

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

10 October 2023

Subject: Update on the Council's response to the Climate Emergency and revised Environment Policy

Cabinet Member: Councillor Nick Holder - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Key Decision: Key

Executive Summary

At its meeting held on 26 February 2019 Full Council resolved to acknowledge that 'there is a climate emergency and to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030'. Cabinet subsequently committed to make the council carbon neutral by 2030. This report demonstrates that the council is on track to become carbon neutral by 2030.

A commitment was made to provide six-monthly progress updates on actions the council is taking to tackle the climate emergency in Wiltshire. This is the eighth progress report to Cabinet. Significant progress is reported against each of the seven Climate Strategy delivery themes and Appendix 2 sets out trends against key performance indicators (KPIs).

One year on from publishing the climate delivery plans, the KPIs show that the council is currently on track to meet its commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030, despite a post-pandemic rebound in emissions last financial year. This is due to tackling emissions from heating and powering buildings as this is the council's largest area of emissions.

Data for Wiltshire-wide emissions is reported nationally with a two-year lag, so it is not yet clear whether a similar trend will be seen, but existing data shows that county emissions are not reducing in line with our targets (based on our independent report on pathways to carbon neutrality). Transport is still the largest source of emissions in Wiltshire and not reducing significantly. It is a challenging area, but some good strides are being made, for example the Demand Responsive Transport service in Pewsey Vale.

Wiltshire Council continues to show leadership through tackling greenhouse emissions and mitigating other environmental impacts of its own operations. The proposed Environmental Policy (Appendix 1) sets out how the council does this.

It is a noteworthy achievement that the amount of renewable energy produced on the council estate has trebled in the last year from 550,000 kWh in 2021-22 to 1,745,060 kWh in 2022-23. This helps the council to be more self-sufficient in terms of electricity, reduces the council's energy bill and adds more renewables into the electricity system.

Although the council cannot influence all of the greenhouse emissions across the county, we publish KPIs to show the state of Wiltshire's progress, and continue to work with partner organisations to deliver the climate strategy.

This report demonstrates where the council is taking action to address or influence county-wide emissions. This includes working with regional and national organisations, and lobbying government for supportive policies and initiatives.

Proposals

That Cabinet Notes:

- 1) the actions taken in response to the climate emergency following the last update in May 2023, and notes the progress made against key indicators as well as areas of limited progress.

That Cabinet recommends that Full Council:

- 2) approves the updated Environmental Policy in Appendix 1 and adds it to Paragraph 1.2 of Part 3B of the Constitution for inclusion as part of the Policy Framework.
- 3) that future climate updates are received annually at its October meeting.

Reason for Proposals

- 1) To provide Cabinet with an update on actions taken in response to the climate emergency.
- 2) To ensure the council's Environmental Policy is up to date and has sufficient weight.
- 3) Moving to annual reporting would be in line with the annual publication of greenhouse gas data, mirror the reporting frequency of other local authorities and reduce the administrative burden on the climate team, enabling them to concentrate on project delivery.

Parvis Khansari
Corporate Director, Place

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

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Cabinet Member: Councillor Nick Holder - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Key Decision: Yes

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the eighth progress update on actions taken in response to the climate emergency, update the council's Environmental Policy and propose moving to an annual reporting cycle.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The programme of work to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030 will contribute to all four business plan priorities (2022-32) of:
 - i) Empowered People
 - ii) Resilient Society
 - iii) Thriving Economy
 - iv) Sustainable Environment

Specifically, the mission to make Wiltshire a place where 'we are on the path to carbon neutral (net zero)'.

3. The update on the actions taken in response to the climate emergency is structured against the seven delivery themes of the climate strategy. In addition, **Appendix 2** provides an overview of the Key Performance Indicators that track the outcomes relating to the climate strategy delivery plans.

Background

4. The council's Environmental Policy summarises how Wiltshire Council will continue to lead by example to minimise the impact of our own operations and supply chains on the environment whilst encouraging others to do the same. It provides a framework for setting and summarising the council's environmental objectives and targets to improve our environmental performance, all in one place. The policy was last updated in 2015 as a delegated Cabinet member decision. It is not currently included on the council's policy framework.
5. At its meeting held on 26 February 2019 Council debated the following notices of motion:
 - 12b) Acknowledging a Climate Emergency and Proposing the Way Forward;
 - 12c) Environment and Global Warming.

6. The council resolved to acknowledge that there is a climate emergency and to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030 – recognizing that the council only has direct control over 0.5% of carbon emissions in Wiltshire but can use its democratic mandate and other levers of influence to have an impact on wider emissions. Cabinet has also pledged to make Wiltshire Council carbon neutral by 2030.
7. The [minutes](#) of the meeting are available online (see pages 21 to 24). As part of this motion, the council resolved that Cabinet should report to Full Council on a six-monthly basis regarding the actions the council is taking and will take to address the climate emergency. The seventh report was presented to Cabinet in May 2023.
8. A Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group was established by Environment Select Committee in 2019 to develop recommendations to seek to achieve the target of making the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. The task group developed two reports and recommendations covering energy, transport and air quality (see Environment Select Committee papers for [13 January 2021](#)) and planning (see Environment Select Committee papers for [3 March 2021](#)).
9. In November 2021 the Task Group updated its name to the Climate Emergency Task Group and agreed its revised objectives as:
 - To help shape and influence the development of Wiltshire Council's programme (in all relevant areas) for meeting its objective of making Wiltshire Council carbon neutral and seeking to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030 (excluding the geographical area administered by Swindon Borough Council).
 - To scrutinise the delivery of this objective through the Climate Strategy (2022-2027) and its delivery plans, as well as key plans, policies and programmes, such as the Local Plan, Local Transport Plan and Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. Including the way in which the Council is measuring progress and how it is performing and reporting against baselines.
 - To provide recommendations on other aspects of decarbonising the county including partnership working and community-led approaches as well as acting as a national role model.
10. The Wiltshire Climate Strategy was approved by Council in February 2022. It sets out a framework for the council's climate programme under seven delivery themes. Page 18 of the strategy document commits us to developing delivery plans with more detail on actions and targets under the areas of focus in the strategy. These were [published](#) in September 2022.

