

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet **DATE:** 21 June 2021  
**CONTACT OFFICER:** Charles Campbell, Principal Environment Officer  
**(For all enquiries)** 07766 442312  
**WARD(S):** All  
**PORTFOLIO:** Councillor Anderson, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Transport & The Environment

### **PART I** **KEY DECISION**

#### **CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY VISION**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

To approve and publish the Council's Climate Change Strategy Vision paper to outline the Council's vision for the upcoming Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan following the political motion on climate change in 2019.

##### **2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Cabinet is recommended to approve the stretch target of borough-wide carbon neutrality by 2030, with an objective target of 2040. This target is to be published in the Climate Change Strategy Vision paper. The paper is a statement of intent for the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, due later in 2021 that will outline how Slough will decarbonise and adapt to climate change.

##### **3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

###### **3.1 Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The Climate Change Strategy Vision paper and subsequent Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will support:

- Priority One: Starting Well and Priority Three: Strong, Healthy and Attractive Neighbourhoods (Building Community Asset Resilience)
  - To realise the target of borough wide carbon neutrality numerous actions will have to be taken. This is likely to include actions that will reduce air pollution, enhance active travel options, and green neighbourhoods. This could be accomplished by switching to electric vehicles, improving cycling routes, and tree planting programmes respectively. Research shows that air pollution and absences of green spaces affect physical and mental health, so if these factors are improved it will contribute to both *Priority One: Starting Well* and *Priority Three: Strong, Healthy and Attractive Neighbourhoods (Building Community Asset Resilience)*.
- Priority Four: Workplace Health
  - It is likely that measures taken to decarbonise Slough will include actions that will improve the quality of buildings in terms of insulation while reducing the use of gas, provide active travel options for commuting, and to reduce air pollution through the electrification of

transport. Higher quality buildings will contribute to healthier work environments by ensuring buildings are well insulated. The provision of active travel options will enable a healthier more active working lifestyle. In addition, improving air quality around workplaces will reduce physical and mental health risks from air pollution.

### 3.2 Five Year Plan Outcomes

The Climate Change Strategy Vision paper and subsequent Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will support the following outcomes of the Five Year Plan:

- Outcome 1 – Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful and Outcome 2 – Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs.
  - The strategy will support decarbonisation measures that will likely support projects intended to improve the quality of buildings, improve active travel options, improve air quality, and green neighbourhoods in Slough. Higher quality buildings will be well insulated reducing the risk of Fuel Poverty. The facilitation of sustainable transport modes such as improved paths and cycling routes will enable a healthier more active lifestyle. Research shows that air pollution and absences of green spaces affect physical and mental health, so if these factors are improved it will contribute to a healthier, happier Slough.
- Outcome 3 – Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay.
  - The actions discussed above such as active travel options and greening of the borough will contribute to Slough becoming an attractive place to live, work and stay. In addition, investment in decarbonisation will promote green jobs providing a source of employment. On 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 the UK government launched a new Green Jobs Taskforce to support the creation of 2 million skilled jobs to build back greener and reach net zero emissions by 2050 nationally. Demonstrating leadership by setting a target of borough wide carbon neutrality, Slough could attract low carbon businesses into the borough.
- Outcome 4 – Our residents will live in good quality homes.
  - The strategy will support decarbonisation measures that will likely support projects intended to improve the quality of buildings. Higher quality buildings will be well insulated reducing the risk of Fuel Poverty. Projects may include the delivery of district heating schemes that could provide lower cost heating or promote rooftop solar PV reducing the need to purchase electricity from energy suppliers.
- Outcome 5 – Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide opportunities for our residents.
  - As stated above in Outcome 3, Slough could attract low carbon businesses into the borough by adopting a target of borough wide carbon neutrality. Investment and demand for decarbonisation created by this target could lead to the creation of new businesses and innovation of new products and services.

## 4. Other Implications

### 4.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications for approving the Climate Change Strategy Vision paper. The paper sets a stretch target of borough-wide carbon neutrality by 2030, with an objective target of 2040 following the political motion on climate change on 23/07/2019. The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will identify and prioritise actions and pathways to achieve this target, in which the financial implications will be assessed. It should be noted that a consultant was appointed to deliver the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan report with a framework for action with a budget of £50,000. The report will be delivered in September 2021.

The government's own targets of a 78% reduction in emissions by 2035 and Net Zero by 2050 will very likely lead to significant Government policy intervention, for example putting a price on carbon, and funding for decarbonisation, which will affect the way businesses operate. The Council is leading by example as it has already committed to make its operations carbon neutral by 2030 outlined by the Council's Carbon Management Plan 2020-2030. Setting a borough-wide carbon neutrality stretch-target of 2030, with an objective target of 2040 brings Slough in line with most councils across the United Kingdom.

