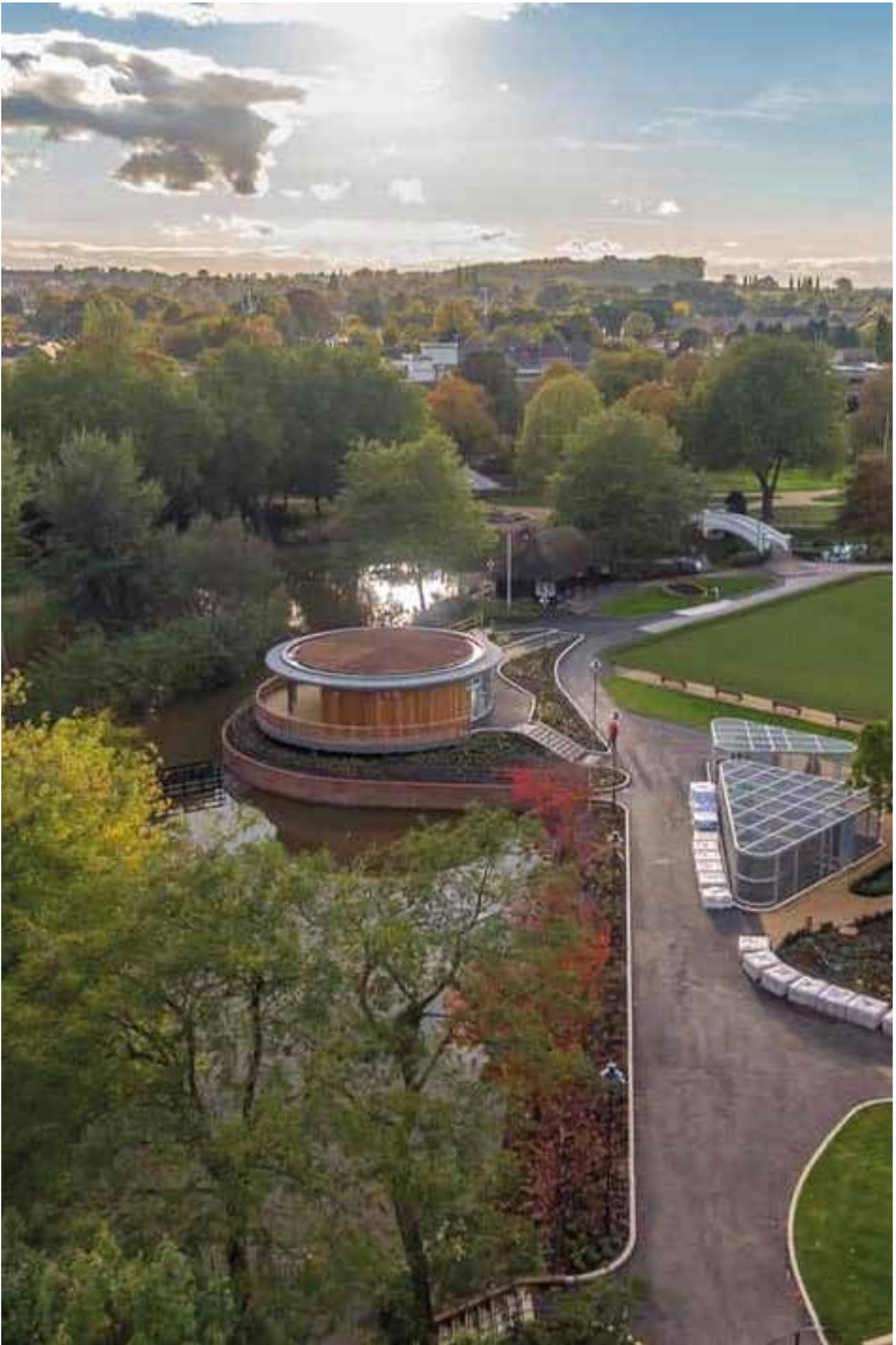


Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy 2020 - 2040





Foreword

We recognise that we have a leadership role in achieving a sustainable climate.

We could not have predicted when council declared a climate emergency on 23 July 2019 that there would be a global pandemic that would have such a huge impact on the way in which we live our lives.



