

16 January 2024

## Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Councillor G Flint – Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces

### 1. Aim

Walsall has committed to become a net-zero borough by 2041.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the contents of this report and the steps being taken by the Council to respond to the Climate Emergency declaration of September 2019 and the subsequent setting of a target for a net-zero borough by 2041 to align with West Midlands Combined Authority.
- 2.2 To review the progress or the current climate Change Emergency Action Plan.

### 3. Report detail – know

- 3.1 This report provides an update on the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan, approved by Cabinet on 18 October 2022.
- 3.2 The Council declared a climate emergency in September 2019 with a target to become a net-zero authority by 2050 in line with the UK Government's Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment; Order 2019).
- 3.3 In October 2022 the Council updated the scope and target date to achieve carbon neutrality. The Council committed to work with all relevant partners and stakeholders to make the whole borough net-zero by 2041 in line with the regional target agreed by the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- 3.4 The adoption of the 2041 target and the wider scope has necessitated a review of our current Climate Emergency Action Plan (**Appendix 1**) to reflect the new borough-wide approach to tackling climate change. A full time Climate Change Programme Manager has been appointed (July 2023) to undertake this review, develop a net-zero 2041 strategy and revised action plan to reflect the council's updated climate change objectives.
- 3.5 The Council has also committed further funding for 2 new officers to deliver net-zero projects who will be recruited this year. The external funding team have been successful in developing a number of bids for funding net-zero projects.

- 3.6 An initial review of Council and borough greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions has been undertaken to establish the priorities for a revised net-zero 2041 strategy and action plan. The results of this review, along with background on the methodologies used, is given in **Appendix 2**. The headline findings are as follows:
- 3.6.1 According to the latest Department for Energy Security and Net-Zero (DESNEZ) current GHG emissions for Walsall are 1088 kt(CO<sub>2</sub>e) [thousand tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent].
  - 3.6.2 Walsall's largest sources of GHG emissions are carbon dioxide emissions from domestic sources (34.9%) and fossil fuel powered vehicles (34.2%).
  - 3.6.3 The total carbon footprint of the Council when direct emissions from the fuel it burns and electricity it buys (scope 1 & 2 emissions), plus the emissions resulting from the goods and services it procures (scope 3 emissions), is 113kt(CO<sub>2</sub>e). This is approximately 10% of Walsall's regional GHG emissions.
  - 3.6.4 To make a fair contribution to the global and national decarbonisation efforts, Walsall has a carbon budget deemed to be 6900kt(CO<sub>2</sub>e). It is this 'carbon budget' that forms the scientific basis of the net-zero 2041 target.
  - 3.6.5 Pathways to net-zero 2041 will be extremely challenging.
- 3.7 To deliver net-zero 2041 the Council will need to show leadership and build on existing partnerships between the public, private, community and voluntary sector organisations. It will need to develop priorities for engaging and educating residents, communities and businesses and upskilling the workforce. It will need to take innovative approaches to working with partners, supporting innovation in technology, and new approaches to finance and funding.
- 3.8 A net-zero 2041 strategy and revised action plan focusing on the priorities highlighted in the GHG emissions analysis will be developed in the next six months. A consultation plan to establish how best to engage and mobilise relevant stakeholders and partners will also be developed.

#### **4. Financial information**

- 4.1 There are significant financial implications to pursuing a net-zero 2041 target for the borough. The actions required will represent a mix of committed and desired interventions by multiple partners.
- 4.2 Significant additional investment will be needed for the net-zero 2041 vision to be realised. There will be a need to explore potential sources of funding through existing avenues as well as develop innovative approaches to ensure projects can be delivered.
- 4.3 Some actions, such as retrofit programmes, already have funding committed while other programmes will require feasibility studies or business cases to be developed

to determine their viability and funding will need to be secured to make them happen. This is particularly relevant for some of the larger projects.

- 4.4 Partners will need to develop financial business cases which consider the whole-lifetime-costs of investments as decarbonisation projects often pay for themselves as a result of reduced energy costs. Partners will also need to appreciate the consequences and costs of delay in delivering the necessary changes which are likely to be greater on the economy and society in the long-term.

## **5. Reducing Inequalities**

- 5.1 Climate change affects all sections of society, however both the consequences of climate change and the measures required to achieve net-zero disproportionately affect the less well-off. For example:

- **Cost of Inaction:** The potential economic, environmental, and health costs of not acting on climate change are substantial. Whilst the less well-off contribute the lowest carbon dioxide emissions they are likely to suffer most from the consequences of climate change.
- **Energy Costs:** net-zero policies often involve a shift to renewable energy sources, which can initially be more expensive. This could lead to increased energy costs, disproportionately affecting poorer households.
- **Health Benefits:** Achieving net-zero emissions can result in significant benefits to human health from better air quality, less noise, and more active travel. These benefits can be particularly significant for less well-off communities that are often disproportionately affected by pollution.
- **Job Opportunities:** The greening of the economy can result in the loss of well-paid jobs in traditional high carbon industries. However, the transition to a net-zero economy can create new job opportunities in green industries. This could potentially benefit the less well-off if they are able to access these opportunities. Developing 'green skills' and reskilling those workers leaving legacy industries need to be a key theme of a Net Zero 2041 action plan.

- 5.2 While there are challenges associated with the transition to a net-zero future, there are also significant opportunities. It's crucial that these opportunities are made accessible to all, and that the transition is managed in a way that is fair and equitable.

- 5.3 The potential of net-zero policies to exacerbate inequalities has long been recognised. Achieving a fair and equitable transition to a net-zero future is described as a 'just transition'. This means that the costs and benefits of the transition are shared equitably, and that support is provided to those who are most affected by the changes to ensure no one is left behind.

## **6. Decide**

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

## **7. Respond**

- 7.1 Over the next 6 months the Council will prepare a draft Net Zero 2041 Strategy for which Cabinet approval will be required.
- 7.2 Delivery of the Net Zero 2041 action plan will continue with a series of business cases will be brought forward for specific measures as required.

## **8. Review**

- 8.1 The Council will monitor achievements against measures set out in the revised action plan. An annual review of the action plan will take place, with appropriate oversight provided through scrutiny committees and Cabinet.
- 8.2 The Council will use the Local Government Association GHG tool to assess council Scope 1 and 2 emissions. It will use the Oxygen Insights tool to assess Scope 3 emissions. It will use the data generated by these tools report performance via the widely used Carbon Disclosure Project to measure performance against other local authorities.

### **Background papers**

Appendix 1: Summary of Walsall Council Climate Change Emergency Action Plan  
Appendix 2: Regional and Council greenhouse gas emissions data  
Climate Emergency Action Plan Update – Cabinet Report 18 October 2022 [Item 14]

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