

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

8 July 2020

Business Plan 2017-27: Climate Emergency Addendum

From its inception in 2009, Wiltshire Council committed to tackling carbon emissions by signing the Nottingham Declaration on climate change. The council produced an ECO Strategy in 2011 and signed up to Climate Local, the successor to the Nottingham Declaration, in 2014. In October 2019, the council was named the most climate-friendly council in England and Wales by Friends of the Earth having been assessed in different categories including renewable energy, public transport, lift-sharing, energy efficiency at home, waste recycling, and tree cover.

In February 2019 Wiltshire Council resolved to acknowledge the climate emergency and to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. A Climate Emergency Task Group was set up to gather evidence and come up with recommendations on achieving net zero. Wiltshire Council's Cabinet subsequently committed to make the council carbon neutral by 2030.

A new carbon reduction strategy will be prepared to enable the council to meet these commitments. The plan will be evidence and data led and a baseline assessment will be undertaken to assist in identifying need and determining priorities. It is proposed that the plan will include a community led approach which engages, empowers, enables and communicates with Wiltshire communities and businesses.

Since the climate emergency was confirmed in Wiltshire, the council has progressed the following areas, recognising that this is the start of a journey:

- Committed to invest £5.2m to make its buildings more energy efficient
- Hosted a number of well-attended special climate change-themed area board meetings
- Secured all the electricity on its corporate contract from a green tariff from April 2020
- Supported the bid and invested to bring electric buses to Salisbury
- Bid for significant funding to improve public transport and cycle networks
- Set up Stone Circle Energy Company and committed to invest £3.5 million in sustainable energy projects across the county
- Committed to develop 1000 new council homes to a zero-carbon standard
- Funded a climate change team in the 2020/21 budget and appointed a Head of Carbon Reduction
- Committed to invest £12m on a major public highway LED light replacement project which is projected to reduce carbon emissions by 83% compared with 2013/14
- Joined forces with other councils through the Countryside Climate Network to ensure that the rural voice on climate action is listened to in Westminster

- Established that climate change and renewable energy is the top priority for residents surveyed in 2019
- Worked with partners to develop the vision for a green infrastructure network in Wiltshire
- Encouraged the public to make a Green Pledge

Carbon reduction will be a key theme in the council's recovery from Covid-19. As well as developing a new carbon reduction strategy, the council is carrying out a review of its Local Plan and developing its fourth Local Transport Plan. Carbon reduction will be an integral theme within these documents. The council is currently developing a Green Infrastructure Strategy. From this we will develop a woodland and tree planting policy.

The council is engaging with other public sector organisations through the Wiltshire Public Service Board and with businesses through the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP). The SWLEP has published its emerging Local Industrial Strategy which includes commitments to improving the strategic energy infrastructure, decarbonising our economy and helping to deliver the national climate change targets. The council will continue to engage with communities to work collaboratively towards achieving the country's decarbonisation goal.