

ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

08 MARCH 2022

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 (CAP).

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

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; because 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. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist - leads the development of the Council's *Climate and Sustainability Programme*, working with colleagues and Councillors, particularly the Corporate Manager Property, Leisure & Climate Change; and Cllr 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 CAP collates projects and activities to address climate change (mitigation and adaptation). The Climate and Sustainability Specialist is coordinating a review of the Council's CAP 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 CAP 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. Estimated costs thus far for the Internal Structures and Processes workstream are £645,638.

2.2.4. Estimated costs thus far for actions within the *Housing Energy and Assets* work stream is £18,564,210. (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 *Transport and Vehicles* workstream are £418,000.

2.2.6. Estimated costs thus far for the *Community and Wider Context* workstream are £531,000.

2.2.7. 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.

2.2.8. **Caveats.** Robust caveats must be provided with any reporting on the 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 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 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 CAP).

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 DCP.

- 3.1.3. The partnership will continue to implement the Interim Devon Carbon Plan and publish an updated Final Carbon Plan incorporating the actions from the Citizens' Assembly for August 2022. (The stage of publishing an updated Interim DCP has been removed.)
- 3.1.4. The Interim DCP has been, and continues to be, the subject of detailed public consultation.
- 3.1.5. The most recent public 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 was 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 inform the next iteration of the DCP.
 - 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 DCP.
- 3.1.6. Update: Cllr Colin Slade initiated debate via the Net Zero Action Group, with members given briefing paper on the Devon Climate Assembly outcomes and give their views to the Climate and Sustainability Specialist.
- 3.1.7. Views were fed back to the Devon Climate Emergency partnership. The reviewed responses now inform the next iteration of the DCP, and the interim DCP will be subject to public consultation.

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

- 3.2.1. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist curates our dedicated website www.SustainableMidDevon.org.uk as a Mid Devon community resource.
- 3.2.2. Community contributions of resources, news, events and ideas are welcomed from local parish and town councils, sustainability groups, eco champions, farmers and growers, etc.
- 3.2.3. 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.
- 3.2.4. An interactive [map](#) of Mid Devon sustainability resources and projects is now live, with an improved design.

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

- 3.3.1. Update: The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has continued outreach work through events, meetings and workshops, for example: preparations for the 2022 State of the District Debate (climate change themed); meetings and correspondence with partnerships e.g. Blackdown Hills AONB, Connecting the

Culm; work with eco champions and green groups e.g. Blackdown Hills Transition, Uffculme Green Team, Sustainable Bradninch, Sustainable Crediton and Sustainable Tiverton. For example: joining a team of Sustainable Tiverton volunteers aiming to use public artwork for a “Net Zero Vision” to inspire local communities.

- 3.3.2. Other recent work includes: helping to coordinate with Tiverton Tree Team, a display at Phoenix House reception area with ‘top tips’ for householders, COP26 workshops and post-event discussions, webinars with Newton St Cyres parish council, local enterprise liaison e.g. Planet and People CIC.
- 3.3.3. Liaison with parishes, ward members, and officers at Devon County Council / other local authorities has included: knowledge sharing, calls for project ideas e.g. tree planting and aftercare, biodiversity, energy saving campaigns, green innovation, EV chargepoints and other green transport.

3.4. Research and Expertise Support.

- 3.4.1. The Council now benefits from membership of South West Energy and Environment Group (SWEEG). This membership will give the Council discounted access to University of Exeter Consulting services, and officers can access data, past reports and fellow expertise through the network.

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

- 3.5.1. 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.
- 3.5.2. Update: project work has begun. We will develop this tool with University of Exeter Consulting. (Adding value via SWEEG membership.)

3.6. Strategy. Housing sustainability. (CS priority 2+3. CP aims h01, h03.)

- 3.6.1. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist supported the 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. Strategy now published: involved in delivery and monitoring.

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

- 3.7.1. Prospect Way in Lapford. The housing team completed a retrofit demonstration project at a pair of Council-owned houses. This shows how we can achieve the lowest carbon footprint possible, with a reasonable available retrofit, for this archetype. We have a live data feed to monitor energy performance over 12 months (2022). This project will inform costed plans to improve the rest of the Council stock of this type.
- 3.7.2. The package included fabric improvements such as new double glazed windows and doors, wall cavity insulation, and loft insulation improved to

300mm. A carefully specified heat pump (reversible) feeds a coil heat exchanger for air to air winter heating and summer cooling. Fresh air is filtered and circulated around the home for consistent ambience.

