Wiltshire Council

Full Council

26 November 2019

Subject:	**Wiltshire Council Carbon Reduction Update on Council's Response to the Climate Emergency**
Cabinet Member:	**Councillor Richard Clewer - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Housing and MCI**
Key Decision:	**No**

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.

This report provides updates on actions the council is taking to reduce carbon generation in Wiltshire in the following areas:

Renewable energy generation, energy use and efficiency
Planning
Transport and air quality
Waste
Land use
Business and industry
The council's greenhouse gas emissions
Carbon audit and renewables audit
Working with partners to deliver this goal.

Proposals

That Council notes the actions taken in response to the climate emergency including Cabinet's commitment to make Wiltshire Council carbon neutral by 2030.

Reason for Proposals

To provide Council with an update on actions taken in response to the climate emergency.

Alistair Cunningham OBE
Executive Director - Growth, Investment and Place

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Purpose of Report

1. To provide Council with an update on actions taken in response to the climate emergency.

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 the business plan goals of:

   (i)   Housing and Environment (Sustainable Development)
         I live in a good home I can afford
         Development where it is needed
         Reaffirm our commitment to continue delivering our policies on the environment and carbon reduction

   (ii) Working with our partners as an innovative and effective council
         We recognise that there is a need to work innovatively and effectively with partners to get maximum value for public sector spend in Wiltshire and also reaffirm our commitment to continue working within our policies on the environment and carbon reduction.
         One Wiltshire Estate
         We take a strategic approach to reducing the carbon footprint of Wiltshire Council, including considering renewable and energy efficient opportunities for our facilities when appropriate.

Background

3. At its meeting held on 26 February 2019 full Council debated the following notices of motion:
         12b) Acknowledging a Climate Emergency and Proposing the Way Forward;
         12c) Environment and Global Warming.
         The council resolved to acknowledge that there is a climate emergency and to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. The minutes of the meeting are available via this link
         https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/g11678/Public%20minutes%2026th-Feb-

2019%2010.30%20Council.pdf?T=11 see pages 21 to 24. Cabinet has also pledged to make Wiltshire Council carbon neutral by 2030.

4. A Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group has been established by Environment Select Committee, chaired by Councillor Graham Wright and made up of nine councillors. The task group will develop recommendations and a plan to seek to achieve the target of making the county of Wiltshire net carbon neutral by 2030. The areas they are investigating are:

    Renewable energy generation, energy use and efficiency
    Planning
    Transport and air quality
    Waste
    Land use
    Business and industry.

5. The task group will undertake a carbon audit and a renewables audit to establish baselines for Wiltshire. The cabinet member and portfolio holder will agree parameters with the task group that represent the council's impact on the climate that can be accurately reported to council on a regular basis.

6. Updates on the task group's work are reported to each meeting of Environment Select Committee. The most recent update was presented on 5 November 2019 and is available via this link:
    https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s169523/Task_Group_Updates.pdf

Main Considerations for the Council

Renewable energy generation, energy use and efficiency

7. There is a report to Council at its meeting on 26 November 2019 on the Corporate Property Energy Efficiency and Generation Programme Phase 1 which sets out proposals to increase renewable energy generation and energy efficiency within the council's estate.

Planning

8. The Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 contains a number of policies which should contribute to the achievement of the goal of seeking to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. This strategy offers a significant opportunity to influence greenhouse gas emissions and has an important role in shaping communities that are resilient to the predicted impacts of climate change such as higher temperatures and increased flood risk.

9. Officers are currently reviewing policies to determine their effectiveness and whether changes are required to improve conformity of the Wiltshire Core Strategy with the National Planning Policy Framework and associated Planning Practice Guidance. This may lead to the need to commission additional evidence. A best practice review is also underway which will focus in particular on those policies, adopted by other councils, that have been prepared more recently than the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Once this exercise is complete the information obtained will inform discussions held by a councillor and officer focus group which will debate and propose any policy changes which are required.

Transport and Air Quality

10. The Wiltshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out the council's objectives, plans and indicators for transport in Wiltshire. As a document developed through partnership working and extensive consultation, the LTP also provides the framework for all other organisations with an involvement in transport in Wiltshire. The current plan is Wiltshire's third local transport plan (LTP3) and covers the period from March 2011 to March 2026.

11. Work on the fourth LTP (LTP4) has now commenced with a draft evidence base having been prepared which includes the existing position on carbon generation. Once the evidence base has been reviewed discussion will take place with relevant Cabinet members and nominated members of the task group on options for policies based on the evidence. LTP4 is being prepared in parallel with the review of the Local Plan referred to in paragraph 8 above which will enable the council to ensure that policies in both plans support and complement each other in achieving the council's objectives.

12. Local authorities are responsible for monitoring local air quality and implementing action plans to improve air quality where this is necessary. The majority of air quality action plans concern road transport emissions. Good cooperation between transport planning, air quality and spatial planning, as well as with partner organisations, is essential to ensure a strategic approach to improve quality of life for those living near busy roads and junctions. There is a report to Council at its meeting on 26 November 2019 on the Wiltshire Air Quality Strategy asking that Council approves the strategy.

Waste

13. There is a report to Council at its meeting on 26 November 2019 on the Wiltshire Household Waste Management Strategy asking that Council approves the strategy. The waste hierarchy upon which the strategy is based continues to remain central to environmental legislation and prioritises those waste management practices which are more environmentally sustainable than sending waste to landfill, which is the option of last resort.

