

Update on Climate Emergency Action Plan

Report of the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development (Portfolio: Environment)

Recommended:

That OSCOM notes and endorses the six-monthly progress update on the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

SUMMARY:

- An update has been provided on the delivery of actions contained within the Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- Data has been collated for the Council's greenhouse gas emissions for 2019/20, which can be compared to data held for 2018/19. As part of this, it is acknowledged that there have been changes in the services being provided which influences the overall emissions we are reporting on.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the implementation of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP).

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council declared a climate emergency on 4 September 2019 and committed to '*investigating clear and effective options to become a carbon-neutral organisation*'. Through the efforts of seven cross party member and officer work streams, the Council was able to produce a Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP). This was approved by the Council in June 2020.
- 2.2 The CEAP sets out that this Committee will be the forum for formally monitoring progress, with reports presented at six-monthly intervals. The last such report was presented in September 2020

3 Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

- 3.1 The CEAP has always been seen as a living document. Actions may happen at a different pace than originally anticipated, for example reflecting specific circumstances that we may face. As reported to this Committee in September, the pandemic is a live example that continues to have an influence – quicker progress has been made on some aspects but has also caused challenges in other areas.

- 3.2 Appendix 1 to this report provides an action by action update on the CEAP. This has been collated through bringing together information from across the Council's Services, reflecting the way we have been embedding climate change across the organisation.
- 3.3 The information within Appendix 1 reflects on the last year, therefore includes items that were reported to this Committee in September 2020. Some of the key areas of progress in the last six months include:
- Electricity is now bought from a Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origins backed scheme¹;
 - Projects to reduce the energy consumption of some of the Council's buildings have been delivered, including in relation to lighting at the Chantry Centre multi-storey car park and for heating at Beech Hurst;
 - A study on the renewable and low carbon energy potential within the Borough has been completed, which will help inform the preparation of the next Local Plan; and
 - Three refuse collection vehicles with electrically operated bin lifts had been ordered and are in operation.
- 3.4 As noted at the end of Appendix 1, we have also been able to work with other organisations to help businesses within the Borough access support to undertake energy audits and access grants to deliver low carbon projects. Through this scheme, businesses across the Borough have been awarded over £100,000 of grant support.
- 3.5 In terms of deliverables anticipated prior to the next six-month report, we anticipating the following to have been progressed:
- Implemented changes to the mowing regimes for some of the Council's green spaces to reduce operational emissions and improve wildlife value;
 - The survey of parish & town councils on climate and sustainability activity to have closed, with analysis of the responses completed to help inform the way forward;
 - Added further electric vehicles to the fleet (replacing diesel vehicles) to bring the total to 11 such vehicles; and
 - Support partners through Andover Vision in delivering the Climate Day of Action (subject to any need to review the revised date due to the pandemic).

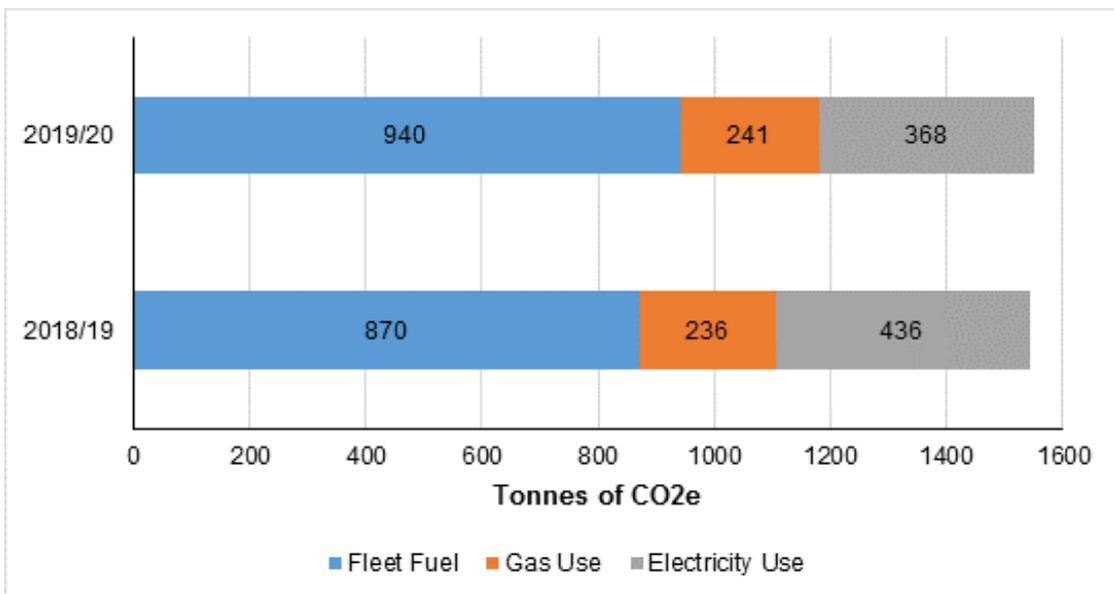
4 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting

- 4.1 The CEAP set out our approach to calculating the Council's greenhouse gas emissions, which concentrated on the energy (gas and electricity) used by the buildings we own and operate, as well as the fuel used in running the fleet.

¹ This OFGEM scheme seeks to ensure that energy has been produced from renewable sources. More information is available from the link included in Appendix 1.

The CEAP provided figures for 2018/19 based on tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e)². Data is presented below for 2019/20, in comparison to the position for 2018/19, with the table providing the headline figures and the subsequent graph indicating the split by the main components.

	Tonnes of CO ₂ e	
	2018/19	2019/20
Total	1,542	1,550
Total allowing for offsetting electricity back to the grid	1,534	1,543



- 4.2 The table indicates that there was an increase in emissions from 2018/19 to 2019/20 of 0.47%. There was an increase in emission associated with the running of the fleet and a smaller increase in gas use from the buildings (with a decrease in electricity use).
- 4.3 The higher fleet fuel usage was referred to as part of the update to this Committee in September 2020. The increased emissions from the fleet are likely to be linked to serving additional homes for waste & recycling collections, managing additional open spaces, and taking on the glass recycling collection in August 2019. The latter was previously provided by another party and so while there would have been emissions from collecting the glass recycling, they existed outside of the Council's emissions reporting. For information, the emissions associated with the fuel use of the vehicles delivering the glass recycling collection, which involves 2 HGVs, was 39.9 tonnes of CO₂e within the 2019/20 reporting. If this was excluded, the emissions in 2019/20 would have been approximately 1,510 tonnes CO₂e. This would have represented a 2.12% reduction in emissions relative to 2018/19.

² This is the unit of measurement advocated for use by the Government to report on greenhouse gas emissions. It looks beyond carbon dioxide, for example covering methane and nitrous oxide. It records the global warming potential of each greenhouse gas, expressed in terms of the global warming potential of one unit of carbon dioxide.

5 Councillor Workshop

- 5.1 The CEAP includes a commitment to hold annual workshops for all Councillors to distil new ideas and actions that have been identified. The first such workshop was held on 30 November 2020.
- 5.2 During the session Councillors had an opportunity to raise comments or queries around inward and outward looking actions. Some of the comments reflected items within the existing CEAP and general queries, as well as suggestions for further consideration.
- 5.3 As part of the workshop, there were presentations on behalf of the Environment Centre and Greener Villages (a community initiative operating in Chilbolton, Longstock and Wherwell) to help provide context from outside the Council and hear from the experiences of communities. During the discussion that followed, there was a greater focus on outward looking action, in terms of how we work with others to reduce their emissions. This included through education and communication opportunities; working with others (including communities); and promotion / enhancement of grants. There were also comments on specific topics including tree retention & planting, as well as waste and recycling.
- 5.4 All of the points raised will be considered as we move forward with the CEAP, some of which are summarised below for reference. There is an opportunity for us to recognise other Council strategies and policies that are intrinsically linked with climate action, to ensure work is aligned and we avoid duplication in reporting. We can also reflect on the priorities and metrics we can use; changes that have occurred in the last year and are anticipated in the near future; and implications these matters may have for how we move forward with the CEAP.

