

This Report will be made public on 4 July 2023



Report Number **C/23/15**

To: CABINET
Date: 12 July 2023
Status: Non-key decision
Responsible Officer: Olu Fatokun, Low Carbon & Sustainability Senior Specialist
Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist
Cabinet Member: Councillor Stephen Scoffham, Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Biodiversity

SUBJECT: DRAFT DISTRICT-WIDE CARBON PLAN

SUMMARY: A draft District-wide Carbon Plan is being prepared for the council to play a leadership role in promoting partnerships for a carbon neutral district, as set out in the council's climate change and ecological emergency declaration. This report presents the draft District-wide Carbon Plan to Cabinet to seek approval to consult on the plan.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To progress with the climate change and ecological emergency declaration requirement "*To develop a strategy for Folkestone and Hythe District Council to play a leadership role in promoting community, public and business partnerships for this Carbon Neutral 2030 Commitment throughout the District*".

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/23/15.
2. To note the work on the Carbon Innovation Lab and Sustainable Futures Forum already underway (Appendix 1).
3. To agree the draft District-wide Carbon Plan for public engagement (Appendix 2) subject to any amendments agreed through recommendation 5.
4. To agree the proposed approach to public engagement and draft consultation questions (Appendix 3) subject to any amendments agreed through recommendation 5.
5. To agree that the Policy & Performance Lead Specialist in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Biodiversity, make any amendments to the District-wide Carbon Plan and consultation questions to reflect the comments of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, prior to public engagement.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The council declared a climate change and ecological emergency on 24 July 2019. The text of the declaration can be viewed here: [\(Public Pack\)Minutes Document for Council, 24/07/2019 19:00 \(folkestone-hythe.gov.uk\)](#) The declaration covered a wide range of activity, from the council's own estate and operations, to wider district emissions and work with partners.
- 1.2. The declaration called for the council *“To develop a strategy for Folkestone and Hythe District Council to play a leadership role in promoting community, public and business partnerships for this Carbon Neutral 2030 Commitment throughout the District”* and *“To achieve this, create a Carbon Action Plan based on practical frameworks and advice ...”*
- 1.3. Analysis of the council's estate and operations concluded that the council's own emissions amounted to 1,536 tCO₂e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent) at a base year of 2018/19. Data published by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)¹ for 2018 show that emissions arising from buildings, transport and activities across the Folkestone & Hythe district amounted to 409,500 tonnes of CO₂. Emissions from the council's estate and operations therefore amounted to less than 0.4 per cent of the district total, and so collaborative working across the district will be essential to meet the net zero target.

2. CARBON INNOVATION LAB

- 2.1. A proposal was put to Cabinet on 23 March 2022 (C/21/94) for the council to establish a 'Carbon Innovation Lab' (CI-Lab) to address the district-wide commitment, building on a similar group that has successfully operated for around two years at the London Borough of Hounslow.
- 2.2. The CI-Lab is an informal and inclusive group of representatives from the community, business, special interest groups and academics. The objectives of the CI-Lab are to:
 - Develop and deliver actions to reduce carbon emissions and the impact of climate change through collaboration across our communities, businesses and farming enterprises across the district.
 - Understand the opportunities and address local hurdles to achieving net zero, including signposting to resources, and support applications for funding opportunities to enable the transition.
 - Develop a District-wide Carbon Plan for both urban and rural areas of Folkestone & Hythe with administrative support from the district council and deliver quick results where possible.
- 2.3. The CI-Lab has held five meetings to date. Four potential projects have emerged from the discussion, as well as the need to promote active community engagement to drive interest in the District-wide Carbon Plan. The members of the CI-Lab, who attend on a voluntary basis, have shared

¹ Now the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ)

experience of their own projects and a support network is beginning to develop.

- 2.4. Table 1 below details the four emerging projects. Further projects may emerge as the discussion continues, for example around regenerative farming and land management.

	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3	Project 4
Focus	Eco-schools Pilot	Local businesses becoming greener	Energy Efficiency to reduce the cost of living in Privately Occupied homes	Cycle and footpath improvements

Table 1- Emerging Projects from the CI-Lab

- 2.5. Updates on the work of the CI-Lab have been given to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group and a summary was also provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 April 2023 (OS/22/12) as part of a general update on the council's climate change work.

