

**Report for: Planning, Environment and Sustainability
Policy Development Group (PDG)**

Date of Meeting: 26 November 2024

Subject: Climate and Sustainability Update

Cabinet Member: Cllr Natasha Bradshaw - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change.

Responsible Officer: Jason Ball - Climate and Sustainability Specialist.

Paul Deal – Hea of Service for Finance, Property and Climate Resilience.

Exempt: None

Wards Affected: All.

Enclosures: 1: A draft Climate Change Strategy.
2: Climate Action Plan.
3: Green Enterprise Grant proposal.
4: Biodiversity Duty Action Plan.

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To receive an update on the Climate and Sustainability Programme.

Recommendation(s):

- 1. That the Planning, Environment and Sustainability Policy Development Group (PDG) notes and accepts this report as an update on the Council's Climate and Sustainability Programme, and progress on its response to the Climate Emergency.**
- 2. That this PDG notes the appended enclosures.**

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-28 places a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability matters woven into all aspects of its work, from procurement to promoting nature recovery.**

- 1.2 The Climate and Sustainability (C&S) Specialist leads the development of the Council's C&S Programme, working inclusively with all Councillors and colleagues and particularly service leads, the Corporate Management Team and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change.
- 1.3 The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and aims to be climate neutral by 2030. The term 'climate neutrality' describes a balance achieved, for any given period, for carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released into or removed from the atmosphere; related to the actions taken by organisations, businesses or individuals. The goal of climate neutrality is to achieve a net zero climate impact.
- 1.4 The Council's work to address the climate change crisis aligns with the climate emergency declaration across Devon, and the Devon Carbon Plan. Council actions with regard to **climate mitigation** (reducing greenhouse emissions) and **climate adaptation** (resilience to climate change risks) can be split into two work streams:
- An internal organisational / corporate focus for the Council;
 - Efforts to enable and facilitate actions across Mid Devon communities.
- 1.5 Therefore this report is divided into **corporate** and **community** items (some overlap is possible). Clearly the Council can monitor and manage matters related to its own assets and operations to a significant degree. For the wider agenda linked to the whole Mid Devon area, we will work as a partner with local businesses, organisations, community groups and residents.
- 1.6 This report emphasises activity and progress updates for brevity. For background details, please refer to previous reports, all [available online](#).

2.0 Performance

2.1 Aims, Priorities and Performance Indicators

2.1.1 Progress on [Corporate Plan Performance Indicators](#) (PI) is provided in quarterly reports to [Cabinet](#) (Scrutiny Committee every 6 months).

2.1.2 Quarterly [Performance Dashboards](#) share data on e.g. greenhouse gas emissions avoided by generating solar power and using electric vehicles.

2.1.3 Progress notes on Corporate Plan aims and Climate Change priorities are [available online](#). (sustainablemiddevon.org.uk/our-plan/#aims-priorities)

2.2 The Council's Carbon Footprint

2.2.1 Annual [carbon footprint reports](#) (greenhouse gas accounting) are published on the Council's [Sustainable Mid Devon](#) website.

2.2.2 The Council commissioned the University of Exeter's Centre for Energy and the Environment through the South West Energy and Environment Group (SWEEDG) to develop and produce its annual carbon footprint reports for 2018/19 (baseline year) to 2023/24. Analysis was based on BS EN ISO 14064-1 and the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. A [carbon footprint](#) is measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e). Net emissions for the 2023/24 financial year totalled 16,454 tCO₂e.

2.3 The Council's Climate Strategy and the Climate Action Plan.

2.3.1 The draft 2024-2028 Climate Strategy and this year's Climate Action Plan are enclosed. Aligned to the Corporate Plan, the Climate Strategy looks at the district's strategic position, as a starting point for engagement between the Council, local communities, businesses and partners which will seek to co-create community climate action planning for adaptive resilience and ways to cut greenhouse gas emissions for the district as a whole.

2.3.2 The Climate Strategy is deliberately brief, with the intention that the collaborative work outlined above will generate more detail and research such as joint and community action programmes, sometimes led by others. The Climate Strategy will be published online alongside further work.

2.3.3 The Council will complement the Strategy annually with a carbon reduction plan ('roadmap to 2030') aiming to deliver corporate net zero at the soonest opportunity. Each will reflect current budgets and capacity.

2.3.4 As the Council has direct control over its own activities, i.e. transport, facilities and working practices, it makes sense to prioritise efforts to reduce the components of our corporate carbon footprint within direct control. This will involve innovation, direct investment and further bids for additional funding to make our journey towards net zero a reality.

2.3.5 Although recognising the majority of emissions are not in our direct control, it is vital that the Council seeks to reduce climate impact across the whole of its operations, and the carbon footprint shows the importance of its potential investments, influence and spending power. Therefore cutting emissions also entails work to enable change within supply chains, joint actions with tenants, and by innovating in partnership with communities and businesses.

2.3.6 As with the Corporate Plan, each PDG and team must drive and monitor their remit, and operations, with regard to climate adaptation and mitigation.

3.0 Community and partnership activities

3.1 Vibrant landscapes at the heart of Devon

3.1.1 We work in partnership with a range of organisations and initiatives such as Blackdown Hills National Landscape (BHNL); and Connecting the Culm.

