

## Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee

XX November 2019



### Surrey's Greener Future Task Group Final Report

#### **Purpose of report:**

To provide the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee with a detailed report on the findings and recommendations of the Greener Future Task Group which was set up to consider the council's role in tackling climate change.

#### **Acknowledgements:**

Members would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have taken time to share their experiences with the Task Group which has helped to shape the findings of this review.

Any errors, factual inaccuracies or inconsistencies contained within the report are the responsibility of the Task Group alone and not of those who contributed their knowledge, insight and experiences to the formation of this report.

#### **Recommendations:**

#### **The Greener Future Task Group recommends that the Council:**

- i. Approves the Call For Action (Annex 3).
- ii. Agrees to create a zero carbon board and officer delivery group to develop more detailed action plan and targets to deliver the Surrey County Council commitments, aiming to be net zero as an organisation by 2030.
- iii. Allocates sufficient investment within the Medium Financial Term Strategy to support climate change programmes and initiatives, reviewing this on an annual basis.
- iv. Seeks to work together with Districts and Boroughs through the Surrey Environment Partnership to develop and deliver a joint zero carbon strategy and action plan.
- v. Commits to continuing to support the emerging Surrey Climate Commission.
- vi. Supports the ambitions within the Environment Bill and calls on government for increased powers and resources to enable local authorities to lead on delivering on the commitment for the UK to be net zero by 2050.

## Introduction:

### Context

1. Climate change is occurring earlier and more rapidly than expected. The world's leading climate scientists have warned there is only 12 years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a landmark report in October 2018 highlighting that even half a degree beyond 1.5C would significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people.
2. People across the world are becoming more concerned about climate change, with mass demonstrations taking place over the last year and an increase in media attention around the causes and impacts of climate change. In response to the growing concerns and recognition of the need to act, the UK Government declared a climate emergency earlier this year and made a commitment to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The commitment to the environment was re-stated in the recent Queen's Speech with the Environment Bill being introduced through parliament, which includes a number of measures that will increase local authorities' powers to address environmental challenges in local areas.
3. The County Council has recognised how important the environment is to residents and the [Community Vision for Surrey in 2030](#) include a clear ambition that *'Residents live in clean, safe and green communities, where people and organisations embrace their environmental responsibilities'*. Tackling climate change is a key part of this ambition.
4. At its meeting on 9 July 2019, the County Council declared a climate emergency and made a commitment to work closely with the Government, the Environment Agency, our Borough & District colleagues, local businesses, our residents and other partners in meeting this ambitious target; and deliver a strategy in 2019/20 involving a task group that clearly outlines how we plan to deliver the target including actions that will be taken.
5. To initiate this work, the select committee agreed to set up a task group to identify the key principles of a draft 'environment call for action' through engagement with residents, staff and partners and recognise which environmental responsibilities are the most important for the people of Surrey and what action needs to be taken to address these.

### The Task Group

6. A Task Group was established by the Communities, Highways and Environment Select Committee in July 2019 with a focus on Surrey County Council's recent declaration of a climate emergency and

the actions the council needs to take to achieve net zero carbon emissions as soon as possible. The task group also agreed to consider the role residents need to play in their local community and the wider impact of other public sector organisations and the private sector on the county's environment to develop a system-wide position. Following the conclusion of its scrutiny, the Task Group would make recommendations to the Council in response to its original motion, recommending a Call for Action that the council could adopt and proposals on how this might be taken forward with partners across Surrey.

7. The Terms of Reference for the Greener Future Task Group are attached as **Annex 1** to this report and provide a detailed outline of the scope and remit of the Task Group.
8. The Membership of the Task Group was agreed as the following:
  - Andy MacLeod (Chairman)
  - Paul Deach
  - Jonathan Essex
  - Becky Rush
  - Fiona White
  - John O'Reilly (ex-officio)

Nikki Barton subsequently joined the task group in October 2019.

