

**Wiltshire Council**

**Environment Select Committee**

**9 November 2021**

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## **Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group Update**

### **Purpose**

1. To update the Environment Select Committee on the work of the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group since September 2021.

### **Background**

2. The Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group (GWCE) is a task group reporting to the Environment Select Committee. The task group's terms of reference were endorsed by the Select Committee on 3 September 2019.
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 [7 September 2021](#).

### **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 adopted its terms of reference in September 2019.
8. The Select Committee agreeing to continue the task group following local government elections in May 2021 prompted a review of its terms of reference, two year on from their adoption, to better reflect agreed work priorities.
9. The task group has drafted new terms of reference, see below:
  - 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.*

## Task Group name

10. Whilst reviewing the terms of reference the Global Warming & Climate Emergency task group also discussed the task group name.
11. The term global warming, now superseded by the term global heating, is considered to be implicit in the climate emergency.
12. Given the task group arose from a motion to full Council concerning the climate emergency, it is proposed that the name of the task group be changed to the **Climate Emergency Task Group**.

## Response to the draft Climate Strategy 2022-2027

13. In September 2021 the council began a consultation on a climate strategy. The task group responded to the consultation and in summary suggested that the Climate Strategy 2022-2027 should:
  - Reflect the urgency of the challenge and speed up delivery;
  - Be persuasive about the need to tackle the climate emergency;

- Be clear on what's required of the Council's other policies, plans and programmes;
- Show how we will be held to account by including milestones and targets;
- Set out the limits to action and how current obstacles can be potentially overcome;
- Strengthen the influence and partnership sections to better reflect the council's leadership, communications, engagement, advocacy and education role;
- Be prepared to innovate and take the lead – regionally and nationally.

14. The full response is set out in Appendix 1.

### **Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Plan 2021-2024**

15. The task group received a briefing regarding the plan Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Plan 2021-2024 on 8 October 2021 to which members of the select committee were invited. The Plan was considered by Cabinet on 12 October 2021.

16. The task group welcomed the Plan, recognising that it was addressing immediate challenges; in particular updating and repairing the council's current EV charging infrastructure but also preparing for a more detailed strategy, which will be part of the Local Transport Plan.

17. The task group considered there are 'quick wins' available to the council, most of which the task group recommended in its first [report](#) on Energy, Transport and Air Quality endorsed by OSMC on 29 September 2020. For example, the council should:

- Prioritise the phasing out of diesel and petrol vehicles in its own fleet
- Work with taxi firms and drivers to help them transition to electric taxis, including possible incentivisation through licencing and the installation of rapid chargers for taxi ranks
- Promote EV use among residents including by updating the guidance on car clubs on the Connecting Wiltshire web pages to encourage EV-specific clubs

18. The task group would like to see the council acting to support residents in going electric in all possible ways – through explanation, information, support for EV clubs and in leading by example.

### **Draft forward work plan**

19. Based upon the draft terms of reference a draft work plan is attached at Appendix 2.

### **Proposals**

- 1. To note the update on the Task Group activity provided.**
- 2. To endorse the task group's new terms of reference, as set out at paragraph 9.**
- 3. To endorse changing the task group's name to the Climate Emergency Task Group.**
- 4. To note the task group's draft forward work plan.**

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## **APPENDIX 1 – Response to the Climate Strategy Consultation**

**Wiltshire Council**

**Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group**

**14 October 2021**

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### **Response to the draft Climate Strategy 2022-2027**

The council's Global Warming & Climate Emergency task group welcomes the opportunity to comment on Wiltshire's draft Climate Strategy 2022-2027. It met on 24 September to consider the document and in summary the task group agreed that the strategy should:

- Reflect the urgency of the challenge and speed up delivery;
- Be persuasive about the need to tackle the climate emergency;
- Be clear on what's required of the Council's other policies, plans and programmes;
- Show how we will be held to account by including milestones and targets;
- Set out the limits to action and how current obstacles can be potentially overcome;
- Strengthen the influence and partnership sections to better reflect the council's leadership, communications, engagement, advocacy and education role;
- Be prepared to innovate and take the lead – regionally and nationally.

These are set out in more detail below.

The task group saw early drafts of the strategy and it is clear that many of the points we raised were taken on board. It is good to see a strong acknowledgement of the climate crisis not only from the council but from its Leader.

The task group is however disappointed that many of the recommendations made in its two reports have not been taken on board, in spite of the evidence of their efficacy elsewhere. We are also disappointed that critical issues such as sustainable spatial planning, net zero development, road building and decarbonisation of the transport system have been left for other parts of the council (traditionally large emitters) to resolve. There are also complete omissions in some significant areas, such as any mention of the role of the council's own farms (some at risk of being sold for development) in sustainable local food production, carbon capture and renewable energy generation (page 24).

