



# Richmond Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy

## Introduction

Climate change is one of the most important challenges facing our society. The release of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, methane and nitrogen oxides into the atmosphere through human activity is having an increasingly negative effect on our environment. Scientists across the world agree that this is changing the global climate. Recent reports from the UN have shown that there is a need for urgent action to prevent a global temperature rise of 2°C or more.

If nothing is done to prevent climate change the impact could be serious. Increased temperatures will mean more hot days and sea level rise will flood coastlines. More extreme weather events will disrupt and threaten people's lives while animals and plants could be severely impacted. For Richmond this could mean more heatwaves, with water shortages during the summer and other dry months. It could also mean river flooding as sea levels rise, or surface flooding from extreme rainfall events. Changes to the local climate could mean the migration or loss of animals and plants that live in the borough.

Climate change is also most likely to have a negative impact on the poorest in society.

The Council recognises this threat and declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> July. It resolved to become recognised as the greenest London borough, to take action to combat climate change and to put the environment back at the heart of local decision making.

The draft Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy sets out the actions and the approaches the Council will take in dealing with climate change. The Strategy pulls together strategies, plans and policies and identifies new areas that require attention and action. It focusses on five key areas where we need to take action now and over the next 3 years. The Council will reduce its carbon emissions, help support residents, businesses and partners to reduce their emissions, protect the environment and embed sustainability into everything we do.

Our aim is to become carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030 and the Strategy is our first step in achieving this ambitious target.

## Climate Change Mitigation and Energy Efficiency

Climate change mitigation means reducing or preventing the release of greenhouse gases which are fuelling global climate change. In the UK in 2017, transport and energy supply were the biggest areas of greenhouse gas emissions. We can reduce our emissions as a Council by using newer, more efficient technology, buying renewable energy, changing what and how we buy things, and reducing our energy use through energy efficiency.

This will be a huge challenge. To reach our target of becoming carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030 we need to 'decarbonise' ourselves, drastically reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and changing the way we operate. We will also need to work with residents, businesses and partners so they can reduce their carbon emissions.

We will reduce our carbon emissions by reducing our energy demand and increasing our energy efficiency. By 2022, Richmond will use less energy in our operations and better control our energy consumption by closely monitoring our emissions and what we use. We will use cleaner, greener supplies of electricity and explore locally generated sources of renewable energy including solar power. We will ensure Richmond is able to plan, measure and respond proactively to the effects of climate change and the implications of resource scarcity.

Our key actions in this area include:

- Improving the energy efficiency of our buildings
- Replacing street lighting with energy efficient LEDs
- Increasing electric vehicle charging points
- Developing plans to switch all Council vehicles to electric or renewable fuel sources

- Working with partners to encourage and support them reducing emissions
- Working with residents to support them in taking actions to reduce their carbon emissions

## Improving Air Quality

Air pollution is a significant challenge for London as whole and for Richmond in particular. The whole of Richmond has been declared an Air Quality Management Area, which means that action is required to reduce air pollution. Heathrow Airport contributes to the poor air quality in the borough, although this is not the only reason and air pollution in Richmond also comes from transport, buildings, construction and wood burning.

Air quality and climate change are closely linked. Many air pollutants are 'climate active' so they not only cause pollution, but they also cause climate change. A warming climate can make air quality worse with harmful smog likely to increase in longer and hotter summers. Long term exposure to air pollution can cause serious health problems such as heart and lung diseases. Short-term exposure to high levels of air pollution can also make asthma worse and cause breathing problems if you already have a lung or breathing related illness.

We will develop and deliver an ambitious air quality plan that will improve air quality in the borough, with a focus on air pollution around schools and town centres. We will move to cleaner modes of transport within our operations and develop policies and infrastructure that reduce pollution from transport and buildings in the borough.

Our key actions in this area include:

- Developing an Air Quality Action Plan
- Reducing air pollution from buildings and new developments
- Consulting on the introduction of a parking surcharge for higher polluting vehicles
- Ensuring our fleet of Council vehicles is ULEZ compliant by October 2021
- Continuing to oppose Heathrow expansion

## Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

Richmond upon Thames is one of the richest boroughs in London when it comes to green spaces. This includes the total area of green space, the quality of its parks, open spaces and conservation areas and the wealth of habitats, animals and plants that these areas support. The borough also has many trees, both in parks and in private gardens.