During the lockdown phases of Covid-19 when all private, public and voluntary sector organisations were providing support to vulnerable residents in the Borough, it was reported globally that there had been a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions which was attributed to a reduction in journeys to work and also in manufacturing output. Scientists found that the production of pollutants including carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxides dropped by between 10% and 30%. Although this was quite significant, unfortunately it is not enough to sustain the change required, so there is still much to do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Price'.

Cllr Jonathan Price
Cabinet Member for Environment

The impact of Covid-19 has made us realise that as a society we can change our habits quickly. As a council we were able to facilitate home working arrangements for most of our workforce and elected members by implementing new technology, and we are also running all our meetings electronically. These small changes have reduced paper usage, travel and utility costs.

Covid-19 recovery and reform plans are currently being proposed and workstreams focusing on organisational, economic and community recovery are underway. Within the recovery work is a focus on green recovery, protecting our environment in the future. We believe that our work to promote green recovery and climate change are complementary and this strategy outlines how we will work with our partners and the community to achieve significant change in both.





Introduction

This strategy supports and enhances the work that is currently underway within the council to tackle climate change and green recovery.

This document provides direction as to how we aim to recover from Covid-19 in order to achieve a more sustainable Stafford Borough by protecting and enhancing our environment.

It takes into consideration the principles contained in ‘A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment’ and the potential role that the council will play in delivering the targets that will be included in the forthcoming Environmental Bill.

Climate change and green recovery will be included in our Corporate Business Plan as an additional business objective to reflect the importance of this work. A new Climate Change and Green Recovery Group will be set up to oversee the implementation of the strategy, monitor progress and co-ordinate the workstreams. This group will be responsible for formulating the delivery plans that sit behind this strategy, for developing realistic and achievable performance targets and ensuring that the environmental principles, set out in the Environmental Bill, are integrated into all our policies and plans. This group will feed into the Staffordshire Climate Change Partnership to share progress and to learn from others.

Long-term sustainability is central to the vision of both our Corporate Business Plan and our Local Plan. A new Local Plan is currently being prepared, with one of the key drivers being to achieve our ambitions towards carbon neutrality. The plan will promote sustainable construction and house building, protect and enhance the natural environment, mitigate the risk of flooding, promote carbon reduction in travel and encourage renewable energy production.

Stafford Borough Council has a key leadership role in tackling climate change. Being smarter and more proactive about our energy management and the reduction of associated emissions of greenhouse gases has been an important focus for the council over the past few years. Although we cannot reverse the impact that climate change has already had on our borough, we can alter what we do in order to limit that impact.

We are already purchasing 10% of green electricity and improving energy efficiency in our buildings in order to ensure long-term sustainability. Solar panel installation at our sites at the Civic Centre and Riverway has generated electricity resulting in a saving of over 200 tonnes of CO₂. Since the cremators were replaced in 2013 at Stafford Crematorium the gas consumption has dropped from a high of 2 million kWh in one single year to an average of 750,000 kWh/year.

Plastics have also been high on the national agenda. The increase of single-use and disposable plastics across the UK has been detrimental to our society and wildlife, with only 10-13% of plastic items being recycled each year. Significant steps have already been taken to reduce plastic waste across the country, with the Resources and Waste Strategy for England (2018) setting out a blueprint to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by 2050.

Stafford Borough Council recognises the importance of acting in line with national best practice to ensure the issues of single use plastics is addressed. To ensure this, in September 2019 the council passed a motion committing them to take actions to reduce the use of plastic products both internally within the council and across the borough. It is critical to Stafford Borough's society and environmental well-being that we align with these objectives and make a stand against the use of single use plastics, alongside the large-scale, systematic changes required to reach carbon neutrality.



