

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Officers Response to the Recommendations from the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on Thursday, 30 September 2021
<b>WARD</b>	None specific
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions - Gregor Murray

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)**

This report sets out the Officer response to the 25 Recommendations set out in section 2 (Attachment A) Climate Emergency Task & Finish Group, Report and Recommendations, June 2021.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive approve the Officers' responses to the recommendations from the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group, as set out in the report.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee established a Task and Finish Group to review the Wokingham Borough Climate Emergency Action Plan. The primary objective of the Group was to make recommendations for improvement which could further enhance the delivery of the plan and to support the aspiration of achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030.

The Task and Finish Group's first report in 2020 concluded that the Council's Action Plan was a bold and ambitious document which required further work to confirm the deliverability of key priorities. Since then, further progress has been made in several areas in spite of the Council's focus on tackling the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Group's 2021 report focuses on four key elements of the CEAP: transport, homes, renewable energy, and behaviour change (Appendix A).

Considering the enormous scope of the Action Plan, a number of areas were identified where more ambitious commitments are needed to strengthen the plan and enable the engagement of residents and key stakeholders across the Borough. Including, the importance of aligning new policies and strategies such as the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan to the CEAP commitments, work collaboratively with multiple stakeholders such as housing developers to make new homes as carbon efficient as possible, that renewable initiatives should fully consider the impact on biodiversity and the important role of behaviour change in delivering the CEAP.

The Group reiterated its earlier recommendations that the CEAP should be underpinned by a Vision for the Borough in 2030 and beyond and must be underpinned by SMART targets and robust external validation.

Following the completion of the Task and Finish Group's review of the Climate Emergency Action Plan (July 2020), the six-monthly CEAP update report (February 2021) and input from Officers, they formed 25 recommendations. These will help to strengthen the Action Plan, making it more robust, transparent and evidence based.

Overall, the recommendations were accepted by Officers subject to a few cases where Officers have explained their reasoning.

## Background

Following the climate emergency declaration made in July 2019 and 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 carbon reduction targets. The Action Plan (CEAP) was adopted in January 2020.

The Action Plan identifies the key priority areas for carbon (CO<sub>2</sub>) 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.

Since then, two progress reports of the Climate Emergency Action Plan have been taken to Council and approved been the latest in July 2021. The detailed reports with smart carbon targets include projections to 2030 based on the actions set out in the Action Plan. The Action Plan highlights the size of the challenge and recognises that at this point on time the actions in the plan are not sufficient deliver the level of carbon reductions necessary to meet the Borough’s 2030 target. However, the Action Plan is a living document and planning tool that assumes that new ideas and carbon reduction innovations will need to come on stream over the next 10 years to help the Council play as full a role as possible in achieving a net carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030. As such, the Action Plan will remain a living document.

To scrutinise the Action Plan, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee established the Task and Finish Group at its meeting in February 2020. Being its primary objective to scrutinise the emerging targets and key performance indicators underpinning Action Plan and to produce recommendations for improving where possible the plan. The Group also assessed the level of carbon reduction to be delivered for each target and its achievability, using SMART principles.

The Task and Finish Group’s first report was published in 2020. The report including 14 recommendations was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in September 2020 and the Council’s Executive in October 2020. Of the Group’s 14 recommendations, 13 were accepted.

The Task and Finish Group’s 2020 report findings were that the Climate Emergency Action Plan was a bold, ambitious document, in line with national best practice underpinned by a significant, dedicated budget and a clear governance structure. Not surprisingly, considering the enormous scope of the Action Plan, a number of areas were identified where more work and clarification were needed to strengthen the document and enable the engagement of residents and key stakeholders across the Borough. More work was required to clarify the impact of specific schemes and ensure that they were supported by SMART targets

The group 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. The report also outlines

that 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. Progress made against the recommendations on this report is provided in Appendix B.

The Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group reconvened in February 2021 and agreed work with the original Terms of Reference with focus on four key issues: transport, homes renewable energy, and behaviour change.

Between February and May 2021, the Group held eight virtual meetings. The Group reviewed the Action Plan with a focus on the specific targets, considered a range of national briefings and reports, and received evidence from internal and external individuals representing the Council, Imperial College London, University of Leeds, National Grid, Gik Zero, University of Reading, Reading Buses, and Executive Member for Climate Emergen

The Task and Finish Group report was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in June 2021. The report provides the Group’s recommendations to the Council Executive (Appendix A).

