

Climate Change Engagement Activities (Climate Change, Stephanie Broadley)

Synopsis of report:

This report outlines a series of proposed methods for conducting early research and stakeholder engagement on the development of a Climate Change Action Plan, which will support delivery of the Council's Climate Change Strategy. The key objectives of the proposals are to:

- (A) engage and consult with key stakeholders to communicate a local narrative and build support for getting to net zero, in accordance with adopted local and national targets;
- (B) gather climate change 'behavioural insights' – collect evidence about the ways in which people and organisations currently behave and could be encouraged to change their behaviours. Gather information to better understand the barriers they face in making behaviour changes.

The findings from the consultation will help inform the type of actions the Council should incorporate into its Climate Change Action Plan.

Recommendations:

That Corporate Management Committee AGREES:

- (i) to approve the research and engagement plan set out in the report, including the use of online surveys for residents, businesses and young people as shown in draft format at Appendix 1;
- (ii) a commencement date of 1 June 2023 for implementing the engagement plan, including launching the online surveys for a period of six weeks;
- (iii) that the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman be given delegated authority to agree any further minor changes which are required to be made to the online surveys as shown in Appendix 1 prior to the consultation commencement date of 1 June 2023.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 The Corporate Business Plan 2022-2026 sets out how the Council will play a key role in creating a greener environment and ensuring an effective response to climate change. The Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030 describes how the Council will approach this and sets out Runnymede's 2030 climate vision: how the Council intends that all its operations will be carbon 'net zero' by 2030.
- 1.2 The Climate Change Strategy recognises that local, collaborative action by all is essential to protect our environment and livelihoods for future generations. A preliminary Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) was previously drafted to support delivery of the Climate Change Strategy, but it was not adopted by the Council, and

further work is required to ensure that any Action Plan developed is informed by robust evidence (such as the baseline emissions findings of the Climate Change Study) and feedback from stakeholder engagement and consultation. This will allow the Action Plan to include measures to encourage and enable changes in behaviour across the borough within the Council's sphere of influence, as well as actions to become net zero across our own estate and operations.

- 1.3 The Committee on Climate Change suggests that without changes to people's behaviours now, the national target of net zero by 2050 will not be achievable. An assessment by the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee estimates that 32% of emissions reductions up to 2035 require decisions by individuals and households to adopt low carbon technologies and choose low-carbon products and services, as well as reduce carbon-intensive consumption.
- 1.4 A key objective of the Runnymede Climate Change Strategy is to "*positively engage with residents, businesses, community groups, national and local government and universities to share information and encourage positive behavioural change to adapt to or mitigate climate change*". This recognises the important role that the Council has to play in influencing behaviour change to drive forward climate action, both within the Council as an organisation, and across the wider borough. It is anticipated that a key theme of the Council's CCAP will cover education, communication and influencing behaviour, but ahead of developing the CCAP, some initial research is required to understand how the local authority can most effectively work with partners, including the local community, to reduce carbon consumption through changed behaviours.

2 Report

- 2.1 This report outlines the proposed approach to early research and engagement that is required to inform the development of the Council's CCAP and the prioritisation of actions. A series of online surveys represents a key element of the engagement plan, and the proposed survey questions are attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 At the [14 July 2022 Corporate Management Committee](#) meeting, a budget was approved to fund the Climate Change Study. Stage 1 of the Study will establish the Council's emissions baseline and estimate carbon emissions trajectories for pathways out to 2030 and 2050. These findings will inform the Council's actions to meet its 2030 and 2050 net zero targets and will help the Council understand the strength of action required.
- 2.3 The findings of the Climate Change Study will be analysed to improve understanding about the potential carbon savings that could be made to the Council's baseline emissions through a range of actions, including through behavioural changes. In parallel, officers will conduct desk-based research to review existing national and local evidence on behavioural factors (capacity, opportunity, and motivation) relating to climate change, and on effective behavioural interventions to reduce carbon.
- 2.4 A third component of the research will be informed by early stakeholder engagement and consultation, which will help identify issues and/or barriers that the Council should consider in developing the actions under the behavioural change theme of the CCAP. Engaging the public early in the process will enable officers and members to build a deeper understanding of local preferences, aspirations and needs. This will support the development of policies/actions that are more likely to achieve public buy-in. Through the use of a range of engagement techniques (described in more detail in paragraphs 2.8-2.21 below), it is anticipated that the Council will be able to

reach beyond those they hear most often from, to a wider audience, which will help to build trust across different communities in the Borough and will help achieve a fair transition to net zero.