Our Vision and Objectives

Our Vision is to have a ‘To create a green, healthy and resilient Stafford Borough where everyone can thrive, by limiting the impacts of climate change and meeting our climate change and green recovery commitments’

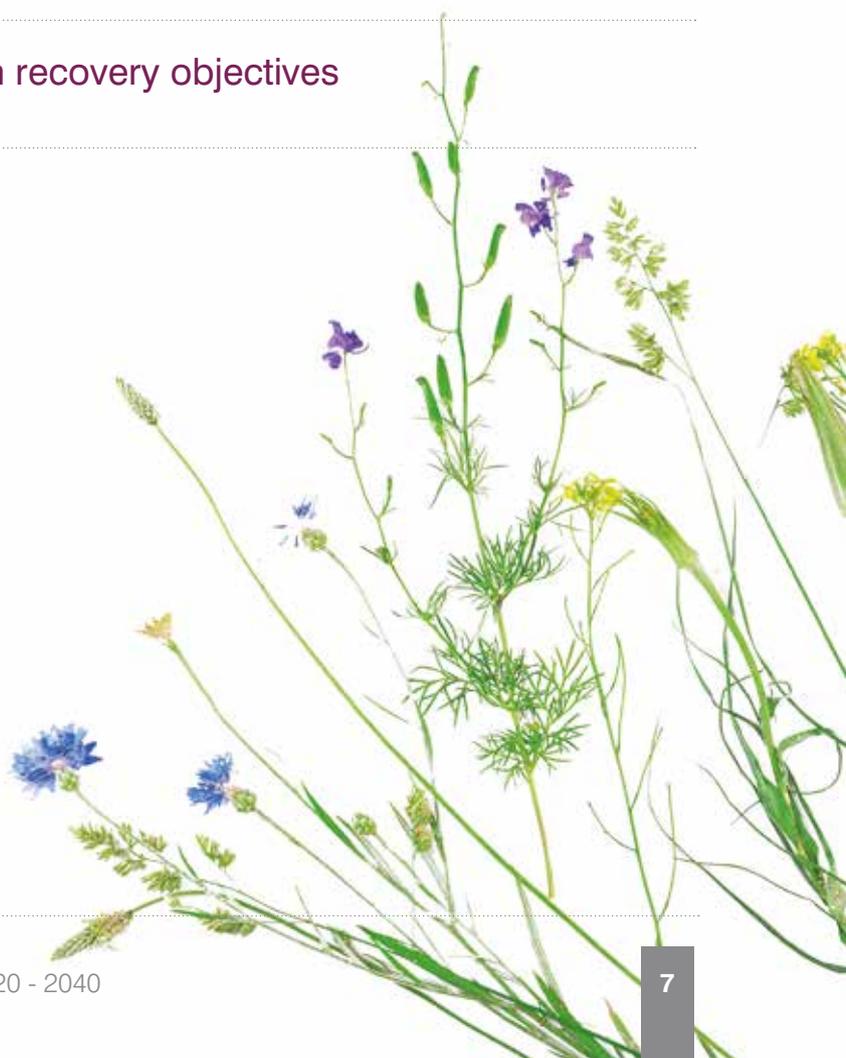
Over the next few years our delivery will be focused upon the following objectives. We will:

1 Reduce emissions from our own activities

2 Work in partnership with Government, Elected Bodies and Elected Members, Partners, Residents and Businesses across the Borough to take action that contributes to carbon neutrality and sustainable development within communities and across the natural environment

3 Mitigate and adapt to Climate Change

4 Continue to implement our green recovery objectives





CC1

Reducing emissions from our own activities.

The council has been very proactive over the years in reducing emissions from its own activities. We have embraced renewable energy technologies and took advantage of the feed in tariff when it was introduced. The installation of the Civic Centre photovoltaic system has generated £113,259.80 and has generated 244.255-megawatt hours' worth of energy. Furthermore, 241 tonnes of Co2 has been saved.

In addition to this we have:

- › Replaced cremators at Stafford Crematorium with high efficiency models with heat recycling
- › Changed boilers in our building to reduce energy consumption
- › Recycled around 52% of the waste that we collect from households each week
- › Managed around 1,000 acres of parks and open spaces (carbon absorption)
- › Installed EV charging points on car parks
- › Progressed initiatives to install solar PV panels on the roof of the Waterfront car park in Stafford, provide battery storage and use spare green electricity to sell on to local businesses in the Waterfront development
- › Explored opportunities to install solar powered equivalents to replace existing lighting columns, parking machines, public realm power boxes etc.
- › Adapted our fleet to less polluting vehicles.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic there were a number of activities as a council that we had highlighted as contributing to a reduction in carbon emissions from our own activities. These were primarily focused around reductions in staff travel, introducing flexible home-working arrangements, utilising technology to minimise printing and electricity use. When the Government implemented a national lockdown, these were areas that we had to quickly respond to and as a result of this we have been able to:

