

TITLE	Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Position Paper
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 04 January 2022
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Service Manager, Climate Emergency – Sabrina Chiaretti

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Climate change poses a significant threat to our community. Increasing temperatures and more extreme weather events have negative consequences on every member of our community, and disproportionately affect those that are most socially vulnerable. Tackling climate change, by minimising the emissions from our operations and infrastructure, whilst adapting to the impacts of climate change that we are already experiencing in the borough will have positive implications on the economy, health and quality of life of our community.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes the progress made against the delivery of Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), and upcoming areas of focus and relative challenges.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Background

In July 2019, Wokingham Borough Council members unanimously declared a climate emergency. The declaration set out the commitment to play as full a role as possible in achieving a carbon neutral borough by 2030.

Subsequently, the council published its first Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), establishing eight key priority areas to mitigate carbon emissions. The priority areas are:

1. Transport
2. Renewable energy generation
3. Retrofitting and new developments
4. Carbon sequestration
5. Schools
6. Waste & Recycling
7. Engagement and Behaviour change
8. Council-own actions and Procurement

The Climate Emergency Action Plan aligns with the following priorities set out in the Council Plan:

- Enjoying a clean and green borough. This includes becoming net zero carbon but also providing parks and green spaces
- Keeping the borough moving. This includes encouraging active and sustainable transport modes

- Delivering the right homes in the right places. This include supporting the provision of sustainable, quality homes.
- Enriching lives. This includes encouraging more people to be involved in volunteering and community activity, taking pride in their community and looking after their own wellbeing where possible and that of their families and neighbours.

Analysis

The latest CEAP progress report was approved by Council in September 2022. In the latest progress report, the emission trajectory has been aligned to the expected emissions of the borough by 2030. As a result, the CEAP actions are now estimated to save 214.72 ktCO₂e emissions, but there will still be a shortfall of 264.27 ktCO₂e emissions. So, delivering all CEAP actions will not result in a carbon neutral borough by 2030. This demonstrates the scale of the challenge. It also outlines the importance of a whole society ownership, as well as central government leadership - with devolution of statutory powers, and provision of significant funding – to enable us to reach carbon neutrality by 2030.

Since the previous progress report, a number of actions have been successfully progressed and delivered significant carbon savings, including:

- Retrofitting of multiple Council assets, including Dinton Activity Centre, Woodley Library, Carnival hub and 75 London Road
- Delivery of several carbon sequestration projects, with 15,000 trees planted across the borough
- Increase in recycling from 50 to 54%
- Improvement of the EV infrastructure, with 176 active sockets installed and a further 190 planned
- Over 1500 households been supported through the Help to Heat scheme

There continue to remain actions that need progressing. These are listed below, and they will be key priorities for the Climate Emergency team throughout 2023.

- **Costing the delivery of the CEAP.** The next iteration of the progress report will include costing against each action, as well as a timeline for implementation. This will help the Council to optimise resources and funding use.
- **Climate change adaptation.** The Council does not have a plan to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Climate change is already affecting the borough's operations and infrastructure. It is key that the Council starts planning for future impacts to minimise the negative consequences on our community, as well as on our operations and finances. Work will begin in early 2023 to assess the current and predicted risks that climate change poses to the borough.
- **The delivery of the Procurement actions in the CEAP** did not start until November 2022, due to staffing issues. The Climate Emergency Team are now working with the Procurement team to include sustainable procurement considerations in the current procurement processes, and ensure officers take into account climate considerations from project inception.
- **Providing a support function in the delivery of the CEAP actions** the Climate Emergency Team continues to work closely with all Council's teams to deliver carbon-reduction projects. Projects that the team has led on, or been closely involved in, across 2022, include a £300k application to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1 to bring social houses to an EPC C rating; and the launch of the Council's Reusable Period Product Scheme. Climate change impacts

all areas of work of the Council, and so achieving carbon neutrality requires a Council-wide effort. Whilst the climate emergency team leads on the delivery of the CEAP, it is key that all departments take ownership of their actions and strive to minimise the carbon emissions from their projects.

- **Engagement and participation from community on actions.** The community deliberative process, which included a number of peer group sessions along with a resident e-panel, was hosted in 2022. The results will be available after a further phase of information gathering. The Climate Emergency Team are currently recruiting for an Engagement Officer. The Officer will be responsible for completing the community deliberative process, as well as driving internal and external engagement around all CEAP actions – working closely with our comms team – and drafting a behaviour change and engagement plan. The Climate Emergency newsletter has recently been revamped, with new, fresh content added to it and the opportunity for climate-conscious residents and organisations to feature on it. The Council has received positive feedback on it, 100 new people have now subscribed to the newsletter, and the average opening rate has increased from 50% to 60%.

The delivery of the actions is challenged by the current unprecedented financial pressure that the Council is facing. The delivery of the CEAP actions is a responsibility of each department. In light of the recent financial challenges, there is a risk that climate change considerations are not given enough weight through strategies and in decision-making, particularly if they bear a financial cost to the departments. In addition, the Climate Emergency Team does not currently have an allocated budget. Therefore, delivering any actions that are not currently included in the CEAP, or that require support from external consultancies, remains a challenge. This includes the drafting of a full Climate Change Adaptation Plan.

The capacity of the Climate Emergency Team across 2022 has been limited, due to staff changes. At present, the Climate Emergency Team includes the Climate Emergency Service Manager, and the Specialist Climate Emergency Officer. The limited capacity of the team across 2022 has affected the progresses in the delivery of the CEAP. In early 2023, the team will onboard a Climate Emergency Project Officer, with responsibilities for transport, building decarbonisation and adaptation, as well as a Climate Emergency Engagement Officer. A fully resourced team should be in place by March 2023, with positive implications on the delivery of the Council's climate ambitions.

As highlighted above, the Council alone, without additional support, cannot achieve carbon neutrality. To support the Council effort to reach the 2030 target, more help is needed from Central Government with devolution of statutory powers, and provision of additional funding. Throughout 2023, we will continue to apply to relevant government grant schemes when available, and strive to support national policy changes that provide more powers to Local Authorities to address the climate emergency.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and 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)	NA	NA	
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	NA	NA	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	NA	NA	

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Costing the delivery of the actions included in the Climate Emergency Action Plan is a priority for the coming months. We aim to include detailed costing against each CEAP actions in the next iteration of the CEAP Progress Report.

Cross-Council Implications Addressing the climate emergency through the delivery of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan supports a range of Council priorities and areas of work. These include: access to clean and green spaces, promotion of sustainable and active travel modes, provision of sustainable and quality homes, improving the health and quality of life of our community. Addressing the climate emergency requires commitment from all Council departments.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Yes, Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken into account. Climate changes affects every member of our community, particularly the most vulnerable people. Tackling the climate emergency, minimising emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change will have positive impacts on the health and quality of life of our residents.

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*

Addressing the climate emergency through delivery of the CEAP will ensure the borough plays as full of a role as possible in achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.

List of Background Papers

Wokingham Borough Council Climate Emergency Action Plan 2022 (3rd) progress report

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