

The background features a large, abstract graphic composed of several overlapping, curved, teardrop-like shapes. The shapes are filled with a gradient of green, transitioning from a dark forest green on the left to a light, almost white green on the right. The overall effect is a sense of movement and depth, typical of modern corporate branding.

Climate Change, Leisure and Communities Committee Report

CLIMATE CHANGE, LEISURE, and COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

November 13th 2023

PART I

Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan Update, Policy and Resources Committee

(CED)

1 Summary

- 1.1 The Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy was adopted by committee March 10, 2021, and by Full Council 25 May 2021. This was followed up by an Action Plan which was agreed at LEC 13 October 2021 and has been reviewed at LEC bi-annually since.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to outline the results of the consultation on the draft Climate Emergency and Sustainability strategy, which was agreed at CCLC in March 2023, and to seek adoption of the final strategy detailed at Appendix 1. This report also provides an update on the Climate Emergency and Sustainability action plan.
- 1.3 The revised Strategy has been prepared with consideration to the bespoke reports commissioned, consultation with all relevant officers, public consultation, reflection on progress to date, and an understanding of how urgent the climate emergency is for residents of Three Rivers, and to ensure Three Rivers complies with the Climate Change Act (revised 2019) target for the UK achieving net zero by 2050.
- 1.4 The public consultation was supported by the new Have Your Say platform generated 37 responses via the platform and 3 written responses and 101 visitors to the page, the results of which can be seen at Appendix 2 and 3. The consultation resulted in identifiable emission reduction targets, separating the aims for our own operation emissions from those of the district, as well as a section focusing on what residents and stakeholders can do to help reach our targets.
- 1.5 The updated strategy states that the council will aim to achieve an average annual reduction of 264t CO₂e to reach net-zero for its' operational emissions by 2030. Our efforts will result in larger reductions in some years than others, due to the timelines of the project deliveries. We also recognise that whilst this strategy sets out our ambition, it will require funding to enable its delivery. We will try to secure funding to deliver our projects but if this is not available then this will impact on our ability to deliver this strategy.
- 1.6 Without additional government funding, or the continued ability to source external funding, the Strategy cannot be delivered within the timescales set out.
- 1.7 The updated strategy states the council will inspire, enable and support everyone in the district to reduce emissions, and adopt sustainable, climate resilient behaviours to achieve net zero emissions by 2045.
- 1.8 This report will detail the achievements of the action plan and can be seen in the strategy on page 11.

2 Details

2.1 Consultation

- 2.2 The public consultation was shared across social media platforms, our website, council newsletters, at in person events including the Community Fair in Leavesden Country Park and Tesco #WorthSaving event. It was presented at the Environmental Forum, and in person all Parish Councils (except Sarratt) and shared with local community groups including Friends of the Earth, Sustainable Three Rivers, and some schools.
- 2.3 There was a limited response to the online consultation however, engagement and consultation at events and forums listed above resulted in increased knowledge of the strategy and our ambition as well as verbal feedback.
- 2.4 As detailed in Appendix 2 The demographic of respondents via the Have our Say platform was as follows:

		Survey Responses	Census 2021 (South West Hertfordshire)
Ethnicity	White British	79.4%	75.3%%
	White – any other white background	8.8%	8.1%
	Mixed – White and Asian	2.9%	1.4%
	Prefer not to answer	8.8%	
Gender	Male	47.1%	49%
	Female	44%	51%
	Prefer not to say	8.8%	
Age	Over the age of 54	73.7%	31.1%
	24-34 years	14.3%	
	35 – 43 years	14.3%	

Source for ethnicity: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/constituency-statistics-ethnicity/>

- 2.5 There was a broad geographical response from across the district. Most respondents were from WD3 postcodes, in particular Croxley Green, Chorleywood and Rickmasnworh.

Whilst “Have your Say” respondents’ gender and ethnicity are broadly aligned with the district census (2021) profile, those aged over 54 were overrepresented. Responses were only received from the ethnic groups shown in the chart above.

- 2.6 Appendix 3 details the open responses to the consultation and helped inform some of the changes made.

- 2.7 There was some feedback that an update to the strategy did not appear necessary as there were limited changes to the aims, and it was too soon for an update – this is one possible reason for the relatively low online response rate.
- 2.8 Suggestions made through the engagement process, both formally submitted and informally discussed via face-to-face interactions have informed the revised version of the Strategy.
- 2.9 The aims of the strategy were consistently endorsed with around 75% of respondents strongly agreeing, or agreeing, and over 50% of respondents agreed our objectives were sufficient to achieve our aims.
- 2.10 The key concerns were regarding the structure of the strategy: -
- 2.10.1 Greater distinction between aims for reducing our own emissions and the districts emissions was needed. We have addressed this by separating the aims into three distinct sections – what we will do to reduce our own emissions to net-zero carbon by 2030, what we will do to support the district to do to reach net-zero by 2045, and advice to residents and stakeholders on what they can do to reduce their emissions and help us achieve our 2045 target. Within these three sections, we have sorted the original aims into several themes, such as buildings, travel and air quality, and waste and resources.
- 2.10.2 The background information and language used was too technical for the average reader. Consequently, wording and data have been significantly cut down, with the number of graphs and charts reduced, only critical data retained, and information and language simplified, with a need to focus on headline figures and the big picture. However, reports with further data and information are still available via the appendices.
- 2.10.3 More clarity was needed between aims for reducing carbon emissions vs increasing sustainability, however we have chosen not to act on this feedback as internally it was felt it would be difficult to separate sustainability from carbon emissions with two different strategies. – put this one after the next two – start with those we have implemented
- 2.11 Other key pieces of feedback were;
- 2.11.1 More information needed on partnership working, therefore the strategy now lays out the different stakeholders, and organisations that we work with, and will need to work with in the future to reach our targets, as well as their key areas of influence.
- 2.11.2 There was criticism about the lack of SMART and measurable targets in our aims, consequently this Strategy states that we need to reduce Council operational emissions by 264t CO₂e per annum to reach our 2030 net-zero carbon target. In this Strategy cycle, we will be producing a route to zero for the Council's own emissions with aspirational milestones - the achievement of which will be dependent on overcoming barriers such as finance, technology, and central government policy.
- 2.11.3 For the district in this Strategy, we have stated an aspirational target that for the next 5 years district emissions must fall by 14% annually to make our fair contribution to the Paris Climate Agreement. In this strategy cycle, we will assign aspirational measurable targets and milestones into the Action Plan on areas we can influence such as housing, consumption, and low carbon/active travel.
- 2.11.4 The timeframe for the 21-23 strategy was considered too short, and an update to the original so soon was viewed by the consultation as unnecessary –Therefore, the timeframe for this Strategy has been extended to 4 years to span 2023-2027.
- 2.11.5 We have removed the aim to remain the top recycling authority in Hertfordshire. While it is a fantastic achievement of the council, a high recycling rate does not

necessarily correlate with a reduction in carbon emissions. We recognise the need to reduce the overall waste going into the waste stream, and hence the volume recycled too. If we are successful in our other aims such as increasing re-use, reducing consumption and food waste, the volume being recycled is likely to fall, which would be a positive step. This one needs a clearer explanation in that we are aiming to.

- 2.11.6 There were some instances of climate change denialism in the consultation responses, however we have chosen to disregard these responses due to their incompatibility with the overwhelming scientific evidence supporting the reality of human-caused climatic change.

2.12 Achievements to date

- 2.13 Substantial progress has been made by this Council in tackling the Climate Emergency – below are the key achievements from the Action Plan since the existing Climate Emergency and Sustainability strategy was adopted in 2021:

Reaching net-zero carbon emissions for our own operations by 2030:

- Depot building replaced including an air source heat pump, radiant heating, solar panels and 2 double headed electric vehicle charging points along with bat boxes, bird boxes, an otter holt, log pile for insects and fruit trees planted.
- Retrofit of Three Rivers House including the installation of air source heat pump, energy efficient cooling systems in the server room saving 335,170 kilowatt hours per annum.
- Started electric conversion of fleet with 3 electric vans.
- Adopted a Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment process that embeds consideration of climate and sustainability into the council's decision-making processes.
- Upgraded all TRDC owned streetlights to energy efficient LED or solar.
- Introduced Climate Change training for all council staff, with senior leadership benefiting from advanced training on climate change and adaptation.

