



15 November 2023

Title	Outcomes of 'The Strategy Room' project
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Peter Moore, Head of Climate Strategy
Lead Councillor	Cllr Ennis, Lead Member for Climate Strategy and Transport
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	1. That the Committee note the outcomes of 'The Strategy Room' project to engage residents in discussions about climate change (to be summarised in a presentation at the Committee meeting).

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 'The Strategy Room' is a project designed to engage people in discussion about climate change led by Nesta, the innovation agency, University College London's Climate Action Unit and Fast Familiar, a Reading-based digital agency. It is described as 'an immersive experience which uses facilitated deliberation, interactive polling and collective intelligence to identify the climate change policies that will best help a local area to reach net zero emissions'; and as 'a way for people to walk in off the street, and within 90 minutes imagine together the benefits of a Net Zero future, and help create a strategy for their local area on how to get there'.
- 1.2 In late 2022 Reading Borough Council was invited to be one of 12 local authorities to take part in the pilot phase of the project. The Council welcomed the opportunity to participate and worked with partners to organise 5 workshops in March 2023 under the project – 3 for residents, 1 for RCCP Board members and 1 for RBC elected members. The project team also worked with the University of Reading who hosted a session so 6 workshops were held in total in Reading with 67 people taking part, over 10% of the total participating in the pilot. Reading also achieved the highest participation rates of any of the 12 pilot areas with a good turnout at all of the workshops.
- 1.3 Following workshops held around the country in spring 2023, the data gathered was analysed and published at a launch event on 12th July 2023. The results can be interrogated via a new website created for the project at strategyroom.uk. The website gives further details of the scenarios and policy prescriptions discussed at the workshops, and enables results from Reading to be compared with the national results.
- 1.4 RBC councillors who participated in the workshop in March 2023 expressed an interest in receiving a presentation on the findings of the project – a presentation from the project team has therefore been arranged for the SEPT Committee meeting on 15th November 2023.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Council declared a climate emergency in February 2019 and worked with partners via the Reading Climate Change Partnership to produce the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25. This was endorsed by the Policy Committee in November 2019. The Strategy emphasises the importance of good communications and public engagement to the delivery of climate action and the invitation to participate in the pilot phase of 'The Strategy Room' project was accepted by the Council in this context.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The outcomes of the pilot phase of the project will be summarised in a presentation to SEPT Committee meeting on 15th November.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The 'Strategy Room' project relates to Corporate Plan themes as follows:
- Healthy Environment: the actions discussed within scope of the project have the potential to contribute to a healthier environment via reducing emissions and the co-benefits arising
 - Thriving Communities: the actions discussed within scope of the project have the potential to contribute to thriving communities by helping them understand climate change and what they can do to respond to the issues it raises.
 - Inclusive Economy: the actions within the scope of the project have the potential to contribute to an inclusive economy as they emphasise the economic benefits and opportunities of taking action on climate change.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). Whilst there are no direct climate impacts arising from this report a Climate Impact Assessment has been completed suggesting a low positive impact arising from the project (low because of the limited scale to date).

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. The 'Strategy Room' project is a pilot project designed to improve community engagement in decision-making about climate change. Lessons learnt from the pilot phase will be applied to any wider roll-out of the project.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. The project was led by external partners rather than the Council though efforts were made by the project team to encourage participation from a wide cross-section of the population, for example, by offering a voucher of nominal value to encourage participation and holding sessions at different times of day.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. There are none.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. There are none.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. There are none.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. Not applicable.

12. Background Papers

12.1. There are none.