development of the wider Reading Climate Emergency Strategy to cover the same period (2020-25). The current intention is that the draft RBC Carbon Plan 2020-25 will be brought back to the Policy Committee in the Summer alongside the final version of the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25. The new Carbon Plan will provide the detailed framework for implementing the future plans outlined in Appendix 1.

### **4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 4.1 The action summarised in Appendix 1 contributes to corporate aims as follows:
- Securing the economic success of Reading and provision of job opportunities: by promoting 'clean growth' and the development of Reading's low carbon economy
  - Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe: by reducing Reading's contribution to climate change and encouraging more sustainable travel options
  - Ensuring the Council is fit for the future: by reducing energy use and the costs to the Council associated with it.

### **5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The action summarised in the report illustrates action taken by the Council to tackle climate change in accordance with both the spirit and the letter of the Climate Emergency declaration. The future plans summarised will have significant impact on the Council's own carbon emissions and will demonstrate leadership by example in this area to the wider community.

### **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 6.1 The future financial commitments summarised in Appendix 1 were the subject of public consultation on the draft budget. Climate change and the environment attracted significant comment from respondents, being one of the most commented on policy areas, and the responses generally supported action on climate change.

### **7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The report presents a factual summary of action taken and future plans so has not been subject to Equalities Impact Assessment. Specific projects mentioned would, however, be subject to Equalities Impact Assessment as required.

### **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The report presents a factual summary of action taken and future plans so there are no legal implications arising.

### **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Capital and revenue commitments: the specific actions identified for the Council within Appendix 1 can be delivered within the revenue and capital budgets to be agreed in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2020-23), subject of course to its approval by Council.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 In producing this report, the following have been referred to:

- Reading Borough Council Carbon Plan 2015-20
- Reading Local Plan
- 'Reading Means Business on Climate Change': the Reading Climate Change Strategy 2013-20
- Draft budget proposals as set out in the budget consultation process