Supporting Three Rivers District to reach net-zero carbon by 2045:

- Joined Solar Together scheme with at least 76 homes in the district installing solar panels and a new round launched in August 2023.
- Retrofitted 117 private homes and saving 161.2 tCO₂e annually and 82 social homes.
- Supported energy efficiency improvements for the least efficient homes in the district through the delivery of Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) and Social Housing Decarbonisation (SHDF) schemes.
- New independent Home Energy Support Service helpline provided advice to over 250 residents.

- Resurfaced a significant section of the Ebury Way trail for walkers and cyclists.
- Improved the northbound link in the Grand Union Canal towpath (Three Rivers) route.
- Inspired sustainable behaviour change at events discussing issues with over 2000 residents.
- Published "[Guide to Greening Your Home](#)" and '[Greener Living Guide](#)'.
- 2,920 free trees provided to Three Rivers' residents in 2022, with a further 7,086 trees reserved by residents in 2023.
- Adopted the Biodiversity Opportunities Audit (BOA), Nature Recovery Strategy, and Alternative Grassland Management (AGM) Initiative throughout the District.
- Creation of 2 new woodlands to celebrate the Queens Green Canopy made up of 750 trees in Leavesden County Park and Denham Way Playing Fields for and 59 street (standard) trees throughout the district as part of the Biodiversity Opportunities Audit delivery.
- Conservation grazing introduced to the Horses' Field at Leavesden Country Park.
- Developed and approved the management plan for the Rickmansworth Aquadrome.
- Hosted 50 wildlife themed events attended by over 850 local people.
- Commissioned reports to improve active travel in our key centres with recommendations to be considered and actioned as appropriate and budgets allow (Walkability Audits)
- Implementation of Wayfinding Signage in Croxley Green to encourage active travel
- Developed and consulted on the district's Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan.
- Installed Real Time Information signs at 15 district bus stops.
- Established the Three Rivers Water Partnership to help protect and improve water quality.
- Awarded community grants for 14 low-carbon and sustainable projects totalling £19,438 since April 2022
- Through the Three Rivers Sustainable Business Programme, helped 12 SMEs develop climate action plans.
- Secured £300k funding from Innovate UK for their Net Zero Living Programme which means Three Rivers District Council is one of 21 local authorities selected as a "Fast Follower" to overcome the non-technical barriers to net-zero. Our Fast Followers funding is shared with two partners Grand Union Community Energy (GUCE) and the National Energy Foundation (NEF) and has enabled the appointment of a new officer to the climate change team. The funding has been awarded to support the following projects: -

- Developing the business cases and potential sources of funds to decarbonise Three Rivers District Council buildings and develop a potential route to net-zero for council operations.
- Pilot a Retrofit One Stop Shop service for able to pay residents.
- Deliver a community energy project.
- Pilot a Transition Streets approach to encouraging domestic decarbonisation and more sustainable living.
- Support the growth and upskilling of the local retrofit supply chain.

