

Cabinet – 20 October 2021

Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

Portfolio: Councillor Bird, Leader of the Council

Related portfolios: All

Service: Place & Environment

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. **Aim**

- 1.1. Significant climate change would threaten the wellbeing of our residents and disrupt our economy. By achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, the Council will help to manage this risk.

2. **Summary**

- 2.1. The Council declared a climate change emergency on 16 September 2019 and committed to becoming a net zero carbon authority by 2050. This report provides an update on the Council's climate emergency action plan, approved by Cabinet on 21 October 2020.

3. **Recommendations**

- 3.1. That Cabinet note the progress made in delivering the measures identified in the climate emergency action plan, as detailed in **Appendix 1**.

4. **Report detail – know**

Context

- 4.1. In June 2019, the UK became the world's first major economy to legislate a commitment to cut emissions to net zero by 2050. The Environment Bill 2020 is one of the government's key vehicles for delivering the bold vision as set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan. It is part of a step-change in environmental protection and recovery, setting a new and ambitious domestic framework for environmental governance and one which places greater responsibility on councils, specifically in their roles as local planning, highway and drainage authorities.

- 4.2. The Council declared a climate change emergency on 16 September 2019 and committed to becoming a net zero carbon authority by 2050. In 2020, the WMCA pledged to reach net zero carbon emissions no later than 2041 publishing "WM2041 – A Programme for Implementing an Environmental Recovery." The Council continues to play a key role working alongside regional partners to tackle climate change and is operating within the framework established by the UK Parliament.
- 4.3. On 21 October 2020, Cabinet approved a climate emergency action plan to address the commitments of the declaration passed in 2019. The first phase of the action plan covers 'Scope 1' and 'Scope 2' emissions using best practice guidance as set by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol.
- 'Scope 1' covers all direct emissions from the activities of the Council or under the Council's control. This includes fuel combustion on site such as gas boilers, fleet vehicles and air-conditioning leaks.
 - 'Scope 2' covers indirect emissions from electricity purchased and used by the organisation. Emissions are created during the production of the energy and eventually used by the organisation.
 - 'Scope 3' covers all other indirect emissions from activities of the organisation, occurring from sources that the Council does not own or does not control.
- 4.4. The action plan set out the initial opportunities the Council had identified to reduce carbon emissions relating to its own estate and operations. The Council will continue to engage staff and stakeholders to expand the range of actions that will enable us to meet our target. The appointment of a climate change programme manager will enable this work to be accelerated and obtain funding for climate initiatives.
- 4.5. The first phase of the action plan covers a five-year period up to 2025. There are established tools available to support carbon budgeting and reporting, and these will be utilised to set specific targets as individual project detail is developed.
- 4.6. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on many Council services and changed the way the Council operates. On 16 June 2021 Cabinet approved a reset action plan aligned to the Walsall Proud Promises and Corporate Plan outcomes. This builds on the new ways of working expedited by the pandemic and will guide the work of the Council over the coming months. The reset action plan has the potential to significantly accelerate progress towards net zero.
- 4.7. Details of progress against the action plan are contained in **Appendix 1**. As the plan covers the period up to 2025 there are some measures that have not been progressed. COVID has also had an impact on delivery, with some short-term measures being delayed and some medium and long term measures being delivered sooner than planned. Measures without progress have been omitted; however, the full action plan can be found [here](#) (also see background papers).

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.8. Responding to climate change is critical to the future of the borough's quality of life and therefore is fully consistent with the 5 strategic priorities identified in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Risk Management

- 4.9. Even with ambitious actions to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, further climate change is inevitable. Stabilising global temperature rise at 1.5 – 2°C above pre-industrial levels would prevent some of the most extreme impacts, such as:
- irreversible impacts on environments and ecosystems;
 - extreme weather events;
 - severe impacts on the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations; and
 - economic damage
- 4.10. Action planning and working jointly with partner organisations will form the mitigation to these risks.

Financial Implications

- 4.11. Delivery of the action plan will have a range of financial implications. The plan includes the preparation of a business case for a climate change programme manager. It may be possible to find external funding for this post.

Legal implications

- 4.12. There are no direct legal implications of this update to Cabinet. The legal framework for this work is set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 (CCA2008) and the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019. The Order sets the expectation that the UK will achieve net zero by 2050.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.13. The Council's approach to procurement has a role to play in its response to climate change. The Council's procurement social value policy includes the following: promoting environmental sustainability by reducing wastage and climate impacts, limiting energy consumption, improving and procuring materials from renewable and sustainable sources.

Property implications

- 4.14. A significant part of the Council's carbon footprint relates to the operation of Council buildings. Several measures related to the council's property portfolio are included in the action plan.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.15. The implications of climate change affect all sectors of the economy and can have a profound effect on personal behaviour and wellbeing.

Staffing implications

- 4.16. Delivery of the action plan requires a contribution from all areas of the Council. A business case will be developed for a dedicated officer to coordinate the development, delivery and monitoring of the programme of work.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.17. Climate change affects all sections of society. However, some groups may require additional support to make the necessary lifestyle and behavioural changes than others. Equality impact screening will be undertaken against all actions and equality impact assessments will be carried out where necessary.

Climate Change

- 4.18. Climate change is the primary focus of this report.

Consultation

- 4.19. Consultation has been carried out in relation to specific measures where necessary (e.g. Black County Plan review). Further consultation will be carried out in relation to specific measures as required.

5. Decide

- 5.1. No decisions are required as this is a progress report for noting.

6. Respond

- 6.1. Delivery of the climate action plan will continue, with business cases brought forward on specific measures, as required.

7. Review

- 7.1. The Council will monitor achievements against measures set out in the action plan, using established tools to support carbon budgeting and reporting. An annual review of the action plan will take place, with appropriate oversight provided through scrutiny committees.

Background papers

Cabinet – 21 October 2020: Agenda Item 12 - Carbon Neutral Council

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Climate Action Plan Progress

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6 October 2021