

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council recognises the serious impact of climate change and is committed to playing its part in pursuing measures that address environmental decline.
- 1.2 As part of this commitment this report sets out a new approach that will ensure that climate change impact assessments are undertaken as part of the service design and report formulation process for all future Committee reports. This will put a clear focus on the impact of Council's actions on climate change at the heart of all future decision making.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That for the reasons set out in the report, a climate change impact assessment is undertaken as part of all future reports, and for the outcome to be reported as a mandatory requirement, ensuring that formal decisions are made having considered the potential impact on climate change.

3. Background and Discussion

- 3.1 At the meeting of the General Assembly of the Council on the 7 October 2019 (Minute No 50 refers) the Council resolved to recognise the serious impact of climate change and accepted that rising global temperatures present a clear and present threat to the world. The Council further recognised that all governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to act but felt that progress in Dartford should not be constrained by the actions of the slowest. The Borough and its people have a part to play in securing a sustainable future and is already actively delivering measure that will help achieve the governments set 2030 & 2050 net zero target.
- 3.2 As required by the Climate Change Act 2008, the UK government has undertaken the third five-year assessment of the risks of climate change on the UK, working closely with the Climate Change Committee (CCC). In December 2020, the CEO of the CCC said, "The Climate Change Committee have recognised that we can get our carbon footprint down in time – and meet the Sixth Carbon Budget if Government and local authorities work hand in glove."
- 3.3 Climate change is therefore a compliance issue for the Council because it goes beyond environmental compliance. Climate is not just carbon it is relevant to strategy, risk management, financial statement disclosures and prudential regulation. Climate change can also be an operational issue that could affect the Council's supply chains or the markets of its products and services. The transition to a Net Zero emissions economy will create opportunities along the way for the Council.
- 3.4 It is vital therefore for the Council to recognise that the potential impacts of climate change are not only to do with the physical effects on people and the environment, but also to do with the effects of the transition to a changing climate and the adaptation and mitigation work involved. Similarly, the impacts of climate change should not only be considered as long-term risks.

CABINET

24 February 2022

4. Meeting the Council's Targets & Aspirations

- 4.1 Since 2019 the Council has delivered and continues to develop, numerous projects that contribute towards the Council's climate changes ambitions and its Net Zero aspirations.

A comprehensive climate change action plan is under development and whilst the publication of the action plan will provide an opportunity to promote, monitor and consolidate the Council's actions, it does not in itself advance the delivery of important climate change policies. The Council has consequently seen no reason to delay or inhibit the practical delivery of climate change actions during this process.

Significant work has already taken place in relation to environmental improvements, energy efficiency and insulation across the Council's corporate and housing portfolio but it is our intention to ensure that potential climate change implications are recognised in every area of Council policy. The recommendation to undertake climate change impact assessments in relation to all future Committee reports represents a step-change in policy formulation and will place the needs of the environment alongside legal and economic considerations in everything we do.

- 4.2 In order that all decisions are taken having given due consideration to the potential impact of climate change of each decision it is proposed that a mandatory climate impact assessment section be included in all future committee reports

- 4.3 Report authors will be required to complete the draft impact assessment attached as Appendix A to this report. The assessment form asks authors to set out any significant positive or negative impact identified by the recommended course of action on any of the following:

- the target to be carbon neutral;
- carbon emissions in the district;
- emissions of other climate changing gases;
- measures to adapt to climate change.

In relation to negative impacts identified, report authors will be asked to consider mitigation proposals.

- 4.4 The climate change impact assessment proposed, is part of a series of actions designed to address climate change and its impact on the Borough, with the expectation that the level of detail in the assessment would be proportionate to the likely impact of the proposal. Proposals in their early stages would have less detail than final proposals and in most cases it would be a qualitative assessment rather than a quantitative one i.e. for most proposals there would not be detailed calculations of carbon emissions.
- 4.5 The intention is to highlight issues, and possible mitigation, which will enable an informed decision to be made in relation to the impact on climate change and carbon emissions on the subject matter of the report. In some cases the assessment may identify a need for further work to be undertaken, at a later stage of a project, once initial decisions have been made. The assessment would be completed by the report author.
- 4.6 The Council's risk management process will also be developed to ensure that emerging Climate change risks and opportunities are captured, assessed and verified.
- 4.7 It is vital that the Council engages now with climate-related risks and opportunities. Forming a robust understanding of climate change risk is the first step for the Council and considering climate-related risks with the same rigour as any other strategic risk. Climate change risks should not be considered in isolation and should be clearly integrated into the Council's wider strategy which is currently being developed.

CABINET
24 February 2022

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 It is therefore recommended that the climate change impact assessment be undertaken for all reports to Committees that are asking for a decision or recommending accordingly. A brief comment on the impact would then be included into the financial, legal, staffing and other implications and risk assessments section of all reports under the title of “Climate Change Impact Assessment”.
- 5.2 Planning Committee reports would be the exception in that they would not have a climate change impact assessment form attached to them. Planning applications are the subject of national regulations, which determine the necessity or otherwise for Environmental Statements to be submitted in support of planning applications under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

6. Relationship to the Corporate Plan

- 6.1 The recommendation set out in this report contributes towards the Council’s Environment & Sustainability objectives, as detailed in the Council Corporate plan of reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality in the Borough.

7. Financial, legal, staffing and other implications and risk assessments*

Financial Implications	None specifically as a result of this report.
Legal Implications	None specifically as a result of this report.
Staffing Implications	None specifically as a result of this report.
Administrative Implications	None specifically as a result of this report.
Risk Assessment	Failure to incorporate climate change impact assessments into service design & delivery, governance protocols and final approval processes, will significantly impact on the Councils ability to actively contribute towards climate change and achieving Net Zero.
Crime and Disorder duty	None specifically as a result of this report.
Public Sector Equality Duty	None specifically as a result of this report.

8. Details of Exempt Information Category

Not applicable

9. Appendices

Appendix A – Climate Change Impact Assessment template.

CABINET
24 February 2022

BACKGROUND PAPERS

<u>Documents consulted</u>	<u>Date / File Ref</u>	<u>Report Author</u>	<u>Section and Directorate</u>	<u>Exempt Information Category</u>
		Peter Dosad (01322) 343215	Housing & Public Protection	N/A