Through its own words and actions the council has shown that it is serious about reducing its own emissions (i.e. those associated with its own operations and estate). However, the task group also regards the council's commitment to seek to make the county (less Swindon Borough) carbon neutral by 2030, as much more challenging and crucial in terms of what this strategy must set out to achieve.

This strategy though is an important step and the task group stands ready to support its further development.

## **The climate emergency**

Emergency is not a word that is used frivolously by local authorities, but the council did agree, in February 2019, that there was a climate emergency, which it needed to take action to address. That was over two and a half years ago.

Preventing dangerous climate change, widely acknowledged as keeping global temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees centigrade<sup>1</sup>, is seriously time constrained and will require deep and rapid cuts in emissions. The draft Climate Strategy lacks an overall commensurate sense of urgency that reflects the mounting concern within society and from young people in particular. Whilst the identification of 'no regrets' measures in the strategy is welcomed as a way of marking out measures that can be advanced immediately, the timeframe for the creation and delivery of a strategy is insufficiently ambitious. The detailed delivery plans may not be complete for 12-18 months (2022/23) and would take even longer to implement. Decisions made in the meantime could lead to investments that lock in greenhouse gas emissions for years, even decades to come.

More could also be made of early wins, which the draft includes, for example the retrofitting council homes to EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) B standard and installing electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, through working with District Network Operators and private sector EV charging infrastructure firms. These initiatives are welcome but need to be less hesitant and much more pro-active. Delivery Plans should not now be put on hold simply to coincide with other statutory plans like the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan but should be quickly set in motion and reviewed regularly.

## **Why are we addressing the climate emergency?**

Why we need to become zero carbon requires more explanation, as people may not fully understand or accept that there is an 'emergency', or one that affects Wiltshire. The strategy should clearly and honestly describe the nature of the threat and the way the council has chosen to respond. This will ultimately enhance the democratic mandate that will help the council in taking the necessary action. In this respect, there are three messages that need to be conveyed.

Firstly, that the scientific evidence that we are facing an unprecedented crisis, more substantial and far reaching than the covid pandemic, for example, is incontrovertible, as is the evidence of how close we are to exceeding safe limits. This links to the recent IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) which predicts that the world will reach or pass 1.5C between 2030 and 2035 and is likely to exceed 2C between the early 2040s or 50s. And that every fraction of a degree of warming above 1.5C leads to substantially more dangerous and costly impacts. These facts need to be communicated in ways that people can more easily relate to.

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<sup>1</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change "Special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C" October 2018. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

Secondly, that people are already dying and suffering as a result of the early impacts of climate change - floods, fires, droughts, heatwaves and diseases. Extreme weather has caused 11,000 disasters and two million deaths in the last 50 years.<sup>2</sup> Wiltshire is also already seeing impacts – warmer wetter winters and hotter drier summers and people have died in Britain as a result of heatwaves.<sup>3</sup> The flooding that has affected many homes in the south west is expected to get worse, as is the increase in heat related deaths. Additionally, it needs to be communicated that the impacts in other parts of the world will directly and indirectly affect live here in Wiltshire. Water shortages, food shortages, mass migrations, increased conflict will all impact on the security and quality of our lives right here in Wiltshire.

Thirdly, our legacy of industries, that Britain’s innovation created – such as iron, steel, cars, gas and electricity – have made our lives much better but have led to carbon emissions that warm the world and are now creating enormous risks for future generations. We have a responsibility to show the way in solving the global problem. The UK is a leader in the global effort, and Wiltshire needs to be a leader within the UK.

There are lots of ways we could help bring these messages to life and achieve a community that is better informed, more engaged and more motivated to take action. This could include ‘twinning’ with a region or part of a developing country that is in the frontline of climate change impacts. The contact would be light touch and virtual but such an initiative would be an opportunity for councillors, officers, schools and community groups to engage with, learn from and support people on the other side of the world and understand how they are affected. [Schools in Oxfordshire](#) have done this, as have the German city of Bonn, but Wiltshire would be the first council to do so.

