

Net Zero 2030

Executive Summary

As the Leader of the Council I am setting a clear ambition for the Council to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 ('Net Zero 2030'). This report and appendix sets out actions towards meeting this target.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- a) Council support and endorse the ambition and actions set out in this report and appendix; and,
- b) Cabinet be asked to establish a Cabinet Working Group to oversee and lead the ongoing development and implementation of the Council's transition to Net Zero 2030.

Reason for Recommendation

It is clear all organisations and individuals have a role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This work must be undertaken fully and enthusiastically if the Council, its community and its partners are to achieve Net Zero. The Council has an enviable reputation as a forward-thinking authority which leads by example, implements policies which improve its District and embraces innovation. The aims and actions set out in this report apply that approach to the climate change challenge.

Introduction & Background

1. International efforts to minimise climate change are generally recognised to have substantively begun in 2015 with the Paris Agreement, which led to the October 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. The history is summarised in the following extract from the House of Commons Library Briefing Paper, 'Legislating for net zero' (reproduced under the Open Parliament Licence v3.0).

"The UK is a Party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and has signed and ratified the Paris Agreement: an international agreement on climate change. The key aim of the Paris Agreement is to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. The Agreement also included a widely-acknowledged net zero global greenhouse gas emissions aim for the second half of this century.

“Following the Paris Agreement, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a Special Report in October 2018 which found that limiting global warming to 1.5°C is possible but would require unprecedented “rapid and far reaching” changes in all aspects of society, including a need to reach ‘net zero’ by around 2050.”

2. The UK Government responded by commissioning the Committee on Climate Change (‘CCC’) to determine what steps the UK would need to take to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. The CCC concluded their work in May and the Government accepted their findings, amending the Climate Change Act 2008 in June to introduce a target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050.
3. The IPCC report observed that a large proportion of the necessary reduction in greenhouse gas reductions must take place before 2030 if warming is to be successfully limited. It is therefore recognised this should be the target for achieving net zero wherever possible. This target is referred to as Net Zero 2030.

Local Government’s Response

4. Whilst there is currently no legal requirement for local authorities to act, councils are well placed to respond both as organisations in their own right as well as bodies which enjoy a position of influence and leadership within their communities.
5. A number of councils have declared a ‘Climate Emergency’. It would appear, however, that many see the declaration itself as the fulfilment of their obligation with little detail as to what this means for each council and what, if any, action they intend to take.

Our Commitment to Net Zero

6. It is proposed that this Council unambiguously commits to working towards Net Zero 2030 and introduces policies which deliver that aim.
7. In recognition that this is a complex, challenging and serious topic which should reach the core of decision making, it is also proposed Council asks Cabinet to establish a Cabinet Working Group to oversee the ongoing development and implementation of the Council’s transition to Net Zero 2030.
8. Set out in Appendix A are initial policies and actions for the Council to deliver, Stage 1, and on which the Cabinet Working Group can build, Stage 2, overseeing measures which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound.

9. Members will note that many of the policies proposed are fully aligned with the commitments contained in the Council Plan: placing wellbeing at the heart of everything we do; employing our values of excellence, value for money, and innovation; and, working together to improve the District's environment, economy, housing, safety and health.
10. The Council will use its position to communicate the steps it is taking and to exercise local leadership in helping others meet their environmental obligations.

Conclusions

11. The Council has already been engaging in activities to improve its environmental footprint: moving away from landfill; replacing diesel vehicles with electric; beginning an ambitious charging point rollout; introducing environmental standards in planning policies; and, moving our offices to LED lighting.
12. It is now recommended that the Council rises to the challenges posed by climate change, responding positively and constructively to achieve Net Zero 2030.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

None. The internationally accepted scientific evidence demonstrates the necessity of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, if not before.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications associated with this report. If constituted, the proposed Cabinet Working Group will consider the resources necessary to deliver the Council's Net Zero 2030 actions and policies.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal implications.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended in this report have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Appendix A: Net Zero Actions

Sevenoaks District Council will fully and enthusiastically move to Net Zero 2030. To achieve this we will deliver the following:

Stage 1: Immediate actions and commitments

- Write to the Secretary of State to demand any local powers needed to achieve this commitment and the resources to match these powers
- Establish a Cabinet Working Group to oversee the production and delivery of our Net Zero 2030 commitments, working across the council towards this commitment
- Audit our current and future levels of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, their subsequent environmental impact and develop plans to address their use
- Hold a Green Summit in Spring/Summer 2020 bringing together groups, organisations, companies and experts to engage and inspire residents
- Embrace the opportunities presented by Net Zero to secure broader environmental improvements
- Support the delivery of Kent and Medway's Energy and Low Emissions Strategy
- Help householders and businesses improve energy efficiency by providing free advice and support for energy improvements and energy saving
- Require bidders for all tenders to include an environmental statement, including their plan for achieving Net Zero, a 'Net Zero Commitment'
- Report and promote our actions towards Net Zero, and support our partners including landowners, residents, businesses and visitors to our District to play their part
- Encourage the location of clean growth businesses in our District, with the aim of developing a clean growth hub
- Work with schools, local communities and groups to create community transport hubs for short journeys, minimising pollution, improving air quality and reducing congestion.
- Deliver the environmental aspects of Sevenoaks District Councils Council and Local Plans
- Participate in and promote World Car Free Day on 22 September 2020

Stage 2: Actions and Commitments to be further investigated by the Cabinet Working Group

- Move to a renewable electricity supplier in 2020
- Roll out “free” electric car charging points across our car park estate
- Continue our transition to a zero-emissions vehicle fleet (this is a vehicle that emits no exhaust gas from the on board source of power) wherever practicable
- Require the installation of electric vehicle charging points in all new developments, both residential and non-residential
- Bring in incentives for taxi drivers to use vehicles with zero tailpipe emission by amending licensing policy
- Give a free tree for every new home built
- Explore opportunities to invest in clean growth such as a local Net Zero Bank to finance energy efficiency and carbon reduction
- Develop an electric vehicle car club, to promote the use of zero-emissions vehicle, to improve air quality in our District and produce an income to support council services
- Provide a one year 100% reduction on the District Council element of council tax for new certified Passivhaus ‘Classic’, ‘Plus’ & ‘Premium’ homes built in the District, in any year until 2030
- In all new SDC and SDC owned company developments, set an ambitious stretch target for sustainable homes in line with the London Plan
- Where everything possible has been done to achieve zero carbon but there is still a shortfall, take action through offsetting carbon dioxide emissions where necessary, and explore a Carbon Offset Fund to finance this
- Work with the local government family within Kent to deliver Net Zero across all our communities
- Look across local government both in the UK and beyond to find further appropriate and deliverable ideas and initiatives