2.14 The Strategy

- 2.15 The final strategy can be viewed at Appendix 1. This updated strategy focuses on what the Council and its partners are doing and plan to do within the parameters of the current legal, financial, regulatory, and technological frameworks, under which we must operate to deliver substantial carbon emission reductions.
- 2.16 This strategy is the detailed work behind the council's Corporate Framework where one of the council's four overarching objectives is to strive towards net-zero and be climate resilient.
- 2.17 The two key strategy headlines are for the council to meet net-zero by 2030 for its own emissions, and for the district by 2045. The strategy outlines aims within each of these headlines and how we will work with our partners, businesses and residents to achieve them.
- 2.18 This strategy has set a big ambition for Three Rivers which we appreciate the council does not have the means to fund but will endeavour to find ways to source. We will look for external funding and work with our partners to find innovative solutions. The strategy sets out our direction of travel and overarching ambitions, as well as the challenges.
- 2.19 To reflect the distinction between the council 2030 net zero target and district net zero by 2045 ambition the two climate change performance indicators have been modified to meet these aspirations: namely a 264t CO₂e annual reduction for council operations (CP50), and 14% annual decline for the next 5 years for district emissions (CP52).
- 2.20 The accuracy of measuring emissions is challenging. To improve this the council is undertaking a thorough review of our utility suppliers and encouraging them to switch all the council meters to smart meters. The water contract has been retendered with the aim of installing smart meters too. Consequently, emissions may change, but once the system is automated it will lead to a more sustainable and accurate system.
- 2.21 This revised strategy will be supported by the [Action Plan](#) which is updated continuously and reviewed bi-annually by the Climate Change, Leisure and Community Committee.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Enable the council to achieve a reduction in operational emissions to advance towards net-zero emissions by 2030, and demonstrate leadership to inspire the district to achieve net-zero by 2045;
- 3.2 Further to implement sustainability initiatives for council operations and inspire everyone to move towards a circular economy;
- 3.3 Help build resilience against the unavoidable impacts of climate change on council services.
- 3.4 Promote net-zero carbon and sustainable development of the council.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the council's agreed budget though additional funding and grants will be needed in the future to deliver the whole strategy. The relevant policy is entitled Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy and was agreed by Full Council February 2022, and this is a revised version.
- 4.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators:
 - 4.2.1 CP50 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan (council emissions)
 - 4.2.2 CP52 Greenhouse Gas emissions (district emissions)
- 4.3 The impact of the recommendations on this/these performance indicator(s) is:

This strategy will enable the continuation of current actions and the development of additional ones to continue and accelerate a reduction in council emissions (CP50) and district emissions (CP52).

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 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 to make investment plans through to 2030.
- 5.2 Where possible, external funding will be sought for individual projects which will be approved through the Council's budget and financial management processes.
- 5.3 The Net Zero Living programme for Fast Followers managed by Innovate UK will allow this council to explore innovative finance options, establish what is and what is not possible to achieve net-zero on our premises –and to try and overcome the limited options available under existing council budgets
- 5.4 Without additional government funding, or the continued ability to source external funding, the Strategy cannot be delivered within the timescales set out.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The recommendations in this report are fully in line with the expectations on local authorities to take local action on the climate issue contained in the Climate Change Act 2008.
- 6.2 Several projects involved in the delivery of the Strategy will require contract preparation and approval.
- 6.3 All elements of the Strategy will need to be considered alongside the Council's legal duties and powers.

7 Equal Opportunities Implications

A Short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment has been completed and can be found at Appendix 4.

8 Staffing Implications

- 8.1 The delivery of the strategy may have impact on staffing requirements. These will be considered as projects are progressed and any additional staffing will be agreed at this stage, with associated finding being made available.

9 Environmental Implications

Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment Summary	
Homes, buildings, infrastructure, equipment and energy	3.40
Travel	3.33
Goods and Consumption	4.00
Ecology	4.00
Adaptation	3.50
Engagement and Influence	4
Total Overall Average Score	3.7

- 9.1 A strong assessment for the positive impact the Strategy will have in tackling the climate and ecological emergency, but some of the achievements will be dependent upon achieving sufficient funding to implement. The top score under this assessment is 4 so 3.7 reflects the positive actions the Strategy will inspire. Full details of the assessment be found at Appendix 5.

10 Community Safety Implications

10.1 None specific.

11 Public Health implications

11.1 The Strategy should contribute to a prevention of deterioration of health and well-being issues arising from the consequences of climate change such as overheating, skin cancers, decline in productivity, and respiratory illnesses. Improvements in Home Energy Efficiency through retrofit work will improve environmental quality within homes and reduce energy bills, thereby assisting in reduction of financial anxiety related to household bills and benefitting physical health by improving the warmth and air quality within homes and preventing damp and mould.