All of these provide 'ecosystem services' that are valuable for society and for biodiversity. These include cooling the local environment by providing shade and shelter and reducing heating and cooling needs for buildings through insulation and shade. They are a way of storing carbon, reducing harmful pollutants and providing habitats for a wide range of biodiversity. There is also a social value in having access to parks and open spaces, which can help make people happier and healthier.

Even though the biodiversity of Richmond is great, it can be hard to keep it this way. New developments (including buildings and transport) need land to build on, which puts pressure on green spaces. As the population grows, more and more people want to use green space and parks which makes them harder to maintain.

We will improve and protect the biodiversity and ecology of our green spaces and protect them against climate change. We will also help create and support new green infrastructure that can support biodiversity. We will make sure that all the parks and open spaces in Richmond are excellent and accessible for all.

Our key actions in this area include:

- Delivering the actions in the Richmond Local Biodiversity Action Plan
- Plant more trees across the borough
- Celebrate our old and famous trees
- Continue to improve our parks and open spaces

## Waste, Plastics and the Circular Economy

Richmond Council collects different types of waste from our residents and businesses, including recycling, food, garden and residual waste. While we recycle over 40% of our waste, we need to reduce the overall amount of waste that we produce. This can be through either not buying as much stuff that can be thrown away or reusing what we do buy multiple times. As a Council, we need to reduce the amount of waste we generate and support residents to reduce the amount of waste they produce.

A key source of waste of plastic. Plastic is everywhere, from food packaging to the clothes we wear, which means that reducing and getting rid of plastic is difficult as it is used so much in everyday life. In January 2018, Richmond resolved to combat the problem of plastics by removing single use plastics from Council operations by 2022 and helping our residents and business to do the same. This is ambitious, but we are determined to achieve this.

We will embed reduce, reuse, recycle into everything Richmond does around waste. We will work with our residents, businesses and schools to reduce the overall amount of waste generated in the borough and be one of the top performing boroughs in London for recycling. We will support residents by making sure that services are easy to use and work well. We will ensure our waste and recycling operations are sustainable by working with contractors, operators and waste disposal authorities. We will look for opportunities to promote a Circular Economy in Council operations including the way we procure goods and services.

Our key actions in this area include:

- Reduce the amount of waste produced by the borough
- Increase recycling rates for the waste produced
- Becoming single use plastic free as an organisation by 2022
- Develop a more sustainable approach to procurement embedding the circular economy into the way we purchase things

## Water Management and Flood Abatement

Climate change will make the weather less stable, with more extreme weather events such as high rainfall in very short bursts or long periods without rain. This will mean we could be faced with more floods and droughts. Increased populations will also need more water, which will make the problem of drought even worse.

Because of the borough's unique location on both sides of the Thames, Richmond is very vulnerable to river flooding. Surface water flooding is also a risk, especially when very heavy rainfall in a short time means that drains are full and water cannot move away. This is an even bigger risk in built up areas where there are lots of roads and

concrete and nowhere for water to stay before it goes into drains. This flooding can also cause pollution in rivers and contaminate drinking water.

We will ensure that development across Richmond addresses flood risks and promotes sustainable drainage. We will promote and encourage development to be fully resilient to the future impacts of climate change in order to minimise vulnerability of people and property, including risks of flooding, water shortages and the effects of overheating.

Our key actions in this area include:

- Provide Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to avoid rapid rain run-off into drains and rivers and improve water quality
- Promote green infrastructure to act as flood storage areas, holding large volumes of water in temporary ponds to protect built up areas from flooding
- Improve water efficiency of Council buildings through retrofitting water saving measures
- Deliver new public drinking fountains where people can access safe and free water.

## Delivering the strategy

This strategy will last from 2020 through to 2022 and during this time we will deliver as many of the key actions as we can. We recognise how important climate change is and are giving it a high priority. We will be producing regular reports, which we will publish so that everyone can see how we are doing.

While the Council's resources are limited, and have been limited for many years now, we will be looking at how we can use what we have

to the best effect. We will look at different ways of funding the projects and approaches, especially for those projects that need upfront investment to get savings later on. We will also think about how we talk to our staff and make sure that they know how to reduce emissions not just in work but in their own homes too.

We will also look at the way we buy things. We will make sure that when we buy goods and services we are thinking about the effect they have on society, on the environment and on climate change. We will talk to our suppliers and make sure that they are thinking about climate change and their carbon emissions.

Action on climate change will not be deliverable without talking to the partners we work with, local businesses and most importantly of all, our residents. As well as this consultation, we will develop a plan for how we talk to residents about climate change and how we can help and support people in changing the way they act and reduce their carbon emissions.