

At our last Cabinet meeting, we agreed two reports which will have a big impact on our fight against climate change.

Cllr Andy Bowden – Cabinet member for Environmental Services and Climate Change – is leading on this and he's doing great work.

The first report was a Draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy, and we've begun a public consultation and engagement with suppliers to explore delivery options. More and more people are switching to electric vehicles, and councils have a role in making sure the infrastructure exists to support their use.

Having a strategy provides a clear vision for the future borough-wide EV network, and will strengthen our ability to fight for future funding from government if and when it becomes available.

We also agreed a detailed Climate Change Action Plan, setting out short, medium and long term actions.

Reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2040 is a huge task and it's going to take coordinated action by all of us – residents, businesses, councils, governments – to make it happen.

As a council we're doing what we can within our areas of responsibility, including the purchase and operation of the UK's first custom built hydrogen-powered waste vehicle; securing £500k Low Carbon Skills Funding to help decarbonise social housing stock; developing carbon reduction strategies for key regeneration projects including the town centres and Parkside; ordering 30 electric vans for our fleet of vehicles; planting hundreds of new trees across the borough; and approving our new waste strategy that promotes the circular economy and aims to improve our reduce, reuse and recycling performance.

And we want to do more. The Action Plan sets out more than 130 specific actions, including creating 81,000 m2 of additional woodland in the Borough over the next 18 months.

Responding to the climate emergency is one of the most complex challenges that humanity has faced. But if we work together there are opportunities too – not least the potential for thousands of new jobs in clean energy. As a borough and region we're well placed to benefit from that, with projects like Glass Futures, HyNet and Mersey Tidal at various stages of development.

If we are bold, and get a government with both the wisdom to take the challenge seriously and the vision to seize new opportunities, St Helens can truly lead the way.

Best wishes to all Star readers.