- › Implement flexible working practices that promote staff working from home and reduce commuting
- › Reduce the use of paper by introducing electronic payslips
- › Introduce HR policies which promote more sustainable means of travel such as cycle to work schemes and health and wellbeing schemes

- › Implement IT improvements such as staff moving to laptops and cloud-based IT solutions
- › Stopped printing large scale plans for planning applications
- › Moved planning consultation to Parish Councils to a fully electronic process
- › Requested that wherever possible all planning applications were submitted online

When the council was last audited, the carbon balance excluding waste derived emissions was 1,500 tonnes CO2 pa output. In order to achieve carbon neutrality a figure of zero would need to be achieved. In terms of our own activities, policies driven by the council will help to achieve large carbon saving impacts when compared to a benchmark year. It is also important that we recognise the challenges of cutting fuel use at the crematorium, waste fleet and vehicle use.

The Environmental Bill includes specific priorities around resource efficiency and waste reduction. It places requirements upon the council to ensure that it delivers consistent and frequent recycling collections and potentially sees the introduction of weekly separate food waste collections by 2023. It will also include provisions for the council to tackle waste crime, rural and urban fly-tipping, littering and support reductions in plastic use. This Bill builds on the vision of the 25 Year Environmental Plan in working towards zero avoidable waste by 2050, eliminating avoidable plastic waste by 2042 and eliminating waste crime and illegal waste sites.

There is much work still to do and one of our first priorities will be to commission a carbon audit of our own activities in order to provide us with a baseline to develop future targets from. We can then utilise this information and start to formulate our detailed delivery plans that will support our activities.

Over the next few years we will:

- › Undertake a meaningful audit of the council's carbon footprint to derive the council's own carbon inputs and output
- › Reduce our energy and water consumption
- › Reduce waste and improve recycling



CC2

Work in partnership with Government, Elected Bodies and Elected Members, Partners, Residents and Businesses across the Borough to take action that contributes to carbon neutrality and sustainable development within communities and across the natural environment.

Climate Change is everybody's responsibility. To achieve our goals, we need to work with a broad range of partners. We will need to lobby central government for resources to assist us in achieving carbon neutrality. We will need to work with elected members to encourage all residents to take action that will contribute to carbon neutrality and sustainable development in all our communities.

Through the Local Strategic Partnership, we will engage with other stakeholders to embed climate change and green recovery objectives in our activities. We will work closely with our economic colleagues through the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Economic Partnership (LEP), the Constellation Partnership and Stafford Borough Growth, Regeneration and Infrastructure Partnership.

Promoting and supporting healthy lifestyles is also an important contributory factor in our communities, many health and well-being interventions can also bring about reductions in CO2 emissions.

We will continue to work closely with businesses, the voluntary sector, education establishments, public sector organisations to develop sustainable energy sources, carry out home energy audits, encourage homes to grow their own produce and encouraging the use of alternative methods of transport such as walking and cycling.

The Council has a good reputation for being quite proactive in respect of climate change and sustainable development and has been at the forefront of implementing several initiatives that support this agenda. We have:

- › Worked proactively with residents in Derrington, Penkside and Littleworth to introduce low carbon communities and sustainable development initiatives such as solar PV schemes on community used buildings, affordable warm and energy efficiency initiatives, planted wildflower gardens and orchards
- › Designed and implemented new sustainable play facilities at Holmcroft and Charney Road
- › Installed cycle parking in schools and community

buildings in and around the borough

- › Been nationally recognised for our work on low carbon and sustainable development

We want to work with and encourage all local community groups to work with us to demonstrate their commitment in supporting this very important agenda.

Over the next few years we will:

- › Encourage elected members to work with their communities to raise awareness and identify opportunities to implement sustainable low carbon initiatives and promote community action on reducing carbon emissions
- › Work with government and elected bodies to determine best practice and use this to raise awareness of sustainable development and low carbon approaches to our communities, businesses and contractors.





CC3

Mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states that humankind has 12 years to ensure global warming is limited to a maximum of 1.5°C. Surpassing this threshold would significantly worsen the risks posed to humans and wildlife on a global scale.

Climate change can be mitigated for in a variety of ways. Large scale efforts such as the installation of renewable energy infrastructure and the electrification of transport networks are incredibly important when considering how to limit the effects of climate change.

The importance of the collective efforts of our population should not be underestimated. Worldwide efforts to reduce emissions will have long-term benefits and may allow us to stop short of the dangerous 'tipping points' that will initiate runaway climate change. For example, reducing the individual carbon footprint by a more considerate choice of transportation methods and effective recycling can both contribute positively to the mitigation of climate change. These types of practices should be encouraged wherever possible.

To successfully mitigate the effects of climate change, a united and holistic approach must be adopted. The 25-year Environmental Plan highlights the need to continue cutting greenhouse gas emissions and the Environment Bill uses ambitious and legally binding targets to combat environmental and climate challenges.

The council's position as a Local Authority means that it has a duty to establish itself as a front runner when responding to the challenge of mitigating climate change. Therefore, the council must consider how it can facilitate the transition of its operations, and the operations over which it has influence, to the use of more environmentally friendly and sustainable practices.

Statistical climate models produce projected scenarios for future time periods. It is possible to estimate how the climate is likely to change in our borough.

This information enables us to ascertain what actions should be taken, in the event that such changes occur.

The council produced its first Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in 2010 and the strategy assessed trends in:

- › Hotter summer temperatures (more heatwaves).
- › Milder winter temperatures.
- › Drier summers (more droughts).
- › Wetter winters (more fluvial flooding).
- › Increase in extreme weather events and surface water flooding.
- › Increase in the incidence of lightning.
- › Impacts from snow, ice, hail or extreme cold.
- › Impacts from strong winds.

This assessment was used to determine what adaptation responses were required in the borough.

However, even if the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases stopped tomorrow, the gases already in the atmosphere would continue to drive climate change for at least the next 30 years. Stafford Borough has to continue to adapt to the climate change that is now inevitable.

Over the next few years we will:

- › Undertake a comprehensive risk-based assessment of vulnerabilities to weather and the climate
- › Refresh the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy



CC4

Continue to implement our green recovery objectives.

It is important to recognise the impact of green recovery on our local economy. Our green recovery plans will align economic recovery measures with the achievement of long-term climate change goals in order to work towards a new socio-economic model that is climate-neutral, resilient, sustainable and inclusive; which safeguards the natural assets of geology, soil, air, water and all living things that make up our life support system; capturing the value of nature in our economic planning.

We will focus on economic growth through the promotion of green jobs and technology and support the creation of cohesive communities that promote vibrancy, protect the environment, encourage healthy living and support community engagement and social capital. We also need to ensure that the refresh of our local plan incorporates a focus upon nature-based solutions to look at how we can manage flood risks, create attractive carbon neutral communities such as Stafford Station Gateway and the proposals for Meecebrook, increase biodiversity and improve and promote healthier living and lifestyles.

In the refresh of the Local Plan we will be promoting:

- › Carbon saving installations such as electric vehicle charging points

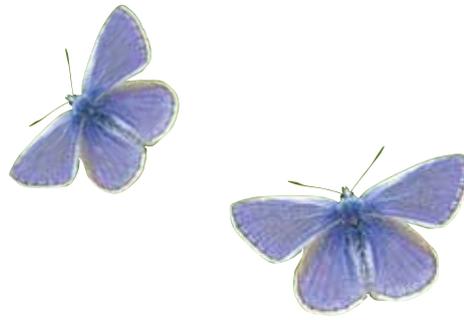
- › Policies to support the building of sustainable/ carbon neutral homes and communities
- › The installation of renewable energy infrastructure
- › Designs for community heating
- › Green and Blue Infrastructure and habitat management

In addition to this, as part of delivering our Economic Growth Strategy, we will be promoting investment in full fibre/gigabit communications to improve the efficiency of businesses and enable further working from home to reduce travel impacts on carbon footprint and support sustainable smaller communities.

The Government's 25-year environmental plan sets out priorities to support clean air, thriving plants and wildlife, using resources from nature more sustainably and enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment. This work is supported by the Environment Bill which places a duty on local areas such as ours, to set ambitious legally binding targets for fine particulate matter, tackle smoke emissions, plan to conserve nature by protecting native wildlife and habitats. It will also introduce new biodiversity net gain measures that will mean new developments



Doxey Marshes, Stafford.



including housing will need to demonstrate how they protect and enhance wildlife and habitats.