### **Internal strategic alignment and influence**

The draft climate strategy has many laudable objectives. However, like many a previous environmental plan, it will not achieve much unless higher level strategies, plans, policies and programmes are aligned with it. If the Local Plan, for example, continues its historical approach to large scale, car dependent development, with policies that don’t require well insulated homes, onsite renewable energy generation and walking and cycling infrastructure, the good intentions of the Climate Strategy will become irrelevant. Similarly, if road building continues to promote car dependency and investment in EV charging infrastructure (e.g., for on street charging) is not forthcoming. Simply referring to ‘developing a new Wiltshire Local Transport Plan and Local Plan’ or ‘*encouraging town councils to support existing town cycle networks*’ (page 20) does not inspire confidence that these plans will be in any way ‘joined up’.

The task group is aware that the previous Climate Change Strategy produced in 2010 aimed to have an action plan in place by the end of 2012 but came to very little, despite declaring that the council needed to act urgently. The agenda was then seemingly abandoned from 2015 until the Climate Emergency was declared in 2019, whilst

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<sup>2</sup> <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/weather-related-disasters-increase-over-past-50-years-causing-more-damage-fewer>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212096321000140>

emissions from commercial buildings, housing and transport continued to rise. This must not be allowed to happen again.

## **Delivery themes**

The workstreams within the council's spheres of control and influence, represent a well framed set of areas for action. Some are nicely worked up, such as on the transport areas of focus (page 20). However, detail of how these will be achieved is lacking. Hopefully these will be broken down further into specific sub-strategies such as for electric vehicles (EVs), buses, cycling and walking and so on. Each with a plan that encourages all available ideas and expertise to be contributed and a light touch governance arrangement to drive progress. However, the lack of detail is a significant weakness, which needs to be addressed (see below).

The task group would suggest a greater emphasis upon community leadership and developing programmes to help and encourage residents, businesses, developers and others to cut their emissions.

## **Objectives, milestones, targets**

Whilst recognising the desire to create a concise and readable document, the strategy must include a roadmap whereby the steps identified will lead to a zero carbon Wiltshire by 2030. Without these the draft can be characterised as a position statement and not a true strategy. As the Wiltshire Climate Alliance note, there is a *'lack of measurable objectives, and associated milestones and proposed investments'*. The target of net zero emissions by 2030 is clear, as is the baseline for county-wide emissions (page 12) but it is important to set milestone targets on the road to 2030. There is no way currently to objectively measure our progress – without these it is not clear we will achieve our ultimate aim and we also cannot be held to account.

## **Limits to action**

We need to be realistic and the overall strategy should reflect the reality of the limits of the council's influence. The Climate Change Committee (CCC) states that *'Local authorities have powers or influence over roughly a third of emissions in their local areas.'*<sup>4</sup> It adds that while over 300 local authorities have declared climate emergencies, *'the levers available to them are unlikely to be sufficient to deliver their net zero ambitions, due to gaps in powers, policy and funding barriers, and a lack of capacity and skills at a local level'*. The CCC's conclusion is that these capacity deficits create a need for *'Government, regional agencies and local authorities to work seamlessly together.'*

The task group accepts that there are limits to how the council can act but this should also be an impetus to re-think, innovate and collaborate to maximise its impact, particularly as Wiltshire's overall aim, to be carbon neutral by 2030, does not completely align with those of central government whose target is 2050. Given the urgency outlined in the early part of this response, the task group believes the council must act decisively, in spite of the government's lack of vision. It believes that the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget/>

council can and must drive change beyond the statutory levers presently available to them. This may require taking some risks in the longer-term interests of its residents, as well as re-prioritising budgets and investment. It is noticeable that currently the strategy only references accessing additional government funding, not how the council's own budgets might be aligned with this agenda – more financial transparency would be welcome.

It should also include working through local government representative bodies to influence national government and send a clear message about what is needed to affect the CCC's recommendations. The task group therefore welcomes the council's involvement in the Countryside Climate Network.

Finally, it should also do this through leadership, communications, engagement, advocacy and education. In other words, if much of what needs to be done cannot be done through the exercise of the council's own powers, then communication, education, persuasion and advocacy should become much more central parts of any strategy.

### **Leadership, communications, engagement, advocacy and education**

While the council may have limited powers, it can increase its influence by being a leader and role model for the community. This can range from advice for residents on buying EVs, through campaigns to encourage walking and cycling, to setting standards for low or zero carbon homes (as some parish councils are already doing through their Neighbourhood Plans). Wiltshire Council may not be able to mandate any of these, but it can act through communication and education to make them better understood and more popular – and hence to increase their social acceptability and desirability. For example, the council could give awards to developers for Wiltshire's greenest new homes. The sections of the strategy that set out how we will use our influence and partnership should have more immediate actions.

