

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Environment Select Committee**

**4 March 2025**

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### **Climate Emergency Task Group**

#### **Background**

1. The Climate Emergency Task Group (CETG) is a standing task group reporting to the Environment Select Committee. It was formed after the council recognised the climate emergency in February 2019. 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 and 12 November 2024.
2. The Environment Select Committee approved the continuation of the task group in July 2021. It has met regularly since 2021 and reported to the select committee at most of its meetings.

#### **Membership**

3. The membership of the task group is as follows:

Cllr Clare Cape  
Cllr Sarah Gibson MP  
Cllr Tony Jackson (until April 2024)  
Cllr Jacqui Lay  
Cllr Dr Brian Mathew MP  
Cllr Dr Nick Murry  
Cllr David Vigar  
Cllr Ian Wallis  
Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman)

#### **Terms of Reference:**

4. The task group's revised terms of reference were endorsed by the Environment Select Committee on the 12 November 2024. These are:
  - a) The task group is a standing task group of the Environment Select Committee; reporting to the select committee on its recent activity and on any conclusions or recommendations. The task group meets frequently and on an ad hoc basis considering items on its forward work plan.
  - b) 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 net zero/climate resilient by 2030 (excluding the geographical area administered by Swindon Borough Council).

- c) 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.
- d) 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**

#### **Local Transport Plan (LTP4) (14 November 2024)**

- 5. The task group had a general briefing regarding the Local Transport Plan. The task group expressed disappointment that it had not seen any drafts of the plan or been involved in any discussions regarding its development.
- 6. Questions were asked about when detailed plans would be published, public transport funding, evidence of increased bus usage, funding for active travel and how much LTP4 is integrated into the Local Plan.

#### **Local Transport Plan (De-carbonisation) (8 January 2025)**

- 7. The task group looked at how the Local Transport Plan will lower carbon emissions.
- 8. Questions were asked about baseline information, what actions would be taken to reduce emissions, the assumptions around the reduction in car travel and access to funding.
- 9. The task group responded to the LTP4 consultation, see Appendix 1

#### **Climate Delivery Plan / Adaptation Plan / Warm Homes Grant (30 January 2025)**

- 10. The task group discussed the new climate delivery plan 2025-2027. The task group were updated on the plan in development in October 2024.
- 11. Questions were asked about detail on delivery, sustainable travel, council refuse vehicles and the use of community energy.
- 12. The task group also considered the Adaptation Plan 2025-2029 which looks to address the risks from a changing climate.
- 13. The task group discussed the methodology used to develop the plan and engagement with town and parish councils and the water companies.

14. Finally the task group heard about the Warm Homes grant, which is a Government funding scheme to improve energy efficiency in the least efficient privately owned homes.
15. The task group considered the success of previous schemes, the selection process for eligible homes and how the council is supporting those who fall outside of the scheme.

#### **Local Transport Plan (LTP4) consultation responses and officer analysis (20 February 2025)**

16. The task group, along with members of the Environment Select Committee, were briefed on the consultation responses to the Local Transport Plan (LTP4).
17. Questions were asked on the effect the plan had on other council policies, when the delivery plan would be published and the development of a new freight management plan. A commitment was made to bring an update on the Local Transport Plan to the select committee every year.

#### **Wiltshire COP (20 February 2025)**

18. The task group met with members of the Wiltshire Climate Alliance (WCA) and members of the Climate Team to discuss the development of a two day conference on climate change aimed at business and local communities. The task group committed to continue discussions with the Wiltshire Climate Alliance and were supportive of the initiative.

#### **Activities 2021/25**

19. The task group met thirty-five times between July 2021 and February 2025. As reflected in its terms of reference CETG has scrutinised 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.
20. The task group has also looked at issues that it considered to be key to delivering netzero. These include electric vehicle infrastructure, increasing and protecting trees and woodlands, community energy and active travel. It has also scrutinised policies and plans which will help manage the effects of climate change, like the Adaptation Plan and that may have consequences for carbon emissions targets, such as off-setting.
21. A list of the meetings of the task group are set out in Appendix 2.

#### **Learning and Improvement**

22. The current task group has a balance of knowledge, skills and experience. This has worked well and allowed both for general scrutiny and for more in-depth knowledge based discussion around what can be complex technical and scientific issues. The task group would therefore suggest that when recruiting

to the task group, that a request is made for evidence of knowledge, experience and interest in climate change mitigation and adaptation and related areas, to capture helpful expertise.

23. To better organise and prioritise its work the task group should actively engage with officers and the relevant Cabinet members. The Chairman of the task group should meet with Cabinet members at the beginning of each council year to review the work programme. Cabinet members should also be asked to update the task group on any relevant issues or programmes when they attend meetings.
24. To prioritise its workload the task group should assess issues and weigh their importance regarding:
  - Impact – particularly in terms of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the plan, policy or programme
  - Risk – both mitigation and adaptation related, for the council and county, including physical risk to assets and services and regulatory/ reputational risk to the council
  - Scope/opportunity – to actively address impact and risk through the plan, policy or programme
  - Potential to influence – reflecting the extent to which the plan, policy or programme can be modified or changed
  - Public interest – taking account of likely priority or concern to the public.
25. The task group should where appropriate recommend to the select committee where time limited task groups or rapid scrutiny would be appropriate for an issue within its remit. The task group should also support the select committee by undertaking to consider the select committees work plan and report back to them on relevant issues up for consideration.
26. The task group has over the last five years had discussions with local groups as well as engaged with external organisations. It should consider developing a stakeholder relationship plan to inform who it should engage with and when as well as how to maximise the outcomes of that engagement. This should be informed by the task groups forward work plan.

### **Future activities**

27. It is at the discretion of the Environment Select Committee whether to re-appoint the task group after the May 2025 elections.
28. Irrespective of that decision there are several key areas that the task group suggests should be scrutinised in the next council session:
  - a) **Climate Change Adaptation Plan** – will set out the risk based approach to tackling the effects of climate change i.e., storms, heavy rain, heatwaves, droughts

- b) **Carbon Offsetting Strategy** – all carbon reduction pathways will have a shortfall. These may be made up by offsetting their effects. These are contentious strategies with schemes criticised for being ineffective.
- c) **Local Transport Plan (LTP4)** – the transport sector generated 38% of Wiltshire's greenhouse gas emissions in 2022. Reducing emissions is critical to reaching carbon targets; the Plan references de-carbonisation.
- d) **Annual update on the Council's response to the Climate Emergency** – the Climate Strategy and delivery plans are crucial in tracking progress towards reducing emissions.
- e) **Bio-diversity Net Gain** - creating and improving natural habitats. Making sure development has a measurably positive impact on biodiversity.
- f) **Warm Homes Grant** – a Government grant to deliver insulation measures and other improvements such as solar panels, batteries and low carbon heating to cut bills for families, slash fuel poverty, and reduce carbon emissions.
- g) **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** - Local Nature Recovery Strategies make recommendations at a local and regional scale, by mapping ecological networks and identifying habitat restoration priorities.

29. The above have been incorporated into the **Review of the work of the Environment Select Committee**

### **Forward work plan**

30. The Climate Emergency Task Group has suggested a forward plan for the task group, based on the above, post May 2025 attached at Appendix 3.

### **Proposals**

**That the select committee:**

1. **Notes the recent activity of the Climate Emergency Task Group and its response to the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) consultation, see Appendix 1.**
2. **Notes the activity of the Climate Emergency Task Group (2021/ 2025), see Appendix 2.**
3. **Approves the recommendations made to improve the working of the Task Group regarding:**
  - **Recruitment of task group members**
  - **Engagement with Cabinet Members and officers**
  - **Prioritisation of its workload**
  - **Time limited task groups and rapid scrutiny**
  - **Stakeholder relationship planning**

4. Approves the Climate Emergency Task Group's suggested forward work plan, see Appendix 3.
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**Cllr Graham Wright, Chairman of the Climate Emergency Task Group**

Report author: Simon Bennet, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Tel: 01225 718709,  
email: [simon.bennett@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:simon.bennett@wiltshire.gov.uk)

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Climate Emergency Task Group Response to the Wiltshire Council Local Transport Plan (LTP4) Consultation**

#### **Introduction**

This is a response to the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan (LTP4) on behalf of the Climate Emergency Task Group (CETG). The task group would like to respond to the consultation outside of the structured process available online. This enables the task group to raise issues which cannot be addressed via the online forms.

In February 2019, Wiltshire Council acknowledged the climate emergency and pledged to reduce carbon emissions in Wiltshire by 2030. The Council also invited the Environment Select Committee to establish a task group to develop recommendations and a plan for making Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. The Environment Select Committee established a task group in April 2019 and the Climate Emergency Task Group began work in June 2019.

