

Thursday, 18 FEBRUARY 2021

Report of The LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Climate Change Declaration Update

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

The purpose of the report is as follows:

- To update Cabinet on progress delivering the Climate Emergency which was declared at the Full Council meeting on the 19th November 2019; and
- To provide a road map that will meet the Council's target of becoming net-zero carbon for its activities by 2050 with an aspiration to achieve 2030 should the council be financially able to do so.

Recommendations

The following are recommended:

1. To approve the release of contingency money to deliver Step 1 in the approach outlined in the report;
2. To approve the procurement and appointment of specialist advice;
3. To designate a Portfolio lead for Climate Change;
4. To designate a Member Champion for Climate Change; and
5. To report back to Cabinet on the outcomes of Stage 1.

Executive Summary

On the basis of a motion put forward to the Council meeting on the 19th November 2019, Tamworth Borough Council declared a 'Climate Emergency'. This resulted in a number of recommendations being made. Aside from the declaration itself, these included:-

- Make the Council's activities net-zero carbon by 2050 with an aspiration to achieve 2030 should the council be financially able to do so;
- Ensure that political and chief officer leadership teams embed this work in all areas and take responsibility for reducing where practicable, as rapidly as possible, the carbon emissions resulting from the Council's activities;
- The Council (including the Executive and Scrutiny Committees) consider the impact of climate change and the environment when adopting and reviewing Council policies and strategies;
- Receive a report to the relevant scrutiny committee regarding the level of investment in the fossil fuel industry that any of our investments have;
- Ensure that all reports in preparation for the 2021/22 budget cycle and investment strategy will take into account the actions the council will take to address this emergency.
- Ask Council to note there will be an as yet undefined financial impact to any plan to achieve net zero carbon operations.

The decision for Tamworth Borough Council to declare a "Climate Emergency" was based on the 'Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C', published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in October 2018. This identified the catastrophic consequences that a 2°C average rise in global temperatures would cause in comparison with a 1.5°C rise in temperature.

It is acknowledged that reaching net zero will involve fundamental changes across the UK economy and that against this backdrop Tamworth's influence individually, will be limited. However jointly, with other Councils and organisations across the public and private sectors, notable impacts will be achievable.

Under any feasible scenario, meeting net zero will require reductions in emissions across the country on a scale not previously seen; ambitious and early deployment of existing technologies and approaches and innovation in new technologies, including greenhouse gas removal technologies, which will enable emissions to be offset from sectors which cannot fully decarbonise, will be vital.

What is Net Zero Carbon? – Net-zero is about balancing the amount of greenhouse gases emitted against the amount of emissions that are either offset or sequestered (repossessed). To achieve this, there initially needs to be a reduction in carbon emissions, but where zero carbon (the eradication of carbon emissions) cannot be achieved, there is the potential to offset the residual emissions through carbon credits or sequestration, for example through measures including tree planting or carbon capture and storage.

Options Considered

The severity of impacts associated with Climate Change are clear; if we fail to act with haste, the consequences for the longevity of the planet, its vital ecosystems and our future generations will be catastrophic. The Government's prioritisation and commitments in addressing this matter further reinforce the magnitude and importance of the issue.

There is a conscious effort to move to a zero net carbon authority by individual teams across the authority. At this point in time this ongoing activity is being undertaken without an overarching strategy to guide priorities, support the transition financially or an understanding of how much effort is required to meet the target given that there is no common baseline information available setting out the authority's carbon footprint.

Some local evidence has been collated, but this relates more generally to carbon emissions across the Borough in its entirety, as oppose to the emissions generated specifically by the Borough Council and its direct assets and operations. Research has also commenced, investigating the ways in which other Local Authorities are approaching this task along with looking more generally at national guidance, direction and research. Notwithstanding this however, to develop an informed, locally specific and workable solution, an organisation specific data set is essential. A study is required to assess the carbon emissions generated by TBC across its assets and organisational operation. The results would provide clarity in regards to the areas of concern, whilst also informing potential solutions and opportunities.

