

Thursday 23rd January 2025

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Sustainability, Recycling and Waste

Climate Change Update

Exempt Information

This report is not exempt.

Purpose

To update Cabinet on the authority's work around climate change and agree to adopt the proposed climate mitigation action plan and climate adaptation strategy. Secondly, to endorse the climate change communication plan and the Staffordshire County Council (SCC) net zero by 2050 planning policy.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

- Approve the climate mitigation action plan and commitment to refresh every three years
- Approve the climate adaptation strategy
- Endorse the Borough Council's climate change communication plan
- Endorse the Staffordshire net zero by 2050 planning policy
- Endorse an annual update to Scrutiny and Cabinet on progress

Executive Summary

On the 19th of November 2019, Tamworth Borough Council (TBC) declared a climate emergency following on from the UK Parliament's declaration in May 2019. The council committed making its estate net zero by 2050 or sooner if financially able to do so.

Since 2022 the Borough Council have been on a journey to understand what the carbon footprint of the authority is to support the net zero commitment made in the declaration. Consultants were commissioned to assist with a baseline position and to kick start climate action within the authority. This report went through Cabinet with a commitment to prepare an action plan by the end of 2024.

In 2023 a report went through Cabinet to endorse the County Council's Climate Adaptation Strategy with a commitment to preparing a strategy specific to the Borough.

In December 2023, TBC made a nature recovery declaration, committing to undertake targeted actions to protect local nature and biodiversity. TBC will make a positive contribution to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Nature Recovery Network and embed nature recovery across policies and all work areas.

The Borough Council commissioned Consultants to assist the authority in understanding the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with its operations, develop a climate mitigation action plan and borough-wide adaptation strategy, and conduct 9 operational building energy audits to map a decarbonisation pathway.

Not only does this workload provide a road map for the Borough Council in relation to climate mitigation and adaptation, it also strongly responds to the Staffordshire Sustainability Board, in meeting a number of the pledges and expectations, namely around emissions reductions initiatives across energy use and transport, conducting building energy audits and the Staffordshire wide work undertaken to support Local Plan delivery.

1. Climate mitigation action plan

The starting point for this work has been to use carbon emissions data to identify emissions hotspots across the organisation where reductions can be made. To identify potential areas of reduction which forms the basis of the Climate action plan, workshops were held with the Assistant Director team and Members. These sessions were integral in arriving at a route to net zero presented in this report.

The Borough Council's carbon emissions data is underpinned by something called a green house gas inventory or GHG for short. An inventory comprises emissions that result from Scope 1, 2 and 3 sources. The Borough Council's carbon emissions report includes scope 1 and 2 emissions only, and business travel. The Council is only required to prepare a GHG inventory for scopes 1 and 2 only. The inclusion of a scope 3 source is at our discretion. For this reason, it is difficult to compare local authorities with each other. Figure 1 sets out what is included under each scope for the Council.

Although it falls under scope 3, business travel is included in the reporting as this is a frequent occurrence (e.g. staff site visits) which is within the Council's control. Other scope 3 emissions such as homeworking and procurement are not included in the emissions report, as the Borough Council are currently unable to capture this data accurately and because there is less control over this area. The climate change mitigation plan does set out some actions for reducing emissions in these two areas, for example embedding sustainability requirements into procurement contracts, which will be explored and monitored further.

Figure 1

In GHG accounting, GHG emissions are grouped by 'scopes'. Scopes help determine which emissions the council has most control over. TBC are required to report Scope 1 and 2 emissions.

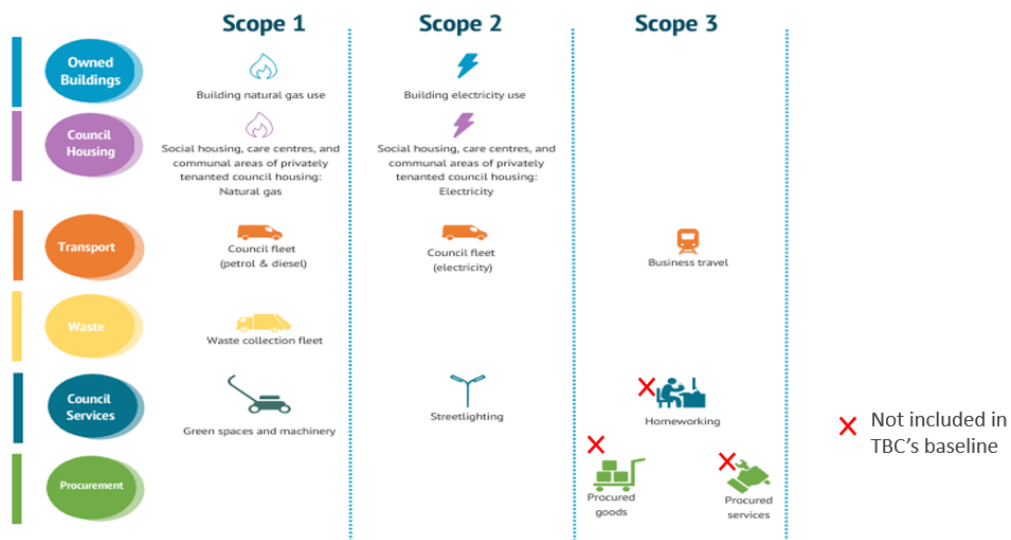
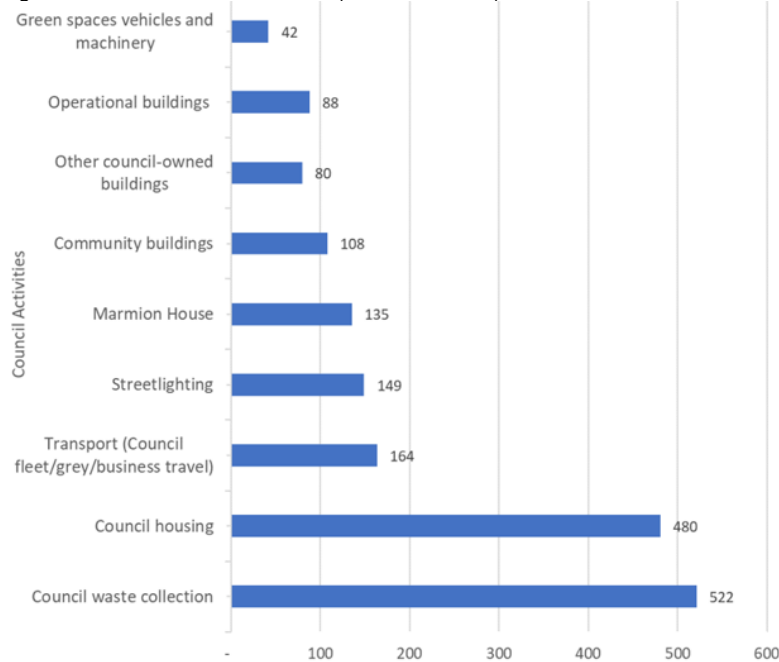


Figure 2 shows that in 2022/23, the largest sources of emissions were council waste collection (29% of TBC's overall emissions), and council housing communal areas (27% of emissions). This demonstrates the need to consider actions focused on optimising waste

collection and housing stock decarbonisation. Whilst it is an operational building, Marmion House is listed separately as the current fuel consumption is high.

Figure 2: estimated total emissions (tonnes of CO2e)



*Operational buildings include: the Depot, Town Hall, Marmion House and Assembly Rooms

Housing includes: sheltered Housing e.g. Ankermoor Court, Annandale, Bright Crescent, Cheatle Court, and Sunset Close

Community buildings include: the Castle and Museum, Anker Valley Sports Pitches, Tamworth Enterprise Centre, and the Bingo Hall

In terms of the structure of the report, the plan identifies key actions for reducing emissions associated with TBC's assets and service provision, detailing timelines, key partners, cost assumptions and predicted emissions reductions. It also highlights the co-benefits and opportunities where there is the potential for positive consequences due to climate change.

Some actions will be delivered in partnership with external organisations across Staffordshire and our internal Climate mitigation action working group will drive the delivery of specific actions.

The timescales for action delivery set out in the plan are short, medium and long term - it is important to note that these may change subject to the Council's monitoring and evaluation, availability of funding, updated government legislation and improved climate technologies.

Key actions across different sectors with the organisation include:

Transport

- Transition the Council fleet to electric vehicles
- Review travel policy to encourage active travel and alternative low carbon modes of transport
- Conduct a feasibility study for introducing greener travel incentive schemes for staff, e.g. Cycle to Work

Buildings, streetlighting and road infrastructure

- Review outcome of building energy audits and establish a programme of building energy upgrades
- Implement a housing stock condition and asset management strategy with integrated mitigation and adaptation aims
- Convert all streetlights to LED bulbs

Waste (joint- partnership with Lichfield)

- Conduct route optimisation analysis (including relocating of the waste depot) to reduce distance travelled
- Replace waste collection vehicles to be Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) in collaboration with Staffordshire's Joint Waste Management Board

Supply chain and communications

- Review partnerships and identify the potential to work together on reducing GHG emissions in the wider Borough
- Produce tender specifications that contain requirements for suppliers to show commitment to reducing their environmental impact
- Develop an internal communication strategy

Some actions will be delivered in partnership with external organisations such as the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. A proportion of the actions are part of Staffordshire County wide projects and the Borough Council will work closely with the Staffordshire Sustainability Board to implement these initiatives within Tamworth.

Some of the actions to do not have any costs attached to them, some actions do, and other actions have the potential to save money. It is important to identify that more work will be required to monitor, for example, using smart meters to better understand energy use to further refine any future actions and spend. For a number of actions early feasibility work is required initially to gauge what options may be available to reduce emissions, and the costs associated with those actions.

Whilst the Mitigation Action Plan provides a pathway it must be acknowledged that it is only one way of achieving net zero emissions. It is therefore important to keep the road map under review on a regular basis to keep it relevant and as up to date as possible. As such a report recommendation suggests that the Action Plan is reviewed every five years. It is also recommended that an annual update is prepared for scrutiny and Cabinet to set out progress.

2.Climate Adaptation strategy

Forward planning is essential to deal with extreme weather events caused by climate change. Resilient cities plan and prepare for risks and encourage residents to play an active role in their local community to strengthen the ability to cope with the impact and support those most vulnerable.

There is a strong case for delivering adaptation actions now because costly, sometimes irreversible, climate impacts are already being seen and expected to increase. The costs of waiting for impacts are expected to far outweigh the costs of acting early. Taking long-term decisions now will prepare Tamworth for climate change and avoid costly retrofitting projects across our operational buildings and housing. Some adaptation actions have low cost and have significant co-benefits.

The adaptation strategy identifies the key risks for Tamworth associated with global warming such as flooding, heatwaves, wildfires and drought and outlines preventative actions that can be taken to mitigate and prepare for these scenarios.

Climate change events can majorly affect the local community (particularly those most vulnerable):

- Education – extreme weather could reduce access to education, meaning children will fall behind in their learning and development
- Health – overheating in homes or workplace could lead to heatstroke and increased hospitalisation
- Buildings and infrastructure – flooding or overheating could damage homes and business, impacting livelihoods and living conditions

Cross-cutting priorities have been identified in the strategy:

- Strengthening emergency response coordination to plan for extreme weather events
- Deliver a communications plan for both the community and TBC to build awareness of risks and encourage action now
- Embed climate adaptation into policies and strategies

Internal focus groups were conducted to agree adaptation priorities across key service areas which are:

Business and local economy

- Develop business continuity and contingency plans for outdoor events in Tamworth to reduce the impact of extreme weather events such as heavy rain, wind and heatwaves on outdoor events including the market. This could include identifying alternative venues, providing additional shelter or shading, procuring different types of temporary structures.

Housing, wellbeing and community

- Adaptive work processes - consider policy for adaptive work processes to minimise risk to the workforce during heatwaves and other climate events

Nature and Green Spaces

- Develop a tree management plan for the borough using the 'right tree, right place' principle.

Buildings, infrastructure, planning and development

- Ensure retrofit or renovation of any council owned buildings considers opportunities to add adaptation measures such as ventilation or shading as required and encourage a similar approach by other organisations in Tamworth.

The adaptation strategy identifies opportunities for positive consequences of climate change. Changes in temperature and precipitation patterns may offer opportunities for new species to thrive, warmer summers and winters may reduce household energy demand and could improve health and wellbeing if people can spend more time outdoors in nature. As with the risks, there is uncertainty in the outcome of these opportunities and adaptation actions are required to maximise the chance of positive outcomes.

As part of the Staffordshire Sustainability Board, TBC adopted the Staffordshire Climate Adaptation strategy which identifies collective County wide actions. Developing TBC's own plan alongside this provides more specific and targeted actions specific for Tamworth.

3.Climate communication strategy

The Climate Declaration that the Borough Council made in 2019 is very much an internally focused declaration based around achieving net zero for council operations. There is a much bigger role for the Borough Council to engage, influence and lead the wider Tamworth community in making sound climate choices.

The communication strategy is very much an externally facing document to deliver key messages and to work with partner organisations to get collective engagement and action from a range of stakeholders across the Borough. Small actions can have big impacts, and an informed group of stakeholders have the potential to make climate decisions that can impact emissions.

A significant strand, therefore, of the climate mitigation action plan, is the communication strategy which focuses on delivering specific climate change campaigns to engage staff,

members, residents and local businesses with climate change issues and impacts and encourage behaviour change. It will aim to signpost, provide resources and share initiatives for people to get involved with and will be a way to celebrate the success of Tamworth Borough as we progress towards achieving net zero.

Relevant and up to date information on climate change events and campaigns in Tamworth and across Staffordshire, will be shared with the local community via social media and other appropriate communication channels that the target audiences will find inspiring and easy to digest. The Borough Council have agreed to the 3-year Staffordshire County Communications Plan which will further support Tamworth's communications.

4. Staffordshire County Council net zero Planning Policy

The majority of Staffordshire District and Borough Councils have declared Climate Emergencies and have a variety of net zero targets in place. Whilst planning policies cannot achieve net zero in isolation, the planning system plays a crucial role in reducing emissions in multiple sectors.

Proactive policies can help to facilitate the transition necessary to achieve Staffordshire's net zero target whilst ensuring that more of the cost of meeting this is shouldered by the development industry, rather than being borne solely by public bodies to improve matters such as transport and energy efficiency through more costly retrofit measures.

Staffordshire County Council proactively supported and facilitated the delivery of the 2020 study which supported Local Plan climate considerations through joint working with Staffordshire Local Planning Authorities, particularly on areas such as sustainable transport, active travel and carbon sequestration/biodiversity net gain.

The Staffordshire Sustainability Board have asked that all Districts and Boroughs endorse the work prepared in 2020 to ensure that all signatory local planning authorities respond appropriately, by implementing the shared Staffordshire-wide climate policy recommendations and commit to exploring the proposed policy directions in their emerging Local Plans.

Tamworth Borough Council officers were involved in the development of the 2020 document and whilst some issues have moved on since 2020, for example, there is now a legal duty for Biodiversity Net Gain as a result of the 2021 Environment Act, there is merit in signing up to the principles, see Appendix 6.

Climate change will form an important component of the new Local Plan and the Climate Change Officer will be integral in bringing these County wide principles forward, in that document. Work has already begun.

Options Considered

Net zero by 2050 is an obligation that requires public authorities to show regard for reducing carbon emissions as outlined in the [UK Climate Change Act 2008](#).

As defined by the [Climate Change Committee](#), a net-zero (i.e. carbon neutral) target requires "deep reductions in emissions, with any remaining sources offset by removals of CO₂ from the atmosphere (e.g. by afforestation)". This removal requires either the purchase of carbon offsets or direct carbon removal through additional carbon removal and storage ("sequestration") activity on an organisation's estate.

Net zero is an imposed requirement of the UK Government and the climate crisis. The Borough Council does not have a choice in delivering this workstream and due to its

fundamental nature of re-structuring finances around a different agenda, one of reduced greenhouse gas emissions, is an important one.

The plans contain several expectations for action, focused on the actions we can take now and the adaptations we can make to lessen future impact and protect those most vulnerable. The climate change communication plan will help to deliver key messaging around the impacts and encourage behaviour change now.

Resource Implications

The Borough Council has employed 1 full time Climate Change Officer who assisted with developing the mitigation action plan and adaptation strategy and will be driving the delivery of these.

There will be a corporate group that drives this transformative carbon agenda and each department must now take some responsibility for embedding climate change into their work. There are funding opportunities available which will continue to be explored, such as the SALIX housing decarbonisation funding. TBC have already utilised the LEVI funding for EV charging points and are working alongside the Staffordshire Sustainability board to develop a county-wide taxi decarbonisation strategy. The internal Climate mitigation action working group will meet quarterly to discuss and steer the actions relating to their service areas.

Following Cabinet approval of this report a meeting will be established with the s.151 and the finance team to start to use the Climate Mitigation Plan to financially plan for the associated budgetary implications to be considered as part of the MTFS process for future years.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

Delivering climate mitigation action and adaptation strategies are recommended in Section 6 of our 2024/25 corporate risk register.

Key risks associated with failing to meet net zero targets and plan for extreme weather impacts are indicated in this register, including:

- A lack of staff awareness of emergency/disaster response and plans for recovery
- Increased global warming will lead to more severe weather impacts on the Borough, causing property and livelihood damage
- Failure to plan financially for cost implications, will mean a lack of resource allocated for climate change mitigation activities
- Not having the specialist skills in place to develop adverse climate resistant infrastructure, will impact vulnerable people, reducing access to council services, healthcare and education

Equalities Implications

Climate Change will impact people in every category as outlined in the Community Impact Assessment. The plans do not discriminate against any group and delivery of the actions will reduce the risk for those most vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change and better prepare people to deal with extreme climatic events.

Climate change impacts such as flooding and extreme heat can disproportionately affect people living in lower super output areas of Tamworth. Working to enhance nature and biodiversity, reduce emissions and adapt infrastructure such as council owned housing may positively impact residents' health and wellbeing, by providing cleaner air, better heating, shading and ventilation and increased access to nature.

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

As discussed throughout this report, committing to the actions set out in the mitigation and adaptation plans will enable TBC to reduce carbon emissions across operations to achieve net zero and build resilience against climate change impacts in future. The plans will deliver positive change, (such as improving health and wellbeing) across the Borough and educate and inform the wider community around the issue of climate change.

Background information

In response to rising global temperatures due to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released the [Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C](#). The report makes it clear that ensuring global temperatures stay well below 2°C pre-industrial levels is crucial to reduce large risks to human and natural systems, and efforts should be made to pursue warming of only 1.5°C to prevent the largest risks.

Achieving the UK target will require cross-government cooperation - local authorities are well placed to influence emissions in buildings, transport, and waste whilst holding the best knowledge of the needs and opportunities of their area. Local authorities can also drive emissions reductions in their areas through their role as community leaders and major employers, as well as their regulatory and planning capacities.

Through their planning role, local authorities can leverage change by enabling sustainable development and placemaking, establishing building energy efficiency standards, implementing sustainable travel programmes and infrastructure, approving renewable energy projects, pursuing district heating programmes and implementing sustainable waste management programmes. Therefore, local action to reduce carbon emissions is vital for the UK to meet its international commitments to reduce global warming.

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List of Background Papers

Appendix 1: Climate change mitigation action plan

Appendix 2: Climate change adaptation strategy

Appendix 3: TBC Communication strategy

Appendix 4: Community Impact Assessment – Climate change mitigation action plan

Appendix 5: Community Impact Assessment – Climate change adaptation strategy

Appendix 6: Staffordshire County Council net zero by 2050 planning policy