The task group's current terms of reference are as follows:

- a) The task group is a standing task group of the Environment Select Committee; reporting to the select committee on its recent activity and on any conclusions or recommendations. The task group meets frequently and on an ad hoc basis considering items on its forward work plan.
- b) 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 net zero/climate resilient by 2030 (excluding the geographical area administered by Swindon Borough Council).
- c) 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.
- d) 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.

#### **General remarks**

The task group, given its remit, has chosen to concentrate upon how the Plan will support decarbonisation and the reduction of carbon emissions in Wiltshire.

Overall, the Plan is comprehensive in terms of background and analysis but is lacking in terms of clear and measurable targets and their means of achievement. It consists

of a large series of dense documents, containing a great deal of information. However, these are mostly descriptive rather than prescriptive. The group questioned the need for such a quantity of contextual analysis and noted that while the documents offered many strategic aspirations with which few would argue, such as enabling active travel and supporting low emission vehicles, they contained few proposals on the steps required to achieve them.

There is also little indication of how the Plan will contribute to national carbon reduction targets and Wiltshire Council's own decarbonisation target for the Country (less Swindon), or how the shortfall will be addressed e.g. in terms of the investment required over what period.

As has been known for many years, transport is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan itself states that the transport sector generated 38% of Wiltshire's greenhouse gas emissions in 2022. It also states that emissions have remained at similar levels for decades, whilst emissions from other sectors have decreased. Car use accounts for approximately 60% of these emissions, with longer trips and travel by more rural and wealthier households contributing above average levels of emissions. Given this context it seems counterintuitive that the Plan does not focus more upon reducing private vehicle usage.

As the delivery plans/mechanisms are not included with the Plan, the task group is puzzled about how the figures setting out a reduction in emissions can be calculated when there are no defined actions. However, it also highlights how a number of the de-carbonisation objectives do not involve Wiltshire Council intervention or influence e.g., up to a 5% reduction in car travel due to increased online and localisation of activity.

### **Closing the emissions gap**

The Carbon Paper makes clear that the measures proposed in the Plan would not close the emissions gap to reach the decarbonisation pathway which has been identified to meet national carbon budgets and commitments.

Closing the emissions gap would require further reductions of emissions from the baseline projections of approximately 30% in 2030 and 55% in 2035. The high-level assessment presented in the Carbon Paper indicates that the combination of LTP4 measures with relevant action by individuals, businesses, and other sectors, only has the potential to support transport sector emissions reductions that would close approximately one quarter of the emissions gap in 2030.

There is no clear plan for how that gap would be bridged.

### **Ambition**

In the view of the task group, the Plan lacks ambition. This is best illustrated by the passive language used in the following sentence:



*'A combination of LTP4 measures and relevant action from individuals, organisations and other sectors could support changes in travel behaviour and choices with the potential to reduce carbon emissions by approximately 5% to 10% by 2030'.*

Similarly the section in the Carbon Paper, which sets out why modal shift is challenging, is a disheartening illustration of the council's lack of ambition on decarbonisation.

Given the challenge, a potential reduction of at most 10% in carbon emissions leaves a lot more to do. The Plan should provide new thinking, higher impact interventions and more urgency. The task group noted that many of the solutions that are set out in the Plan could have been implemented five years ago, see the task group's [report](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) of September 2020.

## **Funding**

There is a lack of detailed delivery measures in this Plan and the task group remains concerned that once again action will be restricted to what central Government will fund and what Wiltshire Council could win in terms of funding. The council has potentially curbed its ambition to fit what it can afford. Rather than motivating greater effort and stimulating new thinking about ways of funding and delivery, the Plan seems to suggest that some issues are too costly or too intractable to address. If the Plan is to be used as a document to access further funding it needs to set out a greater ambition and clearer pathway to decarbonisation.

Unfortunately not acting now may cost us much more in the future.

## **National/regional comparators**

It is not clear how effective the previous Local Transport Plan was in addressing decarbonisation and it would be helpful to see some reflection on what worked in the previous Plan. Also, more comparative data beyond Wiltshire might help set the Plan in a greater context. Given the role of national government in addressing decarbonisation a key part of the Plan should be a synopsis of Wiltshire's current position against national targets.

## **Rurality**

The Plan recognises the wide variety of issue facing Wiltshire and the task group supports that approach. However, it does feel like the Plan uses the challenges of addressing the needs of a rural population as a barrier to action to reduce car use and as a justification of the status quo.

Early in the document, Wiltshire is portrayed as 'dispersed and largely rural' with most people dependent on their cars, whereas the majority of population live in urban areas. According to Govt. stats, only 44% of Wiltshire's population live in rural areas, which classifies it as "Urban with significant Rural." This sets the wrong tone for the Plan e.g. around active travel and public transport as part of the solution for large parts of Wiltshire's population.

Whilst the Plan must find a balance between the needs of rural and urban areas it should not overstate rurality as an excuse for lack of action in urban areas. Car use accounts for approximately 60% of transport emissions and any Plan must be serious about lowering these emissions.

## **Planning and development**

The government's aims to significantly increase the number of homes provides a further challenge which the LTP must account for. While the task group recognises the need for affordable and sustainable homes for Wiltshire residents; there is a close relationship between the Local Plan and the Transport Plan. Building homes for commuters, especially with the current mind-set of large developments on the edges of towns, will inevitably increase the use of transport of all types, including (in the short-medium term) private internal combustion engine vehicles. This will reduce the impact of actions put in place to reduce emissions originating from transport of all types and puts even greater emphasis on the Plan's decarbonisation objectives e.g. around promoting EV use, increasing use of public transport, and investing in active travel.

## **Growth and Tourism**

Wiltshire's ambition for economic growth, and specifically tourism, would also lead to increased use of transport within the county and wider. Continuing to build roads will attract private motorists and freight companies to use them. This should also be acknowledged, managed, and mitigated.

## **Conclusion**

The objective to decarbonise Wiltshire's transport is welcomed but it is not one that can be traded off against other objectives, from which it needs to be de-coupled. The Plan in its current form gives a sense of decarbonisation being a 'secondary' objective, with reasons such as 'rurality' given as to why Wiltshire cannot be expected to fully engage with it.

Without detailed delivery plans it is not easy to make detailed comments about the extent to which the Plan will even achieve the relatively low level of decarbonisation ambition it sets out, or to understand the potential that Wiltshire Council actually has in terms of influencing the county's emissions reduction (accepting this will of course be limited).

However, from what the task group has seen so far in terms of decarbonisation, the Plan lacks ambition, measurable targets and the specific measures and associated investment calculations that will be needed to plan for significantly cutting transport emissions in Wiltshire.

Over five years since the council recognised the climate emergency, the slow incremental introduction of piecemeal programmes to reduce transport emissions is not working. This Plan is a start but much more needs to be done. Greater candour is needed regarding the challenges of transport decarbonisation and the difficulties in addressing them to make the Plan more relevant and realistic.

The task group has some issues with the Plan as currently drafted and therefore constructively challenges the council to improve the Plan's de-carbonisation elements by:

- a) Creating a shorter summary document related to decarbonisation pulling together all the relevant elements from the wider Plan.
- b) Setting out in the Plan:
  - What has been done so far (what LTP3 achieved), what needs to be done going forward and how and when the necessary measures will be delivered;
  - How the Plan will ensure that there will be no increase in total transport emissions as a result of development set out in the Local Plan (e.g. due to more ICEs on Wiltshire's roads);
  - How the carbon emissions gap explicit in the current draft Plan will be closed (including what will need to be delivered in partnership and by government);
  - The scale of investment required potentially available sources of funding and current/anticipated budget gaps (e.g. in relation to delivering the infrastructure proposed in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans);
  - Wiltshire's current performance against relevant climate related national objectives and targets such as those for the roll-out of EVs, EV infrastructure and proportion of short journeys undertaken by active travel, for example;
  - More detail on how existing plans/programmes and the measures listed will be implemented (e.g. in terms of targets, timescales, milestones, expected carbon reduction impact, supporting policies, infrastructure and investment required), including a schedule of existing and proposed 'delivery plans' and policies.

## APPENDIX 2

### Climate Emergency Task Group – Activity 2021 / 2025

29 July 2021	<b>Draft Climate Strategy 2022/27</b> Discussion and commenting on the draft strategy before the formal consultation process.
5 August 2021	<b>Draft Green &amp; Blue Infrastructure Strategy</b> Discussion and commenting on draft strategy before the formal consultation process
September 2021	<b>Response to the draft Climate Strategy 2022-2027</b> The task group responded to the consultation and made several suggestions and comments
8 October 2021	<b>Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Plan 2021- 2024</b> 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.
22 November 2021	<b>Implications and outcomes of COP26</b> 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 December 2021	<b>Final draft Green &amp; Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2030</b> 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 December 2021	<b>Final draft Climate Strategy 2022-2027</b> 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
18 March 2022	<b>Woodlands &amp; trees – national and local perspective</b> Looked at the current policy environment nationally and regionally and the experience of creating new permanent woodlands in Wiltshire.
6 May 2022	<b>British Army Sustainability Briefing</b> This briefing followed some more wide-ranging meetings between the military and the council which also touched upon climate change.
13 May 2022	<b>Climate Strategy Pathway Reports</b> Briefing on the Anthesis reports
5 August 2022	<b>Climate Strategy – delivery plans</b> The task group scrutinised the draft delivery plans for the Climate Strategy
2 September 2022	<b>Local Cycle &amp; Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)</b>

