

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S
REPORT TO**

Cabinet
10 January 2023

Report Title: Staffordshire-wide Climate Change Communication Plan

Submitted by: Executive Director of Sustainable Environment

Portfolios: Environment & Recycling

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To support the objectives and actions of the Staffordshire Sustainability Boards County –wide communications plan to help reduce emissions outputs to reach net zero targets.

Recommendation

That:

- 1. Cabinet formally adopts the Staffordshire Sustainability Boards County wide Communications Pan.**
- 2. The Council helps facilitate action on the County wide communications plan through its membership of the Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB)**

Reasons

Sustainability and Climate Change are serious issues facing us all, and there is a need to work as a collective across Staffordshire, to address climate change adaptation measures that are within individual organisations leverage, to influence and facilitate change with adaptation to climatic changes that are already locked in.

1. Background

- 1.1** At its meeting on 4th November 2020, Cabinet received and endorsed the Council's reviewed Medium Term Financial Strategy including a mid-term review of the Council Plan. Under Priority 3 – a Healthy, Active and Safe Borough, Cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to establish a Sustainable Environment Strategy for the Council and the Borough linked to Government targets.
- 1.2** Across Staffordshire, all ten local authorities have committed to similar strategies, and declarations of climate emergencies.
- 1.3** In order to provide a consistent and collaborative approach across the County of Staffordshire, The Staffordshire Leaders and Chief Executives Group has committed to work

collaboratively to successfully achieve net carbon zero in line with each of our independent authority's climate change declarations.

- 1.4 A Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB) has been set up to facilitate collaborative forum, consisting of member Portfolio Holders and senior officers with responsibility for sustainability, supported by a team of advisors drawn from across the authorities. The SSB works to influence change within its own individual organisations as well as other organisations and individuals to ensure that Staffordshire is net zero by at least 2050 or before.
- 1.5 In the Staffordshire Sustainability Board's 'Vision and Council Commitments 2022-2023' statement, we agreed that all councils will work together to contribute towards a countywide communications group, to deliver and manage a countywide communications plan, working together to drive our collective carbon reduction goals forward.
- 1.6 Communicating well is the responsibility of every member of Staffordshire's Sustainability Board and their respective organisations. It will be important for communication to be integrated at all levels.
- 1.7 Staffordshire is a relatively affluent area but has notable pockets of high deprivation in some urban areas.
- 1.8 Staffordshire has two well-renowned universities educating around 20,000 higher education students. Keele University is currently Global Sustainability Institution of the Year
- 1.9 There are a number of active climate change groups across Staffordshire, including Climate matters, The Globe Foundation, Staffordshire Moorlands Climate Action Group, Zero Carbon Rugeley, Sustainability Matters and No Planet B.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 Staffordshire as a whole county emits approximately 5.8million tonnes of carbon a year. Staffordshire's collective local authorities contribute less than 2% of these carbon emissions.
- 2.2 The main carbon emissions in Staffordshire come from Transport (40%), Industry (24%), Residential Homes (23%), Commercial (6%), Agriculture (4%), Public sector (2%), Other (1%).
- 2.3 Over the last four years, the population in Staffordshire has increased by 6%. The number of new homes has increased by 6% and there is a 13% increase in car use nationally. The current resident population is 867,100, covering a large geographical area of over 1,010 square miles.
- 2.4 Research from the National Centre for Social Research 'British Social Attitudes' report has found that overall, Britain is relatively relaxed about climate change, and not strongly divided over it. There are more worried than there are sceptical individuals, but the majority in Britain appears to have middling attitudes towards climate change. They know about it, and acknowledge a human component, but are overall relatively indifferent and apathetic about climate change.
- 2.5 Differences by age and education are reasonably strong and consistent when it comes to beliefs and concerns about climate change and what the government should do about it. Other socio-demographic variables, such as sex, ethnicity, and income, are typically weak and sporadic.

2.6 On average, people in Britain are only “somewhat worried” about climate change, and do not feel a strong sense of personal responsibility to try to reduce it. Those who think climate change is mainly or entirely caused by humans feel more personally responsible for trying to mitigate it. However, most people do not think that climate change is mainly caused by humans or that the consequences will be very bad.

2.7 At the present time, we have limited knowledge of our residents’ thoughts and feelings about climate change. Further public engagement around climate change would be beneficial when planning activity in the future.

3. **Proposal**

3.1 A County wide communications plan has been developed, and is detailed in appendix 1. The plan will rely on the collective responsibility across the SSB members. The plan will rely on the collective responsibility and a distributed model of communication. The communications plan follows the OASIS framework (Objective, Audience, Strategy, Implementation, Scoring) which is a structured way of tackling a communications issue to achieve objectives.

3.2 the objective of the communication plan is –

- Engage with residents to increase understanding of climate change issues.
- Motivate residents to take practical steps to reduce their carbon emissions.

3.3 a consultation is proposed and will ask members of the public key questions around their understanding of climate change, how much they care, what kind of personal responsibility they feel and any barriers they face to being greener. The consultation aims to capture both quantitative and qualitative responses, allowing a deep understanding of what our residents think. The consultation will launch with an online digital questionnaire, and a number of in-person engagement sessions will be run in each district. A roadshow event developed as part of the communications plan, known as the ‘Carbon Bubble’ (detailed in Appendix 1) will also be used to engage residents, and capture their feedback.

3.4 It is proposed to launch the consultation in March 2023, continuing until the end of the summer. By the Autumn of 2023 we will then have a good picture of what our residents think about climate change and their personal responsibility to be greener. This will help us to plan for the 2024 communications activity.

3.5 The consultation results will provide a baseline to be able to monitor and measure changes in attitudes and behaviour. Any future communications plan will benefit greatly from more Staffordshire specific audience research about climate change and sustainability.

3.6 in the spirit of co-production all members of the board will work together on delivery of the plan, keeping themselves updated on activities and to amplify the agreed communications. In terms of the council, this work will be led by the Sustainable Environment development team. We will utilise our local advocates and influencers through the university and climate change action groups to share our messages.

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 Sustainability and Climate Change are serious issues facing us all, and there is a need to work as a collective across Staffordshire, to address climate change adaptation measures

that are within individual organisations leverage, to influence and facilitate change with adaptation to climatic changes that are already locked in.

5. **Options Considered**

5.1 The Council could just focus on and work in isolation in achieving its own targets as set out in the Sustainable Environment Strategy was approved by Cabinet. However, there are significant advantages in working collaboratively particularly around communications across Staffordshire, sharing best practice and innovation. It will present consistent messaging and help reduce duplication, therefore allowing all authorities in Staffordshire to move forward effectively, and meet individual challenges of becoming Net Zero organisations.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 has the following provisions:

Carbon targets and carbon budgeting – The Act places the government under a legal duty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050

The committee on Climate Change – The Act also establishes the Committee on Climate Change, an independent, expert body to advise government on the appropriate level for target, budgets, and on matters relating to mitigation and adaptation. The Committee will submit annual reports to parliament on progress towards the targets and government must respond to this report.

6.2 Councils Duty to reduce carbon emissions which are further legislated for as part of the Environment

6.3 All Local Authorities have a 'biodiversity duty' under the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 There are no equality issues arising from this report. However there may be Equality impact assessments required going forward, as the communication plan are undertaken and developed.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 The total annual spend for the delivery of the communications will be £24,000 in total. Each member of the SSB has committed to contribute £3,000 towards delivery of the plan.

8.2 Financial support for this programme will be taken from the £100,000 per annum has been agreed through the Councils Borough Growth fund.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 There are growing expectations that Councils take a leading and decisive role in this respect and there are reputational risks to the Council in not acting positively.

9.2 There are overarching risks of inaction in respect of the Councils response to the environmental threats caused by rising carbon emissions, habitat loss, plastic pollution and poor use of dwindling natural resources. As a result, Councils around the UK and Governments around the world are responding to these threats and public calls for a robust and rapid reduction and mitigation measures and need an effective communications plan to support those activities.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

10.1 This report, and the base pledges contained within it support all of the UNSDG goals



11. Key Decision Information

11.1 This report is a key decision, as Climate Change has the potential to have a significant effect on communities living or working in an area.

12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 Cabinet approval to support the ten base pledges recommended by the SSB.

12.2 Cabinet approved the Councils Sustainable Environment Strategy at its December 2020 meeting.

13. List of Appendices

13.1 Staffordshire sustainability Board – Countywide Communications Plan. – Appendix 1

14. Background Papers

14.1 None.

