

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	7 July 2021
Subject:	Carbon Reduction Action Plan
Report of:	Head of Finance and Asset Management
Corporate Lead:	Head of Finance and Asset Management
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

Following the declaration of a climate emergency in October 2019, Officers, together with Members of the Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group, undertook a baseline audit of the Council's current carbon consumption. This was reported to Council in July 2020 along with an overarching Action Plan designed to achieve carbon neutrality in Council services by 2030.

Despite the impact of coronavirus on service delivery, good progress has been made on a range of actions in the first twelve months. This includes the application and award of external grant funding, totalling £305,200, to support the change of the heating system within the Council Offices, timetabled for later in 2021.

The appendix also includes a draft action plan for year two. The actions recommended are aimed at formally embedding climate change within the Council, delivery of a number of actions which will reduce the Council's carbon consumption and an initial study scoping the potential requirements of the Council should it wish to pursue a Boroughwide carbon neutrality target. As always, the action plan has been prepared in acknowledgement of the resources available to pursue the ambition.

To support the delivery of the action plan, the report requests the support and recommendation from Executive Committee for the addition of a permanent Carbon Reduction Programme Officer being added to the base budget from April 2022. Whilst this request is out of sync with the usual budget timetable, it is made now to give the best possible chance of a successful recruitment of an Officer this summer in order to help support delivery and take advantage of the wider opportunities.

Recommendation:

Executive Committee is asked to:

- 1. NOTE the progress achieved in Year 1 of the Action Plan.**
- 2. APPROVE the recommended Year 2 Action Plan.**
- 3. RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL the inclusion of a permanent Carbon Reduction Programme Officer post within the ongoing base budget of the Council, at an estimated cost of £40,600, from April 2022.**

Reasons for Recommendation:

To give Members a formal opportunity to consider progress against the Carbon Reduction Programme and approve the recommended actions of year two. In addition, to support the allocation of resources on a permanent basis to meet the needs of delivery the Council Plan priority.

Resource Implications:

Actions highlighted within the report will require funding from the Council's Asset Management Reserve and the newly formed Climate Change Reserve. In addition, the Council has secured £284,200 of external grant funding to deliver the replacement heating system project. Further external funding will be sourced but it is likely that additional delivery budgets will be required in future years.

The report also recommends the employment of a permanent Carbon Reduction Programme Officer to support the Council's green ambitions. Whilst this post will be subject to job evaluation, it is estimated that the cost of a full time, permanent member of staff will be circa £40,600. If approved, this post would form part of the ongoing establishment and base budget of the Council from April 2022. It will replace the annual request for one-off support funding for climate change.

Legal Implications:

None associated with the report.

Risk Management Implications:

If sufficient resources to allow the delivery of the ambition are not allocated, the Council will not be able to deliver all of the points within the Council motion and will not be able to play a proactive role in anything wider than energy efficiency measures within the Council Offices.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The progress against the Action Plan will be reported on a quarterly basis to the Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group and an annual outturn report produced for Committee.

Environmental Implications:

The Action Plan aims to deliver the changes necessary in order to ensure the Council reduces its carbon footprint.

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.

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.

1.2 In July 2020, the Risk Management Group recommended to Council the approval of the initial Climate Change and Carbon Reduction baseline audit report and the adoption of the action plan.

1.3 This report details progress made against the initial action plan targets over the last 12 months and recommends the adoption of new targets for the next twelve months to ensure the Council remains on course to meet its stated target.

1.4 The report also sets out the need for permanent resources to be allocated to support the delivery of the action plan.

2.0 ACTION PLAN

2.1 Following the adoption of the Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Audit and Action Plan, Officers have been reviewing the overarching targets and working on the delivery of a number of actions to advance the Council's ambition. As with all services, coronavirus had an impact on delivery of the action plan in 2020 and a change of Corporate Leadership in December also impacted on delivery. Nonetheless, good progress has been made through the first half of 2021.

2.2 Appendix A, taken from a presentation to the Risk Management Group, highlights the achievements in the first year of the Action Plan including:

- The application and agreement for external funding to support the feasibility study and delivery of replacing the gas boiler heating system at the Council Offices.
- Significant work undertaken to establish energy diaries for all Council operational buildings. The diaries provide a baseline of energy usage and carbon consumption and a means of monitoring these issues in the medium term.
- The survey work already undertaken at both the Roses Theatre and our domestic properties.
- A range of smaller achievements including the appointment of the Countywide Climate Change Coordinator and the works in our car parks.

