

ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

02 NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT – CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr C R Slade - Cabinet Member for the Environment and Climate Change.

Responsible Officer(s): Andrew Busby - Corporate Manager Property, Leisure & Climate Change. Jason Ball, Climate and Sustainability Specialist.

Reason for Report: To receive an update on the Climate Change Action Plan from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist.

Recommendation: That the Environment PDG notes and accepts this report as an update on the Council's response to the Climate Emergency – documenting progress with the Climate Action Plan (to reduce the Council's carbon footprint) and the wider Climate and Sustainability Programme.

Financial Implications: The financial implications associated with this report are the overall costs of the Climate and Sustainability Programme, budgets specifically linked to the Council's Corporate Plan, Climate Strategy and Climate Action Plan.

Budget and Policy Framework: Budgets specifically linked to the Council's Corporate Plan, Climate Strategy and Climate Action Plan.

Legal Implications: Full Council declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019 and as part of that commitment, the Council is to produce a carbon footprint in line with Environmental Reporting Guidelines published by HM Government. With regard to the Climate Emergency, the Environment Policy Development Group (PDG) is the initial owner of this policy activity and considers how best to determine the Council's own policy response(s) such as may then be subsequently recommended to Cabinet and Council. [Link to declaration decision.](#)

Risk Assessment: Progress on Performance Indicators (PI) is provided separately on the regular Performance and Risk Reports. There are 2 main risks (to the Council): 1) that the Council does not take sufficient actions to enable it to meet its Climate Emergency declaration ambitions; and 2) that the financial implications of Climate Change are not adequately measured and reflected in the Council's decision making.

Equality Impact Assessment: There are no equality impact assessment implications associated with this report.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Please refer to **Annex A** which shows the Council's Corporate Plan Aims (Table 1) and Climate Strategy priorities (Table 2).

Impact on Climate Change: The role of the Climate and Sustainability Specialist in support of the corporate officer team is central to the Council's Climate and Sustainability Programme by actions such as the development of strategic positions and delivery of projects through internal, community and partnership work.

1.0 Introduction / Background

1.1.1. The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and aims to be climate neutral by 2030. Climate neutrality is a term used to describe the achievement of a balance, for any given period, for carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released into or removed from the atmosphere; as a result of the actions taken by organisations, businesses and individuals. The goal of climate neutrality is to achieve a net zero climate impact.

1.1.2. This report is divided into **community** and **corporate** strands (some overlap is possible). Aligned with the recent climate change declaration by councils across Devon, climate action for the Council falls into two work streams:

- an internal organisation focus to cut corporate greenhouse gas emissions to net zero;
- the wider agenda to enable emission reductions across Mid Devon communities.

Clearly, the first is a process the Council can manage / monitor and control to a significant degree, as it relates to our own assets and operations. For the wider agenda linked to the whole Mid Devon area, we will work as a partner with local businesses, organisations, community groups and other residents to support the district's journey to achieve net zero.

1.1.3. Throughout each priority area within our Corporate Plan, there is a strong emphasis on local level sustainability. Environmental sustainability matters in all aspects of the Council's work, linked to everything from procurement to promoting nature recovery.

1.1.4. Jason Ball - as our Climate and Sustainability Specialist - leads the development of the Council's *Climate and Sustainability Programme*, working with colleagues and Councillors, particularly Andrew Busby - Corporate Manager Property, Leisure & Climate Change; and Colin Slade - the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change.

2.0 Performance

2.1.1. Progress on Performance Indicators (PI) is provided separately.

2.1.2. Tables in this report's **Annex A** briefly summarise actions in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan *aims* and Climate Strategy *priorities*.

2.2. Climate Action Plan (CAP).

2.2.1. The Council's Climate Action Plan collates projects and activities to address climate change (mitigation and adaptation). The Climate and Sustainability Specialist is coordinating a review of the Council's Climate Action Plan to cost it, identify additional funding required, address gaps, and develop the plan.

2.2.2. The Corporate Management Team (and their officers) will maintain the Climate Action Plan as a live management tool to enable budget planning and ensure a timely cycle of reporting. Teams will prioritise the most imminent and impactful projects.

2.2.3. A timeline for costing the Climate Action Plan was provided to Scrutiny Committee on 15 March 2021 (as outlined below in Table 1) with updates due in July, September and December.

- 2.2.4. Estimated costs thus far for actions within the *Housing Energy and Assets* work stream is £18,044,210. (This includes HRA planned works and estimates for retrofitting and decarbonising the Council’s facility buildings.)
- 2.2.5. Estimated costs thus far for the Internal Structures and Processes workstream are £200,138.
- 2.2.6. Estimated costs thus far for the *Transport and Vehicles* workstream are £403,200.
- 2.2.7. Estimated costs thus far for the *Community and Wider Context* workstream are £413,000.
- 2.2.8. Cost estimates may already be allocated within existing budgets, or may be additional; the CAP will show where additional funding is required in order to enable fundraising and budget planning.
- 2.2.9. **Caveats.** Robust caveats must be provided with any reporting on the Climate Action Plan (CAP) to cover factors such as estimation, forecast uncertainty and data gaps. Examples below.
- Analysis gap. We do not yet have a comprehensive list i.e. we have not identified all the projects required to reach Net Zero.
 - Data gap. The majority of the CAP items require more information. Details will be enhanced by the *lead officers* assigned to each prioritised project.
 - Estimates. The majority of the costs are estimated. The majority of carbon savings are estimated, and not always based on an assessment.
 - Forecasting. The further ahead a project is planned, the less certain we can be about future costs.
 - Scope. Many items show capital costs but do not always forecast running costs e.g. of new installations or vehicles, or disposal costs. Business cases for each project / activity must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis (do not assume projects have been approved simply by being listed as an option in the Climate Action Plan).

Table 1 - A Timeline for Costings

Split by workstream	Date for Draft Figures	Date for Submission to Env PDG
Baseline (2018-2019) was 20,372 tCO ₂ e		
Housing, Energy and Assets	June '21	July '21
Internal Structures and Processes	Aug '21	Sep '21
Transport and Vehicles	Nov '21	Dec '21

3.0 Community and partnership activities

3.1. Devon Climate Emergency Response Group

3.1.1. The Council is a partner within Devon Climate Emergency Response Group (DCERG) and a signatory to the Devon Carbon Plan (DCP). The Climate and Sustainability Specialist role includes working with the DCERG Tactical Group

and the over-arching Response Group (the Chief Executive also receives Response Group communications).

3.1.2. Partnership work serves 2 main purposes:

- Seek to ensure strong strategic alignment.
- To facilitate cooperation, learning and communication e.g. updates on current projects, consultation and the Devon Carbon Plan.

3.1.3. The Interim Devon Carbon Plan is the subject of detailed public consultation. The most recent consultation stage was the [Devon Climate Assembly](#) (Citizen's Assembly) comprising a demographically representative sample of 70 Devon residents. [The report on Assembly results](#) was published 12th October 2021 and has been circulated to all Council members.

- The resolutions respond to 3 challenging topics: retrofitting homes; the role of onshore wind power; and decarbonising transport (particularly with regard to encouraging less car use in Devon).
- This is an important milestone for the Devon Climate Emergency partnership, as the assembly results will inform the next iteration of the Devon Carbon Plan.
- The Council and fellow individual local authorities will now consult with their members (23/11/2021 – 27/01/2022) on how to respond to the Devon Climate Assembly – debating how to turn those resolutions into actions that will appear in the draft Final Devon Carbon Plan.

3.2. Engagement: The Mid Devon climate and sustainability website. (Corporate Plan aim: env 10.)

3.2.1. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist worked with colleagues to launch www.SustainableMidDevon.org.uk and has begun to cultivate this further as a Mid Devon community resource. Community contributions of resources, news, events and ideas are most welcome (some already received) and have been invited from local parish and town councils, sustainability groups etc.

3.2.2. The role of the website is to: 1) share updates on the Council's carbon reduction work; 2) provide information to residents, businesses, members and others; and 3) share and signpost resources, opportunities, events and local groups active on the climate, sustainability and biodiversity agenda.

3.3. Engagement: groups and partnerships. (Corporate Plan aim, env 10.)

3.3.1. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has continued outreach work through events, meetings and workshops e.g. Sustainable Crediton's *Big Green Fair*, discussions with Sustainable Crediton and Sustainable Tiverton; a webinar with Newton St Cyres parish council, and attended environmental webinars on the DALC conference (Devon Association of Local Councils) which we also helped to promote.

3.3.2. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has corresponded with parishes, ward members, and officers at Devon County Council / other local authorities.

3.4. Project: Electric Vehicle charging points. (CS priority: 3. CP aim: env 02.)

- 3.4.1. As part of the Council's Climate Strategy 2020-2024, the Council seeks to facilitate the roll-out of electric vehicle (EV) charger locations across the district. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has worked with colleagues and councillors to develop and assess a list of potential EV charging locations (rapid chargers can top up a modern EV by 80% in 40 minutes). A report to Cabinet presented an evaluated set of 3 options for this, to facilitate decision-making and aiming to achieve at least 5 to 15 additional EV charging locations through procurement during 2021. Each of the current options would be powered by renewable electricity.
- 3.4.2. At their meeting on 13th May 2021, Cabinet decided to delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive (S151), Cllr Colin Slade (Cabinet Member for the Environment and Climate Change) and Cllr Andrew Moore (Cabinet Member for Finance) as follows. *RESOLVED that: delegated authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive (151) and the Portfolio Holder(s) for the Environment & Climate Change and Finance, in consultation with Property Services to facilitate the installation of additional electric vehicle charging points on Council land and across the District.*
- 3.4.3. Current EV charger provision can be viewed on this map: www.goultralow.com/ev-charging-point-map/
- 3.4.4. Western Power Distribution (WPD) has been informed of the potential extra power capacity needs in Mid Devon, linked to this project. Published plans for WPD's Green Recovery scheme indicate support for 250% growth in EV rapid charging capacity within their network.
- 3.4.5. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has coordinated teamwork to enable actions delegated by Cabinet. Work included partnership liaison, submitting documentation for legal advice, clarifying parking fee policy, assessing risks, and steering charger locations.
- 3.4.6. Locations for fast chargers under the Deletti scheme have been approved, and the lead partner Devon County Council is preparing for procurement.

3.5. Strategy. Housing sustainability and Zero Carbon. (CS priority 2+3. CP aims h01, h03.)

- 3.5.1. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist worked with the new Mid Devon Housing Strategy project team to help consider how it will help deliver the Council's 2030 Net Zero ambition and incorporate the aims and priorities of the Mid Devon Climate Strategy and the Corporate Plan.
- 3.5.2. The Strategy was recently completed and opened to public consultation.

3.6. Project: Housing Advisors Programme. (CS priority: 1. CP aims: env02, env 05, h01, h02, h03, c04.)

- 3.6.1. Being prepared for invitation to tender. The Forward Planning team secured £20k funding through the LGA's Housing Advisors Programme to develop an assessment tool to model low carbon interventions and consider how they can be implemented at scale, using the Post Hill site in Tiverton as a pilot.

4.0 Corporate activities

4.1. The Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG). (CS priority: 1. CP aim: none.)

4.1.1. This advisory group set up after Cabinet approval on 23 April 2020 continues to consider topics including, but not limited to, climate and biodiversity. Chaired by Cllr Elizabeth Lloyd, NZAG meetings take place on alternate months to the Environment PDG to enable a regular feedback cycle.

4.1.2. The most recent meeting took place 05 October 2021, discussion included:

- The Sustainable Procurement Review.
- Planning policies and practice in relation to heritage.
- The Council's Climate Action Plan.
- The potential for a 'Community Climate & Biodiversity Support Fund'.
- Evidence for the environmental benefits of home / blended working.

4.2. Working across service areas. (CS priorities: all. CP aims: all.)

4.2.1. As previously noted, the Climate and Sustainability Specialist agreed, in consultation with Andrew Jarrett, Andrew Busby and Councillor Colin Slade, to apply a Programme Management approach to develop and deliver the cross-cutting *Climate and Sustainability Programme*. This has now been initiated with the Corporate Management Team and will be developed.

4.3. Priority: large scale tree planting. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: env07.)

4.3.1. The team has identified planting for over 600 trees on its own land this winter, and outline plans to plant more during winter 2022-2023 subject to consultation. We have begun to liaise with other landowners where possible to expand potential on a wider scale, and this is subject to future agreements. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist identified funding opportunities and has agreed to work with Devon County Council as a delivery partner (subject to agreement and confirmation of details).

4.4. Procurement: Greener Electricity. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: env02.)

4.4.1. The Cabinet on 04 March 2021 approved a proposal by Andrew Busby - Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change to procure a further 50% of our electricity via the 'Green Basket' under the LASER Framework for renewable energy. The forecast cost to source an additional 50% of the Council's annual consumption was circa £8k or 2.3% on top of current costs. Provided the 100% Green Tariff is entirely additional, hypothetically the savings would be around 183 tCO₂e (tonnes of CO₂ equivalent) of Scope 2 emissions.

4.4.2. The LASER Framework will now deliver renewable electricity to 50% of corporate power supply by October 2021; with the other 50% to be secured during 2022.

4.5. Project: Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). (CS priority: 1, 2. CP aim: env01, env02, ec01.)

4.5.1. A brief update.

- Phase 1: Heat Decarbonisation Plan. Work is underway to assess and devise solutions for 4 key council buildings: Phoenix House, and the 3 leisure centres.
- Phase 1: £310,821 grant being spent. Work in progress to install energy-efficiency and low-carbon improvements at the 3 leisure centres.
- Phase 2: no bid; grant fund exhausted within 2 weeks.

4.5.2. Phase 3: Tim Powell - Property Services Corporate Projects Officer - has submitted a bid to Salix, on the day the fund opened, to place us at the front of the queue (the first element has been accepted). The Heat Decarbonisation Plan (funded by Salix grants) helped to inform our Phase 3 bid detail.

- The grant would enable us to “decarbonise” heating at the Exe Valley and Lords Meadow Leisure Centres, primarily by replacing gas boilers with air-source heat pumps.
- Total bid value is £3,079,032, (of that £1,986,771 is for Exe Valley and £1,092,261 for Lords Meadow).
- Should we succeed, the grant does not require match funding, however the Council would be required to contribute the cost of what it would have been to replace gas boilers like-for-like. That value has been estimated at a total of £176,602 (£101,452 Exe Valley, £75,150 Lords Meadow).

4.5.3. Further assessments will be commissioned to inform future bids and works e.g. building fabric improvements.

4.6. The Council’s vehicle fleet. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: none).

4.6.1. The Transport Manager and the Climate and Sustainability Specialist authored a report to promote the adoption of Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEV) in the fleet with electric vehicles as a priority to replace selected small cars and vans. This would reduce Scope 1 emissions and save on fuel costs.

4.6.2. Costed options were presented to relevant managers and are under review.

4.7. Project: Mid Devon District Council’s proposals for hydro-electric power on the River Exe at Tiverton. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: env02.)

4.7.1. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has begun to lead this project, and has set up a project board.

4.7.2. Western Power Distribution has been informed of the plan to connect 150kWp generation capacity.

4.7.3. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist recently met with Environment Agency officers. Work is underway to address and resolve issues behind planning objections e.g. flood risk assessment modelling. Funding has been applied for to help research key issues.

4.8. Project: Archetype housing - energy efficiency and low carbon performance. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: env01, env02, c04.)

4.8.1. The Housing team will work on exemplar homes typical of Council stock (beginning with 2 buildings this year) to optimise energy performance and retrofit energy solutions. This project will inform costed plans to improve the rest of the Council stock of this type.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1. That the Environment PDG notes and accepts this report as an update on the Council's response to the Climate Emergency – documenting progress with the Climate Action Plan (to reduce the Council's carbon footprint) and the wider Climate and Sustainability Programme.

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Circulation of the Report: Cabinet Member for the Environment and Climate Change, Leadership Team.

List of Background Papers:

The previous climate change and sustainability report provided to the [Environment Policy Development Group](#) on [07 September 2021](#). Link to [Report](#). Link to [Appendix A](#).