

Report title	Climate Change Communications Plan 2024/25
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Department	Planning, Economy & Built Environment
Exempt?	No

Purpose of report:

To resolve

Synopsis of report:

This report details the contents of the proposed Climate Change Communications Plan for the 2024-25 financial year. The Plan, which can be viewed at Appendix A of the report, outlines how Runnymede Borough Council will engage and communicate with relevant partners and communities to encourage positive behavioural changes in response to climate change. The Plan identifies anti-idling and food waste as the focus of campaigns for the coming financial year, which have been selected based on feedback received from Members following two presentations at the Climate Change Members Working Party. The Plan sets out the overarching strategy, audience, planned objectives, and timelines for each campaign.

This report seeks Committee approval of the proposed Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25 for Runnymede Borough Council so that officers can begin implementation aligned to the timelines set out in the report from 1 April 2024.

Recommendation(s):

That the Corporate Management Committee:

1. **APPROVES the proposed Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25 at Appendix A with implementation commencing on Monday 1 April 2024.**

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, adopted in October 2022, 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. The Strategy also sets out how the Council will work with local community groups and a range of other stakeholders to reach net zero carbon emissions across the wider borough by 2050, in line with national targets.
- 1.2 At Full Council on 7 December 2023, Runnymede Borough Council resolved to declare a climate emergency. In declaring a climate emergency, the Council will use its reasonable endeavours to continue its work to meet the Council’s target of net zero operational

emissions by 2030, and to use its sphere of influence to support the Borough and its communities to achieve the 2050 national net zero target for the UK.

- 1.3 To support the Council's net zero targets, a Climate Change Action Plan has also been prepared and was subsequently adopted by the Council on 29th February 2024. Action ID 8.2 states that the Council will "Work with our partners and communities to encourage positive behavioural changes, supported by annual communications plans, which co-ordinate priorities and campaigns".
- 1.4 The Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25 has been developed based on resident feedback to members and officers directly during general engagement and by using evidence from the climate change summer of engagement outcomes, internal discussion with relevant service areas, external discussion with relevant organisations, suitable literature, and feedback from Members following presentations at the Climate Change Working Party in November and January. This information has been utilised by officers to steer the campaign focus areas and develop the engagement approaches in the Plan.
- 1.5 The proposed anti-idling campaign aligns with Action ID 3.9 in the Climate Change Action Plan which states the Council will "Publicise and share information about cycling, walking, and sustainable transport initiatives". Idling, defined for the purpose of this report as leaving engines running while stationary for longer than a minute, can be a notable source of localised air pollution. This has the consequence of not only increasing greenhouse gas emissions when compared to turning off an engine, but also can contribute to public health issues such as lung disease and reduced lung capacity within children. Avoiding idling behaviour also has the potential to save money for drivers, and therefore enables messaging to target multiple co-benefits of reducing this behaviour.
- 1.6 The proposed food waste campaign aligns with Action ID 4.6 in the Climate Change Action Plan which states that the Council will "Engage and collaborate with partners to facilitate behaviour change in Runnymede's local communities, adopting more sustainable and resilient waste practices". According to the Love Food, Hate Waste campaign, 18 million tonnes of carbon dioxide are generated by UK homes from wasted consumable food and drink, and eight meals could be saved each week per household if we stopped binning our food at home. Reducing food waste therefore presents both environmental and financial benefits, while recycling food in Surrey creates bio-fertiliser and biogas which is used to generate electricity, heat, and transport fuel according to the Surrey Environment Partnership. There is an ongoing food waste project to introduce more food waste bins and toolbox talks to Council housing stock and communal properties, which achievement of the planned objectives of the Communications Plan may support.
- 1.7 It should be noted that the Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25 provides a high-level strategy for implementing the anti-idling and food waste campaigns. This breadth is necessary in allowing officers to adopt an evidence-based approach to development of more detailed campaign resources and appropriate engagement methods with key implementing partners and engaged groups.

