WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

CLIMATE EMERGENCY TASK & FINISH GROUP

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SEPTEMBER 2020

Task & Finish Group Members:

Councillor Alison Swaddle (Chairman)
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CLIMATE EMERGENCY TASK & FINISH GROUP

Foreword by Councillor Alison Swaddle

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the 2019 word of the year was “climate emergency”. The term is defined as a situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it. The risks relating to climate change include extreme weather events (floods, heatwaves and droughts), rising sea levels, disruption to food and water systems and irreparable damage to biodiversity across the globe.

In 2020, it is likely that the words “coronavirus”, “shielding” and “social distancing” will be vying for the word of the year title. Following ten years of austerity, the combined impact of climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic provides an enormous challenge for national and local government across the UK.

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019 with the aim of moving to carbon “Net Zero” by 2030. Over 280 councils have made similar declarations. WBC’s initial Climate Emergency Action Plan was submitted to Council in January 2020. In order to scrutinise the Action Plan, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee established the Task and Finish Group at its meeting in February 2020. The Task and Finish Group established terms of reference which focussed on scrutinising the emerging targets and key performance indicators underpinning the Action Plan. We also assessed the level of carbon reduction to be delivered for each target and its achievability, using SMART principles.

The Task and Finish Group met (virtually) on seven occasions. We interviewed the Executive Member for Climate Emergency and a number of Officers. In order to seek external validation, we interviewed Professor Paul Chatterton from the University of Leeds. We also received written evidence from the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (the LEP).

Our overall findings were that the Climate Emergency Action Plan was a bold, ambitious document, underpinned by a significant, dedicated budget and a clear governance structure. We commended the Executive Member and Officers for the significant progress made on the Action Plan since January 2020, especially in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the national lockdown. Not surprisingly, in light of the enormous scope of the Action Plan, we found a number of areas where more work and clarification were needed to strengthen the document and enable the engagement of residents and key stakeholders across the Borough. These areas are explored in the report. Also, throughout our discussions we were keenly aware that the Action Plan is a living document which will evolve over the next ten years. Our recommendations aim to strengthen the Action Plan as it begins that journey.

Finally, I would like to thank the Officers, Members and external experts who gave up their time and contributed to the Task and Finish Group’s work in such a positive and constructive manner.

Alison Swaddle

Section 1 - Executive Summary

1.1 The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement saw nearly 200 countries agree on the need to cut greenhouse gas emissions in order to keep global temperatures “well below” 2 degrees C above pre-industrial times and to “endeavour” to limit them even more to 1.5 C. In November 2018, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report which outlined the enormous harm that would be caused by a 2 C rise in global temperature.

1.2 The 2008 Climate Change Act committed the UK Government to achieve an 80% reduction in carbon emissions, relative to 1990 levels, by 2050. In June 2019, the Government passed secondary legislation which extended the 2050 target to a 100% reduction, or Net Zero.

1.3 In July 2019, Wokingham Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency. The Council committed to “playing as full a role as possible in achieving a net carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030”. The Council pledged to develop a Climate Emergency Action Plan and to submit annual updates showing progress on individual carbon reduction targets.

1.4 The Action Plan (first published in January 2020) focussed on eight priority areas for carbon emission reductions, including transport, homes, businesses and waste. The Action Plan also set out proposals to generate renewable energy, increase carbon sequestration and strengthen the planning process to deliver carbon neutral construction and infrastructure. Finally, the Action Plan set out proposals for engagement with residents, schools, businesses and local stakeholders as well as ideas to promote positive behaviour changes.

1.5 The Group’s overall findings were that the Climate Emergency Action Plan was an ambitious document in line with national best practice. However, more work was required to clarify the impact of specific schemes and ensure that they were supported by SMART targets. We felt that the current version of the Action Plan was specific, measurable and time-bound, but more work was needed to demonstrate that it was achievable and realistic.

1.6 The Action Plan was underpinned by a significant three year £50m budget, but we noted that the budget contained a number of pre-existing spending commitments - while £18m was new spending, £13m was not reflected in the Action Plan. The Action Plan also contained a clear governance structure on paper. We questioned whether this translated into a real life structure which provided robust challenge and support from a range of stakeholders across the Borough.

1.7 We commended the Executive Member and Officers for the progress made on the Action Plan since January 2020, especially in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council’s day-to-day activities. We also noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had created huge risks for the Borough, but also provided a

number of opportunities in relation to a “green recovery” with investment in new jobs, new ways of working and new methods of service delivery.

1.8 The Group noted that, in its current form, the Action Plan did not deliver the level of carbon reductions necessary to meet the Borough’s 2030 target. Furthermore, as the proposals to date are likely to have captured the “low hanging fruit” we believe that the Council’s Executive should recognise that much more needs to be done in order to achieve Net Zero. At the same time, we were reminded that the Action Plan is a living document and that many new ideas and carbon reduction innovations will come on stream over the next 10 years. As such, the Action Plan will remain a work in progress, requiring strong focus and rigorous scrutiny.

1.9 We concluded that the Council’s progress compares favourably with other local authorities, including some of the UK’s largest cities. The Council’s approach of developing a dedicated in-house team, supported by Officer working groups was also a positive, which will help to embed the Climate Emergency response throughout the organisation, including the Council’s contractors and suppliers. However, as outlined in the report, a successful response to the Climate Emergency will only be delivered through the combined efforts of every resident, school, business, Town and Parish Council and other stakeholders across the Borough.

1.10 The Group’s recommendations are set out in Section 2 of the report. We believe that they will help to strengthen the Action Plan, making it more robust, transparent and evidence-based.

Section 2 - Recommendations

2.1 **That the Council work with schools, businesses and community stakeholders to develop a Vision for a Net Zero Borough, with indicators and milestones to demonstrate progress.**

2.2 **That the annual progress report on the Climate Emergency Action Plan include recognition of the levels of non-CO2 greenhouse gas emissions in the Borough and progress achieved in delivering reductions through the sequestration measures in place.**

2.3 **That the Council's key decision reports include a section on Climate Emergency to ensure that the issue is mainstreamed into the decision making process. This must include a transparent, calculated carbon impact assessment of the proposal rather than a generic comment such as "in line with the Climate Emergency Action Plan".**

2.4 **That, as part of the 2021 progress report on the Action Plan, the Council commission an independent carbon accounting audit of the Action Plan's targets, methodology and underlying assumptions.**

2.5 **That the six monthly update of the Action Plan, in January 2021, address the gaps and errors in the current version.**

2.6 **That the annual update report on the Action Plan include estimates of consumption emissions, progress of measures aimed at increasing awareness of these emissions and individual responsibilities such as the promotion of local sustainable sourcing options for food, goods and services.**

2.7 **That future iterations of the Action Plan set out SMART targets to reduce car usage, thereby tackling traffic congestion, and demonstrate how the Council is working with neighbouring authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership, bus and rail operators to deliver transport solutions and a transport network and infrastructure which focuses on active travel and public transport.**

2.8 **That a further report be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, setting out the business case for the Green Bank Project, including an assessment of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the viability of the project.**

2.9 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee scrutinise the impact of the Local Plan Update on the Climate Emergency as part of its review of the new Local Plan later in 2020/21.**

2.10 **That the Council establish and publish details of the amount of land available for sequestration and renewable energy projects by surveying**

the Borough, in conjunction with Town and Parish Councils, to identify opportunities for tree planting, solar farms and other green projects.

2.11 **That the annual update report on the Action Plan:**

- **Emphasise the relative significance of WBC's organisational footprint in any discussion of WBC's estate and facilities;**
- **Provide details of progress on the Council's journey to becoming a Net Zero organisation, including investment, procurement and supply chains;**
- **Outline the measures taken to protect individuals, families and groups most at risk from the impact of climate change and provide details of the outcomes;**
- **Include a risk register, setting out the major risks (including the impact of third party action and non-action);**
- **Include an assessment methodology which measures the likelihood (as a %) of success or failure for each item.**

2.12 **Recommendation 12 – That, in light of the increasing number and complexity of initiatives aimed at tackling the Climate Emergency, consideration be given to strengthening the in-house team, especially in relation to "number crunching" of carbon reductions and project costs.**

2.13 **That the Action Plan recognises the important role played by Towns and Parishes across the Borough in moving to Net Zero and commits to working in meaningful partnership to develop and support local initiatives which turn new ideas into positive action on the ground.**

Section 3 - Background

3.1 In 2015, the Paris Climate Agreement saw nearly 200 countries agree on the need to cut greenhouse gas emissions in order to keep global temperatures "well below" 2 degrees C above pre-industrial times and to "endeavour" to limit them even more to 1.5 degrees C. In November 2018, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report which outlined the enormous harm that would be caused by a 2 degrees C rise in global temperature. This included extreme weather events, rising sea levels, mass migration, disruption to food and water systems and huge damage to biodiversity across the globe. The IPCC stated that restricting warming to 1.5 degrees C rather than 2 degrees would require "rapid and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society". The IPCC report acted as a wake-up call for national and local government around the world. As activist Greta Thunburg stated: "I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is."

3.2 A recent Met Office report stated that 2019 was the 12th warmest year since 1884. Although outside the top ten warmest years (all since 2002), 2019 set a number of UK high temperature records, including a new all-time record (38.7 C) and a new winter record (21.2 C). In the second week in August 2020, UK temperatures rose above 34 C for six days in a row, for the first time since 1961. There is growing concern that infrastructure for homes and buildings, transport, water and energy networks will be unable to cope with the added strain caused by hotter summers (with major storms/flooding) and wetter winters.

3.3 The UK is responsible for less than 1% of global emissions. The biggest emitters are China (27%), USA (13%) and India (7%). The UK Government has accepted a "moral responsibility" to lead the international response to climate change due to the country's role in the industrial revolution. It has also recognised the opportunities relating to early adoption of innovative ideas and new technologies which drive progress towards a greener, carbon neutral economy. Over the past 30 years the UK has achieved significant emission reductions in the energy sector, largely through the phasing out of coal and the increasing use of renewable energy. However, in other sectors of the economy – transport, home heating and agriculture, emissions remain largely unchanged. In many sectors, technologies exist that can bring greenhouse gas emissions to zero. In electricity it can be done using renewable generation (wind and solar). In transport it can be done through a system that runs on electricity and hydrogen. Well insulated homes using green energy can also achieve absolute zero. However, sectors such as aviation and agriculture are unlikely to achieve this target, hence the need for balancing (sequestration) measures.

3.4 The 2008 Climate Change Act committed the UK Government to achieve an 80% reduction in carbon emissions, relative to 1990 levels, by 2050. In June 2019, Theresa May's Government passed secondary legislation which extended the 2050 target to 100%, or Net Zero. The UK was the first G7 nation to legislate for this outcome. Net Zero refers to a situation where there is a balance between the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced and the amount removed

from the atmosphere, predominantly through natural carbon sinks such as new forests and woodland. The 2008 Act also established the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), a public body that advises the Government on progress against the targets. The CCC has described the 2050 target as “technically feasible but highly challenging”. In its progress report to Parliament (June 2020) the CCC highlighted the opportunity, post Covid-19, to implement a recovery which “drives new economic activity, accelerates our transition to Net Zero and strengthens our resilience to the impacts of climate change”. The Government has made good progress in some areas, e.g. the March 2020 Budget included provisions for:

- £500m investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure to ensure that drivers are never more than 30 miles from a rapid charging station;
- A plastic packaging tax which (from 2022) will require manufacturers and importers of plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled content to be subject to a tax of £200 per tonne;
- £800m investment in a carbon capture and storage fund for two UK sites, one by the mid-2020s and a second by 2030;
- Increased investment in flood defence works which will be doubled to £5.2bn over the next five years.

At the same time, the Budget committed £27bn to fund major road building schemes across the country and continued the 10 year freeze on fuel duty. It should be noted that, over the same 10 year period, bus and train fares have been allowed to increase every year. Over the next six months the Government will publish major strategic documents such as the Buildings and Heat Strategy and the Transport Decarbonisation Plan. Also, in November 2021, the Government will host COP 26, the 26th UN Climate Change Conference, in Glasgow. As host, the UK will be expected to demonstrate significant progress on its plans to reduce carbon emissions and move towards its Net Zero commitment.

3.5 In tandem with the Government’s legislative changes, UK councils started to declare climate emergencies, beginning with Bristol City Council in November 2018. To date over 280 councils have made similar declarations. In July 2019, Wokingham Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency. The Council committed to “playing as full a role as possible in achieving a net carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030”. The Council pledged to develop a Climate Emergency Action Plan, the initial version of which was approved in January 2020, and to submit annual updates showing progress on individual carbon reduction targets. In support of the Action Plan, a three year £50m Capital budget was approved at the Budget Council meeting in February 2020. A summary of the budget is set out in the Annex to the report.

3.6 In February 2020, the Council also approved its new Community Vision and Corporate Delivery Plan for 2020/24. The Corporate Delivery Plan includes commitments to:

- Deliver against our Climate Emergency Action Plan and ensure that becoming carbon neutral is given due weight through all our strategies and decision making;
- Ensure that our colleagues across the Council and our contractors take measures, where possible, to reduce carbon emissions, including making our own buildings more energy efficient;
- Help and support our residents and businesses to make behavioural changes that actively address the challenges of climate change;
- Continue to tackle fly-tipping, litter, graffiti and waste generation;
- Enhance our existing green areas and valued open spaces.

3.7 Also, in February 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed to establish the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group (the Group). The Group met for the first time on 5 May 2020 and agreed the following terms of reference:

- To scrutinise the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan;
- To scrutinise emerging targets and key performance indicators underpinning the Action Plan;
- To assess the level of carbon reduction to be delivered by the Action Plan in light of the Council's 2030 target;
- To produce a final report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the Executive, with guidance for improvement relating to the Action Plan.

3.8 Between May and September 2020, the Group held seven virtual meetings. The Group reviewed the Action Plan with a focus on the specific targets and the underpinning carbon reduction assumptions. It also considered a range of national briefings and reports, including an assessment of progress made by other councils. We also received evidence from the following individuals:

- Nigel Bailey (WBC Assistant Director, Housing and Place Commissioning);
- Professor Paul Chatterton (University of Leeds);
- Ian Gough (WBC Energy Officer);
- Graham Ebers (WBC Deputy Chief Executive and Project Sponsor);
- Rhian Hayes (WBC Category Manager, Economic Prosperity and Place);
- Gregor Murray (WBC Executive Member for Climate Emergency);
- Diana Torvar (WBC Climate Emergency Strategy Officer).

In addition, we received written evidence from the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

3.9 Prior to the meeting with the Executive Member, the Group set out its initial findings on the Action Plan. Those findings are included in this report. Additional findings have also been added. Following the initial drafting of our report, we held a further meeting with the Executive Member in order to sense check and give initial feedback on our conclusions. The Group's final report will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in September 2020 and then to the Council's Executive in October 2020.

Section 4 – Evidence and Findings

4.1 Vision for Net Zero

As set out above, in January 2020 the Council published its new Community Vision for the Borough. The Vision sees the Borough as “a great place to live, learn and grow and a great place to do business”. In looking at the Climate Emergency Action Plan, we noted the key priority areas, projects and carbon reduction targets. However, we felt that the Action Plan would benefit from a Vision for Net Zero, i.e., what sort of place will the Borough be in ten years’ time when we have progressed towards Net Zero. How will life in the Borough be different in terms of the homes we live in, the way we travel, the way we work and communicate, the ways in which we spend our leisure time and the way we source food, goods and services.

The Vision could also set out measures of success in relation to home energy efficiency, renewable heat and power, decarbonised transport, waste and recycling efficiency and the empowerment of individual residents and local communities. We felt that the development of a Vision for Net Zero could be an exciting project for engagement with local schools, businesses and community groups. There is strong public support for change to tackle the Climate Emergency and the time for change is now. The Borough’s residents are intelligent and articulate, so there is an exciting opportunity to build community support and to be at the forefront of this agenda. The Council should be clear about the scale of the challenge, including securing and utilising the necessary resources effectively and efficiently, and the implications of inaction.

Recommendation 1 – That the Council work with schools, businesses and community stakeholders to develop a Vision for a Net Zero Borough, with indicators and milestones to demonstrate progress.

4.2 Carbon Footprint

The Borough’s carbon footprint is the total level of greenhouse gas emissions caused by individuals and organisations and the consumption of goods and services, expressed as carbon dioxide (CO_2) equivalent. CO_2, produced by the burning of fossil fuels, makes up around 80% of the total of greenhouse gases. Others include methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride.

In order to set a baseline for CO_2 emissions, the Council used data produced by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). BEIS produces data for each local authority in the UK (two years in arrears). The 2017 data for the Borough is summarised in the table below.

Table: Local Authority Carbon Dioxide Emissions 2017 – Wokingham Borough

Sector	CO_2 (kt)
Industry & Commercial - Electricity	94
Industry % Commercial - Gas	40
Large Industrial Installations	0
Industrial & Commercial - Other Fuels	17
Agricultural Combustion	4

Domestic Electricity	71
Domestic Gas	177
Domestic – Other Fuels	10
Road Transport (A Roads)	86
Road Transport (Motorways)	175
Road Transport (Minor Roads)	89
Diesel Railways	14
Transport Other	8
Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF)	-15
Total for All Sectors	**771 kt**

Discounting the impact of drive through motorway traffic (though not all motorway traffic is drive through) and rail travel, the Borough's carbon footprint was estimated as **580.9** thousand tonnes CO2 equivalent (580.9 ktCO_2e). Officers carried out further calculations to assess the impact of ongoing national carbon reduction policies on the Borough, including decarbonisation of the electricity grid and the transport system. This, together with a projected increase in sequestration, produced a final carbon reduction target of **274.5** ktCO_2e to be achieved by 2030.

Delivering all the actions currently set out in the Action Plan would result in a shortfall of **72.7** ktCO_2e by 2030 based on current figures. We noted that the assumptions and carbon reduction figures in the Action Plan will inevitably change as new ideas come forward, new Government policies are implemented, the full impact of the pandemic is assessed and residents embrace the behaviour changes suggested in the Plan. However, it was important that the numbers "stacked up" to ensure that the Action Plan retained credibility and public confidence.

The Group felt that it was reasonable to base the Borough's carbon footprint and Climate Emergency Action Plan on the annual CO_2e data produced by BEIS. However, it was also important to recognise that CO_2 accounted for only around 80% of greenhouse gas emissions and that separate plans should be in place to tackle the 20% non-CO_2 emissions. The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research (University of Manchester) suggested that the Council adopt a LULUCF (land-use, land-use change and forestry) pathway that included CO_2 sequestration sufficient to help compensate for non-CO_2 emissions.

We also noted that the Council agreed a motion, at its meeting on 23 July 2020, aimed at strengthening its approach to air quality management. This included monitoring the level of particulate matter 2.5 (extremely small particles) across the Borough, committing to further work on No-Vehicle-Idling zones and encouraging local businesses to sponsor green walls and tree planting.

Recommendation 2 – That the annual progress report on the Climate Emergency Action Plan include recognition of the levels of non-CO2 greenhouse gas emissions in the Borough and progress achieved in delivering reductions through the sequestration measures in place.

4.3 Carbon Budgets

The 2008 Climate Act established the concept of carbon budgets – the amount of fossil fuels we can use without exceeding the 1.5 C limit. The CCC monitors performance against the Government's five yearly carbon budgets which run until

2032. These budgets limit the amount of greenhouse gases the UK can legally emit over a five year period. Applying principles from the Paris Agreement, the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research has produced carbon budgets for every local authority in the UK. The proposed carbon budget also includes a projected emissions reduction pathway and an average emissions reduction rate.

For WBC to make its fair contribution towards the Paris Agreement, the Tyndall Centre recommended that:

- The Borough should stay within a maximum cumulative CO_2 budget of 5 $mtCO_2e$ for the period 2020 to 2100. At 2017 emission levels it was projected that we would use this budget within seven years from 2020;
- Initiate a programme of CO_2 mitigation to deliver cuts in emissions averaging 13% per annum (made up of national and local actions);
- Reach Net Zero no later than 2042 – earlier years for reaching Net Zero are also within the recommended budget.

The Group felt that the annual update report of the Action Plan should include progress against this projected emissions pathway as a reminder of the rapid progress we need to make. We noted that the Council's carbon budgeting methodology was based on the annual BEIS data, but felt that an assessment of progress against the carbon budget would complement that work.

4.4 Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The recent report from the CCC identified the Covid-19 pandemic as a turning point in tackling climate change. The Committee made a number of recommendations urging the Government to deliver an economic recovery which accelerates the transition to net zero and strengthens resilience to the impacts of climate change. The Committee highlighted a number of priority actions, including:

- Reinforcing "climate-positive" behaviours that have emerged during lockdown such as remote working and delivering customer service remotely. We wished to emphasise that a reduction in car journeys was the quickest and most important win (by CO_2 volume);
- Infrastructure to make it easy and safer to walk, cycle and work remotely;
- Tree planting, change of land use and green infrastructure which bring benefits for the climate, biodiversity, air quality and flood prevention;
- Investment in low carbon retrofits and buildings fit for the future which also provides new employment and reskilling opportunities;
- Moving towards a circular economy through increased reuse and recycling;

It is commendable that the majority of these issues are addressed in the WBC Action Plan. However, the Group felt that the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Plans should also focus on any opportunities to reshape the local economy and deliver a "green recovery". For example, is the level and balance of investment in the Capital programme consistent with the assumptions contained in the Action Plan and the "new normal" post Covid-19? How is the Capital Programme being reviewed and reshaped to reflect the challenges and opportunities arising out of the pandemic? What lessons has the Council learned as result of the remote delivery of services and home working for the majority of Council staff? How can the benefits of this

change be baked into the Council's recovery plans? What has been the impact of remote working on congestion and air pollution levels across the Borough and how can reduced traffic levels be maintained? What opportunities are there to support new training initiatives and new jobs, such as retrofitting homes and installing solar panels, to deliver improved energy efficiency and the delivery of green infrastructure? How do we promote, celebrate and encourage the early adoption of innovation in new green technologies within the Borough?

We noted that, in a recent report, the Local Government Association (LGA) urged the Government to work with councils to develop post Covid-19 economic recovery options, including proposals for a jobs guarantee programme providing new opportunities, including in the low-carbon sector. This will help to counter the projected level of job losses due to coronavirus, which are likely to increase further, when the Government furlough scheme ends from October 2020.

In the future, the Group felt that key Council decision reports should include a carbon impact assessment (similar to financial and equality impacts) of the decision on the Climate Emergency and potential linkages to the projects in the Action Plan.

Recommendation 3 – That the Council's key decision reports include a section on Climate Emergency to ensure that the issue is mainstreamed into the decision making process. This must include a transparent, calculated carbon impact assessment of the proposal rather than a generic comment such as "in line with the Climate Emergency Action Plan".

4.5 SMART Targets

The Group noted that the Action Plan contains a number of key assumptions upon which detailed modelling has been carried out. The assumptions include:

- Doubling public transport use by 2030 from the 2019 baseline;
- 20% reduction in total distance travelled in private vehicles by 2030;
- By 2030, 50% of new vehicles registered in the Borough each year be electric vehicles (EV), 25% delivered by Government action, 25% delivered via the WBC Electric Vehicle Strategy;
- 20% of households in the Borough to be retrofitted by 2030.

Whilst the Group recognised the need to set out assumptions in order to carry out the modelling in the Action Plan, it felt that there should be more detail in the narrative about the factors underpinning the assumptions. The assumptions should be based on SMART principles: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. For example, the doubling of public transport use will depend on actions taken by the Government and bus/train operators. 50% electric vehicles will depend on Government policy, the actions of motor manufacturers and changes in public awareness and behaviour. Measures to support active travel and decarbonising cars and vans will be included in the Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, due to be published later in 2020.

Clearly the Council will play a part in this work, but the Group felt that the Action Plan would be strengthened by setting out the necessary actions required from

Government and other key actors. The Group felt that it was important to position the Action Plan within the framework of wider joined up working necessary to achieve Net Zero. We felt that the current iteration of the Action Plan was specific, measurable and time-bound, but much more work was necessary before it was demonstrably achievable and realistic.

Notwithstanding the comments about the underlying assumptions, the Group felt that the latest version of the Action Plan was much more robust and credible than the version published in January 2020. The Group were pleased see the robust methodology paper and felt that this should be included in the annual report to Council. The Group also recognised the extensive research which underpinned the documents and the role of the Advisory Board of experts who were sense and fact checking the Council's work. We were impressed by the skills and knowledge of the in-house team which had already carried out a significant amount of work in developing the Action Plan.

The Group noted that the numbers set out in the detailed methodology paper did not always match the numbers in the summary table. The numbers provided as the line items in the Action Plan did not always correspond to the totals provided in the same section, while these totals did not always correspond to the totals in the summary table and the detailed methodology. As a result it was not easy to assess, on the basis of these numbers, the carbon reductions the Action Plan hoped to generate or the size of the "carbon gap" between "no WBC action" carbon emissions in 2030 and zero carbon emissions in 2030. As outlined above, the Action Plan indicated a carbon reduction shortfall of 72.7 ktCO2e in 2030. The Group was not confident that this was the correct total based on the numbers presented in different parts of the Action Plan and the supporting detailed workings. We noted that this element of the gap was the result of the technical process of assembling the Action Plan.

In order to foster public confidence in the Action Plan targets and underlying assumptions, the Group felt that independent evaluation of the progress made would be essential. This would also provide effective challenge to the in-house team, allow benchmarking of progress made by other local authorities and demonstrate an open, transparent process. We also felt it essential that future iterations of the Action Plan contain clear, accurate and coherent presentation of the carbon numbers. We considered that mathematically incorrect numbers would damage the credibility of the Action Plan and hinder vital public engagement. We felt that an independently verified carbon accounting audit, as part of the 2021 update, would provide a solid foundation for the future and build confidence in the process.

In order to make the Action Plan more accessible, the Group felt that it should include a one-page summary, setting out a dashboard which represented:

- The Council's overall carbon reduction targets;
- The size of the carbon gap/shortfall;
- The impact of expected nationally driven carbon reductions;
- The contribution of measures in the Action Plan to reduce emissions;
- The cost of the measures in the Action Plan;

- Progress towards implementing key measures (by CO_2 impact).

Recommendation 4 – That, as part of the 2021 progress report on the Action Plan, the Council commission an independent carbon accounting audit of the Action Plan's targets, methodology and underlying assumptions.

Recommendation 5 - That the six monthly update of the Action Plan, in January 2021, address the gaps and errors in the current version.

4.6 Territorial vs Consumption Emissions

The Group felt that the Action Plan should also refer to the distinction between territorial and consumption emissions. We know that that many of the goods and services consumed in the UK are imported from overseas. Similarly, many goods and services produced in the UK are exported. As an example, in 2017, the UK's consumption emissions were 773 $mtCO_2e$ compared to territorial emissions of 460.2 $mtCO_2e$ (i.e. 68% higher). The consumption based emissions include imported goods, aviation and shipping.

Allocating responsibility for emissions can be done in two ways. The territorial basis places responsibility on the country where the emissions physically take place. The consumption basis allocates emissions to the country where they are eventually consumed. Understanding the Borough's wider climate change impact through its relationship to goods and services produced worldwide can help in promoting a focus on lower carbon supply chains and more sustainable local options.

The Group accept that it is reasonable and consistent to use the territorial emissions definition in the Action Plan. However, the relationship to consumption emissions should be stated and used as part of the engagement process aimed at increasing awareness and changing behaviour amongst the Borough's residents and businesses. Again, we are not recommending an additional carbon budgeting approach, but felt that an assessment of consumption emissions would help to focus on the scale of the challenge facing the Borough.

Recommendation 6 – That the annual update report on the Action Plan include estimates of consumption emissions, progress of measures aimed at increasing awareness of these emissions and individual responsibilities such as the promotion of local sustainable sourcing options for food, goods and services.

4.7 Transport Emissions

Transport is the largest contributor (28% in 2018) to UK greenhouse gas emissions. Transport emissions are 4% higher than in 2013 and only 3% lower than 1990. In 2018, 94% of car journeys were under 25 miles, with 58% under five miles. According to the National Travel Survey, 87% of car users in England believe that their current lifestyle means that they need to own a car. The growth in ownership of sports utility vehicles (SUVs) highlights one of the problems we face. Their market share increased from 6% in 2008 to 25% in 2019. Under current legislation, petrol and diesel motor vehicles will still be on sale well into the 2030s. Also, the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly reduced the usage of public transport in the short term – the development and roll-out of a vaccine will play a

key role in restoring confidence and demand. Locally, the Borough faces a number of significant challenges:

- The Borough has one of the highest per capita car ownership rates in the country;
- Building around 800 new homes each year (potentially double that total under recent Government consultation proposals) adds over 1,000 cars to the, already crowded, local transport network;
- The Borough has good transport (road and public transport) connectivity east to west, but less so for the settlements in the north and south;
- Air quality zones are in place in Twyford, Wokingham town centre and land adjacent to the M4;
- The location of schools in the Borough results in a significant number of school run journeys which criss-cross the area, adding to congestion levels, especially in the morning rush hour;
- The regeneration of Wokingham town centre is based on attracting more visitors and shoppers into the town.

The Government will publish its Transport Decarbonisation Plan in the autumn of 2020. It will set out a Vision whereby public transport and active travel will be the first choice for daily activity and all road vehicles will be carbon neutral. Achieving this Vision will require enormous changes in public behaviour underpinned by serious investment in alternatives to the motor car such as walking and cycling infrastructure and public transport. Progressing to Net Zero in the Borough will require a significant reduction in the number of vehicles on the road and, of those remaining, a significant shift to electric vehicles. We felt that much more work was necessary to achieve the modal shift required to meet the targets in the Action Plan.

The Action Plan states that the Council will seek to reduce transport emissions by using technology to reduce congestion and improve traffic flows. Secondly, the number of electric vehicle (EV) charging points will increase across the Borough. The Council will also encourage residents to take up more sustainable, active transport options including walking, cycling and to use public transport more frequently.

The Group felt that the detailed calculations in the Action Plan around the impact of 50% of new vehicle registrations each year being EV were not supported by the data. As the EV component of the total carbon reduction in the Action Plan was 22%, the total reduction figure would be reduced significantly if this figure was corrected.

We were also briefed on the “fundamental law of traffic congestion” developed by academics in the UK and USA, which states that:

- The number of vehicle-miles travelled increases in direct proportion to the available lane-miles of highways;
- Building new roads and widening existing ones only results in additional traffic that continues to rise until congestion returns to previous levels;

- The most effective way to reduce traffic congestion is congestion pricing as used in cities such as London, Stockholm and Singapore.

Assuming that the fundamental law is correct, the commitments in the current WBC Capital Programme would increase the number of vehicle miles travelled, thereby increasing CO_2 emissions whilst not reducing the level of traffic congestion across the Borough. Feedback from studies into the Stockholm experience indicated that a sustainable urban transport system must incorporate four strategies: attractive public transport, walkability, compact spatial planning and restraints on car traffic. All four strategies strengthen each other. Without one of them, the remaining three strategies lost effectiveness.

In its response to Reading Borough Council's Local Transport Plan Consultation (August 2020), WBC stated:

"Demand Management measures are potentially difficult to justify where alternatives are not readily available or viable for many people. This is particularly the case for those in rural areas who depend on a car to make at least part of their journey. If bus services can reach these rural areas, or Park and Ride has capacity and is cheap enough and fast enough to make it a natural choice then it is recommended that we support this. Otherwise it may be seen simply as a tax on those who have no other option. As with all the measures proposed the impact on the surrounding network wherever the boundary of such schemes falls needs to be considered carefully and mitigated where necessary".

We also noted that the Council's Capital Programme for 2020/23 commits to £154m on building new roads and infrastructure and only £14m on alternative transport, greenways, park and ride and byways. The Council is currently working with partners to develop an updated Local Transport Plan (LTP). This document will play a crucial role in setting out and delivering on the Council's commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2030. The LTP should set out a baseline for traffic congestion with specific reduction targets based on SMART principles.

The Group considered evidence from the LEP about the way in which the impact of the Climate Emergency was included in the process for evaluating infrastructure projects. We looked at the recent example of the Coppid Beech Park and Ride scheme (funded 80% by the Local Growth Fund and 20% by WBC) and reviewed the independent assessment report. We felt that future WBC infrastructure bids to the LEP should include more detailed carbon reduction assessments, in line with the principles set out in the Action Plan. The LEP told us that its recent "Call for Bids" (through the Berkshire Local Transport Body) included a provision for focusing on scheme benefits delivered through addressing the climate change agenda. We also noted that the LEP felt it had an "excellent" working relationship with WBC.

In relation to the impact of school run traffic, we felt that a dynamic and proactive approach to reducing the use of cars on the school run was essential. The Highways and Parking Enforcement teams working with schools would be crucial in making walking or cycling to school the first choice for many parents and children.

We were informed that all options for reducing transport emissions were still on the table. We recognised the potentially negative public reaction to proposals which impact on car usage. However, we felt that the time for bold, imaginative solutions was now.

Recommendation 7 – That future iterations of the Action Plan set out SMART targets to reduce car usage, thereby tackling traffic congestion, and demonstrate how the Council is working with neighbouring authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership, bus and rail operators to deliver transport solutions and a transport network and infrastructure which focuses on active travel and public transport.

4.8 Domestic and Business Emissions - Green Bank Project

The Action Plan stated that there were around 72,000 dwellings in the Borough, with 85% using fossil fuel based natural gas. Home Heating is a major challenge to be addressed as part of the Climate Emergency. It is currently responsible for between a quarter and a third of UK greenhouse emissions. The proposed Green Bank would provide loans to help residents and businesses fund energy efficiency projects and move from natural gas to low carbon forms of energy. The Action Plan states that the Green Bank will provide a loan to assist householders in their net zero carbon ambitions. This will include energy efficiency measures on the fabric of the building and replacement of appliances with low carbon versions. We were informed that discussions were ongoing with a major financial institution which would finance the loans, with no financial risk for WBC.

The Group felt that more detail was required to understand the cost of setting up and running the Green Bank Project, the basis for the carbon saving projections, the relevant risk assessments and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the proposals, i.e. the changed financial situation facing many of the Borough's residents. It would also be helpful to understand the benefits of using the Green Bank over other lending institutions and the impact of Government schemes to deliver energy efficiency improvements, such as the recent £2bn fund for home refurbishments.

Recommendation 8 – That a further report be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, setting out the business case for the Green Bank Project, including an assessment of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the viability of the project.

4.9 Renewable Energy Projects in the Borough

The Action Plan stated that the Council aimed to develop five large-scale solar PV farms between 2020 and 2025. This would increase the production of renewable energy and deliver an income stream which could be reinvested in other carbon reduction projects.

We were informed that good progress had been made on two potential solar farm sites and two more were under investigation, although no specific evidence was provided due to confidentiality issues. As an example, the cost of setting up one 38 hectare site was estimated at £12m. This site could potentially deliver 25 gigawatt hours of electricity which was over two thirds of the current energy demand for the

Council's own operations (35 gigawatt). There was clearly potential for income generation arising out of the solar farms proposal. At this point, the most effective way to unlock this potential was still being discussed, but the way forward looked positive.

The Group welcomed the solar farm initiative as a positive method of delivering clean energy locally whilst also developing a new income stream for the Council. We noted that the funding for solar farms was one of the few new funding items in the Climate Emergency Budget. We noted that the £18m commitment (36% of the budget) was projected to deliver 25 ktCO2e (12% of the projected total carbon savings). We also questioned the amount of land required to deliver this project in conjunction with the proposal to plant 250,000 new trees across the Borough. See 4.11 below.

4.10 Local Plan Update - Net Zero Construction and Infrastructure

The Action Plan stated that the upcoming Local Plan Update (LPU) would include provisions to ensure that major commercial and residential developments delivered high sustainable construction standards. Major developments will be expected to achieve innovative design solutions for energy efficiency and low carbon energy generation and use. The new Local Plan would also establish a spatial strategy aimed at securing development which allows for more people to live and work in locations where journeys can be undertaken by walking, cycling and public transport. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was already committed to scrutinising progress on the LPU later in 2020/21. We felt that progress relating to the new Local Plan's impact on Climate Emergency and the impact of recent Government announcements on changes to the Planning system should be considered as part of the Committee's review.

Recommendation 9 - That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee scrutinise the impact of the Local Plan Update on the Climate Emergency as part of its review of the new Local Plan later in 2020/21.

4.11 Carbon Sequestration and a Greener Environment

The Action Plan stated that the Council will plant 250,000 trees by 2025 with the aim of increasing capacity for carbon offsetting and improving levels of biodiversity across the Borough. Large-scale tree planting is an important tool in tackling Climate Emergency. Trees and soil lock up carbon dioxide and absorb damaging pollutants such as sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxides. A single tree can absorb as much as 22kgms of carbon dioxide each year and can sequester 0.9 tonnes by the time it reaches 40 years old.

As stated in 4.8 above, we questioned the amount of land required to deliver a number of solar farms and the proposed level of tree planting across the Borough. We noted that the Woodland Trust has produced an Emergency Tree Plan for the UK which contains recommendations for national and local government. The Plan states that the percentage of woodland cover in the UK stands at 13% and that this should be increased to 19% by 2050 in order to support the achievement of carbon neutrality. This amounts to an increase of 1.5 million hectares (around 2 million football pitches). The Group felt that the tree planting proposals in the Action Plan provided an opportunity to work in partnership with schools, local communities and

Town and Parish Councils. We also noted the importance of developing a wider landscape management approach which ensured that the correct type of tree was planted in the most appropriate location.

The Group noted that planting on the scale set out in the Action Plan would have a limited impact on CO_2 sequestration in the Borough. Assuming that all the planting targets were met, the Action Plan indicated that tree planting would deliver 3.5 ktCO2e per annum, i.e. around 2% of the total at a cost of £2.2m (around 4% of the spend). We also noted that the detailed workings relating to afforestation provided sequestration totals for the life of the trees rather than per annum. This created the risk that readers may misunderstand the impact of tree planting in achieving the Net Zero target.

Recommendation 10 - That the Council establish and publish details of the amount of land available for sequestration and renewable energy projects by surveying the Borough, in conjunction with Town and Parish Councils, to identify opportunities for tree planting, solar farms and other green projects.

4.12 Engage with Young People and Support Sustainable Schools

The Action Plan stated that the Council aimed to launch a sustainable schools programme which would increase awareness and promote behaviour change amongst young people. It was hoped that young people would then act as influencers amongst families and community groups.

The Group welcomed the wide range of actions aimed at engaging schools and young people in tackling the Climate Emergency, although it acknowledged that many young people already have a high level awareness of the issues. We felt that there was an opportunity to work with schools to develop a Vision for Net Zero and to encourage young people to act as community champions. We also felt that discussions should be held with local schools on potential curriculum development to improve knowledge about the Climate Emergency and the roles that local communities can play to support the Action Plan.

4.13 Reduce Waste Sent to Landfill

The Action Plan stated that the Council aimed to achieve zero waste to landfill, 70% recycling by 2030 and 90% recycling by 2030. We noted that the Council had made good progress in this area with waste to landfill under 5% and recycling at 60% (in line with the EU Waste Directive). We noted, however, that carbon reduction initiatives would generate new challenges, such as the task of recycling spent lithium-ion batteries from electric vehicles. The Council accepted that the Action Plan contained stretching targets, but was committed to working in partnership to drive innovation and positive solutions. A key part of this process would be winning the hearts and minds of residents about the community benefits of effective recycling and waste minimisation.

4.14 Encourage Behaviour Change

The Group felt that the section of the Action Plan on “Engagement and Behavioural Change” lacked ambition. The proposed actions include phrases such as “actively communicate” and “provide and share information” with residents. Also, there are no project costs allocated to this section of the Action Plan. The Group felt that the

Action Plan presented a real opportunity to engage with and empower residents and community stakeholders so that they became an integral part of the Borough's response to the Climate Emergency.

At the January 2020 Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee there was a discussion on the potential for developing a local citizens' climate assembly, as had happened in other parts of the country. We noted that the UK Climate Assembly had completed its series of virtual meetings and was now preparing its report, to be submitted to Parliament in September 2020. The Government has committed to take account of the assembly's recommendations. As stated above, the Group believes that it is important to understand the impact of the Borough's demography and to engage with residents at an early stage, before strategic and policy decisions are taken. There is a risk that a perception may build that development and implementation of the Action Plan is being carried out by a relatively small number of Members and Officers. As an example, the Climate Emergency Cross-Party Member working group has only met twice since January 2020.

We noted the wide range of behavioural changes which could help to support the reduction of CO_2 emissions in the Borough. These changes need not be expensive or reduce well-being and could deliver significant co-benefits to health and beyond. Examples of behaviour change include:

- Drive less – reducing car ownership, dependency and use through modal shift to public transport, walking and cycling will provide co-benefits for air quality, congestion, more active and healthy lifestyles. Progress in decarbonising UK electricity, together with falls in the cost of renewables and batteries, creates an opportunity for consumers to reduce emissions by shifting to electric vehicles, potentially cutting a third from the average household's footprint;
- Reduce flying – 70% of flights are taken by 15% of the population. A single return flight from London to New York (including the effects on the high atmosphere) contribute a quarter of the average person's annual emissions. The pandemic has severely restricted the number of flights taken, but air travel will take off again if/when a successful vaccine becomes widely available.
- Eat less meat and dairy products – According to the CCC, UK agriculture is expected to account for approximately 30% of remaining positive emissions by 2050. The impacts of UK food consumption also extend beyond emissions currently produced by UK agriculture – both through imported foods and the potential to free-up land use for carbon sequestration through afforestation. Healthier diets will help to address the obesity crisis highlighted by the impact of Covid-19 on specific groups.
- Plant a tree and/or create a garden with shrubs and flowers that will attract wildlife, grow vegetables and eat local produce – find out where goods and services are sourced. Don't buy unsustainable products. Use less plastic, or no plastic. Take a three minute shower instead of a ten minute shower. Avoid "fast fashion" – the IPCC has calculated that the fashion industry produces 10% of global CO_2 emissions every year.

4.15 WBC as Community Leader

The Group felt that, as a democratically elected body, the Council had a responsibility to lead from the front in delivering key messages and promoting

change by setting an example in relation to its policies and behaviours. In so doing we welcomed the Council's approach of developing a dedicated in-house team, supported by Officer working groups. This will help to embed the Climate Emergency response throughout the organisation, its contractors and suppliers. We felt that the in-house team should have access to ongoing training and support to enable it to embrace new innovations and techniques, including the ideas we have put forward in the report. We also noted that the in-house team currently comprised 1.5 full-time equivalent posts. In light of the importance of tackling the Climate Emergency and the growing number and complexity of issues to be addressed in future years, we considered that additional staff resources were justified, especially in relation to "number crunching" the costs and carbon reductions relating to individual projects.

As set out above, we believe that progress towards Net Zero requires openness, transparency and a willingness to work in partnership. The Action Plan states that the Council's organisational carbon footprint is 11,156 tCO2e, which amounts to 1.45% of the Borough's footprint. We noted that £5m (10%) of the £50m Climate Emergency budget was committed to making WBC a carbon neutral organisation.

The Council aims to become a Net-Zero carbon organisation by 2030. As such, it should aim to share its experiences and ideas in order to assist local schools, businesses and partner organisations who are on the same journey. The Council should also review its investment portfolio, procurement methodology and supply chains to ensure consistency with its Net Zero ambitions. We suggest that leading businesses in the Borough be asked to do the same, with the LEP providing publicity and support.

In the same way as Covid-19, the Group felt that the impact of climate change would be felt most by our most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents in areas such as housing, underlying health conditions, fuel poverty, flooding, air quality and the resilience of and access to public services. It is essential that the Council engage with all sectors of the community to ensure that its response to climate change (alongside its response to Covid-19) takes into account the diverse views and needs of all the Borough's residents. As an example, in 2015, 7.1% of households in the Borough experienced fuel poverty, 4,446 households. A household is fuel poor if it has higher than typical energy costs and would be left with a disposable income below the poverty line if it spent the money to meet those costs. Fuel poverty and cold homes represent a major public health problem in the UK. Improvements in home energy efficiency can help to cut carbon emissions whilst leaving low income families with more money for food and other essentials.

The Group felt that implementation of the Action Plan provided an opportunity for the Council to share its knowledge and experience with other local authorities. In so doing the Council may be able to boost its reputation and unlock new sources of funding and support. We also felt that Action Plan would be strengthened by the addition of a risk register and that consideration should be given to a methodology for assessing the probability of actions being delivered within the 2030 timeframe. So, for example, if a proposed action was assessed at 75% achievability, further actions may need to be considered to fill the gap.

Recommendation 11 – That the annual update report on the Action Plan:

- **Emphasise the relative significance of WBC's organisational footprint in any discussion of WBC's estate and facilities;**
- **Provide details of progress on the Council's journey to becoming a Net Zero organisation, including investment, procurement and supply chains;**
- **Outline the measures taken to protect individuals, families and groups most at risk from the impact of climate change and provide details of the outcomes;**
- **Include a risk register, setting out the major risks (including the impact of third party action and non-action);**
- **Include an assessment methodology which measures the likelihood (as a %) of success or failure for each item.**

Recommendation 12 – That, in light of the increasing number and complexity of initiatives aimed at tackling the Climate Emergency, consideration be given to strengthening the in-house team, especially in relation to "number crunching" of carbon reductions and project costs.

4.16 Partnership with Towns and Parishes

The Borough is covered by three Town Councils and 14 Parish Councils. The Town Councils (Earley, Wokingham and Woodley) have significant local assets such as leisure centres, community facilities, parks and open spaces. WBC is working to support the Towns and Parishes in developing their own response to the Climate Emergency. This includes sharing information about the WBC Action Plan and guidance on the development of individual action plans and projects. This process has helped to develop local knowledge and reduce the risk of double counting of carbon reductions. Joint working has also helped to develop an understanding of individual carbon footprints for each of the Towns and Parishes.

In the same way as WBC, the Towns and Parishes have a democratic mandate to lead their local communities. As such, they play an important role, working in partnership, to drive the Climate Emergency agenda forwards by developing local solutions and networks. It is important that WBC seeks to harness this local commitment and knowledge and works closely with the Towns and Parishes to achieve shared solutions and positive outcomes for local communities.

Recommendation 13 – That the Action Plan recognises the important role played by Towns and Parishes across the Borough in moving to Net Zero and commits to working in meaningful partnership to develop and support local initiatives which turn new ideas into positive action on the ground.

Section 6 - Conclusions and Next Steps

6.1 The Group's overall conclusion is that the Climate Emergency Action Plan is an ambitious document which has evolved considerably from its first iteration in January 2020. It is in line with best practice across the sector. In fact, the Council's approach compares favourably with the approach taken by more high profile local authorities. However, as set out in the report, we recommend a number of changes which, we believe, will make the Action Plan more robust and credible. These include:

- Correcting a number of technical errors of presentation and logic;
- A rigorous review of a number of key assumptions including:
  - the implications of achieving 50% EV registrations per annum by 2030;
  - A business case and projected uptake rates for the Green Bank project;
  - A reconciliation of the £50m budget with the monetary values in the Action Plan.

The Group was informed that the Action Plan included an assessment of the carbon impact of around 10,000 new homes in the Borough over the next ten years, but did not include, for instance, the associated carbon impact of additional vehicles on the transport network. We felt that the Action Plan should clarify the assumptions made in assessing the impact of additional homes on the Borough's carbon footprint.

6.2 The recent report from Climate Emergency Manchester on the way that major UK cities have tackled these issues sets out three key findings:

- **Missing £ signs** – few climate emergency responses are costed, or include a plan for funding.

  The WBC Action Plan meets this test for the next three years, although the Group identified a number of issues relating to the budget, issues which are set out in the report. For example, we queried the fact that £13m of Capital funding for the construction of roads was not linked to any item in the Action Plan and noted that some "big ticket" spending items did not appear to deliver commensurate levels of carbon reduction. We also noted that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's finances may well restrict future levels of funding. Consequently, actions which reduce emissions whilst delivering new income streams and measurable carbon "value for money" will be vital.

- **"Green Recovery" more slogan than reality** – increased active travel infrastructure is welcome, but limited. Retrofit is hailed by leaders, but the next steps are not clear.

  WBC has outlined projects to increase active travel and the use of public transport. The Green Bank project aims to support homeowners to improve energy efficiency. These projects constitute a positive approach but need to be underpinned by SMART targets, detailed business cases and decisive action. Without these, there is a risk that the projects will have no material impact.

- **Engagement is rarely ongoing or city-wide** – local authorities have either carried out small-scale or one-off consultations, or established stakeholder groups of "usual suspects".

  The WBC Action Plan is underpinned by a strong governance structure on paper. However, as evidenced by the errors and omissions identified in the report, we would have liked to have seen more evidence of rigorous challenge arising out of the various bodies, including the Climate Emergency Advisory Group. The governance arrangements must translate into real engagement with all the key stakeholders in the Borough and strong partnerships with neighbouring authorities, key partners and the LEP. The Council should encourage critical evaluation and challenge through targeted, meaningful and ongoing engagement with residents, community groups, schools, businesses and Town and Parish Councils. A successful response will only be delivered through the efforts of every resident in the Borough.

6.3 The Task and Finish Group report will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 16 September 2020 for discussion and approval. Subject to any amendments it will then be submitted to the Council's Executive for consideration in October 2020. We hope that the report helps to demonstrate the value of the Scrutiny process in providing constructive challenge and support in developing the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan. The Council's Constitution requires the Executive to agree which recommendations (if any) are acceptable (with a timeframe for implementation) and which recommendations are not (with reasons).

6.4 In order to ensure that future Scrutiny is effective, the Group requested that the annual update of the Action Plan be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny body in a timely manner that will enable Scrutiny feedback to be carefully considered and incorporated.

6.5 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee will monitor the implementation of the Group's recommendations. The Committee may decide to scrutinise further specific aspects of the Action Plan as it progresses or to set up further Task and Finish Groups as necessary.

Annex

WBC Climate Emergency Capital Budget 2020/23

Project Name	Project Description from the Medium Term Financial Plan	2020/21 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Public Rights of Way Network	Investment in all public rights of way and other non-motorised routes to support the needs of all types of users	612	737	737
Wokingham Borough Cycle Network	Investment in current/future cycle networks in the Borough	500	500	1,000
Greenways	A network of quiet commuting and leisure routes for pedestrians and cyclists	610	874	742
South Wokingham Railway Crossings	New foot and cycle structures in the Borough	0	0	1,500
Byways	Foot/bridle/cycleway enhancements or new build in the Borough	100	100	0
Winnersh Triangle Parkway	Transport infrastructure enhancement in the Borough	3,100	0	0
Coppid Beech Park and Ride	Transport infrastructure enhancement in the Borough	2,700	0	0
Transport infrastructure enhancement	Bus stop infrastructure works to support the North Arborfield SDL Bus Strategy	54	0	0
Renewable energy infrastructure projects	Renewable energy generation infrastructure, i.e. solar farms (fields of solar panels) feeding into a battery or grid arrangement	3,500	6,500	8,000
Waste schemes - recycling	Purchase of brown bins, paper sacks and recycling boxes to enable the Borough to continue the waste/recycling scheme	89	89	89
Support services energy reduction schemes	Investment in energy reduction schemes through various mechanisms, e.g. lighting, insulation and improvements – delivering energy bill savings	250	250	250
Food waste collection	Provision of food waste containers	20	20	20
Biodiversity Capital projects	Rolling programme of Capital projects aimed at enhancing the biodiversity value of various sites and other assets	25	25	0
Managing congestion and pollution	Investment in future road building/enhancement across the WBC road network (including new relief roads)	3,000	5,000	5,000
Energy reduction projects	Expenditure on a range of energy efficiency projects in existing properties – including LED lighting, cavity wall, loft insulation, boiler controls	1,500	1,500	1,500
Climate Emergency		**16,060**	**15,595**	**18,838**
Grand Total between 2020 and 2023		**£50,493,000**		

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