Main Considerations for the Council

11. An updated Environmental Policy for the council is set out at **Appendix 1**. This can be included as part of the council's policy framework, alongside other non-statutory plans

and strategies such as our climate strategy. This contributes to action C1.3 of the Carbon Neutral Council Plan 2022-24.

12. The review process involved updating the policy against the priorities of our Business Plan and drawing on good practice from other councils (eg Devon County Council and South Gloucestershire Council) as well as online guides to gauge content and format. Heads of Service from relevant parts of the council were involved in the review process.

13. The policy can be used to:

- a. show the council's leadership and approach to mitigating the environmental impacts of its operations;
- b. provide a guideline for suppliers to respond to through the procurement process;
- c. provide a guideline for environmental implications to be considered, and included in Cabinet reports;
- d. implement an environmental management standard;
- e. encourage One Council working, by providing a basis for relevant service areas to be proactive in delivering the objectives outlined in the policy.

14. The proposed Environmental Policy replaces the immediate need to develop a Buildings Policy, which the council committed to in delivery plan action C4.3. The Environmental Policy states that the council will aim for new builds, refurbishments and maintenance to be as close to net zero in operation as possible, and encourage retrofit, and make sure council buildings are resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Overall progress on the climate strategy delivery plans

15. In October 2022 the Climate Strategy Delivery Plan 2022-2024 and the Carbon Neutral Council Plan 2022-2024 were agreed and [published](#). These plans set out the immediate actions to help deliver the Wiltshire Climate Strategy 2022-2027. This report updates the council on the progress being made in response to the climate emergency, structured against the seven delivery themes of the climate strategy. Updates will state the delivery plan action reference number where applicable.

16. Different from previous reports, this report now also provides an overview of performance against the key performance indicators (KPIs) that were set out in the above delivery plans. The council has set targets for as many of the indicators as possible. This overview is provided in **Appendix 2**.

17. One year on from publishing the delivery plans some milestones and indicators have needed to be reviewed, and this is made clear in **Appendix 2**. Importantly, the KPIs show that the council is currently on track to be carbon neutral by 2030, despite a post-pandemic rebound in emissions last financial year. County-wide we saw the same post-pandemic rebound, however due to the national emissions inventory reporting intervals we do not yet have data to show whether the whole of Wiltshire's emissions have also subsequently decreased.

18. The baseline for county-wide emissions has been changed to 2020 (from 2014), to mirror the pathway to carbon neutral mapped out by consultants Anthesis in 2022. From 2020 we are also able to track not just carbon dioxide (CO₂) but the additional greenhouse gases methane (CH₄) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), as data for these is now included in the national data set provided by the government Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, DESNZ.
19. The council is delivering against most of the 200+ actions and milestones set out in the delivery plans. In the year since the delivery plans were drafted, restructures and reprioritisation of work programmes means that a small number need to be delayed, or others no longer align clearly to the council's service delivery. Where a key action is delayed this is noted below in the relevant section.
20. A key cross-cutting action (X4.1) is to develop a strategy for offsetting greenhouse gas emissions that cannot be avoided or reduced. This was scheduled to be produced by the end of 2023, and initial work on options has been carried out by consultants Anthesis and staff working groups to inform the strategy. Offsetting residual emissions is a last resort once all possible emissions have been reduced, therefore the climate team is prioritising other deliverables such as developing home retrofit projects, commenting on planning applications and inputting to policy development, and revising the Adaptation Plan. The Offsetting Strategy is still important, as there is a need to plan for offsetting due the long timeframes involved, and the strategy will now be delivered by the end of 2024.

Delivery theme: Carbon Neutral Council

21. The council publishes an [annual report on the greenhouse gas \(GHG\) emissions](#) arising from its own estate and operations as requested by government and as set out in our Carbon Neutral Council Plan 2022-24 (action C6.2). The emissions included arise from council owned or controlled estate or buildings, council operational fleet, streetlights, business travel, waste generated by the council through its operations, leased vehicles, schools purchasing energy through our energy contract and outsourced waste collection vehicle emissions. The figures exclude full emissions data from schools and academies, social housing and all other outsourced operations.
22. The council's commitment is to be carbon neutral in its own operations (Scopes 1 & 2) by 2030. In 2014-15 Scope 1 & 2 emissions were 23,758 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent and in 2022/23 were 3,568 tCO_{2e}. This means that council emissions have been reduced below the target for 2022/23 (3750t) ensuring that the council is aligned to the pathway to carbon neutral set out in 2022.
23. The council's GHG emissions fluctuate from year to year due to acquisition and divestment of buildings, change of use of buildings, seasonal weather conditions which affect the need for heating and cooling buildings, and improvements to energy efficiency made during the year. The council is engaged in a range of work to deliver savings in emissions and costs. Examples include rationalisation and improvement of the council's property portfolio, investment in energy efficiency measures within the

remaining estate such as lighting and heating equipment upgrades, investment in appropriate renewable energy technologies and the replacement of street lighting units with LED lights which use considerably less energy. Specific actions are set out in the Carbon Neutral Council Plan 2022-24.

24. The council is currently installing solar canopies on the car park at Five Rivers Leisure Centre in Salisbury. It is estimated that works will complete by the end of December. The total installed capacity of the solar canopies will be 248 kW and they will reduce electricity bought from the grid to power the leisure centre by more than 10%. Alongside the canopies we are also piloting a solar EV charging unit called a Papilio unit. This will provide 12 charging stations for EVs, powered from solar panels that are incorporated into the roof of the unit. This will be piloted at the site for 3 years.
25. We are planning to roll this approach out to other suitable sites, where building electrical demand and car park layout are suitable, and are in the process of assessing other leisure centres at present.
26. The Energy Team's continued work on property decarbonisation as well as increasing renewable energy generation really stands us in good stead to meet our carbon neutral target and be as self-sufficient as possible in electricity. The amount of renewable energy produced on the council estate trebled in the last year from 550,000 kWh in 2021-22 to 1,745,060 kWh in 2022-23. Electricity consumption was 18,203,879 kWh in 2022-23 so demand reduction and efficiency is also a big part of the work.
27. Wiltshire Council has teamed up with Tusker to make it more affordable for employees to buy an electric car. With the scheme, part of employees' gross salary is exchanged for a non-cash benefit, in this case a fully insured and maintained brand new electric or plug-in hybrid car. The salary is exchanged before income tax and NI are deducted for a fully inclusive package with fleet and manufacturer discounts. The car scheme includes all routine servicing and wear-and-tear maintenance, fully comprehensive motor insurance, annual Road Fund License, European breakdown cover, a home charging point with standard installation, replacement tyres and even lifestyle protections (T8.1).
28. Wiltshire Council's local highways maintenance contractor Milestone has announced the deployment of Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil fuel for their fleet operating from the Chippenham Depot. Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is a biofuel derived from plant based oils. It produces less CO₂ (and other tailpipe emissions such as NO_x, particulates, and carbon monoxide) when combusted than fossil fuels such as diesel. Switching the Chippenham fleet from diesel to HVO will save 150 tonnes of CO₂e per year, which is a 90% reduction compared to using diesel. Milestone has sourced GD+ HVO, which is made from waste plant materials. It is certified by the International Sustainability and Carbon Certification (ISCC) and the Renewable Fuels Assurance Scheme (RFAS). (C5.3, C7, G2.1)

29. The council is continuing to roll out carbon literacy training and to date 105 officers have been trained (C2.1). The course is accredited by the Carbon Literacy Project and involves a full day's training plus an assessment, as well as making two work-based pledges relevant to each officer's role to support the council's climate objectives.

Public engagement

30. A statutory consultation ran from July to September for the Air Quality Action Plan. As well as transport contributing over a third of all carbon emissions in Wiltshire, it also releases harmful gases that affect the quality of the air. Wiltshire Council monitors air quality across the county to assess the levels of harmful gases in the local environment. This monitoring has shown that the air quality in Wiltshire is very good but in a few heavily trafficked areas, levels of nitrogen dioxide are too high.

31. Nitrogen dioxide is a product of combustion and in Wiltshire's case the high levels are being caused by emissions from motor vehicles. The biggest contributors are diesel cars. Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) have been declared around Wiltshire where the nitrogen dioxide levels are excessive. The council is required by law to produce an action plan detailing the measures that will be used to reduce levels of nitrogen dioxide in these locations. By tackling nitrogen dioxide, through measures to reduce pollution from transport, carbon dioxide will also be reduced. This is linked to actions set out under the climate strategy 'transport' delivery theme (e.g. T2, T3, T4, T5, T21, T22).

32. The council produced a summary of its [Air Quality Action Plan](#) alongside a more detailed plan to help inform people how it plans to ensure the quality of the air the local population breathes is safe. The plan contains a list of proposed actions and measures that the council will take to improve air quality, more specifically the reduction in levels of nitrogen dioxide in eight areas in the county where levels have been found to be excessive. The Air Quality Action Plan was consulted on at the same time as the draft Air Quality Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The consultation concluded at the beginning of September and responses will be reviewed and any final changes made to the documents before Cabinet and Full Council approval.

33. The theme of this year's libraries week (2-7 October 2023) is "Go green at the library", contributing to the climate delivery plan action X1.4 to continue to engage residents. There will be themed story times and rhyme times as well as displays in Salisbury and our town libraries covering:

- a. the work we have done to decarbonise our libraries
- b. waste and recycling
- c. Tree Wardens and planting

34. As part of a national pilot being run by the Carbon Literacy Project, carbon literacy training is going to be offered to Wiltshire community groups via the Engagement and Partnerships Team. The team are in the process of finalising the details of the first session which will take place in Autumn 2023 (X1.4)

Adaptation and Resilience

35. Work is progressing on the Salisbury River Park, the council's flagship climate adaptation project. This contributes to delivery plan actions X5, T16, NE1 and NE3. The latest newsletter is available [here](#) and includes a photograph of an otter visiting the site. See also paragraph 50.
36. Over the next few months, the council's [Climate Change Adaptation Plan](#) is being reviewed (X5). Originally scheduled to be updated by December 2023, staff capacity has meant that work has been delayed. In the meantime national guidance and a toolkit have been published meaning that our approach and timeline has altered. New adaptation actions will be co-developed with various council teams that will increase the resilience of service areas to future climate impacts. An update will now be delivered by Summer 2024.

