

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S
REPORT TO**

Cabinet
06 June 2023

Report Title: Adoption of Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy

Submitted by: Service Director for Sustainable Environment

Portfolios: Recycling & Environment

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

Climate Change presents serious issues, and there is a need to address many of these issues through adaptation measures. The Staffordshire Adaptation strategy sets out areas for action which Councils collectively across Staffordshire can support by adopting the objectives and actions of the Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy.

Recommendation

That

1. Cabinet formally adopts the Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy.
2. The Council helps facilitate action contained within the Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy 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 Climate change is affecting our long term weather conditions, affecting the whole world. Over the last 150 years the average temperature has warmed by 1.2oC across the planet, and the rate at which temperatures have been increasing has been getting faster, with the rate from 1980, almost doubling compared to 1900-1980.
- 1.2 Our local climate is changing in Staffordshire. In 2022 the temperature in Staffordshire went over 40 degrees centigrade, and since the year 2000, there have been at least 15 significant floods across the County, 9 of them storm events happening between 2018 and 2022.

2. **Issues**

2.1 UK climate projections say our climate will continue to get warmer over the next few decades, even if we reduce the amount of carbon emissions produced.

2.2 It's hard to predict what will happen later in the century as it depends on how much carbon emissions are reduced worldwide. Along with changes to the average temperature and rainfall we will also have more extreme weather in Staffordshire, meaning –

- Increased chance of rivers and streams flooding.
- Flash floods at all times of the year
- More extreme heatwaves
- Drier summers and water shortages.

2.3 In 2022, UK government revised the risks that climate change could cause in the UK. They identified 61 different risks and opportunities and put them into 8 categories, including: -

- The impact on habitats and species
- The impact on the health of the soil
- Risk to natural carbon stores and removal of carbon from the atmosphere, known as carbon sequestration.
- The impact on local crops, livestock, and commercial trees
- The impact on getting food, goods and vital services
- How people and the economy will be affected.
- The impact on people's health, wellbeing and productivity.

2.4 Sustainability West Midlands (SWM) is a sustainability champion for the West Midlands, and the Council is a member. SWM have examined the government's risks and opportunities and how they may affect the West Midlands, and produced 'The West Midlands Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan 2021 – 2026'.

2.5 SWM have identified some high level actions that can be taken to help adapt to these challenges, and the information from the plan has been used to understand the risks and opportunities specific to Staffordshire, and incorporated into the Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy.

2.6 Climate change has the potential to impact all Council services, and there is therefore a need for future planning. This will involve looking at all the things we do as a Council, and thinking about how we make our services more resilient to climate change to protect people's lives and livelihoods.

3. **Proposal**

3.1 Adoption and supporting the Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy will allow the Council to work collaboratively with other members of the SSB, other Local Authorities, with the public and

private sector, our communities and businesses in order to maximise the outcomes which can be achieved across Staffordshire. Through a managed approach and working together the ability to adapt and influence will be increased.

3.2 The Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy includes a range of objectives across 4 key themes for Councils within the SSB to reduce exposure to climate change risks and capitalise on new opportunities. The themes are -

- **Critical Infrastructure and buildings.**
- **Natural Environment and Green Spaces.**
- **Health Wellbeing and Safety.**
- **The Local economy.**

3.3 Preparing plans for a more resilient Staffordshire we are faced with the challenge of responding to a broad range of uncertain risks.

3.4 The strategy sets out to be proactive in introducing positive changes through development of specific plans and policies, taking account of statutory requirements to aid change. Identifying our priorities and working collaboratively, Staffordshire Councils can build a more resilient society and economy, thus providing people with a safe, comfortable place to live and work.

3.5 The strategy sets out strong governance to:-

- Improve the policy and incentive framework and integrate adaptation considerations into policies, plans, strategies and programmes. Risks will be actively managed to ensure the policy framework keeps pace with the changing climate.
- Ensure decision making will consider resilience to the impacts of the changing climate, particularly severe weather on service delivery.
- Develop, innovate and adopt good practice.

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 Climate Change is a serious issue facing us all, and there is a need to work as a collective across Staffordshire. This makes it easier, to address climate change adaptation measures that are within individual organisations leverage, and 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 work in isolation, in achieving its own targets as set out in the Sustainable Environment Strategy approved by Cabinet, and the emerging 'RoadMap' currently being developed. However there are significant advantages in working collaboratively, sharing good practice, wider and more consistent communication, awareness

raising, evaluation of adaptation measures, potential future financial or expertise support bids and best practice on improvements moving forward.

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 have a duty to reduce carbon emissions which are further legislated for as part of the Environment Act.

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

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 An equality impact assessment is not required as part of this report. However there may be equality impact assessments required going forward, as the Adaptation Strategy is implemented and developed.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. However as the Council starts to consider adaptation measures moving forward, finance and resource issues will need to be considered and built into the Councils Capital programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 The Staffordshire Adaptation strategy identifies risks and opportunities to help guide adaptation plan preparation. These risks are based around the 4 key themes set out in paragraph 3.2.

9.2 Identified risks and opportunities are set out in Appendix 1 of the Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy, a copy of which is appended to this report (Appendix 1).

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

10.1 This report, and the adoption of the Staffordshire adaptation Strategy will support the Councils Sustainable Environment Plan and associated action plan, as well as delivery of the following UNSDG:



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 There are no earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions.

13. List of Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1 – Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy.

14. Background Papers

14.1 There are no background papers.