



# **Warwick District Council's Strategic approach to sustainability and climate change 2016 to 2020**

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# Strategic approach to sustainability and climate change for Warwick District Council

## Introduction

The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit.

The FFF Strategy has 3 strands – People, Services and Money and each has an external and internal element to it. Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies of relevance to this strategy are the 'Clean, Green and Safe'.

In line with FFF, this document outlines how the Council is on its journey to make the District more sustainable, by addressing key issues such as climate change, energy security and depletion of natural resources. It defines our strategic aims and associated objectives, and presents an action plan - covering the period 2016-2019 - which describes how the aims and objectives will be fulfilled in the short-to-medium term.

*Why do we need to define a strategic approach to sustainability?*

Sustainability is a complex, multi-faceted and ever-evolving issue, and one which frequently involves making choices between competing priorities. Therefore, if it is to be addressed effectively, aims and objectives need to be defined and priorities set.

The Council recognises that in its role as a public authority, service provider and community leader it is uniquely placed to make a significant difference to the sustainability of the District, both through the actions it takes to address its own impacts and vulnerabilities and its influence in the wider community.

## Priority issues relating to sustainability to be addressed by this strategic approach Greenhouse gas emissions

It is widely accepted that climate change is happening and that greenhouse gas emissions - primarily of carbon dioxide resulting from the burning of fossil fuels to generate energy for domestic, commercial / industrial and transport uses are the main cause. The UK is committed under the Climate Change Act 2008 to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 34% by 2020 and 80% by 2050, using 1990 as a baseline.

In March 2011, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change and the Vice-Chair of the Local Government Association signed a Memorandum of Understanding<sup>1</sup> designed to recognise the pivotal role that local councils have in taking action to combat climate change by taking action to:

- reduce energy consumption from their own estate and from homes, businesses and transport;

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<sup>1</sup> DCLG & LGA, 2011. *Memorandum of Understanding between the Local Government Association and the Department of Energy and Climate Change*

- create more renewable energy generation; and,
- Participate in national initiatives at the local level.

## Climate change

Climate change adaptation is high on the central government agenda, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) having stated "*Local Government plays a central role in leading and supporting local places to become more resilient to a range of future risks and to be prepared for the opportunities from a changing climate.*"

The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017 states there has been a global increase in temperature of 0.85°C since 1880 and this is mirrored in the UK climate with higher average temperatures and some evidence of extreme weather events. There is a trend towards milder winters and hotter summers in recent decades. In addition sea levels have risen by 15-12cm since 1990. Whilst natural variability in the climate will have a considerable influence on individual weather events, the recent episodes of severe and sustained rainfall are consistent with the climate change projections.

The earth's climate is changing, and projections indicate that, regardless of what actions are taken now and in the future to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, weather patterns will continue to change over the coming decades as a result of historic emissions. We therefore need to take actions to enable us to adapt to these changing climatic conditions.

Unless we are able to adapt, this will result in adverse impacts on human health, habitats and biodiversity, food security, and infrastructure. Along with increasing temperatures, we will see reduced summer rainfall, with projections indicating a 20% reduction by 2080. Summer droughts are therefore likely to occur much more frequently. Winters, on the other hand, are likely to be warmer and wetter, with rainfall predicted to increase by 5% by 2020 and 18% by 2080. Rainfall events are also likely to become more intense, resulting in more frequent flooding and storm damage, with areas already vulnerable becoming more so if interventions are not made.

The impacts of climate change are already being felt in the District, and have led to significant disruption and costs in dealing with emergencies and repairing the damage. Despite implementation of a number of recent alleviation schemes, river flooding is still a cause of concern. Historically, rainfall events of sufficient severity to cause widespread flooding have occurred approximately every two or three decades, but the frequency of such storms is steadily increasing and they are now occurring at a frequency of every ten years or less, with major events recorded in 1998, 2007 and 2016, together with a near miss in 2012. The District also experienced heat waves in 2003 and 2006, gales in 2005 and cold snaps in 2009 and 2010.

The Council recognises that climate change poses a threat to its services and includes it the organisation's Significant Business Risk Register. The impacts of climate change will be felt across all service areas, and robust plans are needed in order to mitigate the risks.

## Energy efficiency in buildings

Reducing energy consumption produces a wide range of benefits including: cost savings; carbon emissions reductions; creation of jobs; greater security of energy supply; and, protection against future increases in fuel costs. It is an area that we as a local authority, in our position as domestic and commercial landlord, private sector housing regulator, energy consumer and community leader, are in a position to significantly influence.

Under the provisions of the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA), the Council has a legal duty to promote domestic energy efficiency in the District, and every two years is required to prepare a report setting out the energy conservation measures that the authority considers practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area.

One of the biggest challenges in reducing domestic energy use in the District is with the existing privately-owned stock. Despite a history of grants and incentive schemes designed to encourage homeowners to install energy efficiency measures, there still remain a large number of unfilled cavities and poorly insulated lofts, leaving scope for significant improvements in this area.

Where the Council's own housing stock is concerned, whilst almost all have been fitted with energy efficient boilers, minimum levels of loft insulation and, where appropriate, cavity wall insulation, there are still a significant number of so-called 'hard to treat' properties, which are older dwellings with uninsulated solid walls. A full condition survey of the entire stock has been carried out, which will inform a long-term investment strategy. This will include options for upgrading energy efficiency ratings.

In terms of the Council's operational buildings, for the larger properties we are required each year, by law, to produce a Display Energy Certificate (DEC), which provides a benchmark of how much energy they use. The DEC ratings for applicable buildings for 2017-18 are shown in Appendix 1.

Performance varies greatly between the buildings, as do the opportunities for improvement. The future of the stock is currently under consideration and options for potential future energy efficiency improvements and reducing running costs will be a key consideration in reaching decisions.

Despite Warwick District's relative affluence, the latest fuel poverty data that is available (2015 data that was issued by BEIS in 2017) identifies that 12.3% of households within the district live in fuel poverty an increase on the previous year where it was 10.8% in 2014 and 11.1% in 2013. Warwick and neighbouring district of Stratford-upon-Avon have the highest levels of fuel poverty of any local authority area in Warwickshire. The average for the county is 12.2%, whilst for the West Midlands it is 13.5% and for England as a whole 11%.

This is a serious issue and with rising fuel costs one which without concerted effort is likely to become much more pronounced in the future.

The Council has a Service Level Agreement with the local charity Act on Energy and works with agencies across the District, on a variety of initiatives. Progress on fuel poverty is addressed through the Sustainability Officer Group, Health and Wellbeing Group and Financial Inclusion Group. At a County level, there is the Health & Wellbeing Group and partnership meetings with others working with Act on Energy.

## **Renewable and low-carbon energy**

### *Solar photovoltaics (PV)*

According to the latest Department of Energy and Climate Change statistics in 2014, there are over 1000 domestic solar photovoltaic systems in the District for which the Feed-in Tariff is being paid, together with 40 non-domestic systems here are also a large (2MW) rooftop array at the Wolseley headquarters, plus two solar farms within the district.

Encraft estimates that that around 28% of the District's housing stock (approximately 17,000) properties) are theoretically suitable for a roof-mounted solar PV or solar thermal system.

### *Wind energy*

The 2014 published statistics state that there is 1 small-scale system currently registered to receive the Feed-in Tariff. There are no large turbines in the District.

According to Encraft estimates, there are a sufficient number of suitable rural locations to install small- and medium-scale wind turbines which are realistically deployable by 2026.

### *Hydro electricity*

There are currently no hydro schemes within the District. Due to the complexities of the permitting regime and the limited number of locations suitable for hydro, the realistic potential is small. However, the council will continue to review all possible options.

### *Renewable and low-carbon heat technologies – biomass, heat pumps (water, air and ground source), solar thermal, biogas/biomethane*

Renewable and low-carbon heat technologies are particularly suitable for properties that are off the gas grid, because for these properties fuel costs are usually significantly higher than for grid-connected properties. In 2015 within Warwick District, some 13% of dwellings were off-grid, (approximately 7,800).

Encraft estimates that at least 21.8MW of renewable and low-carbon heat technologies are realistically deployable across the District up until 2026.

### *Council's own estate*

The Council has installed a number of solar PV arrays and biomass boilers for its housing stock, and has embarked upon a programme of converting several buildings with communal heating into biomass-fuelled systems. In the past, consideration has been given to installing hydro turbines at Jephson Gardens and Princes Drive and the proposals were not progressed, mainly due to technical and financial uncertainties that were relevant at the time. However, opportunities for renewable and low-carbon energy are planned as part of new office headquarters.

## Staff travel

In order to conduct the functions of the council, staff must travel for business purposes. In 2014 staff travelled 273,000 miles on business, and travel-related carbon dioxide emissions were responsible for just under 10% of our total carbon footprint. In 2015, the figure was 245,892 miles, in 2016 it was 173,615 miles and in 2017 173,055 miles. Cycling claim mileage accounted for 33 miles in 2016 and 132 miles in 2017. In terms of staff commuting, a travel survey carried out in November / December 2013 revealed that 88% of staff usually travel to work by car (79% as the sole occupant and 9% as car sharers), despite the fact that 46% of employees live within 5 miles and 66% live within 10 miles of their place of work. A refresh of the 'Travel Plan for Warwick District Council 2016-19' is currently being undertaken and more recent data is to be obtained, The Council are working towards lowering the impact of staff travel arrangements.

## Other aspects of sustainability

As sustainability is such a wide subject area. There are either aspects of the sustainability agenda not covered in this strategy or are given less emphasis than the issues discussed above. This is because they are issues over which the Council has little influence and/or because they are addressed through other means. However we will continue to contribute to the wider sustainability agenda in these areas.

These aspects include:

- **Waste**, addressed primarily through Warwickshire's Municipal Waste Management Strategy<sup>2</sup>;
- **Air quality**, covered by the Warwick District Air Quality Action Plan<sup>3</sup>;
- **Water quality**, dealt with primarily by other agencies, for example the Environment Agency and DEFRA by means of river basin management plans. Warwick District is covered by the Severn River Basin Plan<sup>4</sup>;
- **Transport**, addressed by the Warwickshire Local Transport Plan<sup>5</sup> and the Warwick and Leamington Sustainable Transport Strategy; and,
- **Biodiversity**, covered by the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity

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<sup>2</sup> Warwickshire Waste Partnership, 2013. *Warwickshire's Municipal Waste Management Strategy*. Adopted October 2005, Updated December 2013

<sup>3</sup> Warwick District Council, 2008. *Warwick District Air Quality Action Plan 2008*.

<sup>4</sup> Department for Environment and Rural Affairs & Environment Agency, 2009. *Water for life and livelihoods. River Basin Management Plan for Severn River Basin District*

<sup>5</sup> Warwickshire County Council, 2011. *Warwickshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026*

Action Plan<sup>6</sup> and, at the District level, by the Green Space Strategy<sup>7</sup> and management plans covering specific sites, for example Jephson Gardens<sup>8</sup> and Oakley Wood<sup>9</sup>.

However, any cross over with this approach action plan will be reported through the action plan successes.

## Strategic aims and objectives

Given the size and complexity of the challenge of addressing the risks and opportunities presented by sustainability and climate change, the Council cannot act in isolation, but rather must engage and work in partnership with the wider community. Therefore, in defining this strategy, three overarching aims have been set, as follows:

1. Embed sustainability at a strategic level within the organisation;
2. Address our own impacts relating to sustainability and ensure our physical assets and operations remain resilient in the face of a changing climate; and,
3. Promote and enable sustainability and climate change resilience in the wider district.

For each of these strategic aims, a number of specific objectives were defined in 2016, based around the priorities discussed in Section 2. These objectives are shown in Appendix 2.

## How the strategic aims and objectives will be achieved

The means by which each of these objectives will be achieved is detailed in the Action Plan presented in the Appendix 3 to this document. The Plan will be updated on an ongoing basis, to reflect updated information and new opportunities as they arise.

A Sustainability Officers Group has been established to ensure the delivery and the integration of the sustainability agenda into the operational delivery of council services and activities.

Where an action has significant budgetary implications a business case will be produced, and if the expenditure is approved it will be incorporated into the relevant Service Area Plans(s) for the appropriate year(s).

## Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring of progress made towards meeting the aims and objectives of this strategy will be the responsibility of the Sustainability Officer, reporting through the Head of Health and Community Protection to the Senior Management Team on a half-yearly basis. The strategy will be reviewed annually. The next review is due in June 2019.

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<sup>6</sup> Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Biodiversity Action Partnership, 2014. *Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Biodiversity Action Plan*

<sup>7</sup> Warwick District Council, 2012. *Green Space Strategy for Warwick District 2012-2026*

<sup>8</sup> Warwick District Council, 2013. *Jephson Gardens and Mill Gardens Management Plan 2013-2018*

<sup>9</sup> Warwick District Council, 2009. *Woodland Management Plan 2009-2029: Oakley Wood, January 2009, updated March 2009*

## Appendix 1: DEC ratings for Council–owned buildings

Building	2017/18 Rating
26 Hamilton Terrace	C - 74
Althorpe Enterprise Hub	C - 68
Edmonscote Pavilion	B - 42
Harbury Lane	A - 11
Jubilee House	G - 187
Newbold Comyn Pavilion	G - 159
Oakley Wood Crematorium	F - 128
Pageant House	E - 124
Riverside House	C - 75
Royal Pump Rooms	E - 120
Royal Spa Centre	B - 41
Spencers Yard	C - 53
Temperate House	G - 203
Town Hall	C - 75
Victoria Park Bowls Pavilion	B - 29
Victoria Park Cricket and Tennis Pavilion	A - 15