

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

14 June 2022

Climate Emergency Task Group Update

Purpose

1. To update the Environment Select Committee on the work of the Climate Emergency Task Group since March 2022.

Background

2. The Climate Emergency Task Group (CETG) is a task group reporting to the Environment Select Committee. The task group's initial terms of reference were endorsed by the Select Committee on 3 September 2019 and were revised on 9 November 2021.
3. The task group has produced two reports with recommendations:
 - Energy and Transport & Air quality (29 September 2020)
 - Planning (13 January 2021)
4. At its meeting on 15 June 2021 the Select Committee approved the continuation of the task group.
5. The task group's last update to the Select Committee was on [8 March 2022](#).

Membership

6. The membership of the task group from July 2021 is as follows:

Cllr Clare Cape
Cllr Sarah Gibson
Cllr Tony Jackson
Cllr Jacqui Lay
Cllr Brian Mathew
Cllr Nick Murry
Cllr David Vigar
Cllr Ian Wallis
Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman)

Terms of Reference:

7. The task group's revised terms of reference were endorsed by the Environment Select Committee on the 9 November 2021. These are:
 - i. *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).*
 - ii. *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.*
 - iii. *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.*

Recent Activity

Woodlands & trees – national and local perspective (18 March 2022)

8. On 18 March, the task group had presentations from the Woodland Trust and Avon Needs Trees (ANT). This looked at the current policy environment nationally and regionally and the experience of creating new permanent woodlands in Wiltshire.
9. The Climate Emergency report (January 2021) recommends that there be 17% tree cover for the county. The UK Committee on Climate Change suggests that the UK needs to increase its national tree cover from 13% to 17%-19% by 2050 (Wiltshire's tree cover is currently 9%). The [England Tree Action Plan 2021/24](#) commits to planting 30,000ha of woodland per year from 2024 (currently it is 1,400ha per year).
10. The Woodland Trust's [State of the UK's Woods and Trees Report](#) (2021) states that there may be an increase in tree cover but there is less woodland wildlife e.g., woodland birds have declined by 29% since 1970 and woodland butterflies by 41% since 1990. Building developments and pollution are having a major impact upon wildlife.
11. Avon Needs Trees (ANT) is a regional charity creating new permanent woods in the Avon River catchment area. It owns and rents land and has land under covenant. ANT identifies suitable sites, working with local volunteers to plant trees and raise funds to deliver its objectives. As many as 500 volunteers are involved with each site.

12. Meeting targets for tree planting will be important for carbon targets but tree planting must be happening now if it is to capture significant amounts of carbon because it takes 10yr to 20yrs for a tree to begin to capture carbon. ANT is about creating permanent woodland which also requires expert care, without which the trees will not thrive. Tree planting via urban development is slow and risky, ANT therefore would encourage the planting of large-scale woodland. To do this they need to identify a supply of land for woodland.
13. To undertake large scale afforestation, networks must be developed, and an overarching policy created. The council is developing a woodland strategy and a local nature recovery strategy. The task group will continue to monitor progress in this area and will seek further updates.

British Army Sustainability Briefing (6 May 2022)

14. On 6 May 2022, the task group received a briefing regarding the Army's approach to the climate emergency and sustainability. The Area Board Environment Leads (ABEL) were also invited to attend. This briefing follows some more wide-ranging meetings between the military and the council which also touched upon climate change.
15. The Army plans to be net zero by 2050. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has published [Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach](#) (2021), which sets out the ambition and initial actions. There are many sustainability programmes currently being delivered. The Army is beginning to engage with local authorities about working collaboratively.
16. The task group heard about the approach being taken to reduce emissions from the Army's estate (the major source of emissions) and the development of several smaller localised programmes.
17. The task group will be seeking an update in 6-12 months.

Climate Strategy Pathway Reports (13 May 2022)

18. The task group received a briefing from Ariane Crampton, Head of Carbon reduction on the two pathway reports. A wider Members briefing regarding these reports was held on 26 May 2022.
19. The council have commissioned Anthesis to produce two reports, one regarding the [council](#) the other the [county](#), that:
 - create a full understanding of current county and council emissions
 - create pathways of future emissions trajectories
 - outline interventions that the council and county can implement to reach their net-zero goals
20. Council emissions have decreased 80% since 2014/15. However, there are a range of differing trajectories to 2030 but the council is in an advantageous

position to reach carbon neutral. The most 'stretching' ambitions will get the council to 95% carbon neutral by 2030.