Advances in technology in the field of 'carbon reduction' measures are increasing by the day and so therefore, are the number of potential routes to achieve net zero carbon. Whilst the technological advances are welcomed, this is a further reason why baseline data is essential. We need to ensure that resources are targeted, and directed towards the most suitable measures. Both time and finances are finite in addressing this issue. There is no capacity for pursuing unsuitable options if TBC are to achieve their Net Zero Carbon commitment by 2050 or by 2030 if finances allow.

Climate Change and Carbon reduction must be an integral consideration in every activity in which this Council partakes and in all decisions made. To ensure this, information must be obtained and a plan set out to underpin these decisions.

The next steps are as follows:-

Two-Step Plan to achieving Net Zero Carbon

STEP 1: Commission a study and research paper to provide the following initial requirements:

- a) Identify TBC's Carbon baseline (utilising information already available and working with partners already exploring baseline data collection and collation). The Carbon footprint of the authority is unique to the Borough Council and will be influenced by the size of the workforce, methods of travel, the number of assets owned by the authority their uses and operation, such as housing and employment stock, heritage assets and the Enterprise Centre. It is also about the way in which the authority operates, which currently is mostly from home. A baseline study will identify which assets or operations generate the most carbon emissions. This will start to provide the authority with potential priorities for climate mitigation.

- b) Deliver against bullet points 2, 3 and 4 from the November 2019 recommendation namely to:

Resource Implications

To enable the stages outlined above to be progressed, financial resources are necessary. This is a Corporate Project and as such it is not considered appropriate to utilise existing funds allocated to specific services. Initially, funds are required to procure a specialist consultant (cy) to deliver Step 1. The costs associated with this step are currently unknown and it is suggested that senior officers and the portfolio holder have delegated authority to release funding from the contingency budget of £105,000 (as specifically included in the 2020/21 budget and will be transferred to reserve at year end) necessary to complete the initial stage.

As part of the project, any monies acquired and released would be clearly reported, for auditing purposes.

Through adopting the recommendations of this report, it is likely that efficiencies will be identified across the Council's services and assets which will translate into financial efficiencies/cost savings.

The research will also identify funding streams including grants and government funding.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

Legal advice and costs will be required for any contracts entered into. It is becoming increasingly likely, as part of the Governments wider 'Carbon Agenda' that individual Councils will be required (for national monitoring purposes) to report progress on achieving their carbon reduction targets. There may be penalties for Council's who fail to do so.

Failing to achieve the Net Zero target and so understand and reduce the Council's Greenhouse Gas emissions poses risks to council business, and council business affects the climate. For example a disrupted climate may have catastrophic effects on the council's ability to achieve its objectives – in particular, its ability to deliver services to the community. Furthermore, making limited progress towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and failing to have a net-zero strategy in place will likely result in significant criticism from the community and may amount to negligence on the Council's behalf.

Equalities Implications

None.

Sustainability Implications

Through failing to adopt the recommendations of this report, the Council will not be able to achieve its Net Zero Carbon target and deliver on its Climate Change Declaration.

In the absence of specific information on the Councils 'Carbon Footprint' and potential methods for greenhouse gas reduction, the Council's ability to develop informed Policies, make informed decisions and undertake financial planning and budget setting in this regard will be limited.