### Recommendations with Officer responses.

#### Transport

Recommendations	Officer Response
<p>i. Ensure that the transport hierarchy set out in the Group’s report is embedded into all highways and development planning and decisions. This includes ensuring that the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) and all subsequent iterations of the LTP are consistent with the CEAP and reflect the above-mentioned transport hierarchy, and that different highways teams work collaboratively on this basis.</p>	<p>Agreed. The Low Carbon Transport Strategy will inform the delivery of the LTP4. Officers have worked with the consultant to ensure that the LCTS and CEAP are aligned. The strategy will be available in the Autumn.</p>
<p>ii. Review the road building proposals and measures for tackling congestion in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (2021-24) to ensure that they are consistent with the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) and the risk of induced demand, leading to increased traffic on the Borough’s highways network, is mitigated.</p>	<p>The Congestion Project in the MTFP is aimed at making the most out the existing network capacity and ensuring that those journeys that need to be made by car are done with the minimum of delay and in the most fuel-efficient manner. The roads which are in the SCAPE contract are a requirement of the Local Plan and these were designed to mitigate the impact of growth to 2026, ensuring they were part of a sustainable managed growth package of building and modal shift measures aimed at securing ‘nil detriment’.</p>
<p>iii. Undertake a Borough-wide Journey Needs Assessment, including consultation with key stakeholders, and use it to assess the viability of “green” transport options. In addition to walking, cycling and public transport, options should include electric bikes and</p>	<p>The Council agrees to works towards delivering a Borough-wide strategy. Part of this will be supported by the LCWIP work currently on progress. The latest consultation will support the delivery of a Borough-wide strategy that inform future</p>

<p>scooters, autonomous guided pods (similar to the Heathrow Pod system), electric taxis and electric “last mile” delivery fulfilment.</p>	<p>infrastructure for active and sustainable travel.</p> <p>Consulting with local groups and residents include Active Travel Forum, Green Ways, etc</p> <p>“Last mile” delivery fulfilment - This part of freight management, and a freight strategy is being developed. This is expected to be ready by 2023</p>
<p>iv. Review and adjust the CEAP targets to reflect the Government’s announcement that the sale of petrol/diesel cars and vans will end in 2030. Alongside this, develop a communication campaign and series of events to normalise the use of electric vehicles (EVs), linking with the strategy to provide the necessary EV charging infrastructure (this will include working with vendors).</p>	<p>The target of achieving 50% registered EVs in the Borough by 2030 is already very ambitious. This projective target was informed by the consultation the government did about the ban of sale of petrol/diesel vehicles by 2035. The consultation was answered in July 2020 and the Council’s position was to support the decision to bring the date forward by 2035 but encouraged further ambition. Latest government policy and the banned of petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 might influence the transition to EV towards the end of the decade but it is uncertain by how much. We will monitor this closely.</p> <p>Communications campaigns are already captured under target 7.6 “Promote uptake of EVs with our residents through engagement”</p> <p>As part of the background work for the EV strategy, the Council is collaborating with vendors and neighbouring local authorities to ensure EV infrastructure is effective across the region. This have been captured in target 7.7 “Coordinate the installation of EV charging points into private and commercial owned land in line with the EV network plan approved in the strategy.”</p>
<p>v. Ensure that the Bus Service Improvement Plan reflects the Group’s recommended transport hierarchy, identifies barriers to increased bus usage (including affordability) and addresses the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Improving access to bus services through additional/enhanced routes.</li> <li>b. Increasing public awareness through improved advertising,</li> </ul>	<p>The Council agrees to work with stakeholders to deliver a Bus Service Improvement Plan that meets the requirements of the National Bus Strategy in the context on the needs of the local area.</p> <p>This is already in progress and has been capture in the CEAP action 2.1 and is expected to be delivered in November 2021.</p>