Smarter working and use of technology

- 5.5 The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated progress on some of the CEAP actions for smarter working. Through the Councillor workshop there were queries around continuing more remote working and opportunities for virtual or hybrid meetings³ going forward. The Council is actively considering such matters as part of its modernisation agenda, including in the context of the climate emergency and other strategic priorities, albeit at the time of writing this paper there is no indication of an extension to the legislation permitting 'remote' Council meetings which currently comes to an end on 6 May 2021.

Communication and education

- 5.6 A range of comments were raised during the workshop on this matter, including thinking about access to trusted sources of information, the approach to communication and specific comments about the website.

³ The potential for hybrid committee meetings would depend on legal obligations. Temporary legislation permitting 'remote' formal Council and Committee meetings 'The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020' currently expire on 6 May 2021.

- 5.7 Information can be shared through a variety of means, including the Council's website, social media, articles in Test Valley News, and news releases. However, it is recognised that we all have a role in communication which extends beyond the above mentioned routes.
- 5.8 Since the Councillor workshop, some changes have been made to the content of our website and how information on this matter is accessed. Climate change and the Climate Emergency Action Plan are included on the 'A to Z of Council Services'. Additionally, on the homepage a 'button' has been added for 'Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change' within the full list of Services. The content of the website in relation to climate change and sustainability will be kept under review. It is also proposed that we turn the progress update provided as part of this report into a document that can be published on the website alongside the CEAP.

Working with others (including promotion of grants)

- 5.9 Looking beyond our own emissions, the Council has some opportunities to influence including through delivering our services and responsibilities (e.g. as the planning authority⁴, enforcing Building Regulations and enforcing minimum energy efficiency standards for domestic private rented properties), through partnership working, and through our purchasing of goods and services⁵.
- 5.10 As referred to in Appendix 1, a survey is currently underway with parish and town councils to help enhance our understanding of sustainability and climate change activities that are underway. The outputs from this survey will help inform our next steps in working with town and parish councils, including looking at sharing best practice between communities and how the Council can support this. The Council's Community Asset Fund has been used to help fund works to improve the energy efficiency of community buildings.
- 5.11 It is important to recognise that other organisations and businesses, including those in the public sector, may have their own strategies and ambitions in relation to climate action, which can influence emissions across the Borough. For example, Hampshire County Council's climate action plan⁶ includes consideration of schools and other buildings and services for which they are responsible.
- 5.12 There are a range of grants available for different purposes and different target groups; grants that the Council offer form part of this. The Council's Home Improvement Grants are focused on owner occupiers on very low incomes. Beyond the Council, grants available for improvements to homes include through the Energy Company Obligation and Green Homes Grant (each have their own eligibility criteria, etc).

⁴ The CEAP includes an action to ensure planning policies are written to facilitate the move towards carbon neutrality as part of the preparation of the next Local Plan.

⁵ The CEAP includes an action to update our Procurement Strategy in the context of the climate emergency.

⁶ Available at:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/environment/climatechange/whatarewedoing/climatechangestrategy>

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 An update has been provided on the actions within the CEAP. Quicker progress has been made on some aspects but there have been challenges in other areas, for example as a result of the pandemic.
- 6.2 An increase in greenhouse gas emissions has been reported for 2019/20, this has been driven by the Council taking on a service that was previously provided by a third party. Such changes need to be kept under review and reflected in our reporting, which otherwise would have shown a decrease in emissions.
- 6.3 Discussion arising through the Councillor workshop has already influenced and will continue to inform the way forward for the CEAP.
- 6.4 The Committee is asked to note and endorse the progress update on the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u> Climate Emergency Action Plan (June 2020)			
<u>Confidentiality</u> It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	1		
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