

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 24 January 2023

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport and the Chief Operating Officer.

Title: Final draft corporate Climate Emergency Plan for 2023-25

Purpose: To seek approval of the corporate Climate Emergency Plan that will go to Full Council on 7 February 2023

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) agree the final draft of the corporate Climate Emergency Plan (appendix 1); and**
 - 2) agree the draft summary version of the Climate Emergency Plan (appendix 2).**
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1 Background

1.1 In October 2019 the County Council set a target of achieving carbon neutrality from its activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050. In June 2020 Cabinet approved a corporate climate emergency action plan for 2020-22. In 2021-22 Cabinet agreed an additional £9.9m to address corporate climate change up to March 2025. This report covers an updated corporate Climate Emergency Plan covering 2023-25. The final draft of the Climate Emergency Plan is set out in Appendix 1 and a summary version is set out in Appendix 2.

2 Supporting information

2.1 A clear understanding of the carbon emissions generated by our activities is a key foundation for working towards net zero. The carbon emissions of an organisation are usually divided into the following 3 categories:

- Scope 1 – emissions from the use of gas and oil in Council buildings and petrol and diesel in Council-owned vehicles. These are about 2% of total Council emissions.
- Scope 2 – emissions from the electricity purchased by the Council. These are also about 2% of total Council emissions.
- Scope 3 – emissions that result from all other activities of the Council, including business travel, water usage, waste, procurement and staff commuting. These are about 96% of total Council emissions, with the vast majority from procurement of the goods, works and services that the Council needs to pay for in order to deliver its statutory services. This is similar to other local authorities.

2.2 The Council has good quality data for scope 1 and 2 emissions, as these are under the direct control of the Council. The quality of scope 3 emission data is much more variable, in particular for the goods, works and services that are purchased by the Council in order to deliver its functions. Further work is required to quantify most scope 3 emissions before they can begin to be integrated reliably into the Council's carbon footprint and modelled for future emission reductions. Most local authorities are in a similar position.

2.3 Following the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019 the Council developed a corporate climate emergency plan for 2020-22, which set out the baseline carbon emissions and the actions to be delivered during 2020-22. A Scrutiny review of progress in becoming a carbon neutral council was carried out in 2019-20, which included a set of recommendations that were accepted by the Council in 2020. Since then, six monthly reports have been taken to the Place Scrutiny Committee

on progress in delivering against the recommendations and an annual progress report on the climate emergency plan was presented to full Council in October 2021 and in October 2022.

2.4 The Council's scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions have been reduced by over 66% over the last decade, due to the decarbonisation of the national electricity grid, through a reduction in the Council's estate and as a result of investment made by the Council in carbon reduction measures.

2.5 The draft Climate Emergency Plan for 2023-25 in appendix 1 sets out:

- 1) The Council's current carbon footprint;
- 2) Some principles for the Council to follow in its approach to net zero;
- 3) The Council's science-based 5 year carbon budgets;
- 4) The modelling work that has been used to steer some of actions in the Plan;
- 5) How the additional investment of £9.9m made available by Cabinet for climate change will be spent up to March 2025;
- 6) The governance, monitoring and reporting systems in place to cover the Plan.

2.6 In June 2022 a cross party working group of the Place Scrutiny Committee was set up to input to the development of the updated Climate Emergency Plan. It held five meetings, first to gather evidence and then to review early drafts of the climate emergency plan and to shape the final version. The plan set out in appendix 1 incorporates the comments made by Members of the working group, who have added their names to the Foreword, alongside the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change. The working group also requested that a shorter summary version of the full Climate Emergency Plan be produced, to help communicate the Plan. This shorter version, which has also been reviewed by the working group, is set out in appendix 2.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The modelling work carried out to inform the development of the Climate Emergency Plan indicates that the Council is currently investing in an appropriate mix of measures to cut its carbon emissions, including low energy lighting, heat decarbonisation, solar PV and vehicle electrification. In order to increase the pace and scale of corporate carbon reduction the additional resources agreed by Cabinet are being used to invest in more of these measures and to establish a more structured, One Council programmatic approach. This includes the delivery of interventions such as staff behavioural change, greater focus on scope 3 emissions, an assessment of carbon off-setting and developing a more robust approach to climate change adaptation across the Council.

3.2 The modelling work also indicated that a significant and long-term uplift in budget provision would be required to meet the Council's carbon reduction target. However, this needs to be set in the context of wider Council pressures and budgetary constraints. The Council has bid for, and will continue to bid for, short-term funding that has been made available by central government to support the public sector to decarbonise. However, there is currently no indication from government as to how local authorities will be able to access the necessary scale of funding to get to net zero. Without access to significant external funding or finance it is unclear how the Council will be able to remain within its carbon reduction ambition.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

4.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) agree the final draft of the corporate Climate Emergency Plan for 2023-25 (appendix 1)
- 2) agree the draft summary version of the Climate Emergency Plan (appendix 2).

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