



Executive
15 June 2009

**Report from the Director of
Environment and Culture**

Wards Affected:
None

Climate Change Strategy

Forward Plan Ref: E&C-08/09-012

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 In September 2007 the Council agreed to commission the production of a Climate Change Strategy for the borough. This report explains why the process has taken longer than anticipated and outlines the contents of the proposed Strategy and Action Plan. It recommends that the Council adopts the Strategy on behalf of the borough; requests 'Partners for Brent' (the Local Strategic Partnership) to adopt it and for the LSP to lead the implementation, and ask Brent Sustainability Forum to assist with this; and to ask the proposed Climate Change Steering Group to provide quarterly progress reports both to the LSP and the Council.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Executive is asked to:

- i) agree the Brent Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for the Borough of Brent;
- ii) request 'Partners for Brent' (the Local Strategic Partnership) to adopt this Strategy for the borough and to invite partners to participate, and
- iii) request the LSP to work with the Council in implementing the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan by setting up a Steering Group and to ask Brent Sustainability Forum to assist.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 At its meeting in June 2007, the Executive approved a Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan (CMS&IP). This committed the Council to a target of reducing its own carbon emissions by 20% by 2011 and to support 38 initiatives across the Council. In July 2007 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a Task Group to monitor the progress of the Implementation Plan and in particular to consider whether more ambitious carbon reduction targets could be achieved by the Council in a cost effective manner.
- 3.2 In September 2007 the Executive agreed to commission the production of a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for the Borough as a whole. The CMS&IP and the production of a Climate Change Strategy for the borough, is the Council's response to the pressing challenges that climate change presents. This approach recognises that the Council intends to set an example and, in its role as a major employer, a manager of property and other assets and as a provider of local infrastructure, wishes to take a progressive and responsible approach to managing its carbon emissions and thereby reduce its own contribution to climate change. The Council also recognises that climate change and 'extreme weather events' in the future could have an impact on all its services and wishes to plan for this e.g. through Emergency Planning, business continuity plans, supporting community recovery etc
- 3.3 The original timetable envisaged that a Strategy would be ready for adoption by the council in July 2008. However, during the winter of 2007 the Government published a new set of national performance indicators for local government that included four related to climate change. In addition, it was expected that the United Kingdom Climate Change Impacts Programme (UKCIP) would publish a new set of climate change scenarios predicting national, regional and local changes (originally expected in late autumn 2008 but now expected in late spring/early summer 2009). A further factor that led to a delay was that the consultation process used to produce the Strategy did not attract strong interest from Brent's communities, particularly BME groups, and the results were skewed by responses from predominantly white British residents and local lobby groups particularly interested in the subject. This situation was addressed by holding a further round of consultation and interviews on the draft Strategy itself. As a result, the final production of Brent's Strategy was delayed in order to take all these further considerations into account.

CAA Performance Framework

- 3.4 Through the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) performance framework the government introduced four indicators to ensure local authorities take actions to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change. The indicators are described below:

NI 185 - CO₂ reduction from Local Authority Operations

The aim of this indicator is to measure year on year progress made by local authorities working with external partners to reduce CO₂ emissions in their

buildings and the transport. It will also help to demonstrate the Council's commitment and leadership in tackling climate change

NI 186 - CO2 emissions per head of population

The source of data for NI 186 is national data collected by the government from energy companies on the household and business use of energy and on transport use for the borough. It forms part of the Audit Commission's assessment for the CAA and therefore progress made on this Indicator by adding local improvements (as set out in the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan) to the national initiatives will be to the Council's credit.

NI 188 – Adaptation to Climate Change

The aim is to ensure that local authorities are sufficiently prepared to manage climate risks and opportunities from climate change. It also aims to integrate the adaptation into a full range of work across a local authority and its LSP partners, services, plans and estates. Working with local strategic partnership members to embed climate change adaptation across the local area will be important. NI 188 measures the Council's progress on a process from Level 0 to Level 4 on adapting to Climate Change. Through implementing the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan the Council aims to achieve level 4 by 2011 from its current Level 0 position.

NI 194 - Improving Air Quality

The aim of this indicator is to ensure that Brent as a local authority is proactive in minimising air pollution emissions from its fuel/energy usage from transport activities as well as its buildings. Any action undertaken to reduce CO₂ emissions will also result in reduction of Oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and Particulate Matter (PM₁₀).

- 3.5 Apart from being part of the National Indicators within the CAA performance framework, NI 185 & NI 188 are also two of the 35 priorities within the Council's Local Area Agreement from 2008/09.

Policy Context

- 3.6 There are a number of external drivers that support the need to prepare a Climate Change Strategy for the whole borough. These include legislation such as the Climate Change Act 2008 and Sustainable Communities Act 2008; EU Regulations and Directives; the forthcoming Carbon Reduction Commitment; the Mayor of London's recent 'London Climate Change Adaptation Strategy'; Government policy advice, circulars and targets (a 34% reduction by 2020 and 80% by 2050); and Brent Council's own initiatives and plans e.g. the Local Development Framework, new Housing Strategy, Local Implementation Plan for Transport, Children's Strategy etc.