The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will deliver an action plan containing actions to decarbonise all aspects of Slough. Actions will target sectors including the build environment, energy, and transport. Actions that will provide economic benefits such as projects that will save money, reduce costs or generate income can be prioritised. These projects could include increasing insulation in buildings reducing energy costs, an increase in remote working, the rollout of council owned electric vehicle charging stations or investing in Solar Farms. Actions that present a cost may necessitate lobbying central government for support, for example the removal of gas boilers. The UK government is already making grant funding available to finance decarbonisation, for example the recent Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, in which Slough Borough Council was awarded over £1m towards the decarbonisation of heat in owned buildings. As the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan is still in development what these measures will be and what their financial benefits or costs are not yet known. However, the council is already operating projects that both reduce carbon and operating costs such as the RE:FIT programme which retrofits council assets to reduce energy demand.

Although the cost of decarbonisation will be substantial, numerous economic analysis's such as the UK Governments' landmark report "*The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review*<sup>1</sup>", found the cost of inaction on climate change will be outweighed by the cost of inaction. The UK Government's recent announcement regarding the target to slash emissions by 78% by 2035 stated: "*government analysis finds that costs of action on climate change are outweighed by the significant benefits – reducing polluting emissions, as well as bringing fuel savings, improvements to air quality and enhancing biodiversity. The government expects the costs of meeting net zero to continue to fall as green technology advances, industries decarbonise and private sector investment grows.*<sup>2</sup>".

---

<sup>1</sup> [The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review - Grantham Research Institute on climate change and the environment \(lse.ac.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [UK enshrines new target in law to slash emissions by 78% by 2035 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The announcement further noted: “*Reaching net zero will also be essential to sustainable long-term growth and therefore the health of public finances, as well as open up new opportunities for the UK economy, jobs and trade – and the government’s ambitious proposals are essential to seizing these opportunities.*”

#### 4.2 Risk Management

There are no direct risk implications for approving the Climate Change Strategy Vision statement.

Recommendation from section 2 above	Risks/Threats/Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
The Cabinet is recommended to approve the stretch target of borough-wide carbon neutrality by 2030, with an objective target of 2040.	a) Economical /Financial:	No direct implications for paper.	N/A	N/A
	b) Political	SBCs motion on climate change commits to developing a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.	Impact: 3 Probability: 5 Risk: 15	The paper will act to address the commitment of the motion on climate change.
	c) Environment	There is no existing borough wide target for carbon neutrality	Impact: 4 Probability: 6 Risk: 24	By committing to decarbonisation the impacts of climate change will be limited.
	d) Legal /Regulatory	SBC are reducing the liability for not complying with the UK Government’s Net Zero by 2050 targets	Impact: 3 Probability: 5 Risk: 15	None

#### 4.3 Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

- i) Legal challenges to governmental policies on carbon management have been made in the European Court of Human Rights, particularly by Dutch environmental pressure groups, relying on provisions in the European Convention on Human Rights which are also given effect to in UK domestic law by the Human Rights Act 1998, particularly the provisions relating to the right to life, private and family rights, and the right to effective remedies. The European Court on Human Rights has consistently rejected that the European Convention on Human Rights confers general rights to environmental protection (*Kyrtatos –v- Greece* and *Fadeyeva –v- Russia*). The Dutch Supreme Court has, however, found that the state is responsible for excessive emissions, triggering positive emissions reduction obligations, based on the provisions in the European Convention on Human Rights relating to right to life and privacy and family life. Such a position has not yet been established in the UK, although it has been found that the establishment of a direct “causal nexus” between a “real and immediate threat” to individual rights may trigger a positive obligation on a state to take action (*Osman –v- UK*).
- ii) The Climate Change Act & Net Zero. The UK Government considers that global warming must be limited to no more than 2°C temperature rise above preindustrial times to avoid dangerous impacts. The UK passed the Climate Change Act 2008 making it the world’s first long term legally binding framework which introduced the target of reducing UK emissions by 80% by 2050, compared to a 1990 baseline<sup>3</sup>. On 27 June 2019, the UK furthered its commitment to decarbonisation by extending the target to Net Zero by 2050 making the UK the first major economy in the world to pass laws to end its contribution to global warming by 2050. An environmental bill is presently passing through Parliament which will develop similar legally binding targets for biodiversity, air quality, water and waste.

#### 4.4 Equalities Impact Assessment

- i. The negative impacts of climate change impact all equality groups; however some groups are disproportionately impacted by carbon emissions. These include children, pregnant women, those with disabilities and older people. Those on lower incomes are also more likely to suffer from the direct consequences of the affects of climate change and some equality groups will be more likely to be on lower incomes. A vision for carbon neutrality will therefore have positive impacts in the long term for all equality groups. The specific policies that will be developed as part of the of the action plan to achieve this will be subject to further analysis to ensure any short –term negative impacts are mitigated against and impacts for all groups are considered.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-first-major-economy-to-pass-net-zero-emissions-law>

## 5 **Supporting Information**

**5.1** The Climate Change Strategy Vision draft is attached as Appendix 1. All final documents will be made public and uploaded to the Slough Borough Council website once approved.

**5.2** On 23 July 2019 Slough Borough Council's full Council passed a motion titled 'Climate Change'. The motion stated:

*"This Council notes the UK Government and Local Government Association's declaration of a national 'climate emergency', recognises that there is a growing urgency for national and international action to combat climate change, and commits to developing a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan that will address the causes and consequences of climate change in Slough by tackling 5 key objectives:*

- *Reducing emissions from our estate and operations*
- *Reducing energy consumption and emissions by promoting energy efficiency measures, sustainable construction, renewable energy sources, and behaviour change*
- *Reducing emissions from transport by promoting sustainable transport, reducing car travel and traffic congestion, and encouraging behaviour change*
- *Reducing consumption of resources, increasing recycling and reducing waste*
- *Supporting council services, residents and businesses to adapt to the impacts of climate change."*

The objectives emphasize the need for a Climate Change Strategy Vision paper outline the Council's direction to accomplish these objectives. The paper will act as a statement of intent for the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan that is to be published later in 2021.

**5.3** In early 2021 Slough Borough Council approved the *Slough 2040 Vision* outlining the Council's ambitions for the future of Slough<sup>4</sup>. The vision encompassed a series of goals including that Slough is to be a "*be a carbon-neutral and sustainable town*".

The following objectives were also stated in the *Slough 2040 Vision* that Slough will:

- *have attractive, green neighbourhoods, which bring people together*
- *be a globally connected town, with a transport system which prioritises public and active transport*
- *have a strong, globally renowned economy, which supports its people to prosper and live well*
- *be a healthy town, where people are supported to live empowered lives*

The upcoming Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will propose actions that will support these stated goals by; reducing air pollution improving the health of residents, promoting nature-based solutions such as tree planting, promoting public transport, and promoting green jobs.

---

<sup>4</sup> [Slough 2040 – Slough Borough Council](#)

Over the next 20 years, the *Slough 2040 Vision* commits to working in partnership with the residents, public bodies, charities and businesses of Slough to transform this vision into reality.

- 5.4 In March 2021 Slough Borough Council published its *Covid Recovery Strategy* that outlined the Council's pathway for recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>5</sup>. The strategy outlined the Council's plan for renewal and acknowledged the *Slough 2040 Vision* objective that Slough will be a carbon-neutral and sustainable town.
- 5.5 Slough Borough Council approved the updated Carbon Management Plan 2020-2030 in 2020 that set a target of carbon neutrality for the councils' operations by 2030. The Climate Change Strategy Vision target applies to the entire borough.
- 5.6 Slough Borough Council has already reduced its own greenhouse gas emissions substantially. From 2008/09 to 2018/19 emissions fell from 30,303 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e to 10,224 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e, a drop of 66%. This was largely achieved through changes such as a reduction in built assets, increases in energy efficiency and a reduction of carbon intensity of electricity from the national grid. In addition to reduced greenhouse gas emissions contributing to global warming, this has brought benefits such as a reduction in operating expenditure for the council through energy costs, and a reduction in air pollution from combustion sources.

However, it should be noted that the Councils' greenhouse gas emissions only constitute 1.67% of the borough's emissions. The majority of emissions in the borough come from industrial and commercial sources, followed by domestic sources and transport.

## 6 Comments of Other Committees

The Environmental Strategic Board, chaired by the Chief Executive, has requested that the Climate Change Strategy Vision is submitted to cabinet for approval.

## 7 Conclusion

Approving and publishing the Council's Climate Change Strategy Vision will provide a statement of intent with regards to the development of the upcoming Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan following the political motion on Climate Change. This will also inform the public as to the Council's progress.

To deliver these targets the Council will need to support the decarbonisation of greenhouse gas emissions from industrial and commercial sources, domestic sources, and transport. In order to achieve this great challenge, the Council must seek to either facilitate decarbonisation or influence stakeholders such as central government. The actions necessary will be outlined in the upcoming Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

## 8 Appendices

1. Slough's Climate Change Strategy Vision paper

---

<sup>5</sup> [Microsoft PowerPoint - Covid Recovery OSC 18 03.20201 \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)