

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

17 October 2023

Item 7 – Update on the Council’s response to the climate emergency and revised Environmental Policy

Extract of Cabinet Minutes from 10 October 2023.

85 Update on the Council's Response to the Climate Emergency and revised Environmental Policy

Cllr Nick Holder, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change presented a report which provided an update on progress and actions taken in response to the climate emergency.

Cllr Holder explained that the council has made significant progress in responding to the climate emergency and in particular against the seven Climate Strategy themes. He reported on the trends against key performance indicators as set out in appendix 2 to the report and confirmed that the Council was on track to become carbon neutral by 2030. It was noted that Transport is still the largest source of emissions in Wiltshire and was not reducing significantly. Work was being undertaken with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Street Scene, and Flooding to these issues.

Cllr Holder reported that the Council continued to show leadership through tackling greenhouse emissions and mitigating other environmental impacts of its own operations, with the Environmental Policy at Appendix 1 to the report setting out how the Council undertakes this.

The Leader reflected on the Council removing 85% of its emissions helping the Council become more self-sufficient and suggested that other organisations could follow the Councils lead in this area. The Council would continue to engage with the government on long term programmes with delivery on a local level.

Cllr Graham Wright, Chairman of the Climate Emergency Task Group reported that the Task Group met on 9 October 2023 welcomed the report and thanked officers for their continued commitment and responses to questions asked at Task Group meetings. He explained that Cllr Wallis chaired the Task Group meeting in his absence and questions about carbon emissions in the county, air quality, demand responsive bus service in Pewsey Vale, take up of active travel and encouraging schools to develop their own travel plans, retrofitting houses

and building carbon neutral homes and fitting solar panels on listed buildings. Officers provided additional updates in relation to the progress being made by the Climate Team and work streams.

Cllr Gordon King, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, agreed with the positive views of Cabinet members and welcomed the news that the Council was on track to be carbon neutral by 2030. He commented on (i) delays in delivery of some of the projects and the corresponding impact; (ii) the style and type of housing being developed on Council land; (iii) the amount of waste produced and how it is disposed of; and (iv) the need to continue to make good progress up to 2030. Cabinet Members explained that the requirement from Council is being fulfilled as update reports to Cabinet and Council only need to include detail of work undertaken. The Council is following an ambitious path and the remaining 15% takes longer to achieve due to more complex elements. Council housing is being built to zero carbon standard, requirements of which are included in the draft Local Plan. Government have been lobbied about waste issues and there needs to be a sensible approach to moving this forward.

Cllr Jon Hubbard commented on the recent briefing on sorting facilities at Council Household Recycling Centres (HRC). He was concerned at the lack of member attendance. He also highlighted the benefits from installing solar panels on village halls and the potential for hydro-electric generation in suitable locations. Cllr Holder reported his disappointment at member attendance for the HRC briefing. Further consideration would be given to the issue of solar panels and potential involvement of Area Boards providing information about funding streams. The Leader advised caution in relation to the hydro-electric schemes following recent technical analysis indicating negative cost benefit.

Members also commented on members being encouraged to promote active travel in schools, increasing passengers on public transport, energy from waste solutions and the need to increase recycling and reuse.

Resolved:

- 1. That Cabinet notes 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.**
- 2. That Cabinet recommends that Full Council 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 Decision:

- 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.*