

18 JANUARY, 2022

Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Councillor Bird, Leader of the Council

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. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the progress made in delivering the measures identified in the climate emergency action plan, as detailed in Appendix 1.

3. Report detail – know

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 In addition to reducing carbon emissions, 'carbon offsetting' can be achieved through tree planting. Applications for grant aid have been submitted to a variety of schemes to support tree planting across the borough. The successful application to the Tiny Forest programme will enabled nine miniature woodlands to be planted during January 2022.
- 3.8 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 in 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 original full action plan can be found [here](#) (also see background papers).

4. Financial information

- 4.1 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.

5. Reducing Inequalities

- 5.1 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.

6. Decide

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

7. Respond

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

8. Review

- 8.1 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 continue to be presented to cabinet and scrutiny.

Background papers

Cabinet – 21st October 2020, Agenda Item 12, Carbon Neutral Council

Cabinet – 20th October 2021, Agenda Item 13, Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

Author

Dave Brown
Director of Place & Environment
☎ 653478
✉ dave.brown@walsall.gov.uk

Simon Neilson
Executive Director

Councillor Mike Bird
Leader of the Council