

ENVIRONMENT PDG

8 SEPTEMBER 2020

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Elizabeth Wainwright, Cabinet Portfolio Member, Climate Change

Responsible Officer: Andrew Busby, Group Manager Corporate Property and Commercial Assets.

Reason for Report: To provide Members with the final draft of the Climate Strategy/ Handbook and action plan.

Recommendation: For the Environment PDG to recommend to Cabinet to endorse the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

Financial Implications: All actions within the Action Plan are subject to the budget available for the 2020/21 financial year. Future financial years will be subject to budget approval.

Budget and Policy Framework: The Council declared a Climate Emergency on the 26 June 2019, but there has been no dedicated budget set to date. Any projects or workstreams which are likely to incur more than negligible costs outside budget will need formal approval through Cabinet and Council. It is therefore important that some thought is given to the costs of projects and how/when these are reflected in the budget/capital programme.

Legal Implications: None directly arising, but there will be implications arising from planned projects and decisions brought forward to deliver progress on cutting our carbon footprint, those implications and whole life carbon costings will be considered as part of those projects

Risk Assessment: The Climate Change risk assessment will be reviewed and managed via the Council's SPAR system and will be regularly reported to the Audit Committee

Equality Impact Assessment: The impact on equality will be considered for each action within the plan and reported to the relevant Policy Development Group, as attached to this report

Relationship to Corporate Plan: A Sustainable Planet - Environment

Impact on Climate Change: The Full Council declared a Climate Emergency and as part of that commitment, the Council agreed to produce a Carbon footprint baseline. This document will be the Council's strategy document for tackling climate change within its own estate and how we can influence reduction of CO2 throughout the District

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and aims to become carbon neutral by 2030. Carbon neutrality is a term used to describe the actions that organisations, businesses and individuals can take to remove as much carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as each puts in to it. The overall goal of carbon neutrality is to achieve a zero carbon footprint. To become carbon neutral we needed to accurately measure our carbon footprint and create a baseline against which future changes can be measured. The assessment needed to establish a baseline from which to measure the reductions that we plan to make via our action plan and make informed recommendations to Members.
- 1.2. Following the recent climate change declaration by councils across Devon, there are now two emerging work streams; an internal organisation focus on reducing CO2 emissions to (net) zero; and the wider agenda looking at reducing emissions across

the whole Mid Devon area. Clearly, the first of these is much more of a process that a) the Council can manage/monitor/influence; and b) can control to a significant degree, as it relates to our own assets and operational base. For the wider piece linked to the whole of the Mid Devon area achieving net zero emissions, this is work that DCC will be initiating linked to baselining work being undertaken for the whole county. However, as a District we will work as a partner with local businesses, organisations, community groups and other residents to support the District's journey to net zero. As we learn figures for the whole District's CO₂ footprint, we will be able to do this more effectively.

- 1.3. The definition of a carbon footprint is the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular individual, organisation, or community. A carbon footprint is measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) and CO₂e is calculated by multiplying the emissions of each of the greenhouse gases (GHG) by its 100 year global warming potential (GWP).
- 1.4. Having a net zero carbon footprint, refers to achieving net zero carbon dioxide emissions by balancing carbon emissions with carbon removal (often through carbon offsetting) or ideally, by eliminating carbon emissions altogether (the transition to a post-carbon economy). It is used in the context of carbon dioxide releasing processes associated with transportation, energy production, agriculture and commercial/industrial processes.

2.0 Achievements from the previous Corporate Plan and the 2016-2020 Climate Change Action Plan

- 2.1 In support of the Climate Emergency, the measures that we've already taken within, our own district to reduce carbon footprint include:
 - Installation of over 1,170 Solar Photovoltaic (PV) systems to our housing stock in 2012, which has since been recognised at the 2019 South West Energy Efficiency Awards (income received from this scheme is being used to fund energy efficiency projects, specifically aimed at providing renewable energy and technologies, and reducing the carbon output from our tenanted residential properties)
 - Installation of Solar PV systems at our main offices at Phoenix House, Tiverton and all three of our leisure/sports centres, which provide a total of 278.32 kWp (kilowatt-peak) of electricity, in turn, saving 150 carbon tonnes per annum, thereby reducing our baseline budget for electricity by around £60k per annum
 - Low voltage lighting upgrades at all three of our leisure/sports centres and the multi-storey car park in Tiverton
 - Installation of Variable Speed Drives (VSDs) for large motors in our air handling units, pool pumps, etc., at Lords Meadow and Exe Valley leisure centres to conserve energy and reduce consumption
 - Implementation of vending machine controls at all three of our leisure/sports centres to reduce energy consumption
 - Optimisation of the boilers at all three of our leisure/sports centres using dynamic control measures
 - Application of pipe lagging on our business properties to reduce heat loss
 - Installation of two Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points at each of our leisure/sports centres, (so far recording nearly 3,000 charges saving over 12,000 litres of fuel) and

two twin outlet chargers at the multi-storey car park in Tiverton, with the aim of increasing availability as part of a future roll-out across Mid Devon

- Installation of a Biomass Boiler at Lords Meadow Leisure Centre to reduce gas consumption as part of the Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme

- Entering into a joint fleet contract provided by Specialist Fleet Services (SFS) in partnership with Exeter City Council on 7 March 2019, with the flexibility of trialling and using vehicles with ever lower emissions (technology pending), over the life of the contract

- Our kerbside waste collection rounds are constantly under review to ensure the most efficient use of our fleet

- Almost all the recycling we collect is reprocessed in the UK with the remainder in the EU - none of the waste we collect is exported to developing countries

- All the food waste we collect is sent to Anaerobic Digestion plants to be used as a source of renewable energy

- We ceased sending non-recyclable black sack waste to landfill in 2017, instead utilising this waste stream as feedstock for Energy from Waste Plants

3.0 Working across service areas

3.1 A series of meetings are taking place with key officers from various services to explore opportunities, connections, ideas and challenges from different perspectives and service areas within the council. We see each team representative who joins the meeting acting as a 'Climate Connector' for the Council, with the intention of building a joined-up approach in our journey to be net zero by 2030

4.0 District-wide community engagement

4.1. Devon-wide Citizens Assemblies to discuss the climate crisis and seek input from residents were planned, but the Covid19 crisis has pushed these back to 2021. At a more local level, Cllr Wainwright had hoped to host in-person 'Mid Devon Climate Conversations' with town, parish, community group and business representatives, to encourage networking and collaboration, and to listen to ideas, questions and information. The Covid19 crisis has meant we have had to put in-person meetings on hold, but in the meantime, we have been hosting online discussions. Content from these discussions will be documented and considered as the Council moves forward with this work, and as part of the Net Zero Advisory Group. This agenda is one that many people are interested in and have expertise in, which the council can benefit from. It is also a good opportunity to improve community engagement.

4.2. We are mapping district-wide groups and initiatives that are working on the net zero carbon agenda, to support residents to connect and learn more. We will put this on our website.

4.3. Members are of course invited to be part of the Climate Conversations mentioned above. In addition, please feel free to share articles, ideas and suggestions as we move forward with this work. It is a topic that goes beyond any one political party, and a collaborative approach will help us tackle this complex issue at a local level.

5.0 The Climate Strategy 2020 with Action Plan

- 5.1. Our Climate Action Strategy and Action Plan is attached to this report as Annex A and B . The strategy sets out our approach to tackling emissions and draws on input from various reports, research, case studies and conversations, and is a work in progress. The Action Plan includes details of actions with a red/amber/green status marker to identify which proposed actions and schemes have a high, medium or low impact on reducing our carbon footprint and includes estimated emission savings so we can track performance. There are current projects within our Capital Medium Term Financial Plan that present opportunities for reducing our carbon footprint. For example, replacing end of life boilers and reviewing the Combined Heat Plant at Exe Valley Leisure Centre, the plan will also include strategic and larger projects such as the Hydroelectricity scheme in Tiverton that will have a high impact on our carbon emission reduction, as well as plans that would need budget and capacity to deliver. We have taken into account the feedback from Members to date from the Environment Policy Development Group, Scrutiny and Audit meetings. The plan will be shared with the Net Zero Advisory Group for review.

6.0 Mid Devon Updated and New Related Policy, Plans and Strategies.

- Corporate Plan 2020-2024
- Mid Devon Core Strategy 2007-2026
- Local Plan 2013 - 2033
- Forward Planning/Local Plan documents
- Green Infrastructure Assessment
- Housing Strategy
- Asset Management Plan

7.0 Devon Climate Emergency

- 7.1 The Council are part of the tactical group for the Devon-wide carbon plan. The group met most recently on 5 August 2020. DCC are also business planning for the offer of a local power purchase agreement between large energy consumers in Devon and community-owned renewable energy, and we are talking to DCC about this.
- 7.2 More widely, the tactical group is a key link for the synchronising of MDDC's climate plans with Devon-wide plans. The Devon Climate Emergency put out a call for evidence to contribute to the Devon Carbon Plan -- the group received almost 900 submissions, mostly from individuals, and a summary of submissions by theme can be viewed here: <https://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/devon-carbon-plan/call-for-evidence/>
- 7.3 Some of the suggestions have been reviewed and incorporated into our own plan, and others will need to be discussed as part of our NZAG and Mid Devon Climate Conversations.

8.0 Central Government Position

- 8.1 The Paris Agreement, following the 2015 United Nations Conference on Climate Change of 195 countries, was to holding the increase in global temperature to well below 2 deg. C and pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees C.
- 8.2 The Government has also committed to support Mission Innovation. This is a commitment of 20 leading governments to seek to double their clean energy research and development investment over five years. New investments would be focused on transformational clean energy technology innovations that can be scalable to varying

economic and energy market conditions that exist in participating countries and in the broader world.

9.0 Solar Together Devon Project

- 9.1 The Council will be part of the Solar Together Devon project. To support the region's energy and climate strategies DCC is looking to incentivise a solar PV collective purchasing scheme for the residential 'able-to-pay' sector. The project will be called 'Solar Together Devon' and delivered by iChoosr. DCC will manage the project and cover all costs. The procurement process and implications post the Covid-19 crisis are being considered.
- 9.2 iChoosr estimate the project will deliver a 20% reduction in installation prices for residents and achieve 800+ installations, 793 tonnes of CO2 saved in the first year and 3MWh total generation capacity. In the UK they have run successful schemes with the Greater London Authority, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Essex, Norfolk and Sussex councils. Local installers will be encouraged to bid for the works.
- 9.3 Where needed, external funding will always be considered before the use of internal Council funds, and Property Services and the Corporate Management Team will work together to help facilitate and maximise the funds available to the Council from our existing Capital programme. Some projects may be suitable for funding from climate/energy efficiency grants that are created to help the transition to a low carbon economy.
- 9.4 The action plan now includes a visual to show the impact of our actions on our carbon emissions, and travel towards our 2030 target. The actual carbon saved will be verified as part of the annual review exercise that will be carried out independently.

10.0 Biodiversity

- 10.1 Impacts of climate change on our wider ecosystem also needs to be considered as part of our climate change journey (i.e. availability of water, changing natural habitats and landscapes). Taking one example the Council prepared and consulted upon a draft Green Infrastructure Plan (GIP) in 2011, the Green Infrastructure Assessment (Section 2 of the GIP) was then revised to take account of comments from residents and other stakeholders. Other planning policies have links to Biodiversity and these will be listed and signposted on an updated web page for Climate Change.
- 10.2 The Council needs to consider the issues of safeguarding the environment and promoting biodiversity and bring forward a report to the Environment PDG to establish what our approach to managing road verges on our own estate should be to encourage and protect biodiversity, some of our residents may wish to see our verges cut and any implications on other internal services will need to be considered. One result of the lockdown has been that verges across our estate have been left to grow and in some areas, this has resulted in steep banks and verges having wildflowers. It is suggested that we should continue to leave these particular verges this season in order to assess the full impact that will inform a future report. This resource from Plantlife provides good background information.
<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/about-us/news/road-verge-management-guide>
- 10.3 The existing design principles allow us to review and designate areas for wildflowers or naturalisation. Naturalising areas is very different to planting wildflower seeds and allowing them to grow in areas that have been prepared for this. A trial took place in 2016-2017 and at the time we did receive complaints regarding the appearance in these areas.

- 10.4 We have also sowed wildflowers in some areas over the last couple of years; including Tiverton and Crediton. This has been viable, as the seeds have been predominantly sown in areas that previously contained bedding, we have also trialled areas within Crediton and Tiverton to ascertain response and viability, and that has been well received.
- 10.5 There is an additional cost associated with maintenance and sowing, however we are also looking at our own grass banks that we can naturalise with very limited maintenance once flowered and self-seeded, such as Linear Park in Cullompton.

List of Background Papers:

- Cabinet report 19 December 2019 Update on carbon baseline.

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/adopted-local-plan-evidence/green-infrastructure-assessment/>

- A vision for green infrastructure was then produced that can be reviewed as part of our journey: <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/114235/vision-and-strategic-objectives.pdf>
- As part of our Local Plan review on sustainability appraisal dated January 2017 can be found here: <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/342723/sustainability-appraisal-update-2017.pdf> this also links into biodiversity across the District.