	The task group received an update on the Wiltshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and allied design guides
16 September 2022	<b>Use of council land for environmental mitigation</b> The task group received a briefing regarding a review of council land ownership.
20 November 2022	<b>Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan</b> The task group reviewed and commented upon the current Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan, which was revised in 2016, ahead of re-drafting the plan.
24 January 2023	<b>Rollalong Visit</b> Members of the task group visited Rollalong in Dorset which is where new build council houses are made as modules offsite, before being constructed on-site
23 January 2023 9 February 2023	<b>Workshops – offsetting Wiltshire’s greenhouse emissions</b> The task group has been involved in a number of workshops facilitated by the Anthesis consultancy discussing approaches to offsetting the council’s emissions.
28 April 2023	<b>Update on the council’s response to the climate emergency</b> The task group received the climate strategy update report before it went to Cabinet (2 May 2023) and Full Council (16 May 2023).
23 May 2023	<b>Briefing – offsetting Wiltshire’s greenhouse emissions</b> Members of the task group were invited to a briefing by the Anthesis consultancy regarding approaches to offsetting emissions.
25 May 2023	<b>Helping fuel-poor households improve home efficiency / funding retrofitting.</b> The task group received an update on the council’s programmes to support fuel-poor households
29 June 2023	<b>Draft Local Plan</b> The task group were briefed on the elements of the Local Plan that lower emissions and protect the natural environment.
9 October 2023	<b>Climate Strategy</b> The task group looks annually at progress with the delivery of the Climate Strategy
16 January 2024	<b>Carbon Audits</b> The task group considered the pros and cons of carbon audits for small to medium sized businesses.
2 February 2024	<b>Climate Change Adaptation Plan</b> The task group received an update on the development of a revised adaptation plan.
15 March 2024	<b>Air Quality Strategy 2024-2029</b> The task group were briefed on the new strategy, the evidence underpinning it and the actions identified.
16 May 2024	<b>Wessex Community Energy Network Event</b>

	The Chairman of the task group attended this event co-hosted by Wiltshire Council.
28 June 2024	<b>Tree &amp; Woodland Strategy</b> The task group received a briefing about the emerging strategy.
12 July 2024	<b>Climate Audit</b> The task group considered the SWAP Internal Audit Services was report as to whether the council has appropriate plans and structures in place to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030
11 October 2024	<b>Update on Council's response to the climate emergency</b> Update report which went to Cabinet (17 September 2024) and Full Council (15 October 2024)
18 October 2024	<b>Updating the Council's Climate Strategy delivery plans</b> Summary of conclusions from the Climate Delivery Plan review and future priorities
14 November 2024	<b>Local Transport Plan (LTP4)</b> General elements of the plan.
8 January 2025	<b>Local Transport Plan (De-carbonisation)</b> De-carbonisation elements of the plan
30 January 2025	<b>Adaptation Plan / Climate Delivery Plan / Warm Homes Grant</b> Update on two plans and the Warm Homes grant.
20 February 2025	<b>Local Transport Plan (LTP4) Consultation responses and officer analysis</b> Changes to the draft Local Transport Plan after consultation. Joint briefing with the select committee.
20 February 2025	<b>Wiltshire COP</b> Wiltshire Climate Alliance (WCA) briefed on the development of the Wiltshire COP

## APPENDIX 3

### Climate Emergency Task Group – Suggested Forward Work Plan 2025/26

tbc	<b>Climate Change Adaptation Plan</b> To be updated on the implementation of the plan.
tbc	<b>Warm Homes Grant</b> Update on the government funded programme for retrofitting homes.
tbc	<b>Bio-diversity Net Gain</b> Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a new planning policy with the potential to change the face of nature recovery in England.
tbc	<b>Local Transport Plan (LTP4)</b> To be updated on the delivery plans in particular how they support reducing carbon emissions.
tbc	<b>Climate Strategy</b> To track progress against carbon targets
tbc	<b>Carbon Offsetting Strategy</b> Update on the development of the strategy.