- 3.1.2 Progress is being made with [an ark project](#) to prevent the extinction of white clawed crayfish, combined with farmer advice and engagement by the Environment Agency and citizen science monitoring of river water quality. Part of conservation projects at the [Culm](#) and Creedy rivers.
- 3.1.3 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change and the C&S Specialist met with BHNL, Defra and Natural England to foster joint understanding of the National Landscape management plan, its heightened need to respond to the climate emergency, and the roles of local authorities, central government, farmers, funding and nature recovery schemes at river catchment scales that consider the full context of risks such as climate change and objectives such as soil, flood and ecological resilience.
- 3.1.4 The Tree Officer and C&S Specialist helped to establish a Mid Devon Tree Warden group, in the area of Crediton and nearby parishes initially, thanks to Crediton Town Council and local volunteers. Volunteer recruitment began at the Big Green Fair run by Sustainable Crediton. Wardens do not have an official role but add to local nature conservation e.g. veteran trees.
- 3.2 Climate Resilient Communities
 - 3.2.1 Community Emergency Plan promotion continues e.g. a presentation on Resilience at the Annual Town and Parish meeting on 20 November.
- 3.3 Green Growth and Bright Futures
 - 3.3.1 Please refer to the enclosed outline proposal for Green Enterprise Grants.
 - 3.3.2 The Council was the first to host a rapid charger in the 'Deletti Phase 2' EV partnership scheme, at William Street in Tiverton, and now has a second at Forge Way, Cullompton. The next installation is due this autumn at Market Street in Crediton. During 2025-2026 a further 3 MDDC car parks will get rapid chargers: Pannier Market at Tiverton, Westexe South in Tiverton and St Saviour's at Crediton. Total 12 new chargepoints under this scheme.
 - 3.3.3 Devon County Council's (DCC) Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) procurement now has OZEV approval (Office for Zero Emission Vehicles). The majority of subsidy will benefit on-street residential areas and parish / community car parks.
- 3.4 Healthy Homes
- 3.5 The Housing Initiatives Officer is currently working with DCC and the other Devon authorities on a delivery proposal for the Warm Homes: Local Grant funding as part of the Devon consortium.
 - 3.5.1 Mid Devon Housing won yet more awards (on 9 shortlists in 2024), most recently at the British Construction Industry Awards, where the St Andrews project at Cullompton earned the title 'Carbon Net Zero Initiative of the Year'.

Built in partnership with ZED PODS, it welcomed new tenants in March 2024. Shapland House at Tiverton also won 'Best Public Sector Brownfield Project' at the Environment Analyst Brownfield Awards.

3.6 Community engagement and promoting events, exemplars and projects.

3.6.1 Online promotion continues via social media, the Let's Talk Mid Devon engagement platform and the Sustainable Mid Devon website.

4.0 **Corporate activities**

4.1 Biodiversity Duty: please refer to the enclosed draft plan.

4.2 The C&S Specialist continues to give support to all teams and has:

- Worked with the Cabinet Member to take forward actions raised by this PDG and NZAG with colleagues and partners.
- Provided secretariat support for Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG).
- Worked to support and brief the Corporate Management Team (CMT), service leads and others on corporate environment aims, goals and policies, particularly the draft Climate Strategy and roadmap to 2030.
- Shared opportunities with Members, NZAG, CMT, etc, such as county travel consultations, local partnership work, projects, community training opportunities and funding sources.
- Met quarterly with key operational managers to support communications, teamwork and to help prioritise actions.
- Held monthly calls for all operations managers / service leads to support climate action planning and delivery.
- Has been attending / supporting team meetings with regard to climate and sustainability being a regular agenda item.
- Has begun drafting an environment policy; will engage teams on action plans for their specialist / service remits.
- Supported an environment audit at Exe Valley Leisure Centre.
- Supported the consideration of climate change related issues and opportunities for the Economy Strategy.
- Continues to support proactive energy management and investment.

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

Legal Implications. The Council's environmental sustainability duties are underpinned by legislation e.g. [Environment Act 2021](#). All local authorities have obligations under the [Climate Change Act 2008](#) with regard to climate change adaptation (resilience) and mitigation (emission reductions). [Full Council declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019](#).

Risk Assessment. Progress on Performance Indicators (PI) provided separately by 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.

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

Equalities Impact Assessment. There are no equality impacts associated with this report. Specific projects and policies are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. (Assessing the equality impacts of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is not only a legal requirement, but also a positive opportunity for authorities to make better decisions based on robust evidence.)

Relationship to Corporate Plan. Please refer to Section 2, paragraphs 2.1 - 2.2.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off / mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151.

Date: 18 November 2024

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer.

Date: 18 November 2024

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director.

Date: 18 November 2024

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager.

Date: 14 November 2024

Cabinet member notified: Yes.

Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. No.

Appendix: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. No.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Jason Ball, Climate and Sustainability Specialist: Email:

JBall@MidDevon.gov.uk Tel: 01884 255255.

Background papers: The previous report was provided to this [PDG](#) on 03 September 2024.