

TITLE	Future Scrutiny of the Climate Emergency Action Plan
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 16 September 2020
WARD	None Specific
DIRECTOR	Graham Ebers, Deputy Chief Executive

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Developing an efficient and effective Overview and Scrutiny function which can hold the Executive to account and ensure that residents' concerns and priorities are addressed.

Climate Emergency will be a major issue for all residents and future generations living in the Borough. Effective Scrutiny of the Council's plans will help to ensure that residents' priorities and concerns are addressed.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- 1) consider the options set out in the report to deliver effective ongoing Scrutiny of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan;
- 2) determine which option to pursue.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

At its meeting on 22 January 2020, the Committee considered the Council's initial Climate Emergency Action Plan. At its meeting on 19 February 2020, the Committee agreed to establish the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish Group met seven times over the summer and produced a report which is included in the Agenda for this meeting.

The Task and Finish Group felt that the Climate Emergency Action Plan was an ambitious, positive start which required ongoing support and Scrutiny. Consequently, this report sets out the options available to the Committee in order to achieve that ongoing Scrutiny.

Background

At its meeting on 22 January 2020, the Committee considered the Council's initial Climate Emergency Action Plan. Due to the ongoing significance and public interest in Climate Emergency, the Committee requested a further report on the following terms:

“A report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee, setting out options for effective Scrutiny of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, one option being the establishment of a separate Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee”.

At the meeting on 19 February 2020, the Committee agreed to establish the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish Group comprised Keith Baker, Andy Croy, Andrew Mickleburgh, Malcolm Richards and Alison Swaddle (Chairman).

The Task and Finish Group met seven times and produced a report which is set out earlier in the Agenda. The Group concluded that the latest iteration of the Action Plan (July 2020) was an ambitious document, in line with best practice across the country. However, there were a number of areas in the Action Plan which required further work. The Group concluded that Climate Emergency was a crucial issue for the Borough and the development of the Action Plan would benefit from ongoing support and Scrutiny.

Climate Emergency will be a key issue for the Council for years to come. It will also be an issue of significant interest for residents, Town and Parish Councils, community groups, schools and businesses. It is important, therefore, that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees have the capacity to carry out the necessary detailed scrutiny whilst maintaining their focus on other key issues affecting the Borough.

Options

The options for continuing Scrutiny of the Climate Emergency Action Plan are set out below.

Option 1 – establish an additional Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Option 2 – maintain the current Overview and Scrutiny structure and scrutinise the Action Plan through regular reports.

Option 3 – maintain or refresh the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group.

Analysis of Issues

From earlier discussions on managing the Overview and Scrutiny workload, Members will recall the implications of setting up another Committee, including:

- further work on adjusting the political balance arrangements across all Committees – because of the complexity of undertaking this task any proposed change should wait until the start of the 2021/22 Municipal Year;
- reference to the Constitution Review Working Group in relation to updating the Council's Constitution re the new Committee's terms of reference, etc.;

- additional costs relating to the Chairman’s annual Special Responsibility Allowance (£2.5k) and the costs of arranging and servicing additional meetings.

The Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group has been effective in scrutinising the current version of the Climate Emergency Action Plan. The Group met seven times between May and September 2020 and has produced a detailed report with 13 recommendations for improvement. A smaller group of Members allows more flexibility, for example in arranging meetings. As an example, the Task and Finish Group could reconvene in January 2021, following the six-monthly update of the Action Plan, in order to carry out Scrutiny before the annual update of the Action Plan in July 2021.

It is suggested that the Scrutiny process be reviewed following the annual update of the Climate Emergency Action Plan in July 2021.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0	N/A	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£2,500	No	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£2,500	No	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of £2,500 per annum.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

None

Public Sector Equality Duty

Due regard has been given to the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Climate Emergency Action Plan includes an Equality Impact Assessment.

List of Background Papers

Council Constitution - Section 6

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