Delivery theme: Transport

Electric vehicle charging infrastructure

37. The UK Government carried out a [consultation](#) in Spring 2023 on the final proposals for a world leading zero emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate, helping to accelerate the UK's transition to net zero. Local authorities have a vital role to play in ensuring the future charging network continues to grow to support electric vehicle (EV) uptake.
38. The Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund will help local authorities in England significantly scale up the delivery of local charge points, enabling more residents, especially those without off-street parking, to switch to EVs. Wiltshire Council was allocated £393,600 capability funding in August 2023 which is available across financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25. The council has also been provisionally allocated up to £3,889,000 capital funding which will be delivered in two tranches and is available in either financial year 2023/24 or 2024/25. As a critical enabler, capability funding will ensure local authorities have dedicated staff to undertake the planning and delivery of charging infrastructure, while capital funding will support chargepoint purchase and installation costs. This contributes to delivery plan area of focus T4 and KPI T3.
39. The next steps involve advertising in Autumn 2023 for a new team dedicated to EVs. This team will develop the overarching EV strategy for the council as well as the specific element funded via LEVI – the focus of which is on street parking for those who don't have any off-street options at their homes.
40. Since the previous report in May 2023 the council has been [replacing and installing new EV chargepoints](#). In addition, the council's offer of funding for town and parish councils to explore installing EV chargepoints has resulted in the maximum 35 applications and feasibility studies being carried out for the locations selected. This will significantly increase the number of electric vehicle chargepoints that are available to the public, and encourage uptake of electric vehicles (T4, C5.2).

Public transport

41. Wiltshire Council is launching five new Wiltshire Connect bus services and several revised services in the Pewsey Vale. The new services will launch in phases over the coming months and include both on-demand and semi-flexible buses, which can pick up and drop off passengers where they want to go, when they want to get there (T7).
42. On-demand services allow passengers to book the bus from a stop of their choosing in the service area to their destination at a time to suit them, either by booking through a smartphone app or by phone. Semi-flexible services are halfway between a standard timetabled bus service and an on-demand bus, in that they follow a timetable, but can take detours and have some flexibility to pick up and drop off people who have booked in advance.
43. The services are being funded for 4 years by a £1.2m grant from the Government's Rural Mobility Fund following a successful bid by the council. All the services are being run by Salisbury Reds but will feature the green Wiltshire Connect branding. The smartphone app has been developed by loki. The council has also worked in partnership with Great Western Railway to highlight the improved connectivity with Wiltshire Connect and the rail network at Bedwyn and Pewsey.
44. Wiltshire Connect buses will cost £2 for adults for all journeys until 31 October, and then £2-£2.50 for adults from 1 November 2023 to 30 November 2024, depending on the length of the journey. Following that, the standard fares for all journeys will be £2 or £3 for adults. Children and young people aged under 21 pay a half fare of £1 or £1.50, depending on the length of the journey. Ten journey tickets are also available for both adults and young people at a reduced rate.

Active travel

45. Wiltshire Council partnered with Sustrans to create an active travel toolkit for secondary schools to raise awareness of climate change, air quality, and the impact of transport. The self-led resource includes workshops that schools can use to promote walking, cycling and other forms of sustainable travel. The toolkit is available online on the [Right Choice website](#), and information and links shared with school business managers. (Delivery Plan action T13)
46. In June 2023 the council submitted an application to UK100 for their 'Local Power in Action' programme which offered four local authorities the opportunity for bespoke support and knowledge sharing to accelerate progress towards their net zero goals. The council was not successful in this bid, however it is still committed to the bid's theme, which was to reinvigorate interest in developing school travel plans in order to deliver its climate and health ambitions. The council would like to see all schools in Wiltshire having an adopted travel plan, and without the UK100 support, seeks to start working on this using existing resources, whilst looking for additional funding. (Action X3 & T13, KPI X5)

47. In June/July people in Wiltshire were asked for their views on [cycling and walking plans](#) in Chippenham, Devizes and Trowbridge. The three Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) set out proposals for cycling and walking networks in each town, and highlight how these networks will be improved and connected to make it easier and safer to walk and cycle in the towns. The aim of the LCWIPs is to deliver infrastructure that will enable and encourage more trips to be made on foot or by bike, and help to improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion and cut carbon emissions. (Action T3, KPI T5)
48. They will also be used to inform the planning process where relevant, and future funding from the Department for Transport for active travel schemes will be linked to the walking and cycling schemes in each published plan. The council has already consulted on the draft county-wide Wiltshire LCWIPs and a Salisbury LCWIP. By the end of 2025 the council intends to develop LCWIPs for Amesbury, Bradford on Avon, Calne, Corsham, Malmesbury, Marlborough, Melksham, Royal Wootton Bassett, Tidworth, Warminster and Westbury.
49. Wiltshire Council has been awarded £978,000 from Active Travel England's Active Travel Fund 4 (ATF4) to create three new cycling and walking routes in the county. The three schemes are a pedestrian footbridge as part of the Salisbury River Park project; a cycling link between Devizes Road, Hilperton, and the A361/Elizabeth Way Roundabout; and an Amesbury to Larkhill cycle link. (Action T14)
50. In Salisbury, the pedestrian footbridge, which will cost £458,000, will link the coach park to Central car park, and will be completed by April 2024 as part of the first phase of the project. The Hilperton scheme, which costs £320,000, will link to the existing shared use paths and head along Trowbridge Road, with the existing footway widened to create a shared use path for both pedestrians and cyclists. It is expected to be completed in 2024. The £200,000 for the Amesbury to Larkhill cycle link will fund the development and design of a scheme along Countess Road. These three schemes are part of a wider list of priority schemes identified by the council. The council will now seek alternative funding sources for the other priority schemes.
51. Salisbury River Park is still on track to complete in April 2024 and will bring 650m of new and improved cycling routes, 1,600m of new and improved footpaths, 600 new trees, 2ha of habitat created and biodiversity improved, and increased resilience to climate change.
52. Construction work for Salisbury Fisherton Gateway commenced at the end of July and is expected to be completed in summer 2024. The improvement works include widening pavements, introducing new street lighting, enhancing landscaping, improving street furniture and wayfinding, and introducing continuous footpaths at junctions to enhance pedestrian priority. We will also be providing cycle parking and six street trees.

53. Salisbury Station Forecourt design work concluded in August and has been submitted to Network Rail for the final round of approvals. The earliest construction start is anticipated to be early 2024. The scheme will improve access for pedestrians and cyclists into and around the forecourt, as well as provide a new bus interchange and passive provision for EV charging meaning that the underlying infrastructure is in place to allow simple installation of charging points in the future (Action T12).

Delivery Theme: Housing and the Built Environment Retrofit

54. A bid for Home Upgrade Grant (phase 2) was completed at the start of this year (actions B6 & B7) which resulted in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero awarding Wiltshire Council £3.623m in April to improve the energy efficiency of between 175 and 210 owner-occupied homes in Wiltshire, subject to household income levels. Eligible properties are those which are not connected to mains gas, have an EPC band D-G and where energy efficiency measures specified within the funding can be delivered within the cost caps and modelling confirms an improvement in the EPC band is achievable.
55. A team has been established to deliver this project, funded by the grant, and posts recruited to during Q1.
56. The project data analytics have been completed to map the eligible households in Wiltshire and to understand the energy measures required. This information has informed the procurement strategy, specifications and communications approach. A fabric first approach will be taken, and the local data analysis demonstrates that common measures include cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, ventilation, smart measures such as heating controls and low carbon heating technologies. There is limited funding for solar panels, double glazed windows and external wall insulation.
57. Procurement planning has started, and we are engaging with potential suppliers. Marketing and customer engagement is due to start during October and retrofits are expected to start taking place during the autumn and through to March 2025.
58. A bid was submitted to the Innovate UK Fast Followers programme to look at the systemic barriers to net zero progress (B5, B6, B7). The bid built on the council's experience with energy efficiency retrofit for low income households, extending out to 'self-funding' residents. It aimed to learn from experience so far, especially in relation to engaging with the electricity network operator on grid capacity, which is a key barrier to retrofit at scale, and to achieving net zero goals across the board. In addition, building up the supply side in terms of installers and skills for retrofit is another challenging area the project aimed to work on. The bid was not successful, however as mentioned above similar themes regarding supply are incorporated in the HUG2 project mentioned above, and the council continues to engage with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks to understand grid capacity constraints and plan for future development and net zero measures.

59. The council home retrofit programme (B1) continues to deliver and the process of retrofitting properties to reduce their onsite carbon emissions and has so far installed 243 measures, including ASHP, Solar Panels, wall and loft and floor insulation, upgraded hot water cylinders and high heat retention storage heaters. However, whole-house retrofits have not been possible while the programme has experienced contractual issues. The contracts have now been re-tendered and the measures that have been delivered will stand us in good stead to progress towards the targets set out in the delivery plan (see Appendix 2 for more detail).

Local Plan Review

60. The spatial planning team has worked very hard to produce the Wiltshire Council Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft 2020-2038, dated July 2023, which has now been approved by Cabinet and Full council to proceed to public consultation. This round of public consultation will be the opportunity for all interested parties to have their say on the document and its policies/proposals. The climate team has worked alongside colleagues to formulate the new policies designed to ensure new developments during the plan period will support the transition to net zero. These include a brand new overarching Addressing Climate Change policy designed to be far reaching to address many of the themes that go to the heart of tackling climate change; an updated sustainable construction policy requiring new build residential to achieve zero carbon in operation; an updated renewable energy policy that goes beyond standalone renewables to also address integrated technologies on existing buildings; and a further new policy to require Embodied Carbon Assessments for major developments. These all sit within the wider planning policies, many of which relate to important climate mitigation and adaptation measures. This contributes to the 'Homes and Built Environment' delivery theme, and B3 in particular.

Design Guide

61. The climate team has continued to work in collaboration with the council's urban design team on the Wiltshire Residential Design Guide. The final draft is being prepared, following public consultation which included a consultation webinar and drop-in session. Due to considerable interest, the consultation period was extended to 14 August 2023. All comments received during the consultation period are being taken into account and the document changed where necessary in response. Subject to adoption, the document, that contains 'Sustainability and Climate Resilience' as one of its three golden themes, will be a material consideration in future planning decisions by Wiltshire Council. (T5.3, NE1.2).

Climate change and development management

62. The climate team has also been ramping up its activity within the development management service, seeking to drive up awareness of climate change with applicants and other stakeholders utilising existing policy and guidance hooks at local and national levels. Input has focused on major development, renewable energy schemes, and the council's own applications. Between November 2022 and July 2023 (inclusive) the climate team responded to over 100 planning/pre-

planning consultations. This has resulted in many developers being supported and encouraged to improve their schemes in relation to climate change impacts. Moreover, it is an important communication tool to publicly raise awareness of how our existing and future built environments will need to evolve to address climate change. The positive impact is exemplified by the climate team supporting Wiltshire College (Lackham campus) proposals for roof mounted solar panels, enabling the planning team to balance the positive climate action and associated co-benefits with heritage implications (B9.2).