Background Information

Legislation, Guidance and Work to Date

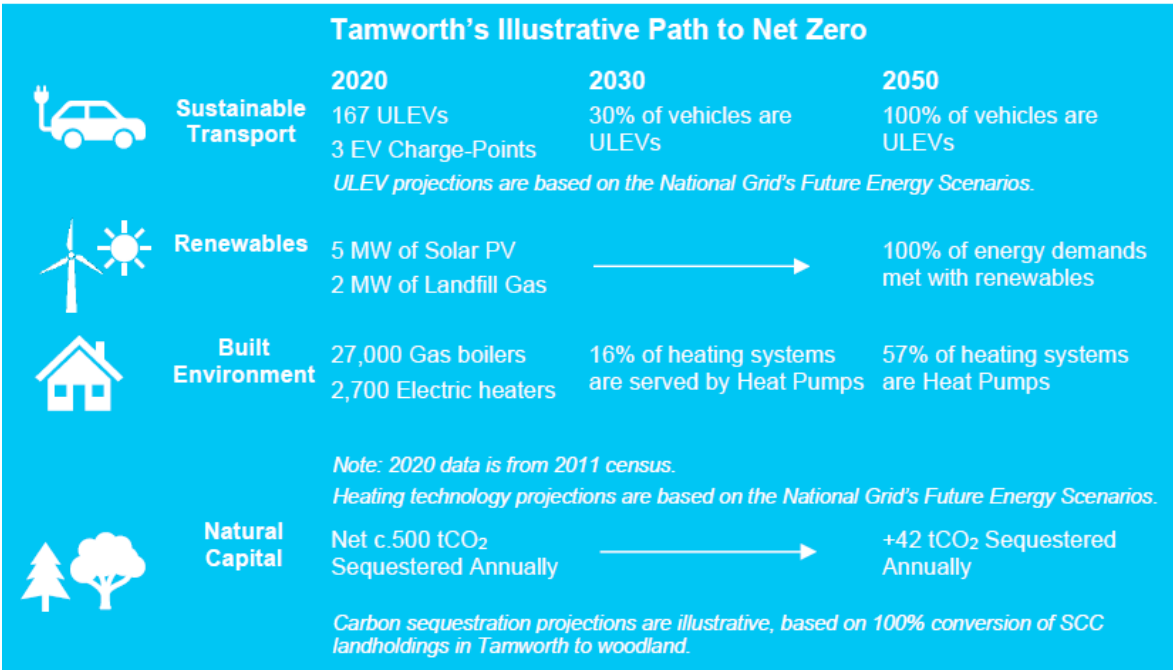
Owing to the implications of the Covid -19 Pandemic, TBC's progress on this area of work had been stalled, and until recently there had been limited headway against the recommendations agreed upon in November 2019. Towards the end of 2020 however, momentum gathered, responsibilities and initial work streams were identified and research and data collection commenced.

Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Report (October 2020)

To aid the development of energy and sustainability related planning policy, a joint study undertaken by AECOM was commissioned by Staffordshire County Council and its eight constituent Local Authorities. This report summarises the findings of research relating to sustainability-focused interventions, which will be instrumental for policy development. The report is informed by two Baseline Reports, an initial Baseline Report issued in March 2020 and updated 'final' Baseline Report issued alongside this report.

The main headlines relating to **Tamworth**, as a whole, are summarised below:-

- Combined Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHE) for Tamworth are c.366,000 tonnes CO2 per annum and per capita emissions are 4.8 tonnes CO2 per annum. On a per capita basis, this is lower than the average for Staffordshire County and the UK as a whole (7.4 and 5.4 tCO2 p.a. respectively).
- The largest single source of emissions in Tamworth is from electricity use, followed by burning of natural gas and petrol / diesel for transport. Fuel use in residential buildings is the largest contributing sector.



The above illustration has been taken from the report. It outlines a potential way to achieve net zero carbon for the entire Borough through the production of various policies in any future revision of the Local Plan and Corporate Plan.

The specific measures are further detailed within Annex 1.

Keele University and the Climate Literacy Project

Tamworth Borough Council has received an invitation (along with other Staffordshire Authorities) from Keele University to work with them to investigate the potential ways in which the University could support Staffordshire Councils in their climate emergency ambitions. To this end, funding has been secured by the University to work with the Centre for Alternative Technology and Carbon Literacy Project, to facilitate joint working between the Staffordshire Councils. To date, an initial workshop has taken place whereby the Zero Carbon Britain Team (CAT) and Climate Literacy Project were introduced, the proposal to support Staffordshire Councils journey to net zero Carbon was presented and desired outcomes of the workshop/process were discussed between attendees. Two further workshops have been organised for spring this year in which the Council representatives will outline their specific actions and requirements for support.