21. The report regarding emissions from the wider county is intended to:
 - set out emissions baseline for Wiltshire
 - demonstrate what needs to be achieved to reach carbon neutral
 - contextualize these milestones with detail around costs, co-benefits, and the council's ability to influence
 - provide guidance on offsetting
22. This report again sets out a series of potential pathways but highlights that Wiltshire is not likely to reach carbon neutral by 2030. Based upon the current level of constraints (which include legislative and financial restraints) the county could reduce its emissions by 55% by 2050. Government legislation and support will remain critical in the collective efforts to reduce carbon emissions across the county.
23. The cost, across Wiltshire, of reaching carbon neutral will be substantial but will be significantly offset by potential savings. The cost of inaction would be higher. The council is continuing to use its influence in the county and with government to reduce carbon emissions.
24. The task group produced two reports setting out its evidence-based recommendations regarding energy, transport, and air quality ([September 2020](#)) and planning ([January 2021](#)). Its recommendations remain relevant and are broadly recurrent themes within these two external reports. The evidence in the pathway reports also aligns with the task group's areas of interest, see para.27 below.
25. The council is beginning to give climate change the necessary prominence, within its strategic plans and policies. It is therefore important that task group continues to monitor the progress of the Climate Strategy.

Forward work plan

26. The task group has agreed to review and follow up several the recommendations that it made to the Executive in 2020/21.
27. This will bring the group up to date with current policy and practice nationally and allow an informed consideration of the future delivery plans for the council. There will be a focus upon specific areas:
 - Net zero planning policies ensuring that all new homes are carbon neutral
 - Making all homes energy efficient
 - Electric vehicle charging, including on-street charging and via taxi licensing across the county to enable a rapid transition to electric vehicles
 - Encouraging active travel for short journeys undertaken safely either on foot or by bike

- Protecting woodlands and natural environment and increasing tree cover

28. The draft forward plan is attached at Appendix 2.

Proposals

- 1. With the commencement of the 2022/23 Council year, that the select committee re-appoint the Climate Emergency task group and the membership listed in the report.**
- 2. To note the update on the Task Group activity provided above.**
- 3. To note the activity of the Task Group (June 2021/June 2022), see Appendix 1.**
- 4. To note the Task Group's draft forward work plan, see Appendix 2.**

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APPENDIX 1

Climate Emergency Task Group – Activity June 2021/June 2022

29 July 2021	Draft Climate Strategy 2022/27 Discussion and commenting on the draft strategy before the formal consultation process.
5 August 2021	Draft Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy Discussion and commenting on draft strategy before the formal consultation process.
Sept 2021	Response to the draft Climate Strategy 2022-2027 The task group responded to the consultation and made several suggestions and comments (see update to the select committee on 9 November 2021 for details)
8 Oct 2021	Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Plan 2021-2024 The task group received a briefing regarding the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Plan 2021-2024 to which members of the select committee were also invited. The Plan was considered by Cabinet on 12 October 2021.
8 Oct 2021	Revised terms of reference Task group considered and revised its terms of reference. The updated terms of reference were endorsed by the select committee on 9 November 2021.
22 Nov 2021	Implications and outcomes of COP26 The task group considered and noted the emerging outcomes and implications for Wiltshire of COP26 (UN Climate Change Conference) which took place in Glasgow 31 Oct-12 Nov 2021.
10 Dec 2021	Final draft Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2030 The task group received a presentation regarding the final draft Green & Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy following the public consultation (1 September to 17 October 2021). It outlined the consultation process, the feedback received and how the strategy would be revised following the consultation.
15 Dec 2021	Final draft Climate Strategy 2022-2027 The task group had a presentation regarding the final draft of the Climate Strategy covering the public consultation process (1 September to 17 October 2021), responses to the consultation and how the strategy had subsequently been amended.

15 Feb 2022	<p>Full Council - Climate Strategy 2022-2027 The Council received the draft Climate Strategy for endorsement. The Chairman of the task group, along with the Leader of the Council, Cllr Clewer, addressed a rally of the Wiltshire Climate Alliance (WCA). The Chairman also took part in the debate at full Council on behalf of the task group.</p>
18 Mar 2022	<p>Woodlands & trees – national and local perspective See update above</p>
6 May 2022	<p>British Army Sustainability Briefing See update above</p>
13 May 2022	<p>Climate Strategy Pathway Reports See update above</p>

APPENDIX 2

Climate Emergency Task Group – Forward Work Plan

Sept 2022 (tbc)	Environmental Mitigation Asset Management Framework To understand the future of the council's land holdings, incl. county farms, with respect to food production, renewable energy, and tree planting.
Sept 2022 (tbc)	Natural England Funded Pilot Meeting to consider the pilot projects looking at rolling out local nature recovery planning, bio-diversity net gain and the environmental toolkit
Oct 2022 (tbc)	Developing EV (Electric Vehicle) Charging Discussion with commercial providers about current good practice, funding models and Government support.
Nov 2022 (tbc)	Update British Army Sustainability To update task group following briefing on 6 May 2022.