

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 July 2020

Subject: **Wiltshire Council Carbon Reduction**
Update on Council's Response to the Climate Emergency

Cabinet Member: **Cllr Richard Clewer - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts & Tourism, Housing, Communities**

Key Decision: **Non Key**

Executive Summary

At its meeting held on 26 February 2019 Full Council resolved to acknowledge that there is a climate emergency and to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030.

A commitment was made to provide six-monthly progress updates on actions the council is taking to reduce carbon generation in Wiltshire. The first update was provided in November 2019. This report provides an update on progress since then.

At its meeting on 26 November 2019, Full Council received a motion to amend the Council's Business Plan 2017-27 and the Leader committed to give prominence on the climate emergency in the plan. The plan will need to undergo a thorough review due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the upcoming elections in May 2021. This report therefore proposes a Climate Emergency addendum to the current plan pending the development of a new Business Plan.

Proposals

1. That the Cabinet recommend Council to amend the Business Plan 2017-2027 to include a Climate Emergency addendum as detailed in paragraph 8 and Appendix 1 of this report.
2. That Cabinet notes the actions taken in response to the climate emergency since November 2019.

Reason for Proposals

1. To ensure that the current Business Plan reflects the council's acknowledgement of the climate emergency and its commitment to addressing climate change.

2. To provide Cabinet with an update on actions taken in response to the climate emergency.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive Officer

Wiltshire Council

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Purpose of Report

1. To provide Cabinet with an update on actions taken in response to the climate emergency and to include this priority as an addendum to the council's Business Plan 2017-2027.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The programme of work to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030 will contribute to all four business plan priorities of:
 - i. Growing the economy
 - ii. Strong communities
 - iii. Protecting the vulnerable
 - iv. Working with our partners as an innovative and effective council

The update in paragraphs 12-49 of this report is therefore structured against these headings.

Background

3. At its meeting held on 26 February 2019 full Council debated the following notices of motion:
 - 12b) Acknowledging a Climate Emergency and Proposing the Way Forward;
 - 12c) Environment and Global Warming.

The council resolved to acknowledge that there is a climate emergency and to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030.

The [minutes](#) of the meeting are available online (see pages 21 to 24). Cabinet has also pledged to make Wiltshire Council carbon neutral by 2030.

4. As part of this motion, the council resolved that Cabinet should report to Full Council on a six-monthly basis with the actions the council is taking and will take to address the climate emergency and reporting these against the Carbon / Renewables Baseline audit. The first six-monthly [report](#) was presented to Full Council on 29 November 2019.
5. At its meeting on 26 November 2019, Full Council received a motion to amend the council's Business Plan 2017-27 and the Leader committed to give prominence on the climate emergency in the plan.
6. A Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group has been established by Environment Select Committee, chaired by Councillor Graham Wright and made up of nine councillors. The task group is developing recommendations and a plan to seek to achieve the target of making the county of Wiltshire net carbon neutral by 2030.
7. Updates on the task group's work are reported to Environment Select Committee. The most recent [update](#) was presented on 4 March 2020.

Main Considerations for the Council

8. The council's Business Plan will need to undergo a thorough review due to the impacts of the pandemic and the upcoming elections in May 2021. To ensure that the plan gives prominence to the climate emergency it is therefore proposed that a new section is added as an addendum to the current plan, pending the development of a new Business Plan for 2021 onwards. The proposed addendum is included at Appendix 1.
9. Since the last update in October/November 2019, the council has been very active in tackling this agenda. The new post of Head of Carbon Reduction has been filled since 1 June 2020 to provide capacity and leadership and facilitate the development of a strategy for Wiltshire. An annual staff and operational budget of £350k has been allocated to drive carbon reduction within the council and through working with partners.
10. Protecting the environment is integral to the new Recovery Coordinating Group's work to restore communities; public health and wellbeing; and environmental and economic resilience following the response to COVID 19. There are three cross-cutting objectives for the Strategic Recovery Plan:
 1. ensure appropriate interventions to address inequalities and build social mobility
 2. ensure the effects of deprivation are considered and interventions are developed
 3. enable appropriate interventions to support carbon reduction
11. The Recovery Coordinating Group will have theme groups, for which the carbon reduction agenda will be a fundamental driver. The economy theme will drive the green economy in Wiltshire and ensure appropriate green infrastructure; the environmental agenda ensures high levels of community engagement through the recovery for the community resilience theme; and the health and wellbeing theme will benefit from active travel and air quality improvements.

Growing the Economy: Highly Skilled Jobs (Employment)

12. The council has worked proactively with Penso Power, an innovative UK renewable energy and battery storage company, to enable it to develop the largest battery storage scheme in Europe at Minety. Energy storage facilitates a greener electricity system by helping to balance the intermittency of renewable generation. Work started onsite in December 2019 and the facility is expected to enter operation this autumn (2020) with 100MW capacity, with a further 50MW capacity being built on adjacent land which will enter operation in 2021. The full value of the investment will be close to £60m, making it one of the largest foreign direct investments into the county in recent years. The council is now supporting the company in looking for other suitable sites and engaging with the Department of International Trade.
13. Birchall Tea company was supported by the council to relocate to Solstice Park, Amesbury through planning and help with recruitment and training. The company always had an ambition to keep its carbon footprint to the minimum and worked closely with Nationwide Engineering, the developers, to ensure this ambition was met. In [June 2020](#) Birchall Tea became the first tea company in the world to officially join the UN's Climate Neutral Now Initiative, which invites organisations to work towards global climate neutrality by addressing their own climate footprint. It has also become the first in the world to achieve the Carbon Neutral International Standard, obtained by measuring and offsetting its greenhouse gas emissions, supporting verified volunteer reforestation projects around the world. This means that all of Birchall's products - including its award-winning Great Rift Breakfast Tea - are now completely Carbon Neutral. An added, unexpected bonus is that with the climate control measures the company is using the tea is keeping much better, resulting in reduced waste.

Growing the Economy: Housing and Environment

14. The council's Housing Board is committed to building 1,000 new council homes over the next 10 years to a zero carbon standard. The approach will aim to go beyond the Passivhaus Standard, utilising the fabric of the building for maximum efficiency, together with energy generation through solar panels, where the council is the developer and this approach is feasible. A pilot of two new homes is going ahead in Durrington to test this approach and the lessons learned will be used to shape the rest of the programme. The July Housing Board will also consider investing in existing council housing stock to increase its energy efficiency, with a view to a future Cabinet meeting considering the revised investment programme and council housing new build programme in autumn 2020.
15. The Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) 2015 contains a number of policies that aim to achieve the goal of seeking to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. The strategy offers a significant opportunity to influence greenhouse gas emissions and has an important role in shaping communities that are resilient to the predicted impacts of climate change such as higher temperatures and increased flood risk.

16. The policies of the WCS are being reviewed to determine their effectiveness and whether changes are required to ensure conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and associated Planning Practice Guidance. A best practice review has also been undertaken which focuses in particular on policies that have been recently found sound by planning inspectors and subsequently adopted by other councils.

17. The following five key policy themes have been identified:

- tackling flood risk and water management;
- enhancing green/blue infrastructure;
- delivering sustainable design and construction;
- encouraging sustainable, renewable energy generation and management;
- promoting sustainable transport, active travel and improving air quality.

18. The work undertaken to date indicates that an ambitious, plan-led approach to tackling climate change mitigation and adaptation is deliverable. However, further evidence will be needed to ensure draft policies are sound and provide sufficient certainty moving forward – e.g. understanding the viability of carbon neutral new development; delivering a decarbonised and sustainable energy strategy; tackling retrofitting of existing building stock.

Growing the Economy: Transport and Infrastructure

19. The council is currently rolling out a £12m programme to convert streetlights across Wiltshire to LEDs, with approximately 8,000 units replaced so far out of a total of 42,000. Since 2013/14, energy consumption has been reduced by 21% thanks to part-night lighting, dimming and the use of LEDs for new and replacement units. During this period carbon emissions have more than halved despite a growth in the number of streetlights as new developments are built. The 42,000 new LED units are projected to reduce energy consumption by 67% and carbon emissions by 83% by 2022/23 compared with the 2013/14 baseline.

20. The council has applied for funding from the Department for Transport's (DfT) Restoring Your Railway Fund for four key rail projects across the county. It was one of only 10 successful applicants nationally in round 1 of the [Ideas Fund](#) which exists to restore lost rail connections to communities. The funds will be used to develop a strategic outline business case for improving rail access for the Devizes community area by providing a station near Lydeway on the Berks & Hants line which passes within three miles of the town. Devizes is the largest town in Wiltshire that does not have access to the rail network. Its branch line closed in the 1960s. The station would be served by an extension of the current GWR Paddington – Bedwyn service through to Westbury.

21. The council is waiting to hear more from the DfT on its two other round 1 bids. One is for developing Westbury station by reinstating a fourth platform. The other is for developing route capacity improvement proposals for the Swindon-Westbury route on the section around Melksham that was single-tracked after the Beeching-era withdrawal of the local passenger service. The council has also recently submitted a bid in round 2 of the Ideas Fund for restoring secondary train services on the Great Western Mainline. As well as

improving connectivity between Bristol to Oxford (and potentially further east) this would help realise new stations at Corsham and Royal Wootton Bassett / Swindon West. It would also potentially help realise new stations at Swindon East, Grove (Oxfordshire), Saltford and St Anne's Park (West of England).

22. The council has worked with Salisbury Reds to secure three new electric buses for the city's park and ride services - a total investment of £1.2 million. This was made possible through a successful bid for £600,000 of Government funding under the Low Emission Bus Scheme. The buses will help provide greener and cleaner journeys, improving air quality in the area. When fully charged, each bus should be able to travel for around 160 miles.
23. The Department for Transport has announced its intention to publish a Transport Decarbonisation Plan later this year. In its recent document '[Setting the Challenge](#)', it has outlined the following key objectives for the plan which will guide the council in developing its fourth Local Transport Plan:
- Accelerating modal shift to public and active transport
 - Decarbonisation of road vehicles
 - Decarbonising how we get our goods
 - Place-based solutions
 - UK as a hub for green transport technology and innovation
 - Reducing carbon in a global economy

Strong Communities: Community Wellbeing

24. The council's Household Waste Management [Strategy](#) 2017-2027 states a commitment to reduce the carbon impact of waste and recycling services in Wiltshire (see page 1).
25. Progress on the priorities within the council's household waste strategy is measured and reported through an [annual action plan](#) reported to Cabinet (see item 69). The council has reduced its carbon impact in the following ways:
- Moved to a comingled collection of recycling from 9 March 2020, thereby removing 32 older 'kerbsider' vehicles from waste fleet. The total number of vehicles used to collect kerbside recycling has reduced by almost 50%. Vehicles now in use are carbon efficient Euro 6 vehicles, reducing the overall carbon emissions associated with the waste collection service, and contributing to an improvement in air quality.
 - The total amount of municipal solid waste collected in Wiltshire in 2019/20 has reduced by 11% (27,600 tonnes) compared to the waste collected in 2014/15. This means that the residents in Wiltshire are creating less waste for the council to collect.
 - In 2019/20, the council only sent 16% of waste collected to landfill, compared with 20% in 2014/15. The majority of non-recyclable household waste collected in Wiltshire is processed for energy recovery.
 - The council subsidises the purchase of home food composters to residents in Wiltshire. These composters divert food and garden waste from the waste stream, therefore avoiding the need for the council to collect and treat this waste. As the compost produced is then used in residents' gardens, the carbon saving of residents using these composters

in high. So far in 2020, 1325 food composters have been sold, compared with 333 sales during the same period last year.

26. It is too early to formally evaluate the impact of the new comingled recycling service due to the impacts of the pandemic, but early indications are that recycling collected from the kerbside is increasing. However overall recycling rates during the lockdown period have been impacted by the closure of household recycling centres which have now reopened but with reduced capacity.

Strong Communities: Safe Communities (Protection)

27. Green and blue infrastructure plays a key role in both carbon storage and adapting to a changing climate. It includes a range of green and blue assets in rural and urban areas - from country parks, rivers, canals and woodlands to urban parks, green roofs and street trees. A draft 20 year vision for Wiltshire's network was developed with around 45 internal and external stakeholders at a workshop held on 26 February 2020. The vision has been informed by the UN Sustainable Development Goals which are reflected in the following themes: climate change; biodiversity; health and well-being.

28. A draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Wiltshire is being worked on and will be consulted on widely towards the end of this year. The settlement level part of the strategy is being informed by the recent town and parish council survey on open space and green infrastructure, and involves bringing the council's map database of open space and green infrastructure assets up to date.

Strong Communities: Personal Wellbeing (Prevention)

29. Following the review and approval of the Wiltshire wide Air Quality Strategy in November last year the council has moved on to reviewing the Wiltshire Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) with the objective of having a new plan in place by the early part of 2021. The Action Plan focuses on the 8 Air Quality Management Areas in Wiltshire.

30. The current plan is very much a community action-based document and this will be retained to a degree. However, we are mindful of changes to the legislative framework which will be strengthened by the proposed Environment Bill. We are currently obliged to work toward air quality objectives. In recent years Government has increasingly looked to local government to produce innovative solutions to resolve exceedances of UK and EU air quality standards. The Environment Bill will deliver a step change and Local Authorities will be expected to deliver detailed AQAPs with actions, targets and dates for achievement of objectives. Services and outside agencies will be expected to form Air Quality Partnerships (AQP) that will cooperate to achieve air quality standards. Recent emphasis has been on achieving these in the shortest possible time, having regard to judgements from the Supreme Court. A multi service working group which includes Highways England and others is driving this project forward and ensuring that air quality integrates into other key policies and strategies.

31. The council has made significant progress in seeking funding for improved cycling and walking opportunities as detailed below. Details are correct at the time of writing this report, however these schemes are evolving rapidly as the country recovers from the pandemic.
32. Wiltshire Council will implement five road reallocation projects funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians. The five projects add up to £227,000 worth of investment, which accounts for the first allocation of funding from DfT. Further projects around the county will fall into the next round of funding, of around £900,000, provided they meet the criteria for the next phase. The funding is designed to help authorities use temporary interventions to create an environment that is safe for both walking and cycling, allowing people to get around while maintaining social distance and avoiding overcrowding on public transport. The five schemes were shortlisted based on the busiest bus routes in the county, with those routes that could not accommodate a cycleway without significant costs or land acquisition being discounted. The five schemes included in the first round are:
- Salisbury cycleways to link Harnham to the city centre, allowing cyclists easy access out of the city.
 - A segregated cycleway and footway on the B3108 between Winsley and Bradford on Avon.
 - On the A420 in Chippenham, a segregated cycleway linking Bumpers Farm to the town centre.
 - Creation of an on-road 3.5km route for cyclists and walkers, linking Purton with Swindon's Lydiard Park.
 - A segregated cycleway on the A361 Hilperton Road in Trowbridge, from near the fire station into advisory cycle lanes from Stancomb Avenue to Hilperton Road roundabout, of more than 1km in total.
33. Using separate funding, the council is also progressing a social distancing scheme in Malmesbury town centre that will benefit both cyclists and pedestrians. As part of this trial, a one-way footway system for pedestrians will be installed on both sides of High Street.
34. The council will also be seeking feedback soon on an ambitious plan to prioritise walking and cycling in the centre of Salisbury.
35. The council is working on developing a permanent off-road route for cyclists and walkers on the 2 miles between Royal Wootton Bassett and Windmill Hill Business Park in Swindon. In 2017, the council successfully bid to Highway England's Cycling Designated Fund and £3.5m funding was secured to take the project forward. Whilst land negotiations are ongoing with regard to access arrangements over some areas of land, it is hoped that the project can be delivered by 2022.

Protecting the Vulnerable: Early Intervention

36. [Warm and Safe Wiltshire](#) is an energy advice service provided by Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council in partnership with Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service and managed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE). The service provides residents across the county, primarily in fuel poverty, with information and support to help them live in warmer, safer and more comfortable homes.

37. Since April 2018, Warm and Safe Wiltshire has given advice to 2,200 households on a wide variety of topics including: insulation and heating improvements, switching energy suppliers, claiming the Warm Home Discount, securing additional benefits and local grants like the Surviving Winter Fund. This has saved residents over £275,723 on energy bills and increased income. Warm and Safe Wiltshire has referred over 400 households to heating and insulation contractors to help keep homes warmer, lower bills and reduce carbon emissions.

Working with Partners as an Innovative and Effective Council: Community Involvement

38. The council's area boards have hosted a number of well-attended special climate change-themed meetings as set out in Appendix 2.

39. An online survey of residents was carried out in autumn 2019 as part of research for the Wiltshire Community Area Joint Strategic Assessment. Residents were asked to choose their top 5 priorities from a list of options and 6260 responses were received. Three out of the top five priorities across the county were linked to the environment: climate change and renewable energies came out top with 32.2% of respondents putting it in the top 5; waste and recycling came third (29.6% of respondents); and wildlife and biodiversity came fifth (24.7% of respondents). These findings will feed into the council's plans in its recovery from the pandemic.

Working with Partners as an Innovative and Effective Council: Performance

40. Since April 2020, the council has secured all the electricity on its corporate contract from a green tariff.

41. The council has committed £5.2m to a corporate energy efficiency and generation programme. A range of technologies and opportunities have been identified as set out in this Cabinet [report](#).

42. Preliminary figures for the council's carbon footprint from 2019/20 show that emissions from leisure centres and the corporate estate totalled 7352 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_{2e}) compared with 8072 tCO_{2e} in 2018/19.

Working with Partners as an Innovative and Effective Council: Commercialism

43. The council has allocated £3.5m to fund renewable energy projects in the county and in January 2020 it [established](#) the Stone Circle energy company. The company will help the council achieve carbon offset by the production of sustainable energy that will be sold to third parties.

Working with Partners as an Innovative and Effective Council: Delivering Together

44. In June 2020, Wiltshire Council became a founder member of a newly-launched network to promote the voice of the countryside in climate change discussions. The Countryside Climate Network is part of [UK100](#) and aims to ensure that the voice of rural knowledge and experience on climate action is listened to in Westminster. It asks that rural councils are an active participant in transforming the national economy into one that saves, rather than harms, our environment. The network calls for investment, such as the government's delayed £100bn infrastructure fund, to be targeted at rural areas to help fight climate change.
45. The council has signed up to working closely with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the County Councils Network to develop a tool that measures the council's levels of carbon emissions. The tool will create a standard, comparable measurement for all councils in the country, which can then be used to baseline carbon emissions and report on them regularly.
46. The council is working with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to evaluate and deliver the opportunity for a Heat Network at the Porton Down Campus in South Wiltshire. The council and the Department are co-funding £110,000 towards detailed development of the scheme with the council's contribution being sourced from revenues generated by its Science Park which opened in 2018. The project aims to deliver low carbon heat across the campus and is expected to include the development of a new energy centre at this large and nationally important science and technology hub.
47. The Wiltshire Public Service Board, which brings together all the major public sector partners in the county, received a presentation on how the council is tackling the climate emergency at its meeting on 4 December 2019. Other partners will be invited to share what they are doing on this topic at future meetings.
48. The council continues to share best practice with other local authorities through the County Council Network, ADEPT and the South West inter-authority group on climate change.
49. The council is in discussion with Southampton University's Energy and Climate Change Division with a view to collaborating on research projects in Wiltshire.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

50. As set out in paragraph 6 of this report, a Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group has been established, chaired by Councillor Graham Wright and made up of nine councillors.
51. Since the beginning of 2020 the task group has been investigating:
 - local planning policies and the development of sustainable, connected communities.

- local transport and how to deliver practical greener transport solutions.
 - community energy and local energy generation through renewable sources.
 - the council's plans to build new houses and ensuring that these are energy efficient.
 - the potential impacts of electric vehicles and the new charging infrastructure.
52. The task group is continuing to examine how to achieve the target of making the county of Wiltshire net carbon neutral by 2030 and formulating its recommendations.
53. The members of the task group discussed the proposed addendum to the council's Business Plan at their meeting on 29 June 2020. This is also being considered by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 8 July 2020.

Safeguarding Implications

54. There are no safeguarding implications arising from this report.

Public Health Implications

55. There are no direct public health implications arising from the report itself. Some of the actions we are taking (for example on air quality and active travel) will, however, have potential to have a positive impact on the health of the population.

Procurement Implications

56. There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

57. There is no equalities impact arising from this report.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

58. This report sets out the council's response to environmental and climate change considerations following the acknowledgement of a climate emergency and agreement by Full Council to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

59. As Full Council recognised on 26 February 2019, the risks from climate change are such that Wiltshire Council cannot wait for national government to act where it can take action itself. If the council's Business Plan does not reflect this reality, there is a risk that the council will not be adequately prepared.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

60. A commitment has been made by the Leader to ensure the Business Plan reflects the climate emergency. Given the current position regarding Covid-19 an addendum is the most pragmatic and proportionate approach to ensuring the carbon reduction agenda is given sufficient weight and consideration now. A new Business Plan will be developed over the next 12 months, which will fully integrate how the council will address the climate emergency as a core part of the council's future business.

Financial Implications

61. There are no financial implications arising from this report as all the budgets mentioned have already been allocated.

Legal Implications

62. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Workforce Implications

63. There are no workforce implications arising from this report.

Options Considered

64. The council has considered amending the main body of the Business Plan as requested in the motion to Full Council on 26 November 2019. However, due to the necessity to thoroughly review the Business Plan in the coming 12 months it was felt more appropriate to insert a climate emergency addendum at this time.

Conclusions

65. Since Full Council resolved to acknowledge that there is a climate emergency and to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030 a number of areas of work have been progressed. This report provides an update and proposes an addendum to the current Business Plan to reflect the importance of this issue.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Proposed addendum to the Business Plan 2017-2027

Appendix 2: Feedback from community area events

Background Papers

None.