

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	8 July 2020
Subject:	Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Audit and Action Plan
Report of:	Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

Tewkesbury Borough Council (the Council) declared a climate emergency in October 2019. This declaration included a commitment to doing all in its power to make Tewkesbury Borough Council offices carbon neutral by 2030.

The declaration also included reference to undertaking an audit of the Council's current position, together with the creation of an action plan, that would set out how the above aim could be achieved.

The Council's Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group (CCFRMG) was created following the Council's declaration, (and included an increased membership and revised Terms of Reference, of the previously constituted Flood Risk Management Group.) This Group was created to consider all aspects of climate change and initially tasked with working with Officers to oversee the delivery of an audit to consider the Council's current position, together with an action plan setting out how carbon neutrality by 2030 could be achieved.

The audit report and action plan are presented at Appendix 1.

The audit report sets out the relevant government guidance and the detailed analysis that was undertaken in order to establish the Council's current 'carbon footprint', or baseline position.

The action plan sets out the short, medium and long-term opportunities that could be explored further as part of detailed feasibility testing, as ways the Council could seek to meet the ambition of carbon neutrality by 2030 in relation to its buildings.

Recommendation:

That it be RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- 1. that the audit report be AGREED as having established the Council's current position and carbon baseline; and**
- 2. that the action plan be NOTED, and agreement given for detailed work and feasibility studies to commence in relation to the carbon reduction options set out in the action plan.**

Reasons for Recommendation:

The report provides Members with detail on the audit report and action plan as required by the Motion approved by Council in 2019.

Resource Implications:

The Council has so far agreed to the inclusion of a £20,000 ongoing allocation within the budget to support some climate change related activity plus a one-off sum of £40,000 to fund some of the early commissions necessary. With the exception of the replacement of heating systems at the Council Offices, which has a funding allocation within the asset management reserve, all other activities and projects will require funding bids and new monies being allocated to them.

Legal Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

Risk Management Implications:

The Council has declared a climate emergency and agreed a Motion including the need to undertake an audit, together with an action plan setting out the measures that could be implemented in order to meet the wording of the agreed Motion. Having an accurate baseline position established assists considerably in terms of minimising risks associated with under-reporting.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The workstreams developed as part of the emerging plan to manage carbon reduction and climate change will be subject to various governance arrangements as they develop. Such arrangements are likely to include informal scoping, discussion and agreeing priorities via the Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Working Group, performance monitoring and scrutiny via Overview and Scrutiny Committee and more formal decision making via Executive Committee and Council as required.

Environmental Implications:

None at this time.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 Tewkesbury Borough Council declared a climate emergency at a Council meeting in October 2019.

The motion as agreed is reproduced below.

1.2 Motion AGREED:

- Declare a 'climate emergency'.
- Commit to doing all in its power to make Tewkesbury Borough Council offices carbon neutral by 2030.
- Expand the remit of the existing Flood Risk Management Group to deal with climate change matters with the following delegations to the Borough Solicitor in consultation with the Group:
 1. Preparation of revised Terms of Reference to include an audit of the Council's current position, an action plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, funding and promotion of good practice throughout the Borough including buildings that provide a public service, such as the Tewkesbury Leisure Centre; and
 2. Membership of the Group, taking account of its wider role.

- Call upon central government to provide additional powers and resources to support local and national action towards the 2030 target.
- Commit to working with partners in Gloucestershire to achieve countywide carbon neutrality aims.

1.3 At the time the Motion was agreed, the Council's Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group (CCFRMG) was tasked with working with Officers to oversee the delivery of an audit to consider the Council's current position and action plan setting out how carbon neutrality by 2030 in relation to the Council Offices could be achieved, together with reporting this back to Council.

2.0 CURRENT POSITION

2.1 As the Council did not have the specialist climate change knowledge necessary to undertake a carbon reduction audit and subsequent preparation of an action plan in house, an external commission was awarded for this piece of work in accordance with the Council's normal procurement arrangements. The audit report and action plan arising from this work are reproduced at Appendix 1.

2.2 Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group observations

2.2.1 The Group met on Monday 22 June 2020 and received a detailed briefing on the audit and action plan from the report authors. The group discussion and key observations are summarised below:

- Overall excellent report, huge amount of work gone into it – good foundation for moving forward.
- Report can continue to grow – initial focus has been on the areas where data is available (collecting and collating data has been difficult and time consuming – no requirement to report to government since 2013 made the data gathering a more protracted process).
- The details within the action plan are not set in stone – identifies a baseline to use as a starting point for moving forward and there will be decisions to make within that (e.g. siting of photovoltaic (PV) panels, is it better to put them onto one building in a single block or to spread across smaller units to take full advantage etc.)
- Timescales – important to work on setting realistic and achievable timescales for actions over the coming 12 months (it would be unreasonable at this stage to set a timetable without identifying the resources to take the plan forward). Timescales will vary – some quick wins, other medium-long term. Officers will be working to put 'meat on the bones'.
- Must ensure we do not allow the momentum to slip – the Group can assist in terms of shaping up timescales. The pace of travel was described as there being a need to move as quickly as possible whilst ensuring a pragmatic and realistic approach is adopted, being mindful of the need to consider all the options. There will need to be a managing of expectations particularly given the current situation with COVID-19 which has brought challenges in terms of managing the response and emerging recovery work plans, remote working and competing resource demands - finances and Officer time in particular. Notwithstanding this, sustainability is a key priority within the Council Plan and there is no lack of drive and ambition to achieve the carbon reduction target, carbon reduction will be firmly on the agenda once the report and action plan have Council endorsement.
- Recognition that delivering the action plan will require investment initially but will result in savings in the medium and longer terms as the benefits of introducing new technologies for example start to be realised.

