

**Report to:** Place Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 25 November 2020

**By:** Chair of the Review Board

**Title:** Scrutiny Review of Becoming a Carbon Neutral Council

**Purpose:** To present the outcomes of the scrutiny review and make recommendations.

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**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Committee considers and endorses the report of the Review Board, and makes recommendations to Cabinet for comment, and County Council for approval.

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## 1. Background

1.1 The Place Scrutiny Committee agreed at the meeting held on 20 November 2019 to proceed with a Scrutiny Review of Becoming a Carbon Neutral Council, which focuses on the actions the Council is taking to reduce its carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gas emissions. This was in response to increasing public concern linked to the publication of the 2018 report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which highlighted that urgent action is needed to address climate change. The scope of the review includes:

- Energy use in the Council's corporate buildings, maintained schools and street lighting;
- Staff business travel, staff commuting, electric charging points at council offices and the Council's fleet vehicles;
- The scope for using renewable energy sources (solar, wind, etc.) and carbon off-setting;
- Use of emerging and alternative technologies; and
- Communications and leadership, including co-ordination of the work on the climate emergency.

1.2 The scope of the review also included acting as a reference group working with officers to comment on the development of a Climate Emergency Plan for the Council. The Council's [Climate Emergency Plan](#) was agreed by Cabinet on 2 June 2020 which sets the context for the work of the scrutiny review.

1.3 The aims of the Review Board in undertaking the review were to:

- To gain a better understanding of the actions, costs, benefits and timescales for achieving carbon neutrality, as well as the choices that may be involved.
- To contribute to the development of a plan of actions to reduce the Council's carbon emissions.
- To identify 'easy wins' and priorities for investment in carbon reduction in the next 5 years.

1.4 This is the first scrutiny review to be held entirely via remote meetings and the review process has been adapted to take this into account. The Review Board has examined evidence from key officers, external expert witnesses and published documents on this topic. The challenge for the Board has been to develop recommendations that will support the Council's ambitions in this area, whilst taking into account the Council's financial position. The Council's Climate Emergency Plan represents an important starting point in the Council's work to become carbon neutral and this review makes a number of recommendations in support of the actions contained in the Plan.

## **2. Summary**

2.1 The members of the Review Board are Councillors Martin Clarke (Chair), John Barnes, Bob Bowdler, Pat Rodohan and Stephen Shing.

2.2 The intention of the review report is to set a direction of travel for the Council in its ambition to become carbon neutral and to maintain the momentum created when the Council declared a Climate Emergency. It has not been possible within the time available for the review to carry out some of the detailed technical and costing work that will be required when appraising the various carbon reduction measures. The review presents a critical view of a possible way forward in what is a constantly evolving and moving situation. Therefore, it will be important to regularly review the Council's Climate Emergency Plan, a task which the Scrutiny Committee can assist with.

2.3 The Review Board is aware that in order to implement some of the recommendations in the report, the Council will need to address funding through the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) budget setting process. Through this process it will be important to balance the short and long term social, economic and environmental implications of funding these proposals, including the impact on the Council's carbon footprint.

2.4 The attached report (appendix 1) contains the findings and recommendations of the Review Board. Copies of evidence papers listed in the report and other support documentation are available on request from the contact officer.

2.5 The Committee is recommended to receive the Review Board's report for submission to Cabinet and County Council on 26 January 2021 and 9 February 2021 respectively.

## **3. Recommendations and conclusion**

3.1 The Committee is requested to consider and endorse the report of the Review Board for submission to Cabinet and Full Council.

**COUNCILLOR MARTIN CLARKE**  
**Chair of the Review Board**

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