
A CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY AND ACTION PLAN FOR THANET.

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel 10th March 2009**

By: **Sue McGonigal, Director of Finance & Corporate Services**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary: To agree a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for Thanet.

For Decision

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Climate change is a global issue that has been making headlines for some years. Internationally, targets and frameworks, such as the Kyoto Protocol, have been set to tackle and reduce the causes and effects of climate change and it is recognised that immediate action is required to reduce greenhouse gases to avoid an irreversible effect on the global climate. The effects of climate change are also experienced at a local level so it is important to act globally, nationally and locally on this issue.

With the rate of rising sea levels increasing rapidly as a result of global warming flooding is a real threat and research undertaken by Canterbury Christchurch University's Department of Geographical and Life Sciences suggests that Thanet could be separated from mainland Britain by as early as the middle of next century as a result of flooding due to climate change. It is predicted that over the next 80 years there will be an increase of between 2.0°C and 2.5°C in average annual temperatures in the South East of England as well as decreases in average annual rainfall of up to 10%. We can expect wetter winters and drier summers with rain increasing by 20% in winter and decreasing by 8-23% in summer. As a consequence of this we can anticipate a shifting pattern of more severe weather with floods and droughts becoming the norm.

2.0 How Local Government is responding to the threat of Climate Change.

- 2.1 The phenomenon of climate change continues to move up the local authority agenda. Local authorities clearly have a central role in leading society's response to the challenge of climate change and as a result environmental action and sustainability, for both the Council and its partners, are now pivotal to the new CAA and Use of Resources assessment.
- 2.2 In October 2000 the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change was launched, which requires local authorities to work with the community to develop an action plan to tackle climate change at a local level. By signing the Declaration councils pledge to systematically address the causes of climate change and to prepare their community for its impacts. To date it has been signed by more than 300 English Councils, although Thanet District Council has yet to do so.

3.0 Progress made by the Council

- 3.1 Although the Council has yet to sign up it is nonetheless aware of the potential impacts of a changing climate and the need to develop adaptation responses. In May 2008, with Member backing and a commitment from the Corporate Management Team, the Going Green Group was formed to address climate change concerns and to promote education both within the Council and in the wider community. To date the group has completed a survey of several Council sites, in association with The Carbon Trust, in order to calculate the Council's carbon footprint and are currently in contact with The Energy Saving Trust to arrange a green vehicle fleet review. A Green Awareness Week was held recently at the Council offices, which was successful in recruiting Green Guardians across the whole range of service areas and raising officer awareness in what can be done to tackle the impacts of climate change. The Council employs approximately 800 staff, which is a sizable number of people who are able to feed the key messages back to the communities in which they live and work.

4.0 Moving Forward

- 4.1 To date although much has been done it has been on an ad-hoc basis, making it difficult to chart the progress. It is proposed that the Council adopts a formal Environmental Strategy, which sets out the Council's commitment to dealing with the causes of climate change and its impact and how it intends to do so. A draft Strategy is attached at annex 1 for Members' approval.
- 4.2 In order to deliver the aims that are set out within the strategy a more detailed action plan has been developed, which is shown at annex 2 for information. This is a management action plan that outlines the key steps that are needed to make the desired progress, the timelines for their completion and the officer responsible. Management will regularly monitor progress against this via the Going Green Group and as with all action plans it will be reviewed and revised (where appropriate) on a regular basis, but no less than annually.
- 4.3 Key Theme 1 - Action 6 in the Plan is "to sign up to the Nottingham Declaration", a copy of which is attached at Annex 2. Members are thereby asked to agree that the Council's commitment to dealing with Climate Change is given formally through the signing of the Nottingham Declaration.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 Financial

Sustainable green solutions are often beneficial financially as well as ecologically. Solutions for reducing energy and water consumption can prove to be excellent and inexpensive 'invest to save' opportunities with the potential for saving the council reasonable sums in the near future. There is also the potential for grant funding for some initiatives. Given the current economic climate, with a reduced cash base, the Going Green Group intends to investigate fully all such opportunities and will endeavour to make progress in other areas at minimal cost.

5.2 Legal

5.2.1 There are no Legal issues specific to this report.

5.3 Corporate

5.3.1 Adopting the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will assist the Council in maintaining the 2008/09 Use of Resources score of Level 3. This will minimise the risk of future reputational damage in not achieving this level under the new CAA assessment for 2009/10.

5.3.2 The contents of this report are designed to improve the Council's carbon footprint and adaption to climate change and will therefore represent an improvement on its impact on the environment.

5.3.3 The Climate Change Strategy and Action plan link to the Corporate Plan through Theme 3 – Beautiful Thanet and Theme 6 – Modern Council.

5.4 Equity and Equalities

5.4.1 There are no Equity and Equality issues specific to this report.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Overview & Scrutiny Members as consultees to this strategy and action plan are asked for comments prior to its presentation to Cabinet in April 2009.

7.0 Decision Making Process

7.1 This is a policy framework decision to go to Cabinet.

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Annex List

<i>Annex 1</i>	<i>Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for Thanet</i>
<i>Annex 2</i>	<i>The Nottingham Declaration</i>