To capitalise on this opportunity/expertise, in advance of the forthcoming workshops it has been necessary to undertake initial research to inform TBC's position and desired outcomes. If agreed, the recommendations within this report will form the basis for further discussions with the University and the Zero Carbon Britain Team.

Since TBC declared its Climate Emergency there have been various updates to Legislation and Guidance along with the publication of significant research in this field. Case study examples and best practice is also beginning to emerge, all of which will enhance our ability to make informed decisions in regards to the right approach for Tamworth Borough Council.

Other Workload Currently Progressing

To present a flavour for some of the initiatives and work streams that Assistant Directors and Heads of Services are progressing the following summary is compiled. It is not exhaustive and also doesn't reflect that many service areas are looking at the issue in terms of future workload.

The Private Sector Housing Team is aware of is the requirement to liaise with Staffordshire Warm Homes and our HEAT service to ensure publicity on appropriate grants to the private sector. Whilst there are a number of initiatives for the green agenda for heating etc there are less opportunities relating to zero net carbon at this time.

The Assets Team are considering a partnership with Engie (an energy services and regeneration company) and one of their suppliers, to baseline the housing property portfolio. This data will subsequently be used to scenario plan a variety of options to further inform budget setting, along with feeding into the wider 'Asset Management Strategy'. Until the baseline data is gathered, it is not possible to fully understand the options available, the realistic levels achievable and the costs involved.

In regards to corporate property, through the asset management strategy work, the necessity for baseline data gathering has been identified but as yet, a specific end provider to deliver this has not been identified. As above, once this data is gathered it

will be possible to identify a technical response, associated costs and potential funding requirements and streams.

Further research has also identified that TBC's external contractors have their own environmental policies, which include some detail around carbon reduction. Additional investigation will be required to understand what this means in regards to the Borough Councils Zero Carbon commitment.

The Customer Experience Team have a method in place to ensure that when considering initiatives or project plans that may result in an environmental impact, a range of alternative solutions are always assessed. When establishing repairs partnerships, carbon reduction measures are a key focus. As part of the process it must be demonstrated that responsibly sourced materials and energy saving fittings such as lighting and dual flush wc cisterns will be used. Similarly in regards to the digital strategy, there is a priority to minimise paper trails and develop modern mechanisms of communication with customers, which will ultimately reduce vehicle emissions arising from traditional delivery methods.

The ICT Team are working on an ICT Strategy which considers the contribution ICT makes to carbon and how this contribution could be decreased. Essentially this covers areas where ICT can support a carbon reduction across the Authority for example, a key enabler for the transformation programme to digitally enabled services and smart working, reducing journeys by our staff and customers and our building occupancy. Reducing paper consumption from printing and printer consolidation, improving asset lifecycles/device rationalisation/re-purposing of legacy devices and leverage of cloud services to reduce our data centre footprint.

The Human Resources Team are considering initiatives on the following:-

- Encourage cycle to work/public transport
- Reducing carbon emissions by planning journeys for work better
- Recycling
- Reducing waste creation
- Less printing via digital transformation
- Having workplace champions
- Installing water machines using mains water instead of bottled water
- Encouraging staff to turn off monitors/lights at the end of the evening
- Encouraging car sharing
- Providing low carbon vehicles
- Food machines have more vegetarian/vegan food
- Reduced use of plastic bottles, cups, cutlery in the office
- Using recycled paper
- Workplace champions

The team have identified that now most of the organisation is working from home it has become harder to implement the carbon reduction measures that they have identified, as there is limited scope to control what people do in their own homes. A focus therefore to look at publicising and encouraging environmental matters for home working has emerged.

Regional

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

In June 2019, the WMCA declared a climate emergency and set a target of zero-carbon for the West Midlands by 2041.

In 2020 a green paper was published to initiate discussion about the actions required for the region to achieve its carbon target, whilst also delivering an inclusive, prosperous, and fair transition that leaves nobody behind.

The consultation resulted in the production of the following:-

“WM2041 - A Programme for Implementing an Environmental Recovery.”