12 Customer Services Centre Implications

12.1 The customer service centre will be expected to answer straightforward questions regarding projects as they progress for which they will either receive training or be able to find answers on the website.

13 Communications and Website Implications

13.1 The website is crucial to this strategy as the repository for the information about all relevant projects and initiatives.

The district emissions ambition demonstrates the need for sustained engagement with the district to encourage a switch to more sustainable behaviors. The climate team works closely with the communications team, this will need to be maintained.

Briefings are held with members as required to optimise the chances of success of the various initiatives.

Active engagement will continue to be essential with the Local Strategic Partnership, parish councils, schools, resident associations, housing associations, activist and conservation groups.

14 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

14.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

14.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Community Partnerships, Environmental Protection, Regulatory Services, Property Services, Economic and Sustainable Development, and Leisure service plans. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within these plans.

14.3

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and impact)
The Council fails to develop the Strategy on climate change and sustainability	The Council will fail to deliver improvements to address climate change within the district.	For the Committee to approve the Final Strategy.	Tolerate	4
The Council fails to act to reduce its' CO2 emissions	The Council 2030 pledge is unlikely to be met unless a co-ordinated programme of activity is implemented. The Innovate UK Net Zero Living Programme should be fully supported to ensure the council benefits from external help whilst it is available and may lead to further funding opportunities. This will lead to reputational damage. And importantly the Council will not be addressing the Climate Emergency and thus will contribute further to the increase in global warming and its' consequences.	For the Committee to approve the Final Strategy.	Treat	6
The Council fails to adapt its services to the embedded impacts of climate change which are leading to more extreme heat and cold, drought and flooding	Services may be impacted and face significant cost to restore, residents and businesses may suffer leading to ultimate financial losses, and environmental damage could be costly both in terms of loss of habitat but also cost.	An adaptation risk assessment of Council services must be prepared, and arising actions incorporated into service plans.	Treat	6

<p>Increase in costs of retrofit hinder domestic decarbonisation</p>	<p>Housing Associations may be unable to afford the cost of retrofit, despite grant funding and those classified as “able to pay” will be unable to pay.</p>	<p>Encourage housing associations to maximise use external funding including ECO4. Apply for grants wherever possible. Aim to work at scale Support a community approach to retrofit to enable participants to benefit from group buying</p>	<p>Treat</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>Increase in construction costs for developers</p>	<p>Developers sacrifice net zero technologies. and do not voluntarily work to higher energy efficiency standards.</p>	<p>Need to work with stakeholders to encourage wider knowledge and adoption of new technologies to bring down costs. Work with the other Hertfordshire Authorities to</p>	<p>Tolerate</p>	<p>6</p>

		drive up net zero standards.		
New developments are not constructed to net-zero and therefore further add to the district emission burden	Delays in the Local Plan adoption means the policies which aid sustainable and net-zero development are not implemented	Ensure the Local Plan adoption process adheres to its' current timetable. Encourage developers in the district to voluntarily adopt higher standards	6	Treat

14.4 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely ----- Likelihood ----- ▼ Remote	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
Impact Low -----► Unacceptable				

Impact Score

4 (Catastrophic)

3 (Critical)

2 (Significant)

1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

4 (Very Likely (≥80%))

3 (Likely (21-79%))

2 (Unlikely (6-20%))

15 (Remote (≤5%))

15.1 In the officers' opinion the risk that the Council fails to act to reduce its' emissions t, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore A Strategic risk.

16 Recommendation

16.1 **That:**

The Policy and Resources Committee:

16.2 Approve the revised Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy 2023-2027 and recommend to Council for adoption.

16.3 Note the updates arising from the Climate Change and Sustainability Action Plan

16 Data Quality

Data sources

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	X
3	High	

Background Papers

None

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy 2023-2027

Appendix 2: Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy Consultation Response Report

Appendix 3: Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy Consultation, open responses

Appendix 4: Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy Short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment

Appendix 5: Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy Climate and sustainability Impact Assessment.