- Community engagement recognised as a key aspect of the carbon reduction work, and the action plan will have a positive impact in terms of the Council's reputation and "being seen to be doing something".
- Business cases will be crucial to support the initial steps and utilise savings made from future activity – important that collectively we do not lose sight of the priority, ensuring that everyone benefits regardless of whether their motivation is environmental, financial or social.

2.2.2 Key Questions from Members and Responses from Consultant

- Question around Councillor mileage and the fact that not all Members claim. Need to look at other options for Members such as encouraging car sharing, use of public transport etc.

RESPONSE There is a need to understand in more detail what central government is looking to do around electric vehicle incentivisation etc. Council could reinvest savings into incentivising schemes - possible action to consider going forward.

- Question about staff cycle to work scheme.

RESPONSE Members advised that commuting was out of scope so had not been included in this report, but such incentives should be encouraged and endorsed.

- Concern that burning waste (energy from waste) is not necessarily particularly green – providing crops purely for burning etc.

RESPONSE Important to understand what happens to waste and recycling being generated, likely to be opportunities around waste going forward. Best solution is to reduce the amount of waste going into bins in the first place.

- Question around efficiency of air source heat pumps and costs outweighing benefits.

RESPONSE Essentially, for every unit of electricity, a heat pump provided 3-4 units of heat/energy back out. If gas cost 3p per unit and electricity was 15p, this meant that it would be roughly the same price. Decarbonisation of the electricity network meant that electricity would essentially be cleaner than gas therefore it would make more sense to switch than to continue with gas. There were taxes on energy consumption with the climate change levy meaning that gas was increasing significantly in price compared to electricity which was reducing.

- Question as to whether the national electricity grid will have capacity given the amount of local authorities and organisations aiming to reduce carbon emissions.

RESPONSE Need to ask this question of the network operator – may recommend a smaller amount to enable better management; may be more opportunities as things continue to improve down the line – essential point is the need to reduce energy demand as much as possible and keep to a minimum the amount that needed to be generated.

- Question as to whether wind power had been considered.

RESPONSE Not felt to be a realistic option at the time due to availability of on-shore winds but could be revisited at a later stage.

2.2.3 The Chair then asked the Deputy Chief Executive to sum up and advise the Group on the next stages. The Deputy Chief Executive thanked the Group for their valuable contributions and endorsement of the report and options set out within the action plan, and advised of key dates as follows:

- Executive Committee - 8 July 2020 at 2pm.
- All Member Seminar - 23 July 2020 at 6pm.
- Council – 28 July 2020 at 6pm.

2.2.4 The Chair suggested an indicative date for the next meeting of the Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group of early August 2020 - date to be confirmed.

3.0 FINANCE AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The audit report and action plan give a clear sense of direction and sets out the opportunities in terms of moving towards carbon neutrality by 2030. The 2020–2024 Council Plan has priorities and objectives around delivery of the climate emergency action plan as part of the Council's commitment to a sustainable environment.

3.2 To deliver these ongoing commitments, consideration will need to be given to how best to resource the workstreams.

3.3 Many of the options presented in the action plan will require more detailed feasibility analysis to determine if they can be taken forward and if so in what way and over what time period.

3.4 There are different ways in which the workstreams could be funded and, in some cases, central government grant funding may be available to offset the cost of project delivery. Other options around resourcing could include creating a dedicated full or part-time Officer post or continuing to outsource projects via specific commissions.

3.5 Furthermore, a countywide Climate Change Strategic Coordinator post is in the process of being established, having been agreed in principle at Leadership Gloucestershire. Each of the districts and the County Council will contribute to this post, and its roles and responsibilities will clearly be aimed at serving the interests of each Council on a countywide basis. As such it is logical to assess in detail how this post could serve Tewkesbury Borough Council's needs before deciding upon longer term resource requirements at a local level. It is envisaged this post will be recruited to by the Autumn of 2020. Clearly any future funding and resourcing decisions will need to be made carefully and in light of the Council's financial position, particularly in respect of COVID-19.

3.6 In the short term, some limited funding exists to provide scope to commission further workstreams to maintain the momentum, but a decision on the allocation of a specific budget to meet the needs of this priority will need to be considered in due course. It is suggested this takes place in the Autumn as part of the budgetary review process.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 Not applicable.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

6.1 The 2020-2024 Council Plan. Climate Emergency Declaration and Motion.

7.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

- 7.1**
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) and adopted on December 12, 2015, (The Paris Agreement).
 - International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report on 'Global Warming of 1.5°C', following the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015. (October 2018).
 - Climate Change Act 2008.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

8.1 There is currently very limited internal capacity allocated to this activity. Any ongoing internal workstream management would involve the need to reprioritise or divert from existing activities. With the exception of the small budget to allow for further commissioned pieces of work, should the Council require ongoing input into this priority area additional resource will need to be considered.

9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

9.1 The work associated with the carbon reduction audit and action plan will inherently need to take sustainability issues and climate change response policies into account.

10.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

10.1 None.

11.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

11.1 None.

Background Papers:

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Appendices:

1 - Audit report and action plan