Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

13 January 2021

Executive Response to the Report of the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group – Part 1

Purpose of the report

- 1. To present the Executive response of the following to the first Report of the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group from the
 - Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism
 - Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste

Background

- 2. The task group's first report was discussed by an informal Environment Select Committee on 22 September 2020 and formally endorsed by Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee on 29 September 2020.
- 3. The report was presented for endorsement by Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee because, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Environment Select Committee was not holding formal meetings at the time.
- 4. The Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee resolved to refer the task group's findings and recommendations to the relevant parties for response.

Executive response to the Task Group's recommendations

- 5. The Executive has considered the Task Group recommendations below and provided its response by topic area. The Executive is not able to pre-empt key polices and strategies which are about to be developed such as the Local Plan review, the Fourth Local Transport Plan and the Climate Strategy, however the direction of travel for all of these is clear and is in line with the Task Group recommendations and seeking to make Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030.
- 6. The detail of working through the recommendations, including prioritising those with the biggest impact and determining which ones can be resourced and delivered, will be carried out through the development of relevant delivery plans and guided by key strategies. All the Task Group recommendations will also

- need to be considered in the round once they have been received by the Executive.
- 7. A number of recommendations below relate to the council lobbying Government and responding to consultations. The council regularly makes representations to Government and as a founder member of the Countryside Climate Network is lobbying Government on a range of issues affecting rural local authorities.

Existing council housing

- i. Establishes a funded programme of energy efficiency and renewable energy generation investments for its existing council house stock, with the aim of completion by 2030.
- ii. Builds on best practice and the experience of other local authorities such as Cornwall Council and Exeter City Council.
- iii. Take the Building Research Establishment (BREEAM) Refurbishment and Fit-out Technical standard as a benchmark for refurbishment, concentrating on a 'fabric first' approach.
- iv. Investigates potential to apply for Government funding of innovation in energy efficiency and low carbon heating technologies.
- v. Undertakes a 'whole house' retro-fitting pilot programme to establish a process for creating at scale net-zero carbon homes in a single step.

Executive response:

8. Cabinet at its meeting on 3 November 2020 approved an investment programme for the council's housing stock over the next 10 years to aim to achieve at least energy performance rating B for all properties. This programme will be fabric first and will also look to install energy production where viable and practical. It is recommended that a pilot scheme is supported in the first instance to test options.

New council housing

- Builds to achieve a net-zero carbon standard, in accordance with the UK Green Building Council's Net Zero Carbon Buildings Framework definition.
- ii. Undertakes sustainable construction and endeavours to minimise emissions through embodied carbon as far as possible, and in accordance with the UK Green Building Council's Net Zero Carbon Buildings Framework definition.

iii. Builds to the BRE Home Quality Mark.

Executive response:

 Cabinet at its meeting on 3 November 2020 resolved that the council house new build programme should aim to develop zero carbon housing where it is in control of development. The pilot programme will use off-site construction methods.

Development by the council's wholly-owned companies

- Ensures that the council's Stone Circle Development Company builds to achieve,
 - a) a net zero carbon standard, in accordance with the UK Green Building Council's Net Zero Carbon Buildings Framework definition;
 - b) sustainable construction and endeavours to minimise emissions through embodied carbon as far as possible, and in accordance with the UK Green Building Council's Net Zero Carbon Buildings Framework definition;
 - c) the BRE Home Quality Mark standard.

Executive response:

10. The current agreed business plans for Stone Circle development company will not deliver carbon zero or net carbon homes. The Stone circle board has discussed ways in which development can respond to climate change considerations whilst delivering viable schemes and in its first project plan identified a number of ways in which the energy efficiency of dwellings will be improved including installation of sustainable energy production where possible. Future developments included in business plans will need to consider this recommendation subject to viability.

Private housing

- Proactively works with energy suppliers to identify households that would benefit from energy efficiency improvements as part of the on-going Energy Company Obligation aimed at energy efficiency and carbon reduction.
- ii. Develops a programme of support for local suppliers and installers to overcome barriers to delivering energy efficiency measures to the private sector, including training for community group coordinators leading initiatives in their areas.
- iii. Commissions or supports a register of approved builders and tradespeople involved in the delivery of retrofit services in Wiltshire.

- iv. Supports, signposts to and/or 'quality approves' housing energy efficiency support schemes.
- v. Uses Remoting Sensing data and GIS mapping to identify areas with the highest potential or need for retrofit to use resources efficiently.
- vi. Supports the establishment and deployment of a Community Buying Scheme offering discounts to private households for installing approved energy efficiency and renewable energy generation materials/ devices, working with partner organisations such as the Energy Saving Trust, Centre for Sustainable Energy and Regen South West, and Community Energy groups.
- vii. Advises Housing Associations operating within Wiltshire on retrofitting using suitable methods and standards and monitors their progress.
- viii. Investigates setting up a revolving loan fund for financing energy efficiency improvements for private homes in Wiltshire.
 - ix. Reviews Government funded pilot programme outcomes to determine which building energy efficiency measures have been most successful and which are most appropriate to deploy in Wiltshire.
 - x. Actively participates in Government consultations on proposed changes to legislation and regulation in relation to energy efficiency and renewable energy generation in buildings, to encourage a supportive policy regime and regulatory environment for decarbonisation.

Executive response:

- 11. Warm and Safe Wiltshire is a service provided by Wiltshire Council, Swindon Borough Council and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service in partnership with the Centre of Sustainable Energy to help residents live in safer healthier homes. The service provides a telephone energy advice, home visits, events for the public and training sessions to front line workers and health professionals. The aim of the service is to support people living in cold homes and with health conditions exacerbated by cold and damp conditions (including those discharged from hospital) to receive in-depth advice and grant aided heating and insulation measures. The Warm and Safe Service was renewed in April 2020 and funding has been committed to provide a service through until April 2022.
- 12. The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) Flexible Eligibility Affordable Warmth grant allows the Council to provide affordable warmth assistance to fuel poor households that are not eligible under the existing criteria and to low income households that are vulnerable to the effects of the cold. A copy of the Wiltshire

- Council ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent 18 November 2019 has been <u>published</u> on the Council's website.
- 13. Discussions have already taken place with partner housing associations at the Partnership Management Forum concerning improving the specification of new build affordable housing to move it towards carbon zero. This will be an ongoing discussion.
- 14. The evidence base which the council aims to commission (see paragraph 16) will seek to identify areas with the greatest need for home retrofits.
- 15. Builders and tradespeople already need to register via TrustMark to be able to deliver home retrofits for the Green Homes Grant scheme to ensure they deliver to an approved standard. The council has been encouraging local businesses to register for the scheme.

Renewable energy generation

- i. Undertakes and publishes a revised assessment of sustainable energy options in Wiltshire (including solar, wind, mini-hydro and bio-energy).
- ii. Undertakes a comparative economic analysis to determine the return-oninvestment of renewable energy generation on the council's own assets including farms, relative to existing investments (i.e. as part its investment portfolio for general reserves) and separately, as a potential future income stream to help fund other carbon reduction activities.
- iii. Investigates the potential for undertaking such investments in conjunction with Wiltshire's well-established community energy groups to maximise the associated local social and economic benefits.
- iv. Liaises with local renewable energy suppliers and community energy groups to enable a more joined-up and better-informed approach on policy and lobbying that promotes renewable energy (for example, on the Local Electricity Bill).

Executive response:

16. The council aims to commission an energy and heat study to establish an evidence base which will enable the development of robust planning policies, a delivery plan for the new Climate Strategy and inform negotiations with Distribution Network Operators. This evidence base will need to assess the linked areas of standalone and building integrated renewable energy, low carbon developments, home retrofits, opportunities for heat networks and future heat and energy demand including from electric vehicles.

17. The council already generates some renewable energy on its estate. In 2019/20 it generated 324MWh from solar PV and 4422MWh from biomass. The council will always look to maximise the return from its investments as it is required to do. If the generation of renewable energy is viable, generates a greater return than current use of the assets and does not impact on the council's status as a Small Holding Authority it will be recommended. In making such recommendation the council will need to have regard to the current tenant as their livelihood may be significantly impacted through alternate use of land they farm. The council does not currently ring fence income from its investment estate for specific purposes.

Community-led energy generation

- i. Acknowledges the value that community energy can provide in terms of reducing carbon emissions and driving social value, community energy groups' willingness to engage with the Council and the significant role the Council can play in supporting Wiltshire-based community energy groups to achieve these shared objectives.
- ii. Pro-actively engages with Wiltshire's community energy groups to explore the following, including, but not limited to:
 - a) Preparing a Community Energy Strategy for Wiltshire;
 - b) Putting a Community Energy Agreement in place that outlines how Wiltshire Council will support community energy groups and provides the confidence these groups need to raise funding and develop projects;
 - c) Supporting Community Energy projects by helping to de-risk and finance them via appropriate funding mechanisms, potentially including contingent loans;
 - d) The delivery of Community Energy projects on non-allocated council land, including, in particular, council farms;
 - e) Supporting Community Energy groups to install solar PV panels on Wiltshire schools;
 - f) Supporting Community Energy groups in integrating EV charging with local renewable energy generation.

Executive response:

- 18. The council recognises that community energy will be an essential ingredient to Wiltshire's energy transition. The council's approach to community energy will be developed through the new Climate Strategy and delivery plans.
- 19. Paragraph 17 above addresses the delivery of projects on council land.

Electric and hydrogen vehicles

- i. Invests in vehicle charging infrastructure to enable the switch to EV and to demonstrate leadership in the transition to zero-carbon transport.
- ii. Undertakes a study to identify cost-effective and appropriate sites for EV charging points across the county, as a basis for investing in and facilitating the installation of EV charging infrastructure, so that that EV drivers of are always within 30 miles of re-charging their vehicles.
- iii. Works with Distribution Network Operators (DNOs), EV charging point providers, local communities and all relevant other stakeholders to install (through investment and facilitation) public EV charging points across the county, in line with Government targets and Committee on Climate Change recommendations.
- iv. Explores collaborating with EV charge point suppliers/ installers to bring in necessary expertise and reduce risk.
- v. Prioritises phasing out diesel and petrol vehicles from its own fleet, beginning with cars and vans, and their replacement with zero emission (electric or hydrogen fuel cell electric) vehicles as soon as possible, at the latest by 2030, and immediately investigates potential for pilot projects.
- vi. Moves from purchasing or leasing any further diesel and petrol cars or vans from 2021 planning to complete the transition by 2030.
- vii. Only hires or commissions services that use zero emission (electric or hydrogen fuel cell electric) vehicles on new or renewed contracts, except as a short-term, interim measure where insufficient charging infrastructure exists to enable vital services to operate.
- viii. Lobbies Government for additional financial support in delivering a rapid and equitable transition to battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles.
 - ix. Provides a guide/ map to existing and planned EV charge points in Wiltshire through the WC website and Visit Wiltshire.
 - x. Works with taxi firms and drivers towards a transition to electric taxis, including possible incentivisation through licencing and the installation of rapid chargers for taxi ranks.
 - xi. Explores the potential for running an EV trial scheme, offering trials of electric vans and e-bikes to commercial organisations and of electric cars trials to private hire drivers.
- xii. Takes the opportunity (on offer from the Department for Transport (DfE)) to implement an electric scooter hire pilot scheme, in line with changing

- legislation that will allow these to operate on cycle routes and shared paths in the near future.
- xiii. Introduces appropriate measures to incentive zero emission vehicles over petrol/ diesel engine vehicles.
- xiv. Progressively increases parking and charging capacity for electric vehicles in its own carparks.
- xv. Implements a parking and charging regime throughout its own carparks that ensures:
- xvi. an appropriate number of working chargers in all carparks;
- xvii. a fair pricing structure for customers when commissioning EV infrastructure:
- xviii. sufficient renewable energy is generated (e.g. through solar PV panels mounted on carpark canopies) to provide zero carbon electricity for its EV charging points.
- xix. Investigates the merits/ feasibility of introducing a workplace car parking levy (with safeguards that ensure viable alternative travel options and mitigate impact on lower paid employees).
- xx. Promotes the use of EV car-sharing and car clubs.

Executive response:

- 20. The council needs to develop a strategy that establishes a coordinated approach to the provision of Low Emission Vehicle Infrastructure. Such a strategy will form part of the current review of the Local Transport Plan and will be guided by the Department for Transport (DfT) <u>Decarbonisation Plan</u> due by the end of 2020. This will set out an implementation plan of how to put the UK's entire transport system on a pathway to deliver the necessary greenhouse gas emissions reduction. Plans devised at a local level will have to rely significantly on the key steer given by the DfT's plan.
- 21. In the short term, the council has engaged the Energy Saving Trust (EST) and commercial providers to identify possible short-term opportunities to deliver infrastructure and EV provision for its internal fleet. The EST are also providing independent advice on the emerging fleet strategy and aligning outcomes with the council's commitment to becoming carbon neutral in the next 10 years. Beyond that, the council is exploring opportunities for government funding to provide additional electric charging infrastructure in a number of its car parks.
- 22. The viability of installing renewable energy at council car parks for charging electric vehicles is being investigated so as to establish the most cost effective way of delivery.

Public transport

- i. Evidences how it will work with bus service providers to achieve a transition to battery electric or hydrogen fuel cell electric buses.
- ii. Evidences how it will work with bus service providers and Distribution Network Operators to enable installation of necessary charging infrastructure.
- iii. Evidences how it will work with bus operators, towns and parish local authorities and other stakeholders (e.g. GWR) to make bus use a more attractive option (e.g. web-based information, joint marketing).
- iv. Evidences how it will work with bus operators, towns and parish local authorities and other stakeholders to ensure bus shelters are clean and well maintained.
- v. Identifies and earmarks funding to support investment in new bus shelters and real-time information displays, including Government grants, community infrastructure levy (CIL) and section 106 (S106).
- vi. Evidences how it will work with bus operators to promote 'No Idling Zones' and policies (where not in place) and enforce (where not being complied with).
- vii. Evidences how it will work with bus operators, train operators and licenced taxi companies to develop a more integrated public transport system through:
 - integrated rail-bus timetables that cater for peak commuting periods to encourage people to switch from their cars;
 - prioritising cycling through safe access, secure parking and cycle hire where appropriate;
 - locating taxi ranks away from train and bus station entrances and pedestrian areas (for safety and air quality).
- viii. Encourages Regional Strategic Transport Boards and other transport bodies to give greater weight to bus service provision.

Executive response:

23. Wiltshire Council has long been an advocate for improving the environment through increased use of public transport. The council's continued financial support for non-commercial routes is noteworthy and goes against the trend in many areas and has allowed us to retain the breadth and scope of our bus network. The council's policy on public transport is part of the Local Transport Plan which is due to be reviewed as set out in paragraph 20.

- 24. Discussions with bus and coach operators over the coming weeks will determine their understanding of how decarbonisation will affect their business and enable the council to better understand how it can meet its carbon targets. We will work with our suppliers to encourage the use of the cleanest propulsion technology, but at the moment this still means diesel. As battery technology improves and becomes viable for rural bus operation, we will include it in our tender process. Likewise, in time, we could add hydrogen fuel-cell electric buses, to our tender process, but this technology is still very much in its trial stages at the moment. The council will have to decide on a case-by-case basis whether the additional cost of cleaner vehicles can be met at each tender round.
- 25. Where operators run services on a commercial basis the council is less able to influence decisions on which types of vehicles are used. However, external schemes such as the Bath Clean Air Zone mean that clean buses will be running along main routes through Wiltshire. Similarly, if Swindon is successful in its "Electric Town" bid, Wiltshire will benefit from hybrid diesel-electric buses which will have the ability to run as pure electric buses in our towns.
- 26. The three electric park and ride buses in Salisbury have provided a learning experience for bus operator Go South Coast and their on-going operation will allow whole life costs to be understood. These buses operate on a local city route with relatively low mileage and therefore cannot be seen as proof of concept for introducing electric buses everywhere.
- 27. A staffing restructure within the Passenger Transport Unit is underway that will ensure the unit can better meet future demands in this area. This will create provision to better market public transport across Wiltshire and improve the overall passenger experience. Part of this work will be to improve links with town and parish councils through the community engagement teams to discuss public transport at a more granular level in terms of customer requirements, as well as establishing a programme of bus shelter / stop improvement. Whilst there is currently no budget for their replacement the use of Section 106, Community Infrastructure Levy and working in partnership with town & parish councils and bus operators will be considered.
- 28. Within the supported bus terms and conditions of contract there is a requirement for suppliers to practise a "no idling" policy. There is currently little evidence that unmerited idling is occurring.
- 29. As part of the Government's <u>better deal for buses</u> it will shortly produce a national bus strategy. The government's ambition to secure a long term, sustained improvement in bus services will be underpinned by this strategy for England. The strategy will focus on the needs of passengers so that more people want to use the bus and set out how national and local government and the private sector will come together to meet the needs of local communities. Accompanying this strategy will be £5bn funding: £3bn for buses and £2bn for cycling and walking. This money will likely be unlocked where local authorities and bus operators work together in a true partnership. The government has pledged "at least 4,000 zero emission buses". The opportunities available in this strategy will likely be a blueprint to how passenger transport emissions can

be reduced in Wiltshire. This national bus strategy is likely to be affected by the huge uncertainty within the bus industry resulting from the current pandemic.

Active travel

- i. Provides the physical infrastructure (dedicated/ segregated/ all-weather cycle paths, wayfinding signage, cycle parking) that makes cycling a safer, more convenient and (for shorter journeys) preferred way to travel.
- ii. Works with town and parish local authorities, cycling groups and other stakeholders to significantly upgrade town and village cycle networks and cycle parking, prioritising key network/ parking improvements where demand is greatest, connecting people with intended destinations (e.g. town centres, train stations, bus stations, schools, leisure centres, council buildings and centres of employment).
- iii. Works with Sustrans, town and parish local authorities, cycling groups and other stakeholders to create and develop an inter-connected, long-distance, segregated, safe, all-weather network of cycle routes across the county (including diverting current 'National' cycle paths and networks away from major roads).
- iv. Invests a significant proportion of the Council's Transport capital budget, supplemented by CIL, S106 and available grants, to achieve the above over as short a timescale as possible.
- v. Takes an approach to highway maintenance that maximises opportunities for safe cycling/ cycle network improvement (for example, taking a cyclist's perspective on priorities, segregation, junctions, signage, road surface, size/ carriageway location of potholes, drain covers).
- vi. Introduces other measures to promote active travel and a safer walking / cycling environment, such as car-free zones, low-traffic streets, traffic calming, removing 'rat runs' on narrow residential roads, restricting speed limits, cycle parking sections within carparks.
- vii. Prepares and implements an ambitious and comprehensive long-term cycling plan for the county.
- viii. Publishes an annual report detailing the Council's total investment in existing and new walking and cycling infrastructure (programmes, projects and network improvements) for the previous and forthcoming spending period in order to evidence and promote this council's commitment to supporting active, low-carbon travel.
- ix. Works with public transport providers, cycle groups and other stakeholders towards a more integrated transport system that helps

- cyclists to connect with buses and trains and makes transporting bicycles on public transport more convenient.
- x. Investigates the potential for 'park and cycle' facilities at park & ride sites or other suitable carparks, including bike and e-bike hire.
- xi. Supports and promotes safe cycling through:
 - providing accessible and up-to-date information on cycle routes (e.g. direct vs quiet routes) and availability of secure cycle parking (e.g. CCTV coverage at stations and in town centres);
 - campaigns to raise awareness of cyclists/ cycle safety among all road users:
 - training services such as those offered through Bikeability or other types of provider.
 - · working with schools to encourage and incentivise cycling.

xii. Lobbies Government on:

- legislative changes (e.g. a presumed liability law);
- better enforcement (e.g. on parking in cycle lanes);
- additional funding for infrastructure improvements.

Executive response:

- 30. The council is currently responding to Government's call for delivery of Emergency Active Travel measures. A number of walking and cycling schemes have been and continue to be delivered across the county at an extraordinary pace. Projects which would have previously taken many months, sometimes years to plan and develop have already been delivered on the ground.
- 31. The Council has a wide and expanding programme of schemes which largely reflect the themes set out in the Task Group's suggestions. Examples include:
 - Securing contributions from development countywide towards cycling and walking
 - II. Partnering with Highways England to deliver a new off road cycle link between Royal Wootton Bassett and Swindon
 - III. Bikeability training
 - IV. New DfT funded (£900k+) cycle routes in Salisbury, Chippenham, Trowbridge
 - V. Experimental one way scheme in Bradford on Avon

- 32. Planning and investment in sustainable transport is already a key priority in many of the council's core policy documents including our Business plan, Core Strategy and Local Transport Plan, and we work hard to ensure those policies are applied across planning and highways/transport programmes and activities.
- 33. The council needs to review its strategic approach to active travel given the major shift in Government's approach to walking and cycling. The recent publication of DfT's 'Gear Change' and Local Transport Note 1/20, both look to transform the role cycling and walking play in our transport system. Our reviewed strategy will need to carefully developed DfT will now be assessing local authority's performance with respect to sustainable travel outcomes, particularly cycling and walking, when considering funding allocations for local transport schemes.
- 34. Ultimately, a delivery plan supporting the strategy will identify a clear programme of agreed measures as well as a pipeline of schemes, including timescales and responsibilities (the latter especially relating to key delivery partners such as Sustrans, cycling groups, Public Transport providers etc).

Air Quality

- i. Undertakes to cut air pollution and improve air quality (including cutting associated carbon emissions) resulting from transport, beyond current statutory requirements, through a series of measures including, but not limited to:
 - speeding the transition to electric vehicles by:
 - investing in EV charging infrastructure;
 - encouraging the take up of electric taxis;
 - supporting the transition to electric or hydrogen public transport;
 - replacing its own fleet with electric and hydrogen electric powered vehicles;
 - transitioning to electric/ hydrogen vehicles for contracted services.
 - promoting active travel through education, awareness, and the creation and improvement of cycling and pedestrian routes;
 - taking local preventative measures to cut harmful emissions outside schools:
 - collecting data on the exposure to air pollution by vulnerable groups in order to better design future policies.

Executive response:

35. Many of the points are already covered in previous sections. Responses to planning application consultations are also part of the work to introduce EV charging points for new developments across the county.

- 36. Local authorities are required to review and assess local air quality in accordance with the statutory Local Air Quality Management guidance under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. Specifically, local councils have a duty to review and assess the air quality in their area against specific pollutants focusing on locations where members of the public are likely to be exposed over the averaging period for the pollutant objectives.
- 37. There are currently eight Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Wiltshire which have been declared in respect of the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide (Bradford on Avon, Calne, Devizes, Marlborough, Salisbury (3) and Westbury). The AQMA in Bradford on Avon was also declared in respect of PM₁₀. Work has been ongoing with local air quality groups in the affected towns.
- 38. The council approved a revised Air Quality Strategy in November 2019. The Strategy provides high level guidance to inform policy and direction across a range of council services with the aim of improving air quality and reducing NO₂ and PM₁₀ levels below the national trigger levels.
- 39. The aim to reduce pollution levels beyond statutory standards is ambitious as improvements in air quality are generally difficult to achieve because they rely on individuals, businesses and communities changing their travel behaviour. Given this, the Air Quality Strategy recognises that improving areas of poor air quality can only be achieved by working collaboratively across the council, and with local communities and other relevant organisations and agencies.
- 40. Work has been carried out subsequently to develop a revised Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for Wiltshire working with stakeholders and partners including Highways England. Progress on the AQAP has been seriously impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic and, more recently, the loss of a key member of the team working on air quality.
- 41. The People Friendly Streets project in Salisbury will reduce traffic, improve air quality and enhance the environment for pedestrians. The council's public protection service has advised on the detailed requirements for enhanced pollution monitoring in the city.

Proposal

42. To note the executive response to the first report of the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group.

Cllr Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism

Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste

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