

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-021-2016/17
Date of meeting: 1 September 2016



Portfolio: Environment
Safer, Greener & Transport

Subject: Environmental Charter and Objectives

Responsible Officer: Liz Ainslie (01992 564235)

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Environmental Charter (attached at Appendix 1) and associated Commitments and Actions (attached at Appendix 2) be endorsed by the Cabinet; and,**
- (2) That the Environmental Charter be approved for signature on behalf of the Council and signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive accordingly.**

Executive Summary:

Climate change is one of the most dangerous threats the world is facing today and there is little doubt that human activity is the primary driver of the observed changes in climate. In recognition of this the Council became a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration in 2007. The Climate Change Strategy published in 2009 in order to demonstrate how the commitments of the Declaration would be met now needs updating.

The Nottingham Declaration has now essentially been replaced by the Climate Local Agreement and framework. This was developed by the Local Government Association as a mechanism that local authorities could use to identify, and make a public statement of their commitment to, appropriate climate change initiatives.

It is considered appropriate that the Council has its own 'Environmental Charter' based on the Climate Local Framework.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The Council's current commitment to environmental issues is outlined in the Climate Change Strategy which is now out of date.

Other Options for Action:

The Council has discounted the option of not having an environmental policy in place as, being a significant local employer and a provider of services, it could be criticised for not demonstrating its commitment to the 'green agenda' particularly in a time of transformation. The Charter and associated documents have been developed in accordance with the express wish of the Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee on 11 November 2015.

Report:

1. In 2007, in order to demonstrate its commitment to the UK Climate Change Programme, the Council signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. This committed the Council to producing a climate change strategy, and a Working Group, the Corporate Green Working Party (GWP), was set up to progress the development of the strategy. The Council's Climate Change Strategy was subsequently agreed by the Cabinet in 2009 (C-119-2008/09).

2. Although the Climate Change Strategy quickly became out of date in terms of the structure of the Council, the resources available to effect change and the abolition of national indicators on environmental issues, the GWP continued to take forward actions that still had relevance and value. However, it is now considered time that the Council should replace the 2009 Strategy with a new strategy that can take account of current thinking on these issues and the Council's future direction.

3. The form that the Council's future strategies on environmental issues should take was considered by the Neighbourhoods and Communities Services Select Committee on 17 November 2015. The Select Committee agreed that an environmental charter and action plan should be developed to replace the 2009 Climate Change Policy. The commitments in the Charter would be under the main headings of 'Climate Adaptation', 'Tackling Greenhouse Gas Emissions' and 'Sustainability' which had been chosen at a working party of the Council's Leadership Team. The Select Committee asked that when the charter and action plan had been developed further it should be brought back to them for 'comments and agreement'.

4. A charter and action plan were then drafted based on the 'Climate Local' methodology which identifies the environmental commitments a local authority might make, broken down into broad areas (e.g. finance, energy, the natural environment etc.). Within each area, suggestions are made for actions that could be appropriate depending on the nature of the individual authority. The draft 'Environmental Charter' (Appendix 1) and the 'Commitments and Actions' document (Appendix 2) follow the format of Climate Local methodology but are tailored to this Council's requirements. The draft Charter and Commitments and Actions were considered and agreed by the Neighbourhoods Select Committee in June 2016.

5. The Environmental Charter is an overarching document to explain the Council's main commitments to the environment as the area leader. The document has been drawn up in such a way as to make it flexible and inclusive enough to cover all areas of EFDC's operations. The 'Commitments and Actions' framework is designed to demonstrate how the Council is fulfilling its obligations under the Charter.

6. Each action in the Commitments and Actions document will be developed into more specific actions in the GWP work plan. The Commitments and Actions will be updated when actions are completed to provide a record of what has been achieved but the work plan will be the "working document" which changes to provide more detail behind the commitments and actions.

7. The GWP work plan already includes an item to review its work plan on a six-monthly basis and ad hoc as required. The Neighbourhoods Select Committee also agreed at its meeting on 28 June to receive an annual report on progress against the Environmental Charter Action Plan.

8. The Cabinet is asked to endorse the draft Environmental Charter attached at Appendix 1 and Commitments and Actions attached at Appendix 2 and that the Charter be signed by the Council's Leader and Chief Executive accordingly.

9. Following the endorsement by the Cabinet, the Environmental Charter will be promoted to all Council employees and the general public by appropriate methods.

Resource Implications:

All costs are contained within current budgets.

Legal and Governance Implications:

There are no legal implications as such as there is not a statutory requirement to have an Environmental Charter although local authorities are required to make a submission two-yearly under HECA (the Home Energy Conservation Act) stating their energy-saving ambitions and targets on energy efficiency in residential homes the District.

In addition to this the Council has statutory duties relating to the environment, including waste collection and recycling, food safety and water sampling, and building and development control.

There is a requirement for local authorities to submit annual greenhouse gas reporting to BEIS (the department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy, formerly DECC). This gives the Government a snapshot of how local authorities are cutting their emissions. While not legally binding, it is requested annually and could, in future, be a legal reporting requirement to achieve UK climate reduction targets.

The GWP has an item on its work plan to carry out a review of its work plan every six months or ad-hoc if required. This will continue and will include the specific actions that will enable the Council to meet its Environmental Charter commitments.

The Neighbourhoods Select Committee will also receive an annual report on progress against the Environmental Charter Action Plan.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The Environmental Charter and associated commitments action document state the Council's high level aspirations with regard to climate change, tackling greenhouse gas emissions and sustainability and therefore has relevance to the 'safer, cleaner, greener' agenda.

