

Three Rivers District Council

Draft Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy
March 2023 summary report for consultation
purposes.

Date: 10th May 2023

Draft Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy

1 Summary

- 1.1 The current [Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy](#) was adopted by committee March 2021. This was followed up by an [Action Plan](#)
- 1.2 Climate change is a core pillar of the Council's new Corporate Framework. Through this strategy the Council will consider the climate emergency and sustainability in all its decisions, steering council operations towards net-zero by 2030. It demonstrates strong leadership to inspire and influence the District to achieve net-zero by 2045 and acknowledges that mitigation alone is no longer sufficient to combat climate change; climate adaptation is now also critical to the future of our District.
- 1.3 The Leisure Environment and Communities Committee approved the L Draft Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy March 2023 for consultation.

1.4

2 Details

- 2.1 Since the original Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy was published in 2021, the climate has continued to change as a result of human activity. In 2022, the estimated rise in global mean temperature was 1.16 degrees higher than the pre-industrial period¹ and global carbon emissions were at a record high². The effect of these shifts in global climatic systems can be observed in every region on Earth, including in Three Rivers. The need for rapid and deep emissions reductions to prevent dangerous levels of global heating, while adapting and building resilience to the effects of climate change that are already irreversible, remain the most urgent tasks of our time.
- 2.2 Since the last strategy, new legislation has been enacted, most notably the Environment Act 2021 which obliges local planning authorities to require a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain from development amongst numerous other requirements.
- 2.3 Substantial progress has been made by this Council in tackling the Climate Emergency - the highlights of which include:
 - retrofitting 117 fuel poor homes
 - building a new depot to optimal energy efficiency standards

¹ 2022: sixth warmest year on record globally - Met Office

² ESSD - Global Carbon Budget 2022 (copernicus.org)

- establishing a free-to-call Home Energy Support Service
 - engaging with over 1600 people in the district on climate and sustainability issues
 - embedding climate change into Council decision making
 - introducing a new grassland management regime and planting 750 trees across the District together with providing over 2500 free trees and hedging to residents
- 2.4 As recognised by the [“Mission Zero” review of Net Zero \(2023\)](#), the Council needs long-term certainty of government funding in order to make net zero investment plans through to 2030, and beyond
- 2.5 Council emissions are measured annually and have declined by 5% since 18/19 to 2113 tCO₂e.
- 2.6 The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) trajectory at Appendix 2 advises a budget of £19m (at 2022 prices) is required to achieve net zero by 2030. The updated strategy will establish how this can be achieved given the current financial climate for local government. The strategy focuses on objectives which are achievable within the current funding environment, but that will lead to a substantial drop in emissions. For example, it requires an in depth review and exploration of expanding the Solar PV capacity of the Council. Whilst a substantial investment would be required, the subsequent cost savings are likely to mean it is affordable.
- 2.7 Appendix 2 reports that the district emits just under 500,000 tCO₂e per annum but identifies that grid decarbonisation and transition to electric vehicles alone will only lead to a moderate reduction in emissions. Therefore, the Council will need to demonstrate leadership to inspire everyone to play their part.
- 2.8 Chorleywood North and Sarratt, and Moor Park wards are the highest emitters in the district with households producing on average 25 tCO₂e per annum. Residents in South Oxhey have the lowest carbon footprints, producing an average of 12 tCO₂e annually³ by comparison. The strategy recognises that for the district to achieve its vision of net zero by 2045, everyone must do their bit to contribute, no matter how big or small.
- 2.9 Given the international and national context, it is clear net zero is a challenge, and the emphasis of this strategy is that we are doing all that we can within the parameters and resources available. There is no doubt central government has significantly more to do to enable local authorities and districts to achieve their net zero targets. The revised strategy keeps us on course by focusing on the immediate reductions we *can* make.

³ [Impact | Community carbon calculator \(impact-tool.org.uk\)](#)

- 2.10 There is renewed emphasis on adaptation in recognition of the local impacts which were demonstrated so clearly in 2022 with extreme heat, drought, and wildfires,
- 2.11 The original objectives have been reviewed and updated to further develop initiatives to tackle the climate emergency. These objectives will generate new actions and revise existing actions in the [Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan](#) together with the continuation of projects underway.
- 2.12 This strategy will be supported by the [Action Plan](#) which is updated continuously and reviewed bi-annually by the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Independent review of Net Zero 2022 recommends the Government provides continuity and long-term funding certainty. As a local authority, we need this long-term certainty of local government funding in order to make investment plans through to 2030.
- 3.2 Where possible, external funding will be sought for individual projects which will be approved either through Policy and Resources Committee or through the Strategic, Service and Financial Planning process.

Background Papers

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy

