

Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Date: 1 September 2022

Subject: Climate Change and Net Zero Carbon

Lead officer: Interim Director of Environment and Regeneration, Adrian Ash

Lead member: Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate, Councillor Natasha Irons

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Recommendations:

A. Scrutiny to note the contents of this report.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of climate action in Merton towards the delivery of Merton's Climate Strategy & Action Plan and net zero carbon commitments [1].
- 1.2. The Council's progress against Merton's Climate Strategy & Action Plan (adopted by Council in November 2020) is reviewed annually through Merton's Climate Delivery Plan.
 - i. Merton's first Climate Delivery Plan was adopted by Cabinet on 18th January 2021 and is publicly available [here](#) [2].
 - ii. The latest Climate Delivery Plan, Merton's Climate Delivery Plan for Year 2, was approved by Cabinet on 7th February 2022 and is publicly available [here](#) [3].
 - iii. Progress will be reviewed this autumn/ winter to inform Merton's Climate Delivery Plan for Year 3 which officers intend to take to Cabinet in early 2023.
- 1.3. Despite the difficult and unforeseen circumstances in 2020 and 2021 in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, on the whole good progress is being made against the actions the Council committed to delivering in its first and second year of delivery, to the credit of officers across the Council, as well as partners in Merton and across London.
- 1.4. The focus in Year 2 of delivery has been embedding climate change in Merton's policies and procedures; developing carbon literacy training for council staff and councillors to raise climate awareness across the organisation; continuing to support community-led projects; increasing climate engagement with less represented groups; supporting residents and housing associations in accessing national retrofit funding schemes; and building capacity within the Council to support the delivery of our carbon reduction commitments.
- 1.5. Within the next six months, councillors will also consider:

- i. Carbon Literacy Training for councillors and staff; and
- ii. Merton's Climate Engagement Strategy.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. In 2019, Merton declared a Climate Emergency and committed to working towards becoming a net-zero carbon borough by 2050 and a net-zero carbon Council by 2030.
- 2.2. Merton's Climate Strategy & Action Plan, adopted by Council in November 2020, sets out the action that's needed to meet these targets and provides a clear direction for the Council, individuals, businesses, organisations and landlords.

- 2.3. The plan covers four key themes:

- i. Buildings & Energy,
- ii. Transport,
- iii. Green Economy, and
- iv. Greening Merton.



- 2.4. Merton's Climate Delivery Plan annually tracks the Council's progress against Merton's Climate Strategy & Action Plan across 8 key workstreams:

- i. Workstream 1: Sustainable consumption and low carbon economy
- ii. Workstream 2: Retrofit of the residential and non-residential building stock
- iii. Workstream 3: Future new build and regeneration
- iv. Workstream 4: Transport infrastructure and modal shift
- v. Workstream 5: Green infrastructure
- vi. Workstream 6: LBM estate and fleet management
- vii. Workstream 7: LBM procurements and investments
- viii. Workstream 8: Communication, outreach and LBM corporate procedure

- 2.5. The Climate Delivery Plan for Year 2 [3], approved by Cabinet in February 2022 and publicly available [here](#), sets out what the Council achieved in 2021 as well as priorities for 2022. Some of the key areas of progress in 2021 were:

- i. Launching Merton's Climate Action Group, a partnership between the Council and the community to foster the development of community-led climate action projects such as Merton Garden Streets, Energy Matters and the Wheel – further details below;
- ii. Launching a climate comms campaign and Merton's Climate Action Newsletter;

- iii. Developing ambitious climate change policies for Merton's Draft Local Plan to ensure that new development in Merton is compatible with operating at net zero carbon from 2025;
- iv. Working with local and regional partners to promote national retrofit funding schemes such as the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery programmes, and group purchasing schemes such as the Mayor's Solar Together programme, to support the decarbonisation of homes in Merton;
- v. Successfully completing the delivery of Merton's emergency Covid Transport Strategy to help support active travel in the borough (including the delivery of 4 cycle lanes, 5 Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, 28 Schools Streets, 20 Cycle hangar and 20 school cycle shelters) working with partners including Merton's Resident Transport Group;
- vi. The continued implementation of Merton's Air Quality Action Plan which included supporting the world's first Low Emission Zone for Construction, the Wimbledon Clean Air Village, air quality audits and air quality monitoring;
- vii. Installing sustainable infrastructure across the borough, ranging from Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, cycle hangars, parklets and air quality monitoring locations, shown on [Merton's Sustainable Infrastructure Story Map](#) [4];
- viii. Appointing a solar PV design and installation company to install and expand solar systems wherever feasible across the Council's building portfolio which already includes over 2MWP of generation capacity;
- ix. Developing a set of criteria to prioritise Council buildings for decarbonisation works and securing Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding to deliver carbon saving measures on Council buildings;
- x. Securing funding in the capital programme towards the decarbonisation of Merton's fleet, particularly Merton's waste collection fleet;
- xi. Starting to embed carbon considerations in Merton's procurement policies and procedures including updating Merton's Contract Standing Orders and adopting Merton's new Social Value Toolkit;
- xii. Continuing to decarbonise Merton's Pension Fund investments;
- xiii. Securing funding to increase capacity across the Council to drive carbon reduction and climate adaptation in Merton.

2.6. This section sets out some of the priorities for Year 2 of delivery, highlighting progress in 2022 to date:

- i. Supporting community-led carbon reduction projects, particularly working in partnership with Merton's Climate Action Group and other community groups – *this is addressed later in this report*;

- ii. Recruiting two additional officers to lead on borough-wide retrofit – *recruitment is underway with a closing date for applications of 5th September 2022;*
- iii. Continuing to support fuel poor homes and social housing providers in accessing national retrofit funding – *council officers have been working with Housing Associations, other boroughs, the Greater London Authority and others to help residents and social housing providers to access government funding;*
- iv. Supporting the examination in Public of Merton’s draft Local Plan which has ambitious climate change policies – *Stage 1 of Merton’s Local Plan public hearing took place in June 2022, with the second stage of hearing scheduled for October 2022. Merton’s climate change policies seek higher carbon reduction targets for all new buildings than either national Building Regulations or the London Plan;*
- v. Developing medium and long-term plans for walking, cycling and EV charging infrastructure – *successful funding bid for £750,000 to deliver +300 EV charging points in Merton is underway, once this is finished progress to be made on long term strategy;*
- vi. Developing Merton’s Tree Strategy – *Phase 1 of Merton’s Tree Strategy, which focusses on Council-owned trees, has been progressed and stakeholder consultation is planned for autumn 2022 prior to adoption. Phase 2, which will focus on privately owned trees, is planned for 2023;*
- vii. Supporting community planting projects like the Climate Action Group’s Merton Garden Streets initiative; *second year of Merton Garden Streets currently underway, see below.*
- viii. Recruiting additional staff to lead on the decarbonisation of the Council’s buildings and community schools – *recruitment is underway;*
- ix. Considering mechanisms to measure and reduce Merton’s supply chain emissions – *council officers have engaged with London’s Responsible Procurement Network, as well as Merton’s Procurement Board and Operational Procurement Groups to investigate this area of work, and are looking to recruit a new officer to lead on this programme of works in winter 2022;*
- x. Increasing climate engagement within the Council and across the borough, particularly with less represented groups - *Climate Engagement Officer recruited in March 2022;*
- xi. Developing carbon literacy training for council staff and councillors - *due to start in autumn 2022.*

2.7. Since the adoption of Merton’s Climate Strategy & Action Plan, the Council has allocated £4 million towards delivering Merton’s climate commitments.

The first round of funding (£2 million) was primarily allocated in 2021 to increase capacity across the Council to deliver the Climate Strategy & Action Plan. This includes additional capacity to help decarbonise the Council's own activities and to support climate action across the wider borough, such as:

- i. Merton's new Climate Engagement Officer recruited in March,
- ii. Two Community Retrofit Officer roles currently out for recruitment;
- iii. A Climate Emergency Building Surveyor role to lead on the decarbonisation of the Council's estate currently out for recruitment;
- iv. A new Fleet and Transport Manager to lead on the decarbonisation of the Council's fleet which will largely focus on the Council's waste collection vehicles.

2.8. However, many public and private organisations are seeking the same services so increasing Council capacity is subject to the availability of suitable candidates and recruitment has been challenging across the sector in 2022. Some of the initial £2 million funding was also allocated to commission consultancy support on specific programmes of work such as delivering climate training for LBM staff and Councillors, and developing a long-term plan for walking, cycling and EV charging infrastructure in Merton.

2.9. In June 2022, Cabinet allocated an additional £2million. Officers are working with the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green spaces and Climate Change and senior officers to allocate this towards further capacity building and programmes which help deliver Merton's Climate Strategy & Action Plan.

2.10. Given that >98% of emissions in Merton are outside the Council's direct control engaging with other stakeholders is key to achieving our borough-wide target. To promote wider climate action across the borough, officers support engagement with residents and a range of partners including community groups, schools, housing associations, etc. A few key examples of climate engagement happening in Merton are described in the sections below. As part of the climate funding highlighted above, the Council recruited a new Climate Engagement Officer in March 2022.

Merton's Climate Action Group

2.11. In January 2021 the Council launched **Merton's Climate Action Group**, a partnership between the Council and the community, to support the development of community-led projects to accelerate action on climate change across the borough that can't be done by the Council alone, or by individuals alone. The group aims to do this by encouraging positive networks of people from all parts of the borough, whose combined resources, skills and expertise, can successfully develop and implement community-led projects which reduce carbon emissions and/ or build climate resilience.

Merton's Climate Action Group

Theme	Projects
Funding & Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools Climate Action Conference Canons Summer Fair
Buildings & Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy Matters Merton Green Building Awards
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Big Pedal Car Free Day Cycle Buddies
Green Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Wheel Circular Economy Hub Packshare
Greening Merton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merton Garden Streets Urban Re-Leaf



2.12. In 2021, the Climate Action Group secured Neighbourhood CIL funding for three projects which are being delivered with partners (Centre for Sustainable Energy and Sustainable Merton) this year:

- i. **'Energy Matters'** which aims to empower the younger generation with knowledge to drive behavioural change around energy use in their home and school, in order to help residents save money and lower their carbon footprint.
- ii. **'The Wheel'** which aims to promote waste reduction and the circular economy in the borough.
- iii. **'Merton Garden Streets'** which aims to encourage Merton residents and businesses to plant up their front gardens, window boxes, streets, etc. to provide climate adaptation and biodiversity benefits, and physical and mental well-being benefits.

2.13. In addition to these projects, officers and the Climate Action Group supported a **Climate Action Conference for Schools** in November 2021, and a community fair at Canons House this summer (**Canons Summer Fair** on 18th June), to showcase local climate initiatives and promote sustainable behaviours, through activities, workshops, and information stands. The Council is also working with the Climate Action Group to organise **Car Free Day** activities in September across the borough.

Merton's Environment and Climate Sub-Group

2.14. In July 2022, in partnership with Sustainable Merton, climate change officers re-launched **Merton's Environment & Climate Sub-Group** of the Sustainable Communities & Transport Partnership to promote collaboration

and knowledge sharing with key partners in the borough across the four key themes of Merton's Climate Strategy & Action Plan.

- 2.15. Organisations attending include the Climate Action Group, Housing Associations (e.g. Clarion, Moat, Wandle etc), Business Improvement Districts, the voluntary sector, Sustainable Merton and others depending on the theme of the meeting. The following meetings have taken place or are scheduled:
- i. Greening Merton (July 2022);
 - ii. Green Economy (week commencing 26th September 2022);
 - iii. Buildings & Energy (January 2023); and
 - iv. Transport (May 2023).

Climate Engagement Strategy

- 2.16. Officers are working with the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green spaces and Climate Change to develop a Climate Action Engagement Strategy to map out the Council's approach to climate engagement in the borough. Principles guiding this strategy include:
- i. **Positively and proactively communicating climate change** – highlighting the opportunities from a low carbon future (cleaner air, lower energy bills, better thermal comfort, job opportunities)
 - ii. **Encouraging and enabling greater participation from groups underrepresented in climate change to date.** Inclusivity and an acceptance that certain groups will need more support to adapt to climate change is central to creating a fairer borough and enabling a just transition to net zero.
 - iii. **Encouraging Action** – Taking a place-based approach to empowering residents to take action. Co-designing projects with residents, working with organisations that know their communities best e.g., schools, local NHS practices, community and youth centres, libraries.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. As summarised in the body of this report and committee reports recommending the approval of Merton's Climate Strategy & Action Plan [1] and Merton's Climate Delivery Plan for Year 2 [3].

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. As summarised in the body of this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. As summarised in the body of this report.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None for the purposes of this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. None for the purposes of this report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None for the purposes of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. None for the purposes of this report.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

11.1. None for the purposes of this report.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. [1] Merton Climate Strategy and Action Plan
(<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=14464>)

12.2. [2] Merton Climate Delivery Plan – Year 1
(<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=22525>)

12.3. [3] Merton Climate Delivery Plan – Year 2
(<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1324>)

12.4. [4] Merton’s Sustainable Infrastructure Story Map
(<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/12050fded6c64aa7ad8317cf74526a9c>)