The borough boasts a number of picturesque and high-quality attractions and beautiful countryside. Maintaining our natural and built heritage and managing change and well planned, appropriate growth, is essential if we are to achieve sustainable development, create more cohesive, sustainable communities and deliver the requirements set out in the 25 year Environmental Plan and also the Environment Bill.

Green Infrastructure (GI) and the protection of our diverse ecological assets have a significant role to play in helping achieve sustainable development, adapt to and mitigate for climate change and promote health and wellbeing. Working locally with the Wildlife Trust, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) partnership, other local authorities and national organisations, we can help to preserve and enhance these assets. We will also develop new initiatives such as the concept of countryside parks to increase tree planting, improve better management of habitat to provide CO2 sequestration, improve routes for walking, cycling and to link habitat corridors.

Many of our important habitats are under threat from

climate change, air pollution, visitor and development pressures. We are working closely with neighbouring authorities, Natural England and national conservation charities to safeguard the future of these habitats and the wildlife which rely on them.

Facilitating the maintenance of functional habitat networks will guarantee the ecosystem services we rely upon and also help mitigate some of the effects of climate change in the Borough. Work with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has produced a Nature Recovery Network map in order to understand the distribution of these habitats and key areas for priority action. Alongside this ground-breaking work is underway to combat the negative effects of atmospheric deposition of Nitrogen.

Over the next few years we will:

- › Develop blue and green infrastructure networks and public realm
- › Protect and enhance our environment
- › Adopt our new local plan
- › Facilitate development that is resilient to climate change



Meadows at Astonfields, Stafford.



Communications and Engagement

We have already said that climate change and green recovery is not something that we are able to tackle on our own.

It will take a multi-partnership approach as we are to achieve what we have set out in the plan.

This strategy is built on the need for a collective borough-wide action that will involve everyone, it places an emphasis on two-way communications - using relevant channels to share and capture information that residents, businesses, partners and other organisations within our communities need to know.

And listening to residents, customers, businesses and others through both formal and informal consultations.



Cycle provision in Stafford town centre.

Monitoring and Review

This Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy will run for a period of three years 2021 - 2024. There will be a delivery plan that will sit behind this plan that will be proactively performance managed through our senior management team and elected members by the Council's Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committees. This delivery plan will be subject to an annual review to determine what progress is being made against each of the objectives.

As part of this process we will ensure that progress is reported to our residents via:

- › Publishing progress on the website, social media and the local press
- › Sharing our progress with our partners

We will be open and transparent in how we work and conduct consultation and engagement activities for all of our major projects so that we can ensure our residents are able to have their say and be part of the process.



Tittensor Best Kept Village Project - Hedgehog Hotel.



Appendix 1

The Council agree to:-

- a | Join other Councils in declaring a Climate Emergency and work towards achieving our vision of carbon neutrality by 2040;
- b | Continue to concentrate on activities that reduce emissions from its own activities and will work towards carbon neutrality by 2040;
- c | Call on the Government to provide the powers and resources to make the 2040 target possible.
- d | Work with other elected bodies (both within the UK and internationally) to determine best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5°C and consider how this could be addressed through the Local Plan process;
- e | Continue to work with partners across the Borough to deliver this goal through all relevant strategies, plans and initiatives;
- f | Explore through the Local Plan process, the expansion of community energy with a view to keeping the benefits of our local energy generation in our local economy;
- g | Report progress to scrutiny at the appropriate time to include a report within 12 months as to the actions the Council has taken and proposes to take;
- h | Encourage elected Members to work with their communities and local business enterprises and empower them to;
 - > Sign up to the Climate Emergency pledge;
 - > Take action that helps to improve the sustainability of their neighbourhoods, the health and wellbeing of residents and the energy efficiency of community and domestic buildings.



Charnley Road Toddler and Junior Play Space with informal natural play.

Appendix 2

The future of our planet is of great importance. At a global level, we are faced with the international implications of climate change; population migration, deforestation, oceanic currents and weather changes, depletion of non-renewable resources, desertification, loss of biodiversity and the chemical loading of the atmosphere.