Consultation Undertaken:

In the development to the Charter and action plan the GWP has consulted with:

- The Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee on 17 November 2015
- The Neighbourhoods Select Committee on 28 June 2016.

Background Papers: Climate Local methodology (www.local.gov.uk/climate-local).

Risk Management:

Although it is not a statutory requirement to have environmental strategies and policies in place there could be considered to be a reputational risk not to do so particularly given the Council's role as a significant local employer and a provider of services. The Council also has a role as an exemplar to people working in and visiting the District and in the light of this, should be able to demonstrate its commitment to the 'green agenda'.

Due Regard Record

This page shows **which groups of people are affected** by the subject of this report. It sets out **how they are affected** and how any **unlawful discrimination** they experience can be eliminated. It also includes information about how **access to the service(s)** subject to this report can be improved for the different groups of people; and how they can be assisted to **understand each other better** as a result of the subject of this report.

S149 Equality Act 2010 requires that due regard must be paid to this information when considering the subject of this report.

While having an Environmental Charter in itself is will not adversely impact any group, various studies have demonstrated that older people and disabled people are most likely to be affected by the impacts of climate change. There is not yet a complete understanding of the relationship between the protected characteristics of age and of disability and the impact of climate change. It has to be recognised, however, that it is not just extreme weather events themselves but also the disruption to services that affects the lives of older and disabled people disproportionately.

The figures on long-term health problems or disability show that in the Epping Forest District, 16% of the population report that they are disabled to the extent that their day to day activities are limited to some degree. Although this is slightly lower (1%) than the national average, this is still a significant proportion of the population that is more likely than those without a disability to be affected by the impacts of climate change. The table below illustrates these figures.

Long-Term Health Problem or Disability, 2011 (QS303EW)

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Census 2011 (see [link](#))

Variable	EFDC	% of Population	England	% of Population
All Residents (Persons)	124,659		53,012,456	
Day-to-Day Activities Limited a Lot (Persons)	8,831	7%	4,405,394	8%
Day-to-Day Activities Limited a Little (Persons)	10,770	9%	4,947,192	9%
Day-to-Day Activities Not Limited (Persons)	105,058	84%	43,659,870	83%

(percentage figures are rounded to the nearest whole number)

Figures on age in the Epping Forest District show that the percentage of the population that is over 65 is 19.5% of the total District population. As can be seen from the table below, this is almost 2% higher than the national figure.

MYE2: Population Estimates by single year of age and sex for local authorities in the UK, mid-2015

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Mid-year estimates **2015** (see [link](#))

Extract for Epping Forest District:

Area	All Ages	Total 65+ (people)	Total 65+ (%)
England	54,786,327	9,711,572	17.7%
Epping Forest District	129,677	25,251	19.5%

(percentage figures are rounded to the first decimal place)

As there are a significant number of older and of disabled residents in the District, it is particularly important that the Council is seen to be playing a part in reducing climate change and taking action to reduce its impacts as much as is possible. The Council can do this by making a commitment on environmental issues that includes clear actions with realistic, but stretching, targets.

The actions put in place will be monitored by the Neighbourhoods Select Committee and any possible equalities issues will be identified together with any action that is necessary to eliminate, so far as is possible, any negative impacts.

Where commitments require engagement with the public, officers will ensure that this is done in such a way as to meet the public sector equality duties of eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Other links for information

Population Projection (see [link](#)) (see [link](#))

Neighbourhood Statistics (see [link](#))

Disability – facts and figures (see [link](#))

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHARTER FOR EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Epping Forest District is unique. It is largely rural, with 92% of the district Metropolitan Green Belt land. There are Sites of Special Scientific Interest, conservation areas and over 200 Local Wildlife Sites, as well as Special Conservation and Protection areas.

Residents have stated the special character of the District is important to them, in particular to protect the Green Belt land. In order to do this, we must recognise the impacts climate change will have on the area. We must ensure that we act in an environmentally responsible way, both as individuals and as a council, to reduce these impacts and mitigate changes.

We also recognise that our council has an important role to help our residents and businesses to capture the opportunities and benefits of action on climate change.

To achieve this, we will progressively address the risks and pursue the opportunities presented by a changing climate, in line with local priorities, through our role as:

- **Community leader** – helping local people and businesses to be smarter about their energy use and to prepare for climate impacts.
- **Service provider** – delivering services that are resource efficient, less carbon intensive, resilient and that protect those most vulnerable to climate impacts.
- **Estate manager** – ensuring that our own buildings and operations are resource efficient and are prepared for the impacts of a changing climate.

We will do this by:

- Working across all EFDC departments, teams, policies and plans to ensure that opportunities to meet the Charter's objectives are pursued.
- Setting EFDC locally-owned and determined commitments and actions to reduce carbon emissions and to manage climate impacts. These will be specific, measurable and challenging.
- Publishing our commitments, actions and progress, enabling local communities to hold us to account.
- Sharing the learning from our experiences and achievements with other councils.
- Regularly refreshing our commitments.

As signatories of this Charter, we the undersigned pledge to:

Commit to Climate Adaptation:

Ensure the Council's assets and operations are resilient to the predicted climate change impacts. Assist in the work to prepare the District for climate change.

Tackle Greenhouse Gases:

Reduce the amount of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases we as a Council emit through our services and operations.

Be More Sustainable Ourselves:

Influence and use our powers where possible to minimise the environmental impact of our actions and decisions. Assist residents to become more sustainable through

advice and policies.

Signed:
(Leader of the Council)

Dated:

Signed:
(Chief Executive of the Council)

Dated: