

Wednesday, 29 March 2023

**Assistant Director - Growth & Regeneration**

**Climate Change Officer**

**Exempt Information**

Not applicable

**Purpose**

To agree a new post to assist with the delivery of the Net Zero transformational corporate project in response to the Borough Council's Climate Change Declaration.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Approves the creation of the Climate Change post – Grade G – 3 years.

**Executive Summary**

The Borough Council declared a Climate Change Emergency in November 2019 and has recently defined the workstream at a corporate level as a transformational corporate project. To date, the Assistant Director of Growth and Regeneration (ADG&R) has led and managed the workstream and has delivered a baseline report setting out the Net Zero Carbon target for the Borough Council. Within that report there are a number of recommendations for the council to consider in relation to embedding the climate change agenda into everyday council operations, decision making and policy reviews. This is an area of work which needs to be progressed alongside the next stage in the process which is to deliver an action plan that provides a timeline to achieve Net Zero, the key decisions necessary to meet the timeframe and the investment strategy required to support those decisions.

This is a substantial area of work for the authority which is not something that can be tacked onto existing ways of working. There will need to be fundamental changes to the way the authority operates and accommodates climate change considerations into everything that is undertaken. To support the journey to becoming net zero carbon it is necessary to identify further capacity and expertise. An additional resource will assist in mitigating capacity issues with the AD G&R. It will be extremely challenging to both manage the net zero transformational project whilst at the same time operationally delivering the project, set within the context of other competing corporate work priorities.

The new climate change post will enable the corporate project to move forwards in terms of tendering for, facilitating and delivering the action plan and also picking up recommendations from the baseline study and delivering against them. It is anticipated that the post would also have a remit to identify and bid for net zero funding.

Further to our own Borough Council climate change agenda and priorities, The Staffordshire Leaders Board has committed to work collaboratively across Staffordshire to successfully achieve net carbon zero in line with each local authority's climate change declarations. The purpose of working collaboratively is in recognition that across Staffordshire the influence of individual local authorities will be limited, however jointly, with other Councils and

organisations across the public and private sectors, notable impacts will be achievable. A Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB) takes the lead on coordinating activity that will enable, influence and facilitate economic sectors across Staffordshire to start the journey to Net Zero. An officers group comprising senior officers from each Staffordshire authority support the Board.

Additional capacity created by the jointly procured Staffordshire officer and also the new TBC post will assist in delivering against the vision and pledge of the Staffordshire Sustainability Board which the Borough Council endorsed at Cabinet in June 2022. Appendix A provides the job description for the post.

### **Options Considered**

An option exists which is to do nothing and keep existing arrangements. Net zero workload will still be delivered without this post however the project will have to fit around other corporate projects. It is likely that it will take significantly longer if left solely to the AD G&R to undertake and there is an aspiration to deliver net zero by 2030 if it is financially possible to do so.

A joint post with another District or Borough was not considered deliverable because to achieve Tamworth net zero aspirations requires a full-time post. In addition capacity does not exist elsewhere across Staffordshire due to districts and boroughs having only either one full time or part time role within their respective authorities. Capacity is therefore not available.

Direct commissioning Staffordshire County Council was also considered but was not considered to be deliverable. The County Council do have a number of officers in their team to support climate change workload however Staffordshire authorities have jointly created a role to support the Board across the County because the existing team could not facilitate that workload over and above existing climate change commitments. Capacity is therefore not available.

### **Resource Implications**

An initial budget of £158K has been created following the submission of a policy change by the AD G&R to facilitate the financing of a Climate Change Officer for a period of three years from April 2023 at SCP 29 (bottom of grade G). This policy change has been incorporated into the MTFs and this was signed off on the 28th February 2023 at Council. The budget will be reviewed in budget process 2024/25 and 2025/26 to adapt any changes in pay award and on costs. An allowance within the budget for £3K redundancy, should it be required, has been made.

### **Legal/Risk Implications**

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

### **Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)**

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 a timely way.

The preparation of a Net Zero Carbon target provides the basis upon which the Council can take action. However, an action plan is essential to provide the framework to improve the Council's ability to develop informed policies, make informed decisions and undertake financial planning and budget setting. Resourcing this workload is both necessary and essential.

## **Background Information**

At Full Council in November 2019 it was resolved that Tamworth Borough Council:

Declares a Climate Emergency' that requires urgent action:

1. Make the Council's activities net-zero carbon by 2050 with aspiration to achieve 2030 should the council be financially able to do so;
2. Ensure that political and chief officers 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;
3. The Council (including the Executive and Scrutiny Committee) consider the impact of climate change and the environment when adopting and reviewing Council policies and strategies;
4. Receive a report to the relevant scrutiny committee regarding the level of investment in the fossil fuel industry that any of our investments have;
5. Ensure that all reports in preparation for the 2021/2022 budget cycle and investment strategy will take into account the actions the Council will take to address this emergency;
6. Ask council to note there will be an as yet undefined financial impact to any plan to achieve net zero carbon operations.

A report taken to Cabinet on the 18 February 2021 provides a road map setting out the steps necessary to support the ambition of the Council's target of becoming net-zero carbon.

The road map has two key steps, the First Step seeks to deliver a baseline report which will provide the Net Zero Carbon target for the authority. The baseline report makes initial recommendations on how the authority can embed climate change into all areas and how the impact of climate change and the environment when adopting and reviewing policies is undertaken. In addition, the baseline report has provided supporting information regarding the level of investment in the fossil fuel industry that any of our investments have.

The baseline report provides a good foundation upon which focus ongoing workload. The Second Step is the delivery of an action plan which seeks to:

- a) establish the feasibility of the solution (s)
- b) Provide a cost/benefit analysis assessing financial implications along with the effectiveness of potential solutions to inform future investment strategies.
- c) A timeline of how the Council will achieve its net-zero carbon status by 2050 indicating key decision milestones necessary to achieve Government Targets;
- d) Deliver against bullet points 1, 5 and 6 from the November 2019 recommendation namely to:
  - o 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;

- Provide supporting information that will assist with future budget cycles and the investment strategy to take into account the actions the council will take to address this emergency.
- The quantification of budget requirements fulfils bullet point 6.

The timeline for the delivery of Step 2 will be dictated by the complexity of the action plan and the resources required to prepare it alongside other corporate priorities, At Cabinet in October it was agreed that Step 2 will be delivered by an external consultancy, procured through a competitive tendering process by the end of December 2024.

**Report Author**

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