2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended

- 2.1 The main purpose of the Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25 is to support positive behavioural changes related to climate change and sustainability in Runnymede. The Council has a key role to play in using its sphere of influence to encourage more sustainable behaviours across Runnymede with residents, local groups, and organisations. Communication is a central element of changing behaviours, by giving accurate, frequent, and up to date information as reflected in the COM-B model of behaviour change. This

model, the Council's role, and the contribution of communications in encouraging behaviour change is outlined in Section 1 of the Plan which can be viewed at Appendix A.

- 2.2 When considering the individual campaigns in more detail, the Anti-Idling campaign will progress through two streams: in schools and at level crossings. The Plan recognises that these are areas where idling is either likely to be particularly prevalent due to long waiting times, or where individuals may be particularly affected by the impacts of idling behaviour. These campaigns are outlined from Section 2 to Section 4 of the Plan.
- 2.3 The Anti-Idling Schools campaign will focus on junior schools in Runnymede, recognising that this age group is more likely to be dropped off and collected by car than travelling independently. The planned objectives of this campaign are:
- To engage junior schools in Runnymede on the issue of idling behaviour;
 - To run interactive education assemblies on idling behaviour and its impacts on the environment and public health;
 - To provide schools and students with educational and information resources related to idling which can then be promoted by schools and partners through their own channels (e.g., social media, newsletters, parent emails);
 - To have anti-idling included in all school safer travel plans of engaged schools; and,
 - To support schools, as appropriate, in any further actions or monitoring they wish to undertake related to anti-idling behaviour.
- 2.4 To achieve these objectives, the Council will work closely, and on an ongoing basis with schools Senior Leadership Teams and Surrey County Council's Safer Travel Team. The campaign will be implemented across the 2024-25 financial year, with Q1 (April-June) focussed on schools' outreach and resource development, Q2 (July-September) on delivery of assemblies in schools, targeting September when returning from the summer holidays in most cases. The remainder of the campaign (October-March) will focus on supporting and empowering schools to continue their work to reduce idling behaviour into the future.
- 2.5 The Anti-Idling Level Crossings' campaigns will focus on three level crossings in Runnymede borough: Station Road in Addlestone, Station Road in Egham, and Guildford Road in Chertsey. The planned objectives of this campaign are:
- To develop anti-idling behavioural change messaging based on best practice examples;
 - To identify new locations for anti-idling signage, working with relevant partners;
 - To replace current signage with larger, striking, and eye-catching signage and implement signage into newly identified locations, working with relevant partners;
 - To work with Surrey County Council and Network Rail as key campaign partners with the aim of encouraging them to promote the campaign through their own channels; and,
 - To launch an anti-idling pledge platform for drivers pledging not to idle, aiming for at least 100 sign-ups and providing pledged drivers with promotional materials e.g., car stickers.
- 2.6 To achieve these objectives, the Council will work closely with Surrey County Council and Network Rail as key implementation partners in the development of a six-week public campaign alongside implementation of anti-idling infrastructure and messaging at level crossings. The campaign will be implemented across the 2024-25 financial year, with Q1 focussed on working with partners to identify existing signage and sites for additional signage, Q2 on the development of campaign resources and pledge platform, Q3 on

launching the anti-idling campaign with key partners, and Q4 on a review of campaign outcomes.

- 2.7 Section 5 acknowledges the importance of engaging internally on anti-idling with Council drivers (staff, elected Members and fleet operators) which will be developed with relevant service areas throughout the year.
- 2.8 The Food Waste campaign will focus borough wide targeting all residents that can recycle food waste, and is outlined in Section 6 of Appendix A. The campaign will focus both on reducing food waste and encouraging residents to recycle any food waste that is produced, in close partnership with the Surrey Environment Partnership (SEP). The planned objectives of this campaign are:
- To run a targeted residents survey to better understand current food waste behaviours and barriers to reducing/recycling food waste;
 - To identify food waste behaviours in Runnymede which could inform food waste campaigns using SEP data, alongside any obtained survey data;
 - To use learnings to create campaign resources which raise awareness of the importance of reducing and recycling of food waste;
 - To use learnings to create campaign resources which demonstrate to campaign recipients how to reduce and recycle food waste (e.g., recipes, instructional videos, where waste goes); and,
 - To partner and work closely with SEP on food waste campaigns.
- 2.9 To achieve these objectives, the Council will produce data-informed six-week campaigns on reducing food waste and recycling food waste, and how this can be done. Officers will seek opportunities to include lesser utilized messaging in these campaigns which reduce waste more holistically in the food supply chain, such as a focus on local food growing, and link these with other ongoing Council initiatives. SEP will be a close partner throughout this campaign to ensure all efforts are coordinated toward a common goal, and to avoid any work duplication or confusion among residents. The campaign will be implemented across the 2024-25 financial year, with Q1 focussed on exploring the feasibility of running a targeted resident survey on food waste and reviewing SEP data, Q2 on developing campaign materials and launch of first campaign (subject to review with SEP), Q3 on evaluating the first campaign and launching the second campaign, and Q4 on evaluating the second campaign.
- 2.10 Section 7 focusses on campaign monitoring and recognises the challenges with monitoring the success of environmental communications campaigns, including the difficulty establishing causal relationships between providing information and behaviour change. These are recognised by officers and are reflected in the planned objectives approaches and wording with focus on campaign delivery and specific, measurable outcomes where possible. Officers will also explore opportunities, in collaboration with partners and independently, to monitor the success of campaigns using existing methods and new approaches where feasible.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The Paris Agreement which is a legally binding international treaty on climate change was adopted by 196 Parties, including the UK at COP 21 in Paris on 12 December 2015 and came into force on 4 November 2016. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, preferably 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to preindustrial levels.

- 3.2 In June 2019, Parliament passed The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019, which requires the Government to reduce the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100 per cent relative to 1990 levels by 2050.
- 3.3 In October 2022, the Council adopted its Climate Change Strategy which reconfirms the Council's commitment to acting on climate change. This strategy acknowledges the relevance of the national 2050 net zero target for the wider Borough of Runnymede and includes the strategic objective that the Council will "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".
- 3.4 In December 2023, the Council resolved to declare a climate emergency, recognising that the consequences of global temperatures rising above 1.5 degree Celsius are so severe that preventing this from happening must be humanity's priority. As such, the Council committed to using its reasonable endeavours to continue its work to meet the Council's target of net zero operational emissions by 2030, and to use its sphere of influence to support the Borough and its communities to achieve the 2050 national net zero target for the UK.

4 Resource implications/Value for Money

- 4.1 Production of the Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25 has taken place in-house, as will the production of communications materials for individual campaigns in collaboration with relevant partners. Implementing the Plan will require combined resources from the Climate Change and Communications teams working closely with partners and organisations operating across the borough, including those with responsibility for specific functions, such as Surrey County Council for highways and Network Rail for level crossings.
- 4.2 Within the Climate Change budget, there is £1500 available for the FY 2024-25 to support implementation of the Communications Plan. While this is a modest budget for a communications campaign, officers have considered methods by which the communications plan can be implemented in a cost-effective manner that makes the best use of this budget. However, it is difficult to establish the specific costs of each campaign until implementation begins. Therefore, should additional monies be required for the implementation of the Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25, this will be sought through external funding streams.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 The UK's Climate Change Act 2008 sets a legally binding UK-wide carbon budget and commits the UK to 'net zero emissions' by 2050. The UK has also signed and ratified the United Nations Paris Agreement – a legally binding international treaty - which commits signatories to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees centigrade.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 (as amended). Section 149 of the Act provides that we must have due regard to the need to;
 - a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - b) advance equality of opportunity
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share protected characteristics.

In regard to the nine 'protected characteristics' stated within the Act.

6.2 The proposed Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25 has been screened to establish whether there may be an impact, whether positive or negative, on any of the nine protected characteristics, as shown in Appendix B. It is concluded that, with regard to the anti-idling, there may be a positive impact on the protected characteristics of Age and Disability. Where food waste is concerned, the challenge is ensuring all people who wish to be engaged in the surveys are able to do so and officers will consider a range of options on how to achieve this.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

7.1 The Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25 aims to reduce the prevalence of environmentally damaging behaviours across the borough and encourage a shift towards more sustainable alternatives. Consequently, both the anti-idling and food waste campaigns are expected to deliver environmental and sustainability benefits.

7.2 Idling behaviour increases the quantity of exhaust fumes in the air, including carbon dioxide which is a greenhouse gas and major contributor to climate change. According to a report by UK-based sustainable research firm Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), idling for a 30-second period produces nearly twice as much pollution as switching off then restarting the engine. Consequently, discouraging idling behaviour would provide environmental benefits through reduced exhaust emissions, including carbon dioxide, and contribute to improved local air quality.

7.3 Food waste produces significant environmental harms. As set out in section 1 of this report, 18 million tonnes of carbon dioxide are generated by UK homes from wasted consumable food and drink, and eight meals per household could be saved each week if we stopped binning our food at home. Reducing food waste therefore provides environmental benefits through the reduction of these carbon dioxide emissions, whilst reducing demand for additional food to be grown. Where food at home is not used, recycling food waste in Surrey creates bio-fertiliser and biogas which is used to generate electricity, heat, and transport fuel, supporting sustainability objectives by ensuring the waste products are utilised for alternative means.

8. Risk Implications

8.1 Achieving the planned objectives set out in the Plan is frequently reliant on the active engagement of key partner organisations and local groups. This is particularly evident in the anti-idling campaigns which require the involvement of local schools and Surrey County Council/Network Rail as organisations with responsibility for highways and level crossings. Without their involvement, accomplishing planned objectives will be limited. This risk has been mitigated by early engagement by officers with key partner organisations, including Surrey County Council, Network Rail, and Surrey Environment Partnership, on their early perspectives of the campaign approach. Such early engagement has also been conducted in borough primary schools, which have shown general enthusiasm for supporting an anti-idling campaign. The risk associated with this is considered Medium, as the likelihood is considered low due to early engagement, but severity of impact considered High.

8.2 As outlined in Section 7 of Appendix A, reliable monitoring of communications campaign outcomes to understand success presents a risk. The absence of robust monitoring processes or presence of poorly worded objectives both risk the intended outcomes being very difficult or resource intensive to monitor. This has been considered in development of

the Communications Plan and is reflected in the planned objectives which focus on campaign delivery and specific, quantifiable outcomes. The risk associated with monitoring success is considered Low.

- 8.3 Highlighted in Section 4 of this report, a modest financial budget is available to implement the communications plan. This risks limiting the outreach potential and scope of the campaigns with implications for success of the planned initiatives. This has been considered by officers and objectives developed which can be implemented with minimal/no financial resources required aside from officer time, although the budget available will be used in appropriate areas to maximise achievement of the planned objectives. The risk associated with the budget is considered Low.

9. Other implications (where applicable)

- 9.1 The exhaust fumes from idling behaviour include nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, benzene, hydrocarbons, and particulates, which are linked to asthma and other lung diseases. A reduction in idling behaviour is also expected to improve public health.
- 9.2 Another implication identified is the need to ensure that through both campaigns, efforts are made to reach all different elements of the community to ensure that heard to reach groups are engaged wherever possible. This is part of the Council's wider commitment to ensuring a just transition to climate change in Runnymede which leaves no one behind. Communication techniques will be tailored accordingly to maximise engagement across all groups.

10. Timetable for Implementation

- 10.1 If the Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25 is approved at this Committee, it will have an implementation date of 1st April 2024 to coincide with the start of the 2024-25 financial year.
- 10.2 Campaign implementation timelines will align with those set out in the Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25 document.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 In line with the commitments in its adopted Climate Change Strategy, the Council needs to use its influence to support positive behaviour changes across Runnymede borough and within its communities in response to climate change, and to achieve borough-wide net zero by 2050 aligned to national targets. The Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25 provides an important contribution to changing behaviours by increasing awareness and providing a foundation for further collaborative engagement on climate change action across the borough.

12. Background papers

- 12.1 Members attention is drawn to the [Corporate Management Committee report](#) of 22nd February which contains the final version of the Climate Change Action Plan which was subsequently adopted at Full Council on 29th February 2024.

13. Appendices

Appendix A: Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25
Appendix B: Equalities Impact Assessment Screening