3.7.3. Following this success, in future the Council's in-house team can deliver most of the works to save costs, with the main heat pump system installed by an external specialist contractor. Training is now being organised.

3.8. Bid update: Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: env01, env02, c04.)

3.8.1. Update: The housing team aim to prepare a Wave 2 bid. Should they be successful, the team will then need to rapidly procure and coordinate the delivery of a formidable project.

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

3.9.1. 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.

3.9.2. 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.*

3.9.3. Current EV charger provision can be viewed on this map: www.goultralow.com/ev-charging-point-map/

3.9.4. 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.

3.9.5. 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.

3.9.6. All 5 Council-owned locations for 10 fast charger points under the Deletti scheme are approved and the lead partner Devon County Council has prepared for procurement, installations will take place during 2022. The 5 locations are the car parks at: High Street and Market Street in Crediton; Forge Way at Cullompton; Westexe South and William Street in Tiverton.

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 08 February 2022. Discussion included:

- The need to move forward with a selection of opportunities to invest budget in addressing climate change. For example, the proposal for a 'Community Climate & Biodiversity Support Fund'.
- The Sustainable Procurement Review. How to further develop policies and procedures to support local sustainability and prosperity through decision making e.g. aligned to Doughnut Economics.
- How to promote and celebrate sustainable farming practices.

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.

4.2.2. Update: Recently the Climate and Sustainability Specialist has worked with and offered support to teams and officers e.g. Development Management, Forward Planning, Street Scene, Transport, Property Services.

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

4.3.1. The LASER Framework delivers renewable electricity to 50% of corporate supply as of October 2021; with the other 50% to be secured during 2022.

4.4. Ongoing energy efficiency work at Council-owned facilities. (CS priority 2+3. CP aims env01, h01, h03.)

4.4.1. Spend-to-save projects include: occupancy-responsive lighting at Tiverton Multi Storey Car Park.

4.4.2. Phoenix House Building Management System will become remotely controllable. Phoenix House will have new occupancy-responsive light fittings to save money; emergency lighting included in solution; design in progress.

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. Report completed: to assess and devise solutions for Phoenix House, and the 3 leisure centres.
- Phase 1: £310,821 grant being spent. **Works now completed:** to install energy efficiency and low-carbon improvements at the 3 leisure centres.
- Phase 2: no bid; grant fund exhausted within 2 weeks.
- Phase 3: bid submitted, update due very soon.

4.5.2. Update on Phase 3: Tim Powell - Property Services Corporate Projects Officer - submitted a bid on the day the fund opened to place us at the front of the queue (bid forms were 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. Priority: tree planting and aftercare. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: env07.)

4.6.1. We are working closely with Tiverton Tree Team, Sustainable Tiverton, Sustainable Crediton and others to engage the community in planting and aftercare. We continue to liaise with other landowners to expand planting on a wider scale where possible, and this is subject to future agreements.

4.6.2. 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).

4.6.3. A new community orchard was planted at Mountbatten Way, Tiverton, on 4th December 2021, attended by the Council Chairman Cllr Ray Radford, and members Cllr Les Cruwys, Cllr Bob Evans, Cllr Ben Holdman and Cllr Colin Slade. We are grateful for neighbour cooperation and for the support of Tiverton Tree Team, Sustainable Tiverton and all volunteers.

4.6.4. Update: The team is planting over 600 trees on Council land (winter 2021-2022) and has outline plans to plant more in winter 2022-2023 subject to consultation. The Council has been awarded a grant through the Devon Emergency Tree Fund towards this winter’s trees and materials.

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 leads on this project, has set up a project board, and recently met with Environment Agency officers.
- 4.7.2. Western Power Distribution has been informed of the plan to connect 150kWp generation capacity.
- 4.7.3. Work is in progress to address the need for evidence and to resolve issues behind planning objections e.g. flood risk assessment modelling.

4.8. The Council's vehicle fleet. (CS priority: 2. CP aim: none).

- 4.8.1. The Transport Manager and the Climate and Sustainability Specialist authored a report to promote the adoption of Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEV) on the Council fleet when suitable vehicles were due for replacement. This would reduce Scope 1 emissions and save on fuel costs. Costed options were presented to relevant managers.
- 4.8.2. Further specialist-supported work between teams led to a decision and target to replace 8 small vans (diesel) with ULEV in 2022.
- 4.8.3. Operations Managers are now encouraged to adopt ULEV to the fleet. Costed options are considered on an ongoing basis. These are being facilitated by the Operations Manager - Street Scene and Open Spaces. A fleet transformation plan is being developed.

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 CAP (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 [11 January 2022](#). Link to [Report](#). Link to [Appendix A](#).