

Report to:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	26 January 2021
By:	Assistant Chief Executive
Title:	Scrutiny Review of Becoming a Carbon Neutral Council
Purpose:	To provide an opportunity for the Cabinet to consider the report of the Place Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDATION: To consider any comments the Cabinet wishes to make to the County Council on the report of the Place Scrutiny Committee.

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 (CO₂) 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) and the declaration of a climate emergency by the Council in October 2019. The scope of the review includes:

- Energy use in the Council's corporate buildings, maintained schools and street lighting;
- Staff business travel and commuting (including councillors), 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. The scope of the review does not include divesting the East Sussex Pension Fund of investments in fossil fuels, as this is within the remit of the Pension Committee.

1.3 The aims of the Committee 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 The review has examined evidence from key officers, external expert witnesses and published documents on this topic. The challenge for the review 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 intention of the review 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 Place Scrutiny Committee can assist with.

2.3 The Place Scrutiny Committee 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 scrutiny review. Copies of evidence papers listed in the report and other support documentation are available on request from the contact officer.

3. Recommendations and conclusion

3.1 Cabinet is invited to consider any comments it wishes to make to the County Council on the report of the Place Scrutiny Committee.

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LOCAL MEMBERS: All.