Neighbourhood Planning

63. The climate team has worked positively and constructively with neighbourhood planning groups through the formal public consultation process. This stream of planning policy is another opportunity to increase the awareness of climate change and help communities take positive climate action through planning for climate mitigation through to climate resilience. The climate team has commented on six draft neighbourhood plans so far in 2023 (B9.2).

New social housing

64. Housing association Magna, Wiltshire Council and Dorset-based manufacturer Rollalong joined forces last year to tackle the housing crisis using modular building methods. They have pledged to build nearly 1,000 new affordable homes by 2026. Magna and Wiltshire Council have now taken another step towards that goal by placing orders for Rollalong to manufacture 109 new, modular homes for five sites across two counties.
65. Of these 109, Wiltshire Council will create 83 new affordable homes across three sites within the county. Rollalong uses precision engineering techniques to manufacture high-quality modern homes as modules in its factory near Wimborne Minster. These are then transported, fully fitted with kitchens, bathrooms and electrics, to sites where they will become attractive, energy efficient homes. Modular manufacturing has potential to deliver much-needed new homes faster and more sustainably than traditional brick housebuilding.
66. Overall, the process generates less waste and has a lower carbon footprint. It also creates less disruption to local people, with fewer deliveries to site over a shorter time. The partners' latest range of modular house types are built to be 'net zero in use', in line with the Government's proposed Future Homes Standard, which will require new homes built from 2025 to produce 75-80% less carbon.
67. The all-electric homes will be heated by air-source heat pumps, with a thermally efficient fabric retaining warmth and helping residents keep their energy bills lower. The homes can be tailored to the local, often rural setting, with a range of house types and finishes influenced by customer feedback. The partners also have the only modular approach in the UK accredited by the National House-Building Council (NHBC) able to 'step and stagger' terraces of houses so that they have more visual variety.

68. In addition to the low carbon modular building, there are other ways that the council's new build social housing programme is contributing to the council's carbon neutral goal. Part L building regulations mean that no new gas systems are put into new units, and energy efficiency requirements mean that new builds are likely to be at least EPC B (See Figure 8 in Appendix 2). Where the council is building on council land, the council is more able to influence that the buildings are designed to be net zero carbon in operation. (B2)

Delivery theme: Natural Environment

69. Wiltshire Council is one of 48 individual local authorities who has benefitted in receiving allocations from a £14 million funding pot from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs enabling us to work with our local communities to develop a tailored nature recovery strategy for the area (NE1.3).

70. The council will be responsible for preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Wiltshire and Swindon, under section 105 of the Environment Act 2021. With the best ways to support nature recovery depending on local geography, Local Nature Recovery Strategies will help communities map out the action needed in their area to restore nature working closely with local stakeholders, from farmers to school children. When put together they will be a key way of meeting our England-wide nature recovery targets. The council now has a new nature recovery officer who will be engaging with key stakeholders and the community over the next 12 months with a view to having a Local Nature Recovery Strategy in place in late Autumn 2024.

71. Following a successful bid for almost £300,000 from a Government fund, the council is relaunching the national Tree Warden scheme in the county. The Tree Warden Scheme is a national initiative led by the Tree Council, and the council is looking to recruit volunteer Tree Wardens in each Wiltshire town and parish area as well as across the Borough of Swindon. Tree Wardens will work with Wiltshire Council Woodland Officers and act as local tree champions who help plant, promote and protect trees in appropriate locations in their local area. (NE3.2)

72. Projects that Tree Wardens can be involved in could include:

- Arranging local tree planting days
- Watering and caring for local trees
- Working with the local authorities and community groups to plant and care for street trees
- Rejuvenating local woodlands
- Raising funds and finding land for tree planting projects
- Going into local schools to talk about the value of trees

More information about the Wiltshire tree warden scheme can be found at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/trees-and-woodland-in-wiltshire.

73. The funding for Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council will also be used to help deliver tree planting targets over the next two years that will see planting of 111ha of trees in the 2023-24 and a further 222ha in 2024-25. Four Woodland Officers have been recruited and are working to deliver these targets. The majority of these will be delivered through community and private landowner initiatives, working with partners such as the Woodland Trust, and Forestry Commission to develop bids for funding.
74. The delivery plan action NE4.2 milestone was to produce a Tree and Woodland Planting Strategy by 2023. With the woodland planting team being established only in early Summer 2023, and the need to focus on setting up Tree Wardens and planting during the winter 2023/24, the Tree and Woodland Strategy timeline will be shifted to 2024.