2.3 Whilst further work is being undertaken to compile the 2020 update of energy and carbon consumption at our other operational properties and through mileage incurred, the data for the Council Offices shows a significant reduction in electricity consumption (25%) but an increase in gas consumption (8%) for Tewkesbury's operations. This would be expected as a result of the change to working patterns during the coronavirus pandemic. The demand on electricity, particularly from IT equipment, has fallen in the offices as staff have been based at home whilst gas usage has increased as the normal levels of staffing, and the associated natural level of heat coming from the workforce, has decreased but the working office temperature needs to be maintained at a consistent level. The lack of zoning and the open office nature of the workplace has also not helped to reduce gas consumption. Overall, around 16 tonnes of CO₂ has been saved by the Council in 2020 compared to 2019.

2.4 Appendix A also highlights the actions recommended by Officers to take forward the Council ambition over the next twelve months. The recommended Year 2 Action Plan contains actions that cover a number of aspects of delivery but they have been grouped under four themes:

- Communications and Engagement.
- Technical Implementation.
- Scoping Studies and Policies and Schemes.
- Budgets and External Funding.

2.5 The action plan has been set against the backdrop of the resources available but provides a broad range of actions which will further embed carbon reduction within the Council, will deliver a number of projects with tangible outcomes and will cast one eye to the future as we source further funding opportunities and consider carbon reduction in the wider Borough.

3.0 CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAMME OFFICER

3.1 The carbon reduction agenda and delivery of the action plan now sit with the Finance and Asset Management service. The agenda is supported by a one-off allocation of funding of £50,000 in the current year plus ongoing funding to part finance the Countywide Climate Change Coordinator. The one-off funding is being utilised to fund a temporary, part-time resource to deal with all aspects of climate change. This role is supported by input from the Head of Finance and Asset Management and the Asset Manager. Whilst specific services support specific items relating to the green agenda, such as planning policies and recycling education, the part-time role is the only dedicated climate change resource in the Council.

3.2 Whilst good progress has been made over the last six months to deliver the year one action plan, it is apparent that the current resource allocation is not sufficient and the time being dedicated by both the Head of Finance and Asset Management and the Asset Manager is not sustainable in the longer term against other work demands. The employment of the current officer in a part-time capacity has worked well and allowed the Council to utilise a senior role to establish the action plan and build the foundations for future successful delivery. However, with those building blocks now in place, the delivery aspect will require a permanent full-time role.

- 3.3** There are many actions in the pipeline for delivery in the medium term in order to address the Council's own carbon neutrality, all of which will require significant input for project specification and project delivery. In addition to this, further strategic work will be required to define our medium to long term path and to construct appropriate medium term strategies. As already highlighted, there are a number of activities already being undertaken by Council services, all linked to supporting the environment and carbon reduction, that need coordinating and presenting under the umbrella of carbon reduction/climate change.
- 3.4** In addition to the above, there are opportunities to attract grant funding and deliver green projects beyond the remit of the Council service property, but currently capacity does not exist to investigate and take forward those opportunities. Finally, whilst an early scoping exercise will be undertaken to understand the requirements of a carbon neutrality strategy wider than just within the Council, if Members wished to take this forward and perhaps declare carbon neutral targets for the Borough, as our neighbouring Councils have done, this will require a significant amount of Officer time.
- 3.5** It is clear to Officers that the scope of works falling under this agenda is significant and a dedicated resource is required. This issue has also been recognised by the Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment and discussions have been taking place on how best to meet the workload requirement. Those discussions have resulted in the recommendation in this report for the approval of a full-time Carbon Reduction Programme Officer, with an estimated ongoing cost of £40,600. Whilst the Council faces tough financial challenges and decisions to increase the base budget in light of those challenges are not taken lightly, it is imperative that investment is made in this area as soon as possible so that the Council can progress on its journey towards carbon neutrality and deliver the Council priority.
- 3.6** Should Members approve the addition to base budget, recruitment will begin immediately and, if successful, the post will be funded from the current one-off allocation in the current year before it becomes part of the ongoing base budget.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1** The Council could continue with an annual one-off allocation of resources to support the agenda. This would not provide certainty to allow the recruitment of a permanent member of staff and would jeopardise the successful delivery of the action plan.

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1** Details of the Year 1 and Year 2 action plan targets have been discussed with the Climate Change and Flood Risk Management Group.

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

- 6.1** Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Audit and Action Plan.

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 As set out in the report.

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

9.1 The carbon reduction action plan targets carbon neutrality for Council activities by 2030.

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: Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Audit and Action Plan – Council
28 July 2020

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Appendices: A – Year 1 Outturn and Year 2 Action Plan.