

**Cabinet**

**18 December 2013**



**Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan**

**Key Decision R&ED/12/13**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team  
Ian Thompson, Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development  
Councillor Brian Stephens Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships**

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**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To inform Cabinet of the progress of the Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan and request direction regarding carbon reduction targets.

**Background**

- 2 In December 2009 the Council set a county-wide carbon dioxide reduction target of 40% by 2020 which was taken forward by means of a low carbon masterplan, agreed by Cabinet in 2010. In light of the strategic context of carbon reduction as a corporate priority, this activity was reviewed in 2011 and an all encompassing approach that included partners and community wide activities was introduced in the form of a County Durham Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan. This would also take into account likely impacts arising from the forthcoming County Durham Plan.
- 3 In 2012 CMT was presented with a draft of the Climate Change Strategy and proposals for its further development including an outline of the Delivery Plan which focussed on actions to reduce emissions within the County and adapt to likely changes.
- 4 Within the County Durham Partnership, as part of the Altogether Greener theme, the Climate Change Strategy Group has overseen preparation of the Strategy and Delivery Plan, engaging with key stakeholders such as AAPs, Parish Councils and local groups. The resulting further actions and examples of local initiatives that are taking place within the County are detailed in the Delivery Plan.

**Strategy**

- 5 The Strategy sets out a clear vision and objectives to become established as a low carbon county. It acts as a bridge between the aims of the

Sustainable Community Strategy and the Climate Change Delivery Plan.  
The aims of the Strategy are:

- (i) to reduce the county's emissions by 40% by 2020 from 1990 levels, stating :  
We will reduce the demand for energy, ensure homes and businesses are energy efficient and will promote alternative low carbon forms of energy generation.
- (ii) to adapt to a changing climate stating:  
We will build upon the County Council's Adaptation Action Plan and ensure that individuals and organisations are more prepared for the challenges of a more extreme environment

6 The aims are assigned in more detail across seven themes:

- Public Sector Performance
- Low Carbon Economy
- Built Environment
- Natural Environment
- Transport and Infrastructure
- Community Engagement
- Impacts Beyond our Boundaries

## **Delivery Plan**

- 7 The Climate Change Delivery Plan takes the high level strategic objectives and translates them into local projects and actions. It details projects that are happening on the ground and key actions that are important to making progress in the seven themes. These are drawn from organisations and individuals across the County and demonstrate action at all scales, from individual residents to large organisations. Durham County Council is involved in a number of projects in the Plan; through Housing, the Warm up North scheme will be targeting energy efficiency and fuel poverty in the domestic sector whilst the Sustainability and Climate Change team are working with Business Durham to target the SMEs in Durham. The Business Energy Efficiency Project (BEEP) will develop low carbon businesses by offering support and signposting services that keep utility costs down and consequently lower carbon emissions.
- 8 Many other organisations and groups are represented in the Plan, and it is hoped that as it evolves, a greater number of examples will come forward.
- 9 The Delivery Plan will continue to strive towards a decarbonising of the economy, reducing fuel poverty and encouraging community ownership of emissions and renewables. In doing so it will aim to place Durham as a low carbon county, doing what it can to reduce emissions and preparing for the likely impacts.

- 10 Copies of the Consultation Strategy and Delivery Plan will be available for inspection at the meeting.

### Target Review

- 11 Durham County Council has set two targets for reducing carbon emissions.

**By 2020, reduce carbon emissions (from domestic, commercial, and transport sources) across County Durham by 40% from a 1990 baseline.** This was adopted first and is above the UK target of 34%. It is worth pointing out that the UK Government also has an 80% reduction target by 2050 so additional goals and targets will need setting to move towards this overall objective.

**By 2020, reduce carbon emissions (from domestic, commercial, and transport sources) across County Durham by 22% from a 2005 baseline.** This was adopted later as a condition of signing the Covenant of Mayors. This represents a greater reduction in emissions.

- 12 DECC have recently released performance data on 'carbon emissions within a Local Authority influence' and it shows Durham is progressing well towards its 2020 targets. The position in 2011 (the most recent year with data) shows we have achieved our 40% target and need to achieve just over another 4% saving before 2020 to achieve our stricter, Covenant of Mayors target. Comparing Durham with other areas, we are slightly ahead of the UK average reduction but behind the North East average.
- 13 Whilst we have successfully delivered a number of programmes reducing the carbon emissions from the County it is clear that external factors and the economic situation in particular, are having a significant influence on overall emissions. Emissions from domestic and commercial users are down and anecdotal evidence indicates that the financial situation is playing a major part in this situation.
- 14 In light of recent progress on reducing emissions, the targets in the Strategy could be revised. However, this must be considered within the context of contributing factors changing the data in the future. If the economy recovers and development increases in line with expected population increases, emissions are likely to pick up and we may miss any new, stricter targets.
- 15 Given the current position and the long lead-in to the UK Government's 2050 target it would be appropriate for DCC to choose an additional medium term target. Linking into the County Durham Plan timescale and choosing 2031 would be logical and a 55% reduction (from 1990 levels) is a suitable aspiration. This can obviously be reviewed by the Council as

data becomes available but it will give a realistic aspiration to work to whilst the Plan is active.

- 16 Projected and planned growth associated with the County Durham Plan and key sites such as the Hitachi plant at Newton Aycliffe will inevitably produce emissions. The County Durham Plan has worked to ensure sustainability has been incorporated into policies and site allocation but there will be increased carbon from development.
- 17 Given the scope of proposed development and increased population predicted in the County Durham Plan it will be useful to also track progress on a per capita basis. This will help give officers and members a useful comparison of progress and improvements from new developments.
- 18 It is proposed to undertake a public consultation using the attached Strategy and Delivery Plan in January and include any amendments to performance and targets in the final version. The consultation will be used for feedback on the documents but will be a first step in engaging with the wider community across Durham. The final version will be presented to Cabinet and the Altogether Greener Board in the first quarter of 2014/15 and will be updated annually.

#### **Recommendations and reasons**

- 19 That Cabinet;
  - (i) acknowledges progress towards the targets and proposes to retain the current targets for the initial publication but review them by April 2015. It is also proposed to track progress on a per capita basis to take account of the planned developments.
  - (ii) formalises a medium term 2031 target to link into the timescale of the County Durham Plan. A target of a 55% reduction (from 1990 levels) would be a suitable mid-point to initially aim for.
  - (iii) considers relevant projects that the authority and its partners are engaged in that will influence progress towards the targets and feeds this back for appraisal.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance –**

No immediate implications

### **Staffing –**

No immediate implications

### **Risk –**

Failure to address climate change will create increasing risks in the future.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty –**

Climate change impacts tend to have a greater impact on less wealthy or vulnerable people. The strategy will help prevent or reduce these impacts. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out.

### **Accommodation –**

None

### **Crime and Disorder –**

None

### **Human Rights –**

None

### **Consultation –**

Consultation with groups has been carried out in early 2013. A consultation plan for public consultation on the strategy and delivery plan has been prepared for January 2014.

### **Procurement –**

None

### **Disability Issues –**

None

### **Legal Implications –**

None