9. In order to reduce the impact on the environment through unnecessary travel and accommodate the different work commitments of the Task Group, the Members agreed to adopt an agile working approach. This meant a focus on using technology where possible to enable remote working and encouraging the use of video conferencing. The Task Group also agreed that they would work in smaller sub-groups where appropriate in order to cover a larger number of stakeholder sessions in the short timeframe.
10. The Task Group initially met on 5 August 2019 to agree their work programme, proposed key lines of enquiry, the methodology for interacting with witnesses. At this meeting it was agreed that the committee would adopt a call for evidence approach over the summer which would then be followed by a more detailed programme of witness sessions with key officers within the council, external experts and councils seen as leading the way on tackling elements of climate change.
11. This report provides detail of the key themes and discussions that have taken place over a five month period. Views collated from witness sessions have been considered by the group and a set of recommendations have been agreed for consideration by the Select Committee, Cabinet and Council in November/December 2019.

<b>Engaging with Key Stakeholders</b>
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## Process for engagement

12. The Task Group has met numerous times since it was first established, hearing evidence from a diverse range of stakeholders in an effort to understand the full range of issues that contribute to climate change.
13. As explained in the introduction the Task Group had an initial meeting on 5 August 2019 to consider the scope of the work and agreed key lines of enquiry.
14. The following key lines of enquiry were agreed by the Task Group:
  - What does the term 'environmental responsibilities' mean to residents, staff and partners?
  - What is the council's current approach to reduce carbon emissions and how effective has this been?
  - What are Districts, Boroughs, Town and Parish Councils doing to address their environmental responsibilities and how do we best work with them?
  - From the evidence available both nationally and internationally, what is seen to contribute most effectively to becoming carbon neutral?
  - What does the research tells us about behaviour change required in communities – what would have the greatest impact?
  - How environmentally sustainable are the council's current policies?
15. The Greener Future Task Group wanted to consult residents to gain an understanding of their concerns for Surrey in relation to climate change and to gain a resident perspective on how the Council itself can work to reach net zero carbon.
16. Various methods were used to engage with stakeholders. The democratic services social media Twitter account was used to put out calls for evidence to residents. A call for evidence was also sent to the [need the details]... An email was sent from the Chairman of the Task Group to all County Councillors twice asking for contributions and suggestions of any organisations and groups the Task Group should make contact with to support this piece of work.
17. The consultation ran from the 14 August 2019 to 15 September 2019 and received 142 responses via the survey with 15 responses sent to the democratic services email, making a total of 157 responses. Out of the survey responses, 19 (13.38%) responded as an organisation and the remaining 123 as individuals.
18. The information received via the call for evidence was collated and analysed for the task group and helped to identify a number of working themes for the task group to structure the remainder of its work around. These themes were:
  - Energy

- Building, development and infrastructure
- Waste, resources and the circular economy
- Countryside, food, farming, water and land use
- Transport
- Surrey County Council

19. Following the broad call for evidence, the Task Group undertook a series of witness sessions, focussing on three key groups:
- SCC officers with a key role within the themes above
  - External Experts working in this field
  - Councils identified as leading the way in tackling elements of climate change
20. Through a range of meetings, visits, telephone calls and video conferences, the Task Group heard the views of xx stakeholders, as detailed in **Annex 2**. For a small Task Group with limited resources, Members were satisfied with the number of stakeholders that came forward and appreciative of the generosity of others in putting time aside to share this knowledge and expertise.

<b>Key themes emerging from the Key Lines of Enquiry</b>
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To discuss with the task group how we structure this section – assume via the themes as per the below:

**Energy**

**Building, development and infrastructure**

**Waste, resources and the circular economy**

**Countryside, food, farming, water and land use**

**Transport**

**Surrey County Council**

<b>Call For Action</b>
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21. Climate Change is a complex issue and it is easy for the scale of it to be overwhelming, with residents often feeding back that they want to make changes but are not clear on what is needed. In order to provide clarity to this issue and a focus for councils, partners and residents to work together, most leading Councils have adopted some form of call for action or statement of intent around climate change. To be effective, it is a simple set of statements, which are easy to read and understand – providing a framework against which more detailed action plans can be developed.
22. It is recommended that this approach is adopted by Surrey County Council and the Task Group has developed a Call For Action as part of its work over the last five months, which looks at what the Task Group feels the County Council should prioritise within the organisation, with partners and businesses and encourage residents to do in support. The Call for Action is attached at **Annex 3**.

### **System-wide Approach**

23. Surrey is a two-tier area with the County Council and the 11 Districts and Boroughs sharing powers and responsibilities to tackle climate change. A number of the districts and boroughs in Surrey have also declare a climate emergency and it is clear that there is a collective ambition across the public sector to act now to reduce emissions.
24. In September 2020, the Leaders and Chief Executives of Surrey's 12 local authorities recognised this shared ambition and agreed to work together to combat climate change. A working group has been set up to provide oversight of and leadership for work to develop a Surrey-wide strategy and common targets that will help Surrey achieve net zero carbon emissions.
25. In addition, the Surrey Waste Partnership recently agreed to extend its remit to broader issues around the environment and has been re-named as the Surrey Environment Partnership. This partnership - Surrey's 12 Environment portfolio holders (with officer support from the Joint Waste Solutions team) – will be well placed to connect work across Surrey's local authorities and to drive the development of the strategy and common targets. It is hoped that the Greener Future 'call to action' will provide a helpful framework for developing a Surrey-wide approach.
26. It will be important to engage all sectors of Surrey's communities in this work, including residents, health, business, education and voluntary, community and faith organisations. A number of cities

have adopted a climate commission approach to coordinate this with evidence that this is helping to deliver improved outcomes. Modelled on the Leeds Climate Commission, the recently established Surrey Climate Commission has the potential to provide overarching, apolitical system leadership, through both its core group (of which Surrey County Council is a member), and the broader steering group that will have representation of all key stakeholders. The Task Group would encourage the County Council to continue to contribute to the emerging work in this area and look at how the Climate Commission might take a more prominent lead role in future.

#### **Conclusions of the Task Group:**

27. Throughout the course of its work, the Task Group have received a valuable amount of evidence from witnesses covering a broad range of issues. The Task Group would like to thank all who have taken time to engage with the group and share their experiences.
28. Climate Change is a complex and far-reaching issues and the Task Group chose to group its work by theme in order to provide clarity and structure as well as a focus for questioning witnesses. The evidence heard at witness sessions has helped the group formulate a series of recommendations for consideration by the Select Committee, Cabinet and ultimately Council.
29. The recommendations agreed by the Task Group are based on evidence gained about the causes of climate change, experts views on the best ways to tackle this and the ability of the council to intervene. It is recognised that this is the start of Surrey's journey to tackle climate change, with the work of the Task Group providing the basis for the call for action to be approved by Council. Following Council's consideration in December, further work will be needed by officers to develop a more detailed action plan against this, as outlined in the recommendations.
30. From the evidence received it is clear that .... **MORE TO ADD HERE FOLLOWING A STEER FROM THE TASK GROUP ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND EMPHASIS THEY WANT TO MAKE**
31. The Task Group is confident that the recommendations contained within this report will help focus the council's effort in tackling climate change and provide a strong platform for taking forward this work with partners, businesses and residents across Surrey as only through collective action will the county be able to be net

carbon zero. The Task Group hopes that the County Council will fully support these recommendations and looks forward to continuing to work in support of this important issue.

### **Next Steps**

32. The Task Group's report will be considered by the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee on 22 November 2019 with a report submitted to Cabinet on 26 November 2019 and recommendations to Council on 10 December 2019.

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**Sources/background papers:**

IPCC Report

Community Vision for Surrey in 2030

**Annexes:**

Annex 1- Surrey's Greener Future Task Group Terms of Reference

Annex 2 – List of Witness Sessions

Annex 3 – Call for Action