Land Use

14. Land use planning will be addressed through the work on the Wiltshire Core Strategy outlined in paragraph 8 above. As Wiltshire is a large rural county there may be opportunities for biomass production, reforestation and tree planting.

15. A meeting has taken place between NFU Mutual and members of the Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group to discuss climate change and agriculture in Wiltshire. The NFU has recently published a report entitled Achieving Net Zero: Farming's 2040 Goal. The NFU intends working in partnership with government and other stakeholders to improve efficiency to reduce emissions, improve land management and change land use to capture more carbon, and to increase renewable energy and bio-energy. This may contribute to achievement of Wiltshire Council's policy of protecting and enhancing Wiltshire's green infrastructure and should contribute to the target of seeking to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030.

Business and Industry

16. There was a report to Cabinet at its meeting on 17 September 2019 reporting progress made by the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership in preparing the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS). The report stated that the strategy includes commitments to improving the strategic energy infrastructure, decarbonising our economy and helping to deliver the national climate change targets. The LIS focuses on the development of clean, flexible and resilient power systems, exploring hydrogen uses in various applications and new energy vehicles. It also addresses decarbonisation and digital connectivity.

17. The LIS has been informed by an energy strategy which builds on the area's strengths to grow the low carbon economy. One of the energy strategy's objectives is to make a contribution towards our national climate change commitments, ensuring Swindon and Wiltshire help meet the carbon target.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2018-19

18. The council publishes an annual report on the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions arising from its own estate and operations as requested by government. Emissions included arise from council owned or controlled estate or buildings, council operational fleet, streetlights and business travel. The figures exclude emissions from schools and academies, social housing and outsourced operations. In 2014-15 total gross emissions were 26,438 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent and in 2018-19 were 15,869 tCO_2e. 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.

19. 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.

Carbon Audit and Renewables Audit

20. The council is able to report on its current baseline for GHG emissions as set out in paragraph 17 above. In terms of renewable energy, the council currently owns 31 photovoltaic systems installed on its buildings which, on average, generate 294,992 kWh of electricity per annum and saves 89.92 tCO_2e per annum. There are a further 94 installations on domestic homes owned by the council which generate an estimated 168,000 kWh per annum.

21. The capacity of renewable energy and heating generators within the county of Wiltshire is currently 685 MW based on work done to prepare the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership's Local Energy Strategy, updated to reflect more recent data published by Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

22. A local authority focussed emissions tool, SCATTER, has been accessed to produce a greenhouse gas report for the county of Wiltshire. As the acronym suggests (Setting City Area Targets and Trajectories for Emissions Reduction) this tool was developed for use in city areas. The Wiltshire report suggests that the highest levels of carbon emissions are produced by on-road transport and residential buildings. The total level of emissions is 3,465k tCO_2e. Based on a population of 498,000 this gives emissions per head of 7 tCO_2e.

23. There are significant challenges in establishing robust, credible renewable and carbon baselines for the county of Wiltshire. The council is in contact with local universities and the organisation which developed the SCATTER tool to try to progress this. While further work is done to try to achieve this it is essential that the council continues to focus on its work to reduce carbon emissions, improve energy efficiency and deliver renewable energy capacity.

Working with partners to deliver this goal

24. While the council is able to plan to ensure it is carbon neutral by 2030, in seeking to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral we will need to work with national government, other local authorities, other public sector bodies, private sector organisations, the voluntary and community sector and residents of the county.

25. The Local Government Association (LGA) has recently declared a climate emergency as have many other councils. The LGA has published a briefing on the next steps that councils which have declared a climate emergency could consider. One of the key points is the importance of engaging residents in considering the impact they have on climate change.

26. The Chair of the Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group attended a recent meeting of the chairs of Wiltshire Council's community area boards (CAB) to talk to them about arranging meetings, workshops or other events to address the climate emergency, ensuring that they engage with those groups and individuals across the county who are knowledgeable on this area of work. Bradford on Avon CAB and Salisbury CAB have already held successful meetings and several other CABs are in the process of planning similar events. The Community Engagement Managers are compiling lists of relevant organisations within their community areas which the council will seek to engage with.

27. The council will work with Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership to engage with businesses and industry in Wiltshire. The Wiltshire Public Service Board brings together key, public sector organisations so would provide a forum to discuss all members' carbon reduction plans. The Wiltshire Assembly has organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors and Wiltshire's communities working together on key priorities for the county, one of which is clearly the acknowledgement of a climate emergency and the goal of seeking to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

28. As set out in paragraph 4 of this report, a Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group has been established, chaired by Councillor Graham Wright and made up of nine councillors. The members of the task group are working on the areas set out under Main Considerations for the Council.

Safeguarding Implications

29. This report provides an update for members to note. There are no safeguarding implications arising.

Public Health Implications

30. As this is an update report there are no direct public health implications arising from the report itself. Some of the actions we are taking (for example on air quality) will, however, have potential to have a positive impact on the health of the population.

Procurement Implications

31. There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

32. There is no equalities impact arising from this report.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

33. 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.

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

34. The paper is for Council to note and does not require a decision to be made.

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

35. The paper is for Council to note and does not require a decision to be made.

Financial Implications

36. The paper is for Council to note and there are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

37. The paper is for Council to note and there are no legal implications arising from this report.

Workforce Implications

38. There are no workforce implications arising from this report.

Options Considered

39. The only option considered is to note the report.

Conclusions

40. 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. This report provides an update as set out in paragraphs 6 to 26 above.

Alistair Cunningham OBE, Executive Director - Growth, Investment and Place

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Appendices

None

Background Papers

None