3. FOLKESTONE & HYTHE SUSTAINABLE FUTURES FORUM

- 3.1. Project 2 above is being taken forward by officers with the support of Liu Batchelor of LVB Creative, a member of the CI-Lab and a coach, TEDx Folkestone Curator and media producer. This has led to the creation of the Folkestone & Hythe Sustainable Futures Forum (SFF). The role of the SFF is to be the 'umbrella' brand for the delivery of initiatives emerging from the CI-Lab or taking place across the district with the support of the CI-Lab.
- 3.2. The project aimed to engage and empower local businesses, community groups and people by giving them a platform to showcase their ideas and projects for a more sustainable future for our district, by providing coaching support to develop their projects into actions that will inspire others.
- 3.3. The scope of the project was to deliver a series of talk videos featuring local businesses, community groups, special interest groups and the people of Folkestone & Hythe District. This was supported by a series of community engagement events including question and answer sessions, development workshops for speakers and engagement campaigns on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn as well as the council's website (Carbon Innovation webpage). The project culminated in an event that took place at the Burlington Hotel, Folkestone on the 29 April 2023.
- 3.4. Officers have received a number of positive comments from participants following the April event, which include the following:
- *The event was very well organised, the speakers were inspirational and provided a lot of useful information. It was nice to engage with the community.*

- *Greater awareness of the live projects will allow me to potentially recommend these when working with local businesses to improve collaboration.*
 - *We are keen to expand your approach to Thanet and have resolved to be a change agent and to make this happen.*
 - *The gathering was with a lot of positive vibes, it needs more regulatory involvement, to scale up the meeting from the community, Council to county, and to open a channel to integrate the possibilities with the Government a CSR [Corporate Social Responsibility] or sustainable channel of appreciation.*
 - *Great selection of speakers and breakout sessions.*
 - *I met two attendees who are keen to train staff in the principles of sustainability, the aim is to get buy-in for change.*
 - *An amazing model on how communities can come together, sharing ideas and plans for a better more sustainable future.*
- 3.5. LVB Creative produced an Impact Report following the April event and this is included as **Appendix 1** to this report.
- 3.6. Given the success of the April event, it is intended to continue with an annual Sustainable Futures Forum event, with smaller meetings in between, perhaps on a quarterly basis.

4. DISTRICT-WIDE CARBON PLAN

- 4.1. Officers have prepared a draft District-wide Carbon Plan, with the ideas and input of the CI-Lab, and the draft is included as **Appendix 2** to this report.
- 4.2. As the scope of the district-wide plan is far-reaching, and beyond the ability of the council to fund or implement itself, it is intended to use the public consultation to identify additional partner groups and projects that are currently underway or planned; this information will be brought together to produce a final version of the plan later in the year, making it a collective plan for the whole district.
- 4.3. The draft plan is currently divided into five chapters. It is intended to add further chapters, with detailed actions and monitoring, following the public consultation. The proposed structure of the plan is as follows:
- **Chapter 1** will include a forward and introduction to be drafted with the Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Biodiversity for the public consultation.
 - **Chapter 2** sets out the legislative and policy background at international, regional and local level.
 - **Chapter 3** sets out the scale of carbon emissions at district level and the main sources of the emissions, using the BEIS dataset (see paragraph 1.3 above). This chapter outlines the different spheres of influence that the district council has, ranging from areas where it has direct control through to areas where it only has limited influence.

- **Chapter 4** sets out examples of actions that can be taken within these different scopes of influence, and opportunities that carbon reduction can create. This can be added to following the public consultation, for example, with actions to improve biodiversity and enhance the resilience of ecosystems, promote sustainable farm and land management.
- **Chapter 5** provides examples of activities that are already underway across the range of transport, residential, commercial, other activities and land use absorption and biodiversity enhancement, as a prompt to further discussion. It will be particularly important to engage children and young people in these activities.
- The public consultation is intended to identify new partners and projects that organisations are currently delivering, are planning to deliver or can contribute to in partnership with others, and these will populate an Action Plan that will form the basis of **Chapter 6**. Public consultation will hopefully identify inspiring projects across the district and help bring together groups to share resources.
- A monitoring plan will follow in **Chapter 7** after the public consultation that will identify key indicators that will be monitored to assess progress to a carbon neutral future and critical points that may trigger a review of the plan.
- A conclusion and summary will follow in **Chapters 8 and 9** after the public consultation.

4.4. Proposed consultation questions are included as **Appendix 3** to this report. It is planned that the consultation will include:

- Consultation materials on the council's website, including a professionally produced version of the draft plan set out in Appendix 2, with illustrations and graphics, designed with the council's Communications Team. This will be accompanied by questions that can be answered through the council's consultation portal.
- Engaging with schools and higher education institutions, as well as organisations such as Kent Wildlife Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Woodland Trust and others, including professional bodies.
- Social media activity to publicise the consultation, working with the Communications Team.
- Officer attendance at selected venues in locations in the Romney Marsh, North Downs and Folkestone and Hythe areas of the district, with display materials, leaflets and questionnaires. These in-person events could be held as specially arranged sessions or as stalls or 'pop-ups' at existing events, such as summer fairs.
- A targeted questionnaire to households in Folkestone & Hythe district. While the above methods are likely to attract comments from people already interested in climate change issues, it is important that we understand the general knowledge of and concern about climate change and commitment to action among the district's residents. It is therefore proposed to use specialists in Canterbury City Council to undertake a

targeted survey of representative Folkestone & Hythe residents. (This approach was used in November 2020, alongside an open consultation exercise, to inform Folkestone and Hythe's Corporate Plan 'Creating Tomorrow Together'.)

- 4.5. Given the success of using a specialist media producer for the Sustainable Futures Forum (Section 3), there is potential to use a similar approach in consultation on the District-wide Carbon Plan.

5. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 5.1. The draft District-wide Carbon Plan was discussed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 June 2023 (OS/23/01).

- 5.2. The committee made the following points in relation to the draft plan:

- The engagement should include schools and colleges, as younger generations will be most impacted by the effects of climate change.
- There will need to be a mechanism for monitoring and review of the plan to ensure that actions are completed.
- It would help to have an executive summary or a 'plan on a page' to make the document more accessible.
- Risks need to be fully considered when the action plan is being drafted.
- Shorter, targeted questionnaires, focussing on particular topics, should be considered (e.g. waste, energy).
- In focussing on transport, domestic, commercial and industrial emissions the carbon and environmental impact of waste should not be overlooked.
- The role of public transport is important, especially as Stagecoach is cutting bus services in the district.
- The Sustainable Futures Forum could consider focussing on specific topics for future events.
- The approach of staging 'TEDx-style' events could be valuable for school children and young people, especially in the more deprived areas of the district, and help participants learn presentation and public speaking skills.
- The council's webpages need to be reviewed to bring climate change information and projects together.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1. Following comments raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, officers will prepare any resulting amendments in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Biodiversity. A consultation version of the plan will be published and public engagement will begin.
- 6.2. Following the public engagement, officers will review the comments and the results of the targeted questionnaire. The CI-Lab (Section 2) could be used

to provide another perspective on the emerging issues and recommend ways in which they could be addressed.

- 6.3. Subject to the issues raised in the engagement, a report could be taken to Overview and Scrutiny Committee later in the year, summarising the results of the engagement and questionnaire exercise, with proposed amendments to the plan. The amended plan could then be taken to Cabinet for adoption later in 2023.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 7.1. A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
That the District-wide Carbon Plan fails to bring together groups and individuals to deliver joint action.	High	Medium	Undertake wide public consultation through different channels, using professional expertise where necessary. Create an implementation group to ensure that actions in the plan are delivered to schedule.
That the District-wide Carbon Plan fails to deliver significant reductions in carbon emissions.	High	Medium	Undertake regular monitoring and review of the plan to identify additional or amended actions.

8. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

8.1. Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

8.2. Finance Officer's Comments (LK)

Any consultation or consultancy costs would be met from the existing climate change budget.

8.3. Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)

There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report. The district wide carbon action plan is proposed for consultation with the public. Access to the consultation and the proposed action plan should be provided in a range of formats to ensure it is accessible for all.

8.4. Climate Change Implications (AT)

There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report. If approved by Cabinet, the draft plan would be subject to public consultation with individuals, community groups and others across the district. When the final plan is produced following the consultation there are could be significant positive carbon reduction and biodiversity impacts, depending on the range of actions identified.

9. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting:

Olu Fatokun, Low Carbon Senior Specialist
Telephone: 07950 880 543
Email: olu.fatokun@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Adrian Tofts, Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist
Telephone: 01303 853438
Email: adrian.tofts@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Sustainable Futures Forum – Impact Report

Appendix 2: District-wide Carbon Plan – Draft Plan for Public Consultation

Appendix 3: District-wide Carbon Plan – Draft Public Consultation Questions