Delivery theme: Energy

75. Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council are working with iChoosr, independent experts in group-buying, to run a second Solar Together scheme, following the success of the first scheme in 2022 (E8.1).
76. The first round of the scheme launched in May 2022, and resulted in 1,047 installations across Wiltshire and Swindon consisting of almost 9,900 solar panels and over 800 storage batteries to a total of 705 households. The total installations are estimated to deliver over 18,500 tonnes of carbon reduction over 25 years. This equates to roughly 10,000 cars off roads for a year.
77. After a competitive bidding process managed by Solar Together, Scheme 2 launched on 5 June 2023, where people could register for free by 11 August 2023, and were then be sent their recommended provider and costs, with no obligation to proceed with the installation. 691 customers have accepted their recommendation so far which is lower than the equivalent stage on Scheme 1. Due to the timing of Scheme 1 (beginning in June 2022) coinciding with the increase in cost of energy and the announcement of zero VAT on solar panels in April 2022, it attracted a much higher level of interest than anticipated. However, it is expected that there will be a lower drop out rate in Scheme 2.
78. To register, residents must either own their own house or have permission from the landlord to install solar panels. Small and medium-sized enterprises (non-domestic) and Commonhold Associations meeting this requirement can also participate.
79. The initiative offers solar panels with optional battery storage and electrical vehicle (EV) charge points, as well as offering battery storage for those who have already invested in solar panels and are looking to get more from the renewable energy they generate and increase their independence from the grid. People can also select whether they would like to discuss options to divert solar energy to power the immersion heater in their hot water tank if they have one.

80. Solar Together operates on a group-buying approach, with the core principle that coming together as a group provides enhanced buying power and allows the approved providers to offer a better price than individual homeowners might get from entering the market alone. Please see **Appendix 3** for further details regarding Scheme 1.

Delivery theme: Green economy

81. Wiltshire Council launched a new £1.35m grants scheme called Invest in Wiltshire to encourage businesses in the county to improve and expand their enterprises. The grants must be used by businesses by March 2025 to improve productivity by buying new equipment, machinery or digital infrastructure; or improving premises and creating workspaces. All applications must show that they will create new jobs or better paid, more skilled jobs; and they must also help the business to decarbonise, for example, by reducing carbon-based energy usage or becoming more energy efficient (G3). The total funding available for Invest in Wiltshire grants is £1.35m. The funding has been provided with £350,000 through the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and £750,000 via the Rural Prosperity Fund.

Delivery theme: Waste

82. The council's Climate Strategy and Household Waste Management Strategy both contain clear commitments for the council to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and ensure that waste is managed in accordance with the nationally recognised waste hierarchy (eg, prevention, preparing for reuse, recycling, other recovery, disposal). Carbon emissions are associated with transportation of waste, as well as the waste process itself, and following waste hierarchy also aligns with the carbon hierarchy i.e. by increasing recycling and composting, and reducing waste going to landfill, GHG emissions will also be reduced (as 'Resources and Waste' delivery plan actions, and KPIs R1, R2 and R3).

83. In 2022/23, Wiltshire landfilled 15.6% of the total household waste collected (32,515 tonnes). During the same period, 40% (83,451 tonnes) was sent for recycling, composting or reuse, and a further 44.4% (92,585 tonnes) was diverted from landfill using waste treatment and energy from waste facilities.

84. The council and its contractors have worked to ensure that 98% of the waste collected for recycling, composting or reuse was managed within the UK. This reduces the carbon impact of waste haulage as this material did not need to be exported from the UK.

85. New rules enforced by the Environment Agency from 1 January 2023 mean that councils need to ensure all Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating is collected, stored and transported separately from other wastes, and must be disposed of by incineration rather than sent to landfill. The fabric and padding used in many upholstered seating items are treated with flame retardant chemicals. These are now known to contain Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) which can be harmful to human health if these enter the wider environment.

86. In Wiltshire, these items are typically collected through the household recycling centre network, kerbside collections of large household items and clearance of fly tipping. Between January and July 2023, a total of 948 tonnes of POPs waste has been collected and sent to energy from waste facilities instead of landfill, saving 403 tonnes of CO₂e.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

87. The Climate Emergency Task Group has been involved in the development of the Climate Strategy and delivery plans as well as scrutinising key pieces of work. The Task Group will be meeting to discuss this report on 9 October 2023.

Safeguarding Implications

88. The impacts of climate change are amplifying safeguarding issues and falling heavily on vulnerable people both globally and in the UK.

89. Evidence suggests that vulnerable demographic groups experience disproportionate effects on their health outcomes from climate related impacts.

90. This includes young children, babies and older people who are particularly affected by extremes in temperature and the disruption caused by severe weather such as flooding¹. People with physical or mental health problems have a lower ability to act due to physical constraints or a lower awareness of their circumstances. People with low personal mobility or living in areas with lower accessibility of services tend to have less ability to respond and recover because it may take them longer to help themselves or to seek and receive help from others.

Public Health Implications

91. Climate change and public health are inextricably linked. Having a climate strategy which looks to reduce carbon emissions in Wiltshire will have a significant and positive impact on the health of the population. Actions from implementing the strategy will improve health outcomes for all residents and help reduce health inequalities. Better home insulation will not only reduce emissions but also provide healthier homes for some of our most vulnerable people. Active travel schemes will help increase levels of physical activity, connecting people to their local communities and potentially leading to improved air quality through reduced car use. Local food production will decrease food miles, benefiting the environment, whilst providing healthier choices.

Procurement Implications

92. Project leads will be engaging with Procurement directly and in line with the council's procurement policy.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

93. One of the key principles is for the Climate Strategy to be equitable, ensuring the transition to low carbon, climate resilient future is fair.

¹ [Socially vulnerable groups sensitive to climate impacts | Climate Just](#)

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

94. This report sets out the council's response to environmental and climate change considerations following the acknowledgement of a climate emergency and agreement by Full Council to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030.