The strategy does seem to recognise this in part, for example, the graphic of a low-carbon home (page 16) suggests a series of low carbon design concepts, mostly (currently) unenforceable except perhaps in the small number of new council-built homes. This does not mean we should scrap this aspiration. It means that we re-double efforts to create and deliver a roadmap of communication and persuasion to make all of Wiltshire's homes, new and old, reach that ideal.

In this respect, the council should review its existing powers to identify where and how it could maximise their use to extract the most benefit and value.

### **External alignment and taking the lead**

It is also important – as the CCC point out – to avoid a fragmented approach and to align what the council is doing with the actions of central government, businesses and other agencies where possible. The council has to know what actions the government and other councils are taking and strive to identify and emulate best practice. This has two strands – first, making sure Wiltshire attracts government funding and pilot projects and second, identifying, monitoring and learning from successful carbon reduction programmes.

In this area, we should have the ambition of making Wiltshire a test bed or early adopter of critical technologies – particularly heating homes. For power and light transport, the key medium to long term solutions are already established in the form of low-carbon electricity via solar and wind and the main challenge is to cut costs and increase capacity. However, residential heat (including cooking) is emerging as the toughest issue for the 2020s. There is a lack of clarity over whether heat pumps, hydrogen, electric heaters, microwave boilers or some other technology will prove the most efficient. Wiltshire can test the relative merits of these emerging solutions challenging and encouraging developers to demonstrate and lead in this area. The Council has missed recent opportunities in this regard (e.g., having an electric scooter trial scheme in Salisbury) and the Strategy should try to ensure this does not happen in future.

In the short to medium term; while internal combustion engines still dominate road transport, it is imperative to encourage more bus services and active transport (walking and cycling). So can Wiltshire run projects to test, for example, the impact of a major ramp-up of bus services in a particular area or a campaign to promote walking to school or work?

### **Concluding remarks**

Tackling the climate emergency means substantial changes are going to be required in the way the council operates, invests and sets the wider planning and policy landscape for the future. It also means that we all (i.e. Wiltshire residents) have to do things differently and the council has to take the lead in helping make that happen. Unfortunately, time is not on our side. We should have a strategy that gets us to zero carbon by 2030. However, without the necessary detail and delivery mechanisms, it is unclear whether this strategy will get us to this target.

Our approach therefore needs to be more urgent and less hesitant. We have to decisively move to becoming a carbon neutral council as quickly as possible and use all possible means to exert influence over cutting the county's emissions and increasing carbon capture. This will require us to be more innovative and forward thinking than ever before. We will need to be much bolder about what we can do now and persuasive about what we need government to do.

The task group realises that this is not an easy ask. We have made some progress, but a big challenge remains – the council has powers or influence over perhaps only a third of the county's emissions. How are we going to close that gap and reduce the other two thirds of emissions by 2030? We need to show leadership but also increase our communications, engagement, advocacy and education. And we need to build the skills and capacity to do this.

Many individuals and organisations want to and can help. The task group met and spoke to many of these when creating its two detailed reports. We hope that this consultation will begin to bring everyone together – at the very least around the high-level objectives under the delivery themes. We also hope that the consultation responses will be taken on board and the council will work with increased urgency on preparing and implementing delivery plans, and on aligning all its other plans, policies

and programmes with this Strategy. With a concerted community effort and high levels of communication and engagement, Wiltshire could achieve the national leadership role to which it aspires.

**Cllr Graham Wright, Chairman of the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group**

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## APPENDIX 2 – Draft Forward Work Plan

9 November 2021	<b>Environment Select Committee</b>
12 November 2021	<b>Councillor Climate Working Group</b> The Working Group (CCWG) has responsibility for ensuring that the work undertaken by officers, meets the 2030 climate ambitions, as set by full council in 2019. (Cllr Wright only)
22 November 2021	<b>UN Climate Change Conference (Cop26)</b> To consider the implications of the climate conference, the Government's response and potential implications for the council.
December 2021 (tbc)	<b>Climate Strategy 2022-2027</b> Meeting to consider the responses from the consultation and next steps, including any specific topics for investigation.
December 2021 (tbc)	<b>Green Blue Infrastructure Strategy</b> Meeting to consider the consultation responses, amendments to the final strategy and next steps in terms of policies and programmes.
12 January 2022	<b>Environment Select Committee</b>
January 2022 (tbc)	<b>Local Plan Review</b> Meeting when the next iteration of plan is published to discuss progress and future areas of investigation for the task group.

Other areas for consideration:

Corporate Business Plan

Environment Bill

Air Quality Strategy 2017-2024

Household Waste Management Strategy 2017-2027