Leadership

- 3.7 The Council has a community leadership role. Through ensuring that the Local Strategic Partnership ('Partners for Brent') and the community as a whole understand the issues, recognise the need to change behaviours, and are willing to put in place actions to address the problems, the Council will provide a lead and assist members of the community to both adapt and mitigate the effects. These actions will be needed to reduce future carbon emissions, thereby limiting climate change in the future, but also assist local

organisations to adapt their policies and practices to the changes in climate and the extreme weather events that are already inevitable. The Council has a key role in helping vulnerable groups of residents and enabling local residents to plan for themselves how they will deal with such change and events.

- 3.8 In order to achieve a reduction in carbon dioxide in the whole borough, the Council needs to work with other partner organisations. These actions will need to be taken by the public sector, local community organisations, residents, businesses, visitors, investors and communities. The Strategy and Action Plan explains the challenges and the issues and makes recommends setting out which actions are needed and who should be involved by working with the Local Strategic Partnership to deal with this challenge.

Content

- 3.9 The draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for the Borough is attached as an *Appendix* and it contains a range of 24 initiatives aimed at:

- i) the Council providing leadership
- ii) the public sector
- ii) local businesses
- iv) local community organisations
- v) local residents

The Action Plan lists a number of local organisations that will be encouraged to work with the LSP and the Council and perhaps lead some of the proposed initiatives. The initiatives will involve a range of different timescales.

- 3.10 The Strategy has been written for a wide audience but contains too much material for one document. It has therefore been structured according to the following sections:

- i) Strategy
- ii) Action Plan
- iii) Implementation Plan
- iv) Resources Plan
- v) Communications Plan
- vi) Supporting Evidence

- 3.11 The Strategy has three aims:

- A) Cut emissions
- B) Cope with extreme weather
- C) Adapt to future climate change

- 3.12 Given these three aims of the Strategy, the following vision statement describes how Brent will be in the future demonstrating that the borough is adapting and mitigating climate change:

“Brent is a pleasant place to live and work. The diverse communities of Brent, local businesses and public services are well-informed and able to act independently and together to protect their members from climate variability and extremes. People and businesses make independent choices that lead to

a low level of emissions in the borough. The infrastructure and layout of the borough make low carbon living easy and are resilient to climate impacts. Public services are delivered consistently, strategically and are able to cope with changes or extremes in weather, including heatwaves, flash flooding and drought. Brent plays its part as a responsible London borough – helping to achieve London-wide emissions reductions targets and contributing to the resilience of London as a city and strong economy. Brent has become an example to other boroughs and city councils, demonstrating a new sense of trust and teamwork in matters relating to climate vulnerability, resilience and emission reduction.”

3.13 The Strategy also has five key objectives:

- 1) To secure commitment from all relevant partners and enable Brent to act.
- 2) To work in partnership to achieve wide-ranging and inclusive solutions to the challenge of climate change.
- 3) To provide user-friendly information to those who need it.
- 4) To collect evidence and continually assess progress.
- 5) To mainstream climate change into our everyday activities.

3.14 Several of the initiatives in the Action Plan focus on local organisations leading by example; tackling carbon emissions in individual businesses and organisations; encouraging behaviour changes; identifying ‘at risk’ groups in the borough; promoting climate resilience of buildings and infrastructure; promoting sustainability in schools; setting up a climate change pledge in the borough; providing information and raising awareness; encouraging the creation of green spaces; and setting up local community champions. This Action Plan is a starting point and will be reviewed after two years.

3.15 The Strategy has a number of messages for the council and encourages different services to take action accounting for the implications of future changes in climate. For example, the new Housing Strategy and Local Development Framework both recognise the need to take action to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide. An officer steering group will oversee how the new Strategy impacts on individual council services and what steps are needed to mainstream these considerations in future service planning.

Management of the implementation of the Strategy

3.15 One of the key initiatives is to set up a new Climate Change Steering Group. This is intended to guide the Strategy’s implementation and to ensure that the Strategy and Action Plan continues to be developed and is not considered as a ‘one-off’ exercise. Both the LSP and the Council will be leading and it is suggested that Brent Sustainability Forum works with them and supports the processes e.g. by setting up a project group which delivers one of the themes. The Steering Group will work with the BSF, draw in relevant partners and provide regular quarterly progress reports to both the Council and ‘Partners for Brent’. In this way wider community ownership of the Strategy can be encouraged; the Strategy will be seen less as a Strategy for the Council and more for the communities as a whole; LSP members and their respective organisations can be involved formally in implementing the Strategy; the BSF will have an opportunity to build on its success and provide support (with the Council’s assistance); and there will be a formal link between the Steering

Group, LSP, BSF and the Council.

Partners

- 3.16 As well as Brent Council, many local organisations contributed to the formulation of the Strategy and Action Plan and it is hoped that these will play a significant role in helping to implement the actions e.g. by becoming members of the Steering Group. By working together a measurable reduction in the borough's CO₂ levels can be achieved. This will lead to an improvement over time in National Performance Indicator 186 (per capita emission levels) with a reduction on its 2008/9 baseline data. This will contribute locally to meeting the Government's national target of a 34% reduction by 2020 and an 80% reduction by 2050.
- 3.17 At a meeting in November 2008, the BSF expressed an interest in working with the Council on this Strategy and wishes to set up a project group.
- 3.18 Other interested partners, who wish to be involved in the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan, will be welcome to become members of the Steering group or a themed project group, when these are set up.
- 3.19 The Council fully supports the Strategy's implementation and the internal officer group will oversee the council's contributions and support.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 In agreeing the budget for 2009/10 the Council provided additional funding to support the work on NI 185 (reducing carbon dioxide emissions), NI 188 (adapting to climate change) and the Climate Change Strategy. All these areas were new responsibilities for the Council.
- 4.2 These new budgets, together with the existing budgets within Environment & Culture will be sufficient to establish and support the work of the proposed Climate Change Steering Group. In particular, part of the new budget will be used to appoint a Climate Change Partnership officer.
- 4.3 Achieving all the goals of the strategy will require significant investment beyond that possible within these budgets. Partners, which in this context will include schools, are likely to need to undertake capital investment to reduce their CO₂ emissions. With rising energy costs and the impending Carbon Reduction Commitment much of this expenditure will be on a spend to save basis, as is the Council's own comparable expenditure which is, in part, supported by the Salix funding stream.
- 4.4 This Strategy is likely to assist other public service providers in Brent to identify or access funding for such investment. Where such organisations seek involvement and become, for example, full members of the Climate Change Steering Group responsible for implementing the Action Plan, it is proposed that a financial contribution is sought.

Risk

- 4.5 If a Climate Change Strategy is not prepared then the borough could be in a much less favourable position to adapt, mitigate or cope with the predicted

consequences of climate change such as dealing with local 'extreme weather events'. Such consequences in the future could affect the provision and potential disruption to public services in the borough that are provided by a range of different public and private organisations. These could also negatively affect the long term prosperity of the borough with the consequence that the borough finds it more difficult to thrive, as set out in the vision of the Community Strategy 2006-10 (see below). The legacy for future generations could be poorer and less favourable than if steps are taken earlier and with foresight.

- 4.6 Failure to agree and implement the Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan will also result in the Council not being able to meet the performance standards as set out in the LAA and CAA.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council has power under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything which it considers likely to promote the environmental well-being of its area. In exercising this power the Council is required to have regard to its Community Strategy. Furthermore the Council has the power under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions.
- 5.2 Brent's Community Strategy 2006-10 includes the statement under, 'Our Vision', 'Brent will be a prosperous and lively borough full of opportunity and welcoming to all, a place that will thrive for generations to come, whose future will be determined by local people'. One of its themes is to be, 'A Green Place' and included under this theme is an aspiration to, '... minimise our contribution to climate change.' It is therefore considered that the Community Strategy supports the exercise of the Council's powers under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 Equality Impact Assessment carried out suggests that the Climate Change Strategy itself does not have an adverse impact. Any adverse impact will be as a result of Climate Change caused by natural and human activity.
- 6.2 It is predicted that climate change will particularly affect those who are vulnerable physically – the elderly and the young – as they will be exposed to greater temperature extremes and potentially new or increased threats of disease.
- 6.3 Businesses working in vulnerable industries, such as those that rely on water resources or other natural resources that may be affected by long term changes in climate could also be threatened. Businesses could also be vulnerable to extra costs required in order to meet higher standards.
- 6.4 It is also predicted that climate change effects will be felt most acutely in areas of the world where communities are less able to adapt. These areas include countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Australia. A number of the council's staff and residents have strong family ties with these nations and so may be affected as a result.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 7.1 Brent Council's own staff are enthusiastic about rising to the challenge of climate change. Over 900 staff from across the Council have signed a pledge to combat climate change and signed up to the Brent Green Network in order to receive regular information on how they can keep this pledge.
- 7.2 Changing behaviour in order to reduce carbon dioxide emissions is a crucial part of the Council achieving its 20 percent reduction target in 2011. Staff will need to be encouraged and supported by senior management in order to take leading roles as climate change champions. In turn, senior management will need to be in a position to make difficult or unpopular decisions confidently in order to achieve emissions reduction targets.
- 7.3 Staff and managers in other organisations based in the borough will also need to be confident and be supported in order to introduce the behavioural changes that are necessary. The Council has an opportunity to lead by example and advise others as to how this can be achieved.

Background Papers

- Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Action Plan 2006-11.
- Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, consultation draft 2008 and final report 2009, AEA Energy and Environment.

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