

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	6 September 2023
Subject:	Climate Change Resources
Report of:	Executive Director: Resources
Head of Service/Director:	Executive Director: Resources
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Clean & Green Environment
Number of Appendices:	None

Executive Summary:

In May 2023, the Council agreed to widen the scope of its climate emergency to include the wider borough and ecological emergencies. Given the significant broadening of scope and increase in ambitions, it is necessary to propose that additional resources are made available.

Currently only one post within the Council is dedicated to climate related activities and, given the plethora of activities required to meet our internal ambitions of being carbon neutral by 2030, there is not sufficient capacity to deliver the additional targets and ambitions. It is proposed that one additional permanent post is added to the establishment, together with a small operating budget, in order to drive through the principles of the May 2023 motion. The additional cost of the proposal can be met from the savings anticipated from ceasing to provide a trade waste service.

Recommendation:

- 1. To AGREE the establishment of a new and permanent Climate Change Officer role within the Council plus associated operating budgets.**
- 2. To APPROVE the virement of £66,276 from trade waste budgets to fund the ongoing cost of the proposal.**

Financial Implications:

It is estimated that the employment of a full time, permanent Climate Change Officer will cost the Council up to £56,276 including on-costs. This is equivalent to the existing Carbon Reduction Programme Officer. In addition to the new post, it is recommended that a small operating budget of £10,000 is established giving a total cost to the proposal of £66,276.

The decision to cease the delivery of the trade waste service is estimated to save the Council up to £131,000 per annum and it is therefore proposed to use some of those savings to meet the cost of providing additional climate change resources. In the short term, whilst savings are starting to be accumulated, any excess cost of employment can be met by climate change reserves in the current year. It is anticipated that a new employee may start in February 2024 and therefore costs in the current financial year are limited. The full cost will be included in the 2024/25 budget and be fully met by savings of the trade waste service.

It should be noted, however, that the redeployment of resources means that savings previously earmarked to support the likely 2024/25 budget deficit, estimated at £800,000, are no longer available and other ways of balancing the budget will need to be found.

Legal Implications:

Under the Council's Constitution, the Head of Paid Service is responsible for ensuring that a proper evaluation has taken place to determine the remuneration of a job. The Leadership Team is responsible for controlling the total numbers in the workforce and its costs. Any proposals to change the establishment list during the financial year needs to be costed and be made within the overall budget set.

The Executive Committee is responsible for agreeing procedures for virements between department, earmarked reserves, and service budget headings. Where the transfer is over £20,000 the Section 151 Officer must prepare a report to the Executive Committee setting out the reasons for the change in resource allocation.

Environmental and Sustainability Implications:

As detailed within the report, the new post will provide additional capacity to tackle the climate and ecological emergency.

Resource Implications (including impact on equalities):

The proposal will double the size of the capacity available to the Council, directly employed to tackle the climate emergency.

Safeguarding Implications:

None

Impact on the Customer:

The proposal will provide additional capacity to support our residents and businesses in their decarbonisation journeys.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 1 October 2019, Tewkesbury Borough Council declared a Climate Change emergency. As part of that motion, the Council agreed to:

- 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:
 - 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
 - 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; and
- report to Council by its meeting on 21 April 2020 at the latest with a detailed action plan for delivery.

- 1.2** On 17 May 2023 the Council approved a motion to widen the scope for our Climate Emergency to include the whole Borough, to declare a Nature (Ecological) Emergency and Support the Climate and Ecology Bill.
- 1.3** Given the breadth of activities needed to support the principles of both motions, it will be necessary to increase the capacity and resources available. The proposal in this report begins this process by suggesting a doubling of capacity from one full time equivalent to two full time equivalent officers.
- 2.0 RESOURCE PROPOSAL**
- 2.1** Following the approval of the 2019 motion, the Council approved the creation of a full time Carbon Reduction Programme Officer to lead and coordinate activities to reduce the Council's own emissions. The Council's ambition is to be carbon neutral by 2030 and there is a significant programme of activity in place to meet this aim with a number of noteworthy achievements over the last eighteen months. The Officer also takes responsibility for raising awareness and understanding of climate change across the Council's workforce, promoting our climate related activities and attracting external funding to support the delivery of key projects.
- 2.2** Whilst the Carbon Reduction Programme Officer does support some initiatives outside of the internally focussed remit, such as the Low Carbon Communities scheme which supports retrofitting existing buildings to reduce energy consumption and emissions, the scope of the programme required to meet the internal 2030 target means that there is not sufficient capacity available in this one post to also support the delivery of the new ambitions and targets.
- 2.3** It is proposed that an additional one full time equivalent post is added to the permanent establishment to provide the capacity required. The post will take the lead on our community facing climate change activities as well as nature recovery. The post will support the creation and delivery of new strategies and action plans to address the issues raised in the May 2023 motion. The role will also work with partners and stakeholders to design and deliver key projects whilst providing awareness, support and leadership to our residents and businesses. It should, of course, be remembered that climate change considerations permeate all of the activities of the Council and by creating this additional post the Council must ensure that those considerations are not just siloed in one or two individuals. The whole Council will play a role in tackling climate change with this role providing the vital coordination of those activities.
- 2.4** The current ongoing operational budget for climate change action totals £20,000 per annum, although £13,100 is allocated to support the Countywide Climate Change Coordinator and Climate Leadership Gloucestershire. This only leaves £6,900 for all other activities such as training, publicity, learning and development, partnership contributions etc. Given that the new ambitions are likely to require much more of these activities, it is suggested that the operational budget is boosted by £10,000 to provide support to Officers to discharge their duties. The use of this budget will be monitored and reviewed.
- 2.5** As detailed within the financial implications section, the Council is able to finance this proposal from within existing budgets given the cessation of the trade waste service this autumn.
- 3.0 CONSULTATION**
- 3.1** The Climate Change and Ecology Management Group has discussed the need for additional resources to support the delivery of the motion and are supportive of the request to vire funding to enable this.

4.0 ASSOCIATED RISKS

4.1 If the proposal is not approved, the Council's ability to meet its climate ambitions and targets will be severely impeded. The single post within the establishment dedicated to climate change and carbon reduction will not on its own be sufficient to deliver both the internal and external change which is required.

4.2 The use of £66,276 funding that has previously been used to support the trade waste service could be used to offset an expected budget deficit of circa £800,000. Without this, other savings may need to be identified in order to balance the budget in future years.

5.0 MONITORING

5.1 The additional capacity generated by the new post will support the delivery of the annual action plan which is approved at Executive Committee and monitored through the year by the Climate Change and Ecology Management Group.

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES/COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

6.1 Sustainable environment is one of the six Council Plan priorities which includes actions to deliver the Carbon Reduction Action Plan, promote a healthy and flourishing environment and responsible recycling and to preserve and enhance the natural assets and built heritage of the borough.

Background Papers: None

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Appendices: None