- 2.5 There are various consultation and involvement techniques available, but in order to achieve meaningful engagement using the resources available, it is proposed that a series of online surveys, and a number of focus groups/one-to-one interviews be carried out from 1 June to the end of August 2023 (although the online surveys will only be live for a period of 6 weeks given the additional time that will be needed to analyse the results). The aim of these engagement methods will be to:
- begin to communicate a positive vision and clear local narrative on climate change, particularly about how the public can help achieve climate and environment goals (recognising that most borough emissions are outside the direct control of the Council);
 - gain clarity about current attitudes towards climate change, and get an early indication of appetite for behaviour change;
 - understand actions that residents, organisations and young people have already taken, and identify the barriers people face in taking further action that the Council could try and address through its CCAP; and
 - start building support in the community for getting to net zero, and reduce the risk of resistance to any new policies and initiatives which may be introduced to help meet ambitious climate change targets.

- 2.6 There are a number of citizen climate change actions which can be explored in more detail through these early engagement methods – a selection are summarised in the following table:

<p>Sustainable Energy and Water Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use water saving devices • Avoid unnecessary water usage • Install insulation • Choose energy efficient appliances when purchasing or replacing • Install renewable energy devices in your home • Change to green energy tariff 	<p>Sustainable Diet, Purchasing and Consumption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce meat and dairy consumption • Buy local produce to reduce food miles • Reduce food waste • Make ethical food choices • Use reusable alternatives wherever possible • Correctly recycle materials • Reduce use of plastics
<p>Sustainable Travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce car/taxi use by using active forms of transport • Reduce car/taxi use by using public transport • Buy/lease an electric car • Avoid short haul flights by taking the train instead • Avoid long haul flights by choosing not to travel internationally • Avoid flights by working from home/conference/video calls • Avoid local travel by working from home/conference/video calls 	<p>Resilience to Climate Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify homes or neighbourhoods to be more resilient to heat and drought • Modify homes or neighbourhoods to be more resilient to storms and flooding

- 2.7 The Council's response to climate change will be supported by a Climate Change Communications Strategy. This will be a high-level strategy, which will be developed alongside the CCAP by the Council's Communications Team. This will be supported by annual Communications Action Plans to support the initiatives being pursued in each financial year. Campaigns and communications will be essential in keeping stakeholders (including local communities) informed of progress about the Council's work to address climate change. This will include, but is not limited to press releases, social media posts, website information and use of local newsletters and publications.

Online Surveys

- 2.8 Online surveys have been used by a multitude of local authorities as a research and engagement tool, to enable people to make their views known and to canvas public opinion. Online surveys have been designed containing different questions targeted at three key stakeholder groups: local residents (over 18s); businesses and other organisations; and young people (under 18s). Draft questions are attached at Appendix 1 – these may be subject to some further limited refinement in order to adapt the questions to the Built-ID 'Give My View' engagement platform (which the Council has secured Government funding to use for a limited number of projects, and which will host the climate change surveys). It is anticipated that the changes will be minor in nature and the substance of the questions as set out in Appendix 1 will not be affected.
- 2.9 The Council's Empowering our Communities Strategy emphasises the importance of reaching all parts of the community, including minority and hard-to-reach groups. The Built-ID 'Give My View' platform aims to empower community members to have an equal voice in decision-making, regardless of their socio-economic background. Built-ID will use targeted digital marketing to extend the reach of the survey to different groups across Runnymede, including minority and hard-to-reach groups. The platform is set up to be visual, intuitive and time conscious in design, thus contributing to the volume and diversity of participants expected to complete the survey. It is expected that the surveys will be promoted on a range of social media sites by Built-ID including Facebook, Instagram, and Linked-in to maximise response rates.
- 2.10 Businesses and other organisations are in a position to enable behaviour change through increasing the affordability and availability of greener products and services and engaging with customers and employees, but they need direction from local and national government if they are to act against their immediate financial interests. They may also struggle to prioritise their environmental performance due to limited capacity and/or rising operating costs of businesses. A bespoke survey has been created to encourage businesses and organisations to start thinking about the type of actions they need to pursue to contribute to climate change targets; and to explore some of the challenges and constraints they face in doing so.
- 2.11 The impacts of climate change are of great concern to young people around the world. It is particularly important to meaningfully engage with Runnymede's younger residents and students and amplify their voices in decisions on climate action and the future of their communities. A bespoke survey has therefore been created for the under-18s, which will be promoted to secondary/college age pupils who have a degree of familiarity with climate change terms. As reiterated in the Council's Empowering our Communities Strategy, the use of social media is the preferred route for many within the younger generations but Built-ID's targeted marketing to younger people is restricted. Whilst the 'Give my View' platform may be visited by under-18s,

the Council will need to assist with marketing of the survey through its own social media platforms and through methods described in paragraph 2.13 below.

- 2.12 The survey questions have been designed to probe into the barriers and challenges that people face in acting on climate change. The questions explore:
- views on net zero and climate change – whether people are concerned about climate change, whether climate change issues should take priority over other issues, and whether people support or oppose the Council’s net zero efforts;
 - climate action and barriers – a series of questions focusing on sector-by-sector actions (if any) people currently undertake, and what barriers they face in acting towards further improvements; and
 - ideas or suggestions for developing Runnymede’s CCAP.
- 2.13 To supplement Built-ID’s digital marketing strategy, links to the surveys will be advertised on the Council website and social media channels, and on publicity material in local libraries, at community events and on borough noticeboards (although printing of leaflets will be minimised and on recycled paper).
- 2.14 It is proposed that the survey be launched on 1 June 2023 for a period of six weeks, to coincide with the Great Big Green Week (running from 10-18 June 2023) where it will be heavily promoted at various events. Links to the survey can also be circulated on emails and information sent out as part of the Council’s involvement in the Surrey Youth Games, taking place over June. Officers will also promote the surveys amongst their own stakeholder networks and at other local events including:
- local schools, Royal Holloway University of London, the Runnymede Family Centre and other community contacts to assist in the promotion of the under-18s survey;
 - Residents Associations, Neighbourhood Forums and other local community groups, and at summer fairs (e.g. Black Cherry Fair, Chertsey) to publicise the survey to residents;
 - local business forums including the Town Centre groups, local Chambers of Commerce, and Runnymede Business Awards sponsors and attendees to assist in the promotion of the organisations/business survey. The survey will also be promoted on the Business Runnymede website and via the Council’s monthly business stakeholder newsletter.
- 2.15 Hard-copy surveys will also be made available on request for those who would struggle to complete the survey online, and to any under-13s wishing to complete the survey.

Supplementary Engagement Methods

- 2.16 Findings from the online surveys will be supplemented by outputs from a number of virtual/in-person focus groups and one-to-one interviews which will take place over three months from 1 June 2023.
- 2.17 Feedback from the Economic Development team suggests that achieving a good response rate from businesses will be challenging. It is therefore proposed that the online survey be supplemented by holding focus group sessions and/or one-to-one interviews, including with members of the Town Centre groups (a mix of local businesses and community representatives) and Egham Chamber of Commerce. There are also several opportunities to attend a number of business engagement meetings to discuss barriers/challenges directly with attendees.

- 2.18 It is also proposed that a focus group session takes place with local Residents Associations and Neighbourhood Forum representatives. Other voluntary/community groups will also be invited to the session in order to understand the barriers/issues that our communities face in delivering climate change actions, including through the neighbourhood planning process.
- 2.19 In addition to the communications support outlined in paragraph 2.7, officers will publicise the engagement activities in local libraries and on noticeboards around the Borough, and through newsletters and officer networks.
- 2.20 In addition to wider community engagement on the CCAP, feedback will be sought from Council staff representatives across all business centres at the internal Climate Change Officers Working Group in July. A session will be held as part of this meeting to gain insights into proposed CCAP actions and priorities for delivery, including those that fall under the theme of education, communication and influencing behaviour.
- 2.21 Outputs from all engagement methods will be analysed and presented in a 'Summary of Findings' document. Analysis will be used to help identify climate change actions, along with findings from the initial research set out in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3. The findings will also help the Council understand how actions should be prioritised for delivery. Feedback from engagement regarding the feasibility and co-benefits of actions will also be important considerations in action prioritisation.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 A key objective of the Council's Climate Change Strategy is to "*positively engage with residents, businesses, community groups, national and local government and universities to share information and encourage positive behavioural change to adapt to or mitigate climate change*". The Council's Empowering our Communities Strategy also emphasises the importance of reaching all parts of the community, including minority and hard-to-reach groups.
- 3.2 Built-ID is a software company whose mission is to use digital techniques to empower communities across all socio-economic backgrounds. Drawing on their expertise to design and deliver an online survey to explore climate change action, opportunities and challenges will help the Council engage with and listen to a wide spectrum of residents, organisations and young people across Runnymede, in accordance with the Council's strategic objectives. The supplementary engagement activities will also enable consultation with a wide range of stakeholders identified to be key in the development and delivery of climate change actions.

4. Resource implications/Value for Money

- 4.1 RBC has an existing contract with Built-ID to supply the community engagement platform 'Give My View'. This includes an allowance for targeted digital marketing throughout the period of consultation to promote the online surveys.
- 4.2 Officers will ensure they achieve best value for money by working closely with Built-ID and the Council's Communications team to optimise the survey response rate as far as possible within the agreed budget. A variety of communication methods will be used prior to the launch of the survey, and during the course of the consultation period.

4.3 Work on the design and delivery of the engagement methods will be managed by the Council's Climate Change and Planning Policy teams through existing staff resources, as will the analysis of survey findings. The Planning Policy team will work with the Climate Change Officer to translate findings into the draft Climate Change Action Plan.

5. **Legal implications**

5.1 More than 190 countries, including the UK, have adopted the Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change reached at COP21 in 2015. The Agreement aims to keep a rise in global temperatures to below 2°C from pre-industrial levels, by the end of this century.

5.2 The overarching target for the Borough and the UK is to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Under the Climate Change Act 2008, the UK is legally required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% by 2050 on 1990 levels. In addition, the Council adopted its own climate change target in January 2022 'to achieve operational 'Net Zero Carbon' emissions from its services and operations by 2030'.

6. **Equality implications**

6.1 The Council has a Public Sector Duty under the Equality Act 2010 (as amended) to have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation;
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a Protected Characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share those characteristics;
- in relation to the 9 'Protected Characteristics' stated within the Act.

6.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been prepared in support of this report. This highlights the anticipated positive impacts on protected characteristics due to the proposed use of a variety of consultation and engagement techniques to capture views from a wide variety of stakeholders, including from different socio economic and hard to reach groups, as well as from a range of age groups. It is also considered relevant that the online survey will contain a range of equalities questions. It is hoped that this will help officers identify any notable gaps in terms of who has engaged with the Council so that officers can consider the use of supplementary engagement techniques (beyond those listed in the officer report) if necessary before the end of the summer. The overall approach proposed should help ensure that people with different protected characteristics are able to be part of this early engagement on climate change and contribute their views. Equalities implications will continue to be reassessed throughout the development of the events with further assessment being carried out as necessary. The Equalities Impact Assessment screening can be viewed as Appendix 2.

7. **Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

7.1 The objectives set out in the Climate Change Strategy seek to enhance the environment and to promote sustainability and biodiversity. The findings from early

engagement will inform actions in the CCAP, the purpose of which is to support delivery of the Climate Change Strategy.

- 7.2 The purposes of the engagement plan set out in paragraph 2.5 above will contribute to the successful delivery of climate change actions, which will lead to environmental improvements across the Borough.

8. **Timetable for Implementation**

- 8.1 The research and engagement plan described in this report will be implemented from 1 June 2023. After Built-ID have designed and tested the survey, the online surveys will be launched on 1 June 2023 ahead of the Great Big Green Week. It is proposed that the consultation period will last for six weeks, with reminders to complete the survey being generated periodically over this period. The focus groups and one-to-one interviews, and publicity at local events, will take place over June, July and August 2023.

- 8.2 Findings will be analysed over the summer and used to inform the development of the CCAP actions this Autumn.

9. **Conclusions**

- 9.1 The Council needs to identify challenges and opportunities in driving forward action on climate change to help achieve local and national net zero targets. Early engagement with residents, organisations, young people and other key stakeholders, in addition to initial research, will improve the Council's understanding of barriers and challenges that people face in changing their behaviour and acting on climate change. Consulting the public in the development of the CCAP will also be an important first step in raising awareness of and building support for delivering actions to achieve net zero objectives.

(To resolve)

Background papers

Appendix 1 – Draft Residents, Businesses/Organisations and Young People Surveys
Appendix 2 - Equalities Impact Assessment Screening