Workforce Implications

95. Replacement of our fleet with electric vehicles where possible and encouraging staff to use the new bikes being provided for short journeys will require changes to ways of working. We have also started rolling out carbon literacy training to staff.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

96. If Cabinet and Council continue to receive updates twice a year, there will be less capacity for project delivery as compiling this report requires considerable time and effort from the climate team and other key delivery teams across the council. Other councils and organisations produce an annual rather than six monthly report.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

97. Reducing the frequency of these reports may be perceived as a negative step by those who are keen to hold the council to account in its progress to tackle the climate emergency. This will be mitigated by continuing to issue press releases to announce key progress and listing them on the council's climate emergency [webpage](#). Climate projects will also continue to be communicated via social media.

Financial Implications

98. In response to the climate and ecological emergency and the resolution made by Council to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral, a Sustainable Environment is a key principle of the Council's Business Plan.
99. As part of the Budget Setting process, Revenue and Capital budgets have been updated to deliver against this objective, this includes continued investment, new investment and savings and covers the programmes listed in the report above.
100. To date spend that contributes to delivering against the carbon reduction programme totals £32.966m Capital and £1.809m Revenue. Investment has been committed for 2023/24 and future years totalling £70.334m Capital and £8.263m Revenue. In addition, grant bids have been successful for a further £0.295m and will be added to the relevant programme in due course. The tables below provide detail at programme level.

Table 1 – Capital Programmes

CAPITAL	Previous Years Spend £'m	2023/24 Budget £'m	Future Years Budget £'m	Total £'m
HRA - Housing Energy Efficiency Programme	0.868	6.105	45.652	52.625
LED Programme	12.998	-	-	12.998
Salisbury River Park Scheme	6.178	0.900	-	7.078
Fleet - Carbon Neutral Fleet / Electric Vehicles	0.288	2.179	0.200	2.667
Local Authority Treescape Fund - BOA	0.035	0.035	0.026	0.096
Property Carbon Reduction Programme	3.636	2.064	4.700	10.400
Park & Ride Solar Panel Canopies	0.006	0.450	3.044	3.500
				-
Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Projects	5.181	0.024	-	5.205
Passenger Transport RTPi	0.341	0.354	-	0.695
Active Travel Fund	3.435	0.978	-	4.413
Home Upgrade Grant 2	-	1.780	1.843	3.623
Total Capital	32.966	14.869	55.465	103.300
Grant	21.649	2.817	1.869	26.335
S106/CIL	-	0.500	-	0.500
Borrowing	10.449	5.447	7.944	23.840
HRA	0.868	6.105	45.652	52.625
Total Financing	32.966	14.869	55.465	103.300

Table 2 – Revenue Programmes

REVENUE	Previous Years Spend £'m	2023/24 Budget £'m	Future Years Budget £'m	Total £'m
National Bus Strategy	0.127	0.179	-	0.306
Better Bus Fund - Bus Service Enhancements	0.053	0.619	-	0.672
Rural Mobility Grant	0.123	1.082	-	1.205
COMF - Warm & Safe Wiltshire	0.500	-	-	0.500
Public Health - Warm & Safe Advice Service	-	0.085	0.170	0.255
Additional Investment in Gully Emptying	-	0.333	0.667	1.000
Climate Change and Sustainable Living Book Collection	0.002	-	-	0.002
Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy	0.097	0.687	1.566	2.350
Salisbury Plain SAC (Stone Curlew)	-	0.070	0.150	0.220
New Forest Recreation Management Project	-	0.189	0.561	0.750
River Avon Special Area Conservation	0.123	0.727	-	0.850
Dedicated Climate team	0.753	0.322	0.706	1.781
Solar Together Grant	0.031	0.031	0.119	0.181
Total Revenue	1.809	4.324	3.939	10.072
Grant	0.836	1.996	0.289	3.121
S106/CIL	0.220	1.673	2.277	4.170
Revenue Budget	0.753	0.655	1.373	2.781
Total Financing	1.809	4.324	3.939	10.072

Table 3 – Successful Grant Bids

Bids	Total £'m
Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (Revenue)	0.295
Total Bids	0.295
Grant	0.295
Total Financing	0.295

101. The Pathways reports by Anthesis consultants published in May 2022 set out anticipated costs and benefits to the council and to the Wiltshire economy of delivering carbon neutrality. As detailed, this will require additional investment over and above the current commitments shown above. The emerging Fleet Strategy which seeks to deliver a carbon neutral position for 2030 for all council vehicles will require further capital investment in vehicles and infrastructure to achieve its objective.

Legal Implications

102. There are no legal implications arising from this report. The council will be responsible for preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire, under section 105 of the Environment Act 2021.

Options Considered

103. The council could continue to use the current Environmental Policy from 2015, however it is now out of date and no longer reflects best practice. The council could also choose not to add it to its Policy Framework, however doing this will give it weight and ensure the involvement of Full Council in any future updates.
104. These updates could continue to be provided to Cabinet and Council twice a year, however the resource implications of doing this are not negligible and detract from the time available to deliver climate projects.

Conclusions

105. Since Full Council resolved to acknowledge that there is a climate emergency and to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030, a number of areas of work have been progressed and continue to progress as set out in this report.
106. The council is currently aligned with its pathway to carbon neutral. Wiltshire-wide emissions are largely not within the control of the council but the council is focussing on areas it can have an influence and impact, and reporting progress to provide leadership and a basis for partnership working.
107. A revised Environmental Policy is proposed for adoption, in order to provide a basis for the council to mitigate its impact on the environment and to show leadership to its partners and suppliers.

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20 September 2023

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Environmental Policy 2023-25
Appendix 2 - Key performance indicators and data
Appendix 3 - Solar Together report, scheme 1 (2022-23)

Background Papers

None