The above provides an overarching delivery timeline, identifies the key areas and proposed solutions and graphically identifies a number of 5 year plans, each supported by policy and research that will enable the carbon reduction target to be achieved.

National

Key updates outlined below:

The Environment Bill 2019-2021

The intent of this Bill is to make provision about targets, plans and policies for improving the natural environment; statements and reports about environmental protection; about waste and resource efficiency; about air quality; for the recall of products that fail to meet environmental standards; about water; about nature and biodiversity; for conservation covenants; about the regulation of chemicals; and for connected purposes.

The Bill further explains how the UK’s green standards and environmental protection laws will look after Brexit, and how these will take shape in future trade deals. The revised version of the Bill also includes a new commitment to review global and national developments concerning environmental legislation, which will be considered in an **Environmental Improvement Plan** and environmental target setting process, both of which will be enshrined in law.

The Bill is now due to have its Third reading. The Third reading is one of the stages that a Bill must pass in each House before it can become law. It is normally the final opportunity for the Commons or the Lords to decide whether to pass or reject a Bill in its entirety.

A series of commitments are outlined within the Bill, including:

Local powers to tackle air pollution, requirements for developments to achieve a biodiversity net gain and requirements in regards to waste management and water services (among others)

Government Response to the Committee on Climate Change’s 2020 Progress Report to Parliament; Reducing UK emissions (October 2020)

Within this report key measures were set out, one of which being that the Government would publish a net-zero strategy in advance of the COP26 climate summit in November 2021.

Sixth Carbon Budget report prepared by the Climate Change Committee (CCC) (covering the period between 2033 and 2037)

This report identifies that under the original Climate Change Act, the UK pledged to cut net emissions by 80% by 2050, however, on the basis of new research and the progress made to date, the report confirms that the UK will now need to deliver a 78% reduction by 2035 if it is to meet its long-term net-zero commitment.

The report identifies various measures required to achieve this. These include that all new cars, vans and replacement boilers must be zero-carbon in operation by the early 2030s, that UK electricity production must reach net-zero by 2035, meaning that the majority of existing UK homes will need to be retrofitted in some way. The report also sets out detailed recommendations for land use, including the creation of 460,000 hectares of new mixed woodland by 2035 and a wide-scale approach to peatland restoration. Alongside these hard measures, the report identifies that a mass behavioural change will be essential on matters including electric vehicle adoption and reducing demand for flights and red meat if the targets are to be met.

Planning White Paper and Future Homes Standards – zero net carbon Homes

As part of the proposals to streamline the planning process, the White Paper identifies that new homes should be "zero carbon ready". Under the new proposals, carbon emissions from new homes are expected to be 75 to 80% lower than current levels by 2025. As the grid continues to decarbonise, the Government expects the houses to be able to perform at zero-carbon levels "without the need for further costly retrofitting work".

National Infrastructure Strategy

In November 2020 the Government launched its National Infrastructure Strategy. This details how transport, industry, energy and the built environment will be transformed to reach net-zero, with Chancellor Rishi Sunak using his spending review to confirm a £12bn commitment to the net-zero transition in 2021-2022.

Government's Ten Point Plan to reach Net Zero Carbon

Also in November Boris Johnson announced a £12bn (commitment outlined above) Ten Point Plan for achieving the net-zero transition.

Energy white paper: Powering our net zero future

This white paper builds on the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan, by defining the necessary energy-related measures. The Plan includes a long-term strategic vision for our energy system, consistent with net zero emissions by 2050. This vision establishes the goal of a decisive shift from fossil fuels to clean energy, in power, buildings and industry, while creating jobs and growing the economy and keeping energy bills affordable. It also explains how and why our energy system needs to evolve to deliver this goal, along with a detailed action plan to achieve the measures/goals identified.

Report Author

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List of Background Papers

Minutes of the 19 November Full Council meeting

Appendices

Appendix 1: Potential Carbon reduction measures for TBC

Appendix 2: 'WM2041 - A Programme for Implementing an Environmental Recovery'

Appendix 3: Government's Ten Point Plan to reach Net Zero Carbon