<p>enhanced bus shelters with digital displays and greater integration with train services.</p> <p>c. Potential pilot schemes for subsidised fares on specific routes to generate data on impact, cost, and customer satisfaction.</p>	
<p>vi. Review plans for future road schemes (including schemes currently in the design phase) to ensure the provision of safe cycle routes, in line with the recommendations in LTN1/20.</p>	<p>Agreed where possible.</p> <p>The strategic road building programme has been designed to mitigate the impact of the Borough's growth as part of our local plan. All planning applications are designed and determined based upon all material considerations and the relevant policies and guidance at the time, giving appropriate weight based upon their legal status. In this context schemes were and are assessed against LTN1/20 to secure a good fit with this new guidance as possible.</p> <p>Going forward pedestrian and cycle guidance is not new to Wokingham, and existing WBC guidance is robust and has seen significant infrastructure provision provided throughout the delivery of the current local plan. We have a commitment to use LTN1/20 along with all other material considerations, relevant policy and guidance as our business-as-usual approach to design and decision making.</p>
<p>vii. Use planning powers and funding opportunities to encourage the maximum roll-out of home, workplace, community-based (e.g., supermarkets) and on-street EV charging points across the Borough.</p>	<p>The Council agrees to works towards the supporting the roll-out of EV charging points across the Borough. This will be captured in the EV Strategy currently in progress, and the local plan currently under review.</p>
<p>viii. Explore the potential for introducing clean air zones at Twyford crossroads and Wokingham town centre.</p>	<p>The Council agrees to explore the potential to introducing clean air zones at Twyford crossroads.</p>

## Homes

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions/Progress</b>
<p>i. Introduce a Supplementary Planning Document linked to the current Local Plan to ensure that, whilst we wait for the new Local Plan Update to be completed, any new homes are built as close to carbon neutral as possible.</p>	<p>Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are documents that add further detail to the policies in an adopted local plan. They are a material consideration but are not part of the development plan.</p> <p>The scope of an SPD is limited to the expectations of adopted policy. They</p>

	<p>cannot introduce new requirements or standards.</p> <p>The adopted local plan, the Core Strategy, does not require homes to be built to carbon neutral standards or similar. It is not procedurally possible to write an SPD at this time requiring carbon neutral development as this would be a new standard.</p> <p>Improved energy performance of development, including carbon neutral standard for major developments, is being progressed as part of the emerging Local Plan Update.</p> <p>The creation of an SPD to support the emerging Local Plan Update policy requirements would be possible once the plan has been examined during in 2022/23.</p> <p>Whilst an SPD is not achievable an alternative interim measure could be to produce and publish a policy statement to encourage carbon improvements by confirming this is a material consideration that will be viewed as a positive aspect of a proposed development. This would not carry the same weight as an SPD, but would provide an incentive to people evolving proposed development schemes to go beyond the adopted policy requirement and achieve higher standards in advance of Local Plan Update.</p>
<p>ii. Engage proactively and work together with housing developers, planning to build in the Borough, to clarify the Council’s position on Climate Emergency and explain the planning and building control requirements arising out of the CEAP.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p>iii. Following the scrapping of the Government’s Green Home Grant scheme and the Council’s Green Bank scheme, urgently consider any new measures to address the additional carbon and funding gap that this creates for the CEAP.</p>	<p>The Council agrees to explore alternatives and initiatives, to work on lobbying central government, and to increase efforts to engage residents and local businesses.</p> <p>The Green Bank scheme is still being explored.</p>
<p>iv. Develop a Retrofit Strategy for the Borough, which recognises the barriers to “greener” homes and tackles the skills gap by developing a skilled workforce in</p>	<p>The Council agrees to identify the barriers that residents face to make their homes greener and the scale of overcoming these. One of these barriers is skills and</p>

liaison with colleges/universities and other partners.	we are working with colleagues from economic development and partners to look at the green skills and the green economy.
v. Consider a pilot Energiesprong (or similar) retrofit scheme in order to assess deliverability, generate performance data and customer satisfaction feedback.	<p>The Council agrees to continue exploring all initiatives and opportunities to engage with businesses and organisations that will help us deliver housing retrofitting and support our residents.</p> <p>The house condition survey on Council owned stock is currently underway. In addition, the external surveyors will undertake energy surveys and produce an EPC for every property.</p>
vi. Use the Council's housing companies to showcase the highest standards of energy efficiency in any future developments.	The Council agrees to use Council housing companies to showcase high standards of energy efficiency in any future development.

## Renewable Energy

Recommendations	Actions/Progress
i) Confirm that any income generated from solar farms and other renewable energy schemes will be reinvested in the Borough via the CEAP.	<p>The Council agrees to the value of net income from renewable energy schemes to be either directly recycled to specific CEAP schemes or indirectly to general resources which in turn funds CEAP schemes and resources to deliver on the CEAP agenda.</p> <p>The energy generated by the first solar farm might be used to power the Council's own property.</p>
ii) Work with partners to develop a strategy which identifies solar PV and other renewable energy opportunities across the Borough for domestic, public, and private buildings.	Agreed. The Council agrees to work with partners towards identifying renewable energy opportunities and to support and enable renewable and low carbon energy, and community led energy schemes.
iii) Work with partners to deliver a Borough-wide renewable energy awareness campaign to improve energy efficiency knowledge and behaviour in every household and business.	Agreed
iv) Confirm that Renewable initiatives will fully consider the impact on biodiversity, with the	Agreed

focus being on decentralising (on individual properties) and dual use sites (such as car parks).	
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

**Behaviour Change**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions/Progress</b>
i) Adopt behaviour change science as a golden thread throughout the whole CEAP, rather than a stand-alone action, to ensure that for every action, consideration is given as to how we will help enable people to adapt.	Agreed.
ii) Recognise that lack of familiarity with new technology is a significant barrier to take-up and tackle this through displays in empty shops (or pop-up facilities) in town centres and community locations. The displays to include workshops, debates, and demonstrations. Utilise volunteers wherever possible in order to develop community champions and engage with local communities.	The Council recognises that the lack of familiarity with new technologies is a barrier and agrees to work with partners and the local community to increase resident’s awareness of these new technologies.
iii) Submit the findings of the evaluation of potential deliberative processes to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for evaluation and scrutiny prior to implementation. Publish updates and incorporate findings from the chosen deliberative process into the annual CEAP update.	Agreed

**Other Priorities**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions/Progress</b>
i) Provide training for Members, staff, and partners to enable them to support the targets in the CEAP, avoid silo working and ensure that Climate Emergency awareness is embedded into every service and key decision.	Agreed.
ii) As part of the annual service/budget planning process, carry out reviews to ensure that policy, spending, and functions align with the CEAP, identify any contradictions, then implement mitigation plans	Agreed.
iii) Develop project and financial appraisal systems that include emissions and climate impacts.	Agreed.

<p>i) Review the following CEAP projections and targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the projected future reduction in CO2 from national initiatives (currently based on carrying forward historic rates of CO2 reduction) to reflect projections from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS);</li> <li>the CO2 savings associated with CEAP target 17 (20% of all homes to be retrofitted by 2030) as the funding for this work is uncertain;</li> <li>the relationship between CEAP targets 2, 3 and 4 – reduction in private car and van use (targets 3 and 4) will require far more than the proposed doubling of public transport use (target 2).</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed.</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

### Financial Implications

Recommendations are subject to financial approval. The Council will consider carrying out due diligence and to take into account the cost of the recommendations and to ensure the financial sustainability.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	More funding may be required to support additional resource to deliver some of these recommendations as proposals are developed	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	More funding may be required to support additional resource to deliver some of these recommendations as proposals are developed	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	More funding may be required to support	

		additional resource to deliver some of these recommendations as proposals are developed	
--	--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

**Other Financial Information**

More funding may be required to support additional resource to deliver some of these recommendations as proposals are developed.

**Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation**

Stakeholder consultation will continue through the Climate Emergency Advisory Board

**Public Sector Equality Duty**

This report relates to adoption processes which in themselves have no particular equalities implications. Due regard to Public Sector Equality Duty and equalities assessments are taken into account in the context of each scheme.

**Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030***

This decision has a significant on the Council's carbon neutral objective

**List of Background Papers**

Appendix A. Final report Overview & Scrutiny Committee in June 2021  
Appendix B. Progress on recommendations O&S report September 2020

<b>Contact</b> Diana Tovar	<b>Service</b> Place and Growth
<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Email</b> diana.tovar@wokingham.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank