

## Response to the declaration of a Climate Change Emergency

Cabinet	<b>12 March 2020</b>
Report Author	<b>Jasmin Vickers, Environmental Services Manager</b>
Portfolio Holder	<b>Cllr Duckworth, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance &amp; Coastal Development</b>
Status	<b>For Decision</b>
Classification:	<b>Unrestricted</b>
Key Decision	<b>No</b>
Ward:	<b>District wide</b>

### Executive Summary:

The Council has declared a Climate Emergency, and now needs to follow up on this with actions. This report recommends actions to be taken based on the Council's current position, taking into account pending actions at a County and National level, which could affect these actions.

### Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to agree the following recommendations:

1. The Council adopts and commits to delivering actions already agreed within the proposed Action Plan 1.
2. The Council commits to exploring proposed actions within Action Plan 2.
3. The Council seeks to develop a climate change strategy to provide a cohesive approach to this wide ranging issue.

### CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

<b>Financial and Value for Money</b>	There are no immediate financial implications arising from this Cabinet report, however, as projects develop and cost implications are understood in more detail, business cases will be submitted through the usual governance processes, based on supporting evidence.
<b>Legal</b>	There are legal issues that may arise out of this response to the Climate Emergency as it proceeds. The implementation of actions may give rise to procurement and related considerations which can be advised on once further detail is available
<b>Corporate</b>	No corporate risks identified at this stage.
<b>Equalities Act 2010 &amp; Public</b>	Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to

<b>Sector Equality Duty</b>	the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	
	Protected characteristics: age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.	
	Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.	
	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,	
	Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it	
Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.		
Findings of the report will inform this section moving forward.		

<b>CORPORATE PRIORITIES</b>	
Growth	
Environment	✓
Communities	✓

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council passed a motion to declare a Climate Emergency on 11th July 2019.

1.2 This Council has resolved to:

- Declare a climate emergency;
- Pledge to do what is within our powers and resources to make Thanet District Council carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions;
- Call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible;
- Continue to work with partners across the County and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies;
- Investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment

1.3 Thanet District Council's Cabinet agreed the following actions in September:

- To form an 11 member working party to advise the Cabinet, Chaired by Cllr Pugh, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance & Coastal Development, and a public focus group following on from this.
- To compile a report on the current situation, immediate and longer term actions to be taken to be reported back to Cabinet by December (Delayed to March Cabinet due to change in administration, election and other factors, allowing for Council processes to be followed).
- The report should include the current environmental impact of the Council, suggestions for actions to address this, and any measures to support positive environmental impact across the District.

## **2.0 Action taken to date**

2.1 A working group has been formed, chaired by Cllr Duckworth. The group is focusing on the development and delivery of an action plan, which is a working document seeking to address the key areas of impact and influence the Council can have in reducing carbon emissions across Thanet, along with supporting and protecting the District's biodiversity. The group will also focus on new projects for future inclusion in strategies such as the Housing Strategy.

2.2 An officer representative is attending meetings of the Kent Climate Change Network, where data is discussed and coordinated actions explored. The officer working group will continue to liaise with Kent colleagues through the Kent Resource Partnership for additional support, guidance and best practice with regard to waste, resources, recycling, litter and enforcement of these areas. Updates from these groups will be reported back to the Member's Working Group for discussion and agreed approaches.

2.3 A public consultation or focus group is yet to be created, but is to be discussed at future Member working group meetings to agree a way forward. The aim of a public group is to ensure all stakeholders are included, enabling positive engagement with residents and relevant community groups, for communication of actions, obtaining feedback and gathering the support and action of residents where needed.

## **3.0 Background to the Climate Emergency**

3.1 In October 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported on the state of global warming. It warned that there is only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people. It also outlined that limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society. Since this report increased focus has arisen from governments and interest groups on climate change and on carbon reduction.

3.2 The biodiversity or ecological emergency is intrinsically linked with the climate emergency, with some councils choosing to declare explicitly a "climate and

biodiversity emergency". We are recognising a biodiversity or ecological crisis as implicit within the declaration of 'climate emergency'.

- 3.3 Hundreds of thousands of different species of animals and plants are facing extinction because of human activity, according to the United Nations. These species are part of the complex ecosystems which provide vital services humans depend on for survival, such as pollinators for example.
- 3.4 Other national and international guidance for further reading on the scientific basis for the climate and biodiversity emergency is available in links within the background papers.
- 3.5 In November 2018, major cities Bristol and Manchester both passed motions that declared a 'Climate Emergency' and set targets aiming to be carbon neutral by 2030 and 2038 respectively. Their decisions have since been echoed by councils across the country, with over 100 councils passing climate emergency motions so far.
- 3.6 On 1st May 2019, the UK Parliament followed the lead of local councils across the UK, approving a non-binding motion to declare a climate emergency and calling on the government to increase its ambition to adopt more ambitious targets for reaching net zero emissions. Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the formation of a Climate Change Committee, the first of its kind which he will chair.

#### **4.0 Findings since declaring a Climate Emergency**

- 4.1 The Council has pledged to work towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030, as this is a key point in declaring a 'Climate Emergency'. However at this stage the Council does not have specific carbon reduction targets, and we should take the steer from Kent County Council on achievable targets for Thanet, along with the other Kent councils.
- 4.2 Kent County Council has carried out a consultation on their proposed Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (ELES), and this is currently being considered by the Kent Council Leaders. It is hoped the strategy will be formally adopted in the first quarter of 2020. It is worth noting that a number of bold actions are being developed as part of the KCC ELES, 'Responding to the climate change challenge collectively-10 point plan'. It is proposed that we look to continuously update and align our action planning with the County-wide approach as it develops and where relevant to Thanet.
- 4.3 KCC is also developing a Kent Biodiversity Strategy, with District level summaries intended to be ready by the end of 2020. This is also pending updated guidance from DEFRA on matters such as Nature Recovery Networks.
- 4.4 Thanet District Council does not currently have a cohesive approach towards the environment or tackling climate change, for example through an overarching policy or strategy. However other Council policies specifically mention climate change, including the Local Plan and Housing Strategy. There are also significant pieces of work already underway across Council departments which address contributors to the climate and ecological emergency and mitigating actions, as have been mapped out in the action plans which are within the appendices.

- 4.5 Data to inform the Council's response to the climate emergency has been obtained from different sources, including Kent County Council and non-government organisations such as Friends of the Earth.
- 4.6 Three key focus areas have been highlighted by the data: carbon emissions; biodiversity; waste and resources.
- 4.7 The Government's Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has requested that councils measure and report their greenhouse gas emissions from their own estate and operations by the end of July each year. The report provides information about the emissions of a range of gases which are caused by the provision of council services. We are able to look at our estate's emissions over the last ten years from this data, which shows an overall reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions during that time. This data is already available to the public on the Council's website.
- 4.8 Kent County Council produces a data pack for Thanet. This has been produced by the Sustainable Business and Communities team at KCC as supporting documentation to the Kent Environment Strategy, with the aim that these data packs will be updated twice annually and will provide a district level description of the Strategy's' data. This pack includes data on the district's commercial & industrial emissions, domestic emissions and transport, water, waste, housing, health and natural habitats. It shows a mixture of positive and negative results in terms of progress towards tackling climate change. Overall it indicates the need for action in a number of areas.
- 4.9 Friends of the Earth (FoE) have recently carried out an independent analysis on all Districts in the UK. The results for Thanet District Council show in summary:
- Trees: 2% of Thanet is woodland
  - Transport: 27% of commuter journeys are made by public transport, cycling and walking
  - Housing: 36% of Thanet homes are well insulated
  - Waste: 35% of household waste is reused, recycled, or composted
  - Overall climate-friendly score: 72%
- 4.10 Thanet was rated as average on the test. According to FoE, Thanet's performance is average, despite only 2% of the area being covered in woodland. Less than a third of journeys are made by public transport too.
- 4.11 FoE warns: "The Thanet area's performance on climate change is average compared to other local authority areas. "Thanet particularly needs to do much better on increasing tree cover and increasing waste recycling."

## **5.0 Next Steps**

- 5.1 As a local authority, the District Council has an important role to play in both the way it manages its own assets and operations and in helping residents and businesses to engage in action on climate change. Supporting residents might include: saving money on energy bills and fuel efficiency; promoting sustainable resource management; and protecting our natural environment.

5.2 The Council has a role as:

**A service provider** by delivering services that are resource efficient, less carbon intensive, resilient and that protect those who are most vulnerable to climate impacts;  
**An estate manager** by ensuring that our own buildings and operations are resource efficient, use clean energy, and prepared for the impacts of a changing climate.  
**A community leader** by helping local people and businesses to be smarter about their energy use and to prepare for climate impacts.

### 5.3 Action Plan

5.3.1 The action plan that has been created is a working document which seeks to address the key areas laid out in the original motion to declare a climate emergency, along with tackling the three main areas of focus as identified above, with actions focussing around the Council's role as a service provider, estate manager and community leader.

5.3.2 Action plan 1 (Annex 1) shows the actions that the Council is already engaged in, Action plan 2 (Annex 1,) shows proposed new actions and areas/potential projects to be further explored. The actions are split into responsible departments and are labelled by the key topic as per headings used within the Kent Environment Strategy.

5.3.3 The action plan includes (and will continue to have added to it as national and county developments happen), proposed actions or ideas for consideration. This includes matters such as the formation of a wider stakeholder/resident focus group, recruitment of a dedicated Climate Change Officer, development of strategies such as a tree strategy for Thanet, amongst many other actions proposed by officers, members and other stakeholders.

5.3.4 The action plan also includes attendance at the Kent Climate Change Network group meetings, and the Kent Resource Partnership meetings with active engagement in these groups to ensure Thanet is working together with the other Kent Councils and taking the County steer on actions.

The action plan seeks to address the three main identified focus areas as follows:

- **Reducing emissions and improving energy efficiency through the Council's operations, and supporting the community to do this too within the powers of the Council.**
- **Supporting and protecting the District's nature and biodiversity**
- **Improving the management of waste and resources across the District**

### 5.4 Financial implications of the action plans

5.4.1 A section has been included within the action plans to identify whether an action is funded within existing budgets, externally grant funded, bids have been submitted or funding would need to be sourced for it to move ahead. As projects develop and cost implications are understood in more detail, business cases will be submitted through the usual governance processes, based on supporting evidence.

## 6.0 Summary

- 6.1 The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and recognises the need to take swift action to respond to this. A number of the key suggestions for Councils in declaring the emergency have already been undertaken, but in addition this Council has compiled an action plan to start a coordinated response, and look ahead to proposed actions that require funding and planning for the coming years.
- 6.2 It would be detrimental to approach this complex matter in isolation, therefore it is recognised that the action plans are dynamic, working documents, and that we await the steer of the County strategies and potential within them for coordinated actions that may have greater impact for our district.

## 7.0 Recommendations

1. The Council adopts and commits to delivering actions already agreed and funded within the proposed action plan.
2. The Council commits to exploring proposed actions within Action plan 2
3. The Council seeks to develop a climate change strategy to provide a cohesive approach to this wide ranging issue.

Contact Officer:	Jasmin Vickers, Environmental Services Manager
Reporting to:	Gavin Waite, Director of Operational and Commercial Services

### Annex List

Annex 1	Action Plan 1 & 2
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### Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report.	<a href="https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/">https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/</a>
The IPBES Report.	<a href="https://www.ipbes.net/news/media-release-biodiversity-nature%E2%80%99s-contributions-continue-%C2%A0dangerous-decline-scientists-warn">https://www.ipbes.net/news/media-release-biodiversity-nature%E2%80%99s-contributions-continue-%C2%A0dangerous-decline-scientists-warn</a>
WWF Living Planet Report	<a href="https://wwf.panda.org/knowledge_hub/all_publications/living_planet_report_2018/">https://wwf.panda.org/knowledge_hub/all_publications/living_planet_report_2018/</a>

### Corporate Consultation

Finance	Chris Blundell, Head of Financial Services
Legal	Estelle Culligan, Head of Legal & Democratic Services