At a local level, issues around flooding, summer heat, pollution of the air, land and rivers, loss of wildlife habitats, agricultural yields and diseases, and the effects of waste disposal (including managing plastics). The majority of these problems are caused by the accumulation of local and global impacts.

It is therefore vital that local action is taken to protect our local environment in order to maintain and improve the quality of life of both present and future generations.

What is Climate Change?

Climate change refers to changes in the average weather experienced over a long period. This includes temperature, wind and rainfall patterns. The climate of the Earth is not static and has changed many times in response to a variety of natural causes. Facts:

- › The Earth has warmed by 0.74°C over the last hundred years. Around 0.4°C of this warming has occurred since the 1970s.
- › The recent Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) leaves us in no doubt that human activity is the primary driver of the observed changes in climate.
- › According to AR4, mean global temperatures are likely to rise between 1.1°C and 6.4°C (with a best estimate of 1.8°C to 4°C) above 1990 levels by the end of this century, depending on our emissions. This will result in a further rise in global sea levels of between 20cm and 60cm, continued melting of ice caps, glaciers and sea ice, changes in rainfall patterns and intensification of tropical cyclones.

What does this mean?

For the UK, climate change means hotter, drier summers (more heatwaves), milder winters, higher sea levels and an increased flood risk to coastal areas. Across the globe, there will be more intense heat waves, droughts and more flooding. There may be severe problems in regions where people are particularly vulnerable to changes in the weather. Population migration, water and food shortages and the spread of disease are commonly predicted. The social, environmental and economic costs of climate change could be huge.

Local impacts are harder to predict but flooding is a significant risk for Stafford. In addition, feeling safe and being able to live independently in your own home and surrounding area are vital to our wellbeing and ensuring the conditions to foster good health across the community is already a priority for the Borough Council.

Ozone pollution and an increased incidence of extreme weather events will have a negative effect on the health of those in affected areas. The scale of the health impacts [of climate change] will depend on the success of mitigation and adaptation measures and will vary between geographical areas and population groups .

Addressing both the causes and impacts of climate change can bring health improvements - for example, through policies that emphasise the importance of well insulated, affordable homes; that reduce air pollution; or encourage physical activity by active travel and increased access to green space. We have an opportunity to further increase community resilience, enhancing the capacity of residents to mitigate their individual impact on the environment and collectively having better emergency and disaster-preparedness.

What is Carbon Neutrality?

Carbon neutrality refers to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions. This can be achieved through the employment of two main methods; firstly, through the practice of “carbon offsetting”, and secondly through the elimination of carbon emissions altogether.

Carbon Offsetting

Carbon offsetting refers to the process of balancing carbon released into the atmosphere with carbon removed from the atmosphere. This necessitates a rate of removal beyond that which can be achieved from natural processes. Therefore, to successfully achieve carbon neutrality through the balancing of carbon-emissions, efforts must be made to either create or contribute to carbon removal schemes.

Carbon removal is an emerging field, with solutions to carbon removal being increasingly explored. However, there are also pre-existing solutions to carbon removal which can be easily integrated into the built and natural environment. For example, through the provision of a green network which continuously filters carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The removal of carbon from the atmosphere to balance carbon emissions is not an easy task and requires a commitment to the widespread deployment of a variety of carbon removal measures.

Eliminating Carbon Emissions

Perhaps the most obvious way to achieve carbon neutrality is to eliminate carbon emissions completely. However, this requires the transformation to alternative practices in all human activities which result in the release of carbon emissions. Whilst this will be both time and resource intensive, there are already solutions available which will aid in the realisation of this objective. For example, transforming energy systems through the installation of renewable energy infrastructure eliminates the need for fossil fuel consumption, meaning that our supply of electric will be carbon neutral.

Whilst the aforementioned methods involve different processes, it is important that they are not viewed in isolation from each other. To achieve carbon neutrality, and limit global warming, a holistic approach must be used. These processes work in synergy with each other; if carbon emissions are reduced, there is less carbon to be removed from the atmosphere. Therefore, these approaches must be used in tandem with each other. Only when this is achieved, will the worst effects of climate change be avoided.



Cycling on the Two Waters Meet Cycle-Path (Baswich to Tixall Road).

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