

Update on Climate Emergency Action Plan

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

Recommended:

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

SUMMARY:

- This report provides an update on the Climate Emergency Action Plan since the last report in March 2021.
- Data has been collated for the Council's greenhouse gas emissions for 2020/21, which can be compared to data held for 2018/19 and 2019/20. The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the emissions.

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*'. The Council approved a Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) 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 March 2021.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The Corporate Action Plan 2019-2023: Year 3, includes 'progressing actions in the Climate Emergency Action Plan'. Key areas of work are noted to include reducing the Council's emissions as we work towards becoming a carbon neutral organisation; and through service delivery and partnership work to support carbon reduction across the Borough.

4 Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

- 4.1 This update focuses on key changes since the last report to this Committee, in March 2021, along with identifying a number of deliverables that we are anticipating to come forward in the next six-months.

4.2 For reference, in March 2021 we advised the Committee that the deliverables anticipated to be progressed in the next six-months included the items set out below. Progress has been made on all of these items.

- 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).

Smarter working

4.3 As the Committee will be aware, since the CEAP was prepared, circumstances have changed substantially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its modernisation agenda, the Council is looking at smarter and more agile working, including the use of technology. The climate emergency has been identified as a strategic influence for this.

4.4 In terms of printing statistics, the number of pages printed averaged at around 93,000 pages from August 2020 to July 2021 inclusive (the lowest monthly figure being about 77,000 pages, with the highest at just under 112,000 pages)¹. The self-serve numbers over the past 12 months have averaged around 50%, with the pre-pandemic position being around 35%.

Housing

4.5 The Council has been working with the Greater South East Energy Hub (GSSEH) and City Energy (an appointed managing agent) on the delivery of funds through the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) 2 scheme of the Green Homes Grant. The funds available for Test Valley are in the region of £315,000 and can support the retrofit of approximately 30-40 households to improve their thermal efficiency. This is for households in fuel poverty and in properties with EPC rating of E or lower. This work is being undertaken by targeting households directly as installations need to be delivered by December 2021.

4.6 The Council is also working with the GSSEH on a bid for the LAD3 scheme², which would start installations from March 2022. The bid has been submitted to the Government Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) with an indicative amount of £1.161million for Test Valley. Bids are subject to funding being available and this amount is therefore not guaranteed.

¹ While it may not be a comparable period, between October 2019 and February 2020, our average of total pages printed per month was in the order of 193,000 pages.

² This similarly focuses on low income households and the least efficient homes.

- 4.7 Through the updating of the Private Sector Housing renewal policy, the maximum amount of available grants and loans available for owner occupiers on low incomes to carry out essential repairs and energy efficiency improvements has increased which should allow eligible householders to access funding for more extensive measures than previously.

Local Plan

- 4.8 As the Committee will be aware, last summer the Refined Issues and Options stage of Local Plan highlighted that climate change will be a key theme running throughout the Local Plan, as well as identifying some of the policy options available. This work will be further refined in producing the next stage of the Local Plan. It is anticipated that the consideration of opportunities to work toward carbon neutrality will run throughout the Local Plan.

Fleet Vehicles and Plant

- 4.9 Two further electric vans have been delivered³, both replacing diesel fuelled vehicles, bringing the total to 11 electric vehicles. The transition to electrically operated hand plant (e.g. hedge trimmers, strimmers) is continuing as part of an ongoing replacement programme, as machines come to end of use / beyond economic repair.

Supporting Communities and Businesses

- 4.10 A survey was circulated to parish councils in January to help improve our understanding of activity underway and how we can support them in relation to climate change and sustainability, including through the identification of key areas of interest. Responses were received representing 16 parish and town councils. As no additional responses have been received since March 2021, the survey will now be closed.
- 4.11 In June, a parish and town council (virtual) climate change and sustainability event was held, which focused on planting and wilding. The theme was identified having regard to the above mentioned survey responses. The event was attended by approximately 30 parish councillors and other representatives. The event shared insights from the Council's Countryside Team, along with the Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust and the Greener Villages group. The post event pack that was circulated also provided information on resources that may be of interest and grants / funding available. The event was well received and research is underway for a future event. The recent TVAPTC/TVBC Conference included a workshop session on local action on climate emergency.
- 4.12 Working with partners from Andover Vision, officers supported the delivery of Andover's Climate Day of Action on 25 June. The day was a great success and saw schools, businesses and community groups from across the town take action to raise awareness and help combat climate change. As part of this event, a climate marketplace was held on Andover High Street with local community groups showcasing their great environmental work and encouraging others to take part. This was the first Climate Day of Action, the lessons learnt are anticipated to be used to improve the event for next year.

³ These are for use by the Environmental Services and Community and Leisure Service.

- 4.13 The Council is one of four Hampshire district councils that is taking part in LoCASE⁴, which launched in September. This scheme is scheduled to run for two years and is intended to support businesses to reduce their carbon footprint, through a combination of support and grants (up to 40% grants).
- 4.14 The 2021 Test Valley Business Awards⁵ included an award category for businesses reducing their carbon footprint or enabling others to do so. The Economic Development Officer is also continuing to work with the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce and other organisations on this matter. This includes working with partners to organise a virtual event for businesses to learn about how they can make a start to decarbonise.
- 4.15 It is intended that the next Test Valley Partnership meeting will include an agenda item on climate change as an additional route to work with partner organisations operating with the Borough on this matter.

Local Environment

- 4.16 This spring, the urban meadow project commenced. This is the first phase of a three year plan, with about 7 hectares of land within our open spaces managed as urban meadows⁶. Initial surveys have been completed (with support from volunteers). The final cut of the urban meadows is being undertaken this September / October. Over the next six-months the review of the project will continue, including taking account of feedback on the current locations.
- 4.17 This autumn and winter, we are planning to plant around 10,000 trees, including a range of species such as hazel, beech, oak, alder and lime. These will be planted at a number of locations across the Borough, including Valley Park woodlands, Hunts Farm, Anton Lakes, and Picket Twenty urban park.⁷
- 4.18 Officers continue to engage with a range of local groups, including Andover Trees United, TARCA, and Wilder Romsey. In addition, discussions are continuing with colleagues at Hampshire County Council in relation to reviewing the management of roadside verges (including reducing mowing frequency) in certain locations.
- 4.19 In summary, key deliverables that we are anticipating to be progressed prior to the next six-month report include:
- Supporting the retrofitting of 30-40 homes in the Borough to improve their thermal efficiency as part of the LAD2 scheme;
 - Planting around 10,000 trees during the planting season at a range of locations across the Borough; and

⁴ EU funded programme, being co-ordinated by Kent County Council. More information at: <https://locase.co.uk/>

⁵ Award ceremony planned for November 2021.

⁶ See: <https://testvalley.gov.uk/communityandleisure/parksandgreenspaces/urban-meadow-creation>

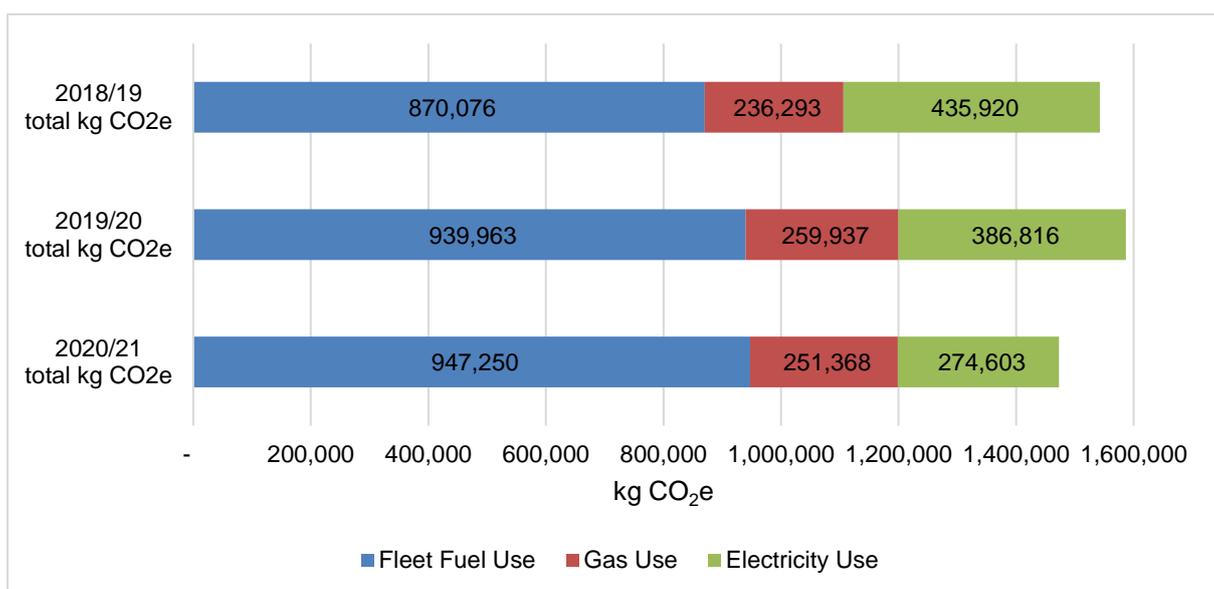
⁷ For more information see: <https://testvalley.gov.uk/planning-and-building/treesandlandscape/tree-planting-in-test-valley>

- Continuing to work with partners to work towards reducing emissions across the Borough.

5 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting

5.1 The CEAP sets 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. The CEAP provided figures for 2018/19 based on tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e)⁸, with data for 2019/20 having been reported to this Committee in March 2021.

5.2 Data is presented below for 2020/21, in comparison to the position for 2018/19 and 2019/20. The graph indicates the three main components⁹ of reporting of our emissions (reported in kilogrammes of CO₂e). The subsequent table sets out the total emissions (in tonnes of CO₂e), along with the implications of exporting renewable electricity back to the grid¹⁰ and through switching to a REGO backed tariff in October 2020.



⁸ 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.

⁹ The emissions associated with the charging of electric vehicles is captured within the electricity use, rather than fleet fuel use.

¹⁰ This relates to the solar panels at Portway Depot.

	Tonnes of CO ₂ e		
	2018/19 ¹¹	2019/20	2020/21
Gross Total Emissions	1,542	1,587	1,473
Total allowing for exported renewable electricity back to the grid	1,534	1,580	1,467
Total allowing for exported renewable electricity back to the grid and for purchased green tariff	1,534	1,580	1,319 ¹²

- 5.3 As may be anticipated, the latest reporting period has been significantly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. some sites being closed or used in different ways). This position will be reflected in many other organisations' emissions reporting for this year. We also need to be mindful that while some components of the emissions appear to show a reduction, there will be displacement of emissions – for example as a result of home working, which is not currently accounted for in the figures.
- 5.4 The gross emissions data for 2020/21 indicates that overall emissions reduced by about 7% relative to 2019/20; and 4% relative to 2018/19. When accounting for the exporting of electricity back to the grid, and the purchase of electricity from a green tariff (from October 2020), the emissions for 2020/21 reduced by about 16% relative to 2019/20; and 14% relative to 2018/19.
- 5.5 The emissions associated with the fleet fuel use marginally increased (0.8%) relative to last year, this is likely to reflect additional homes being served through waste and recycling collections, along with the responsibility for a growing number of open spaces. There may also have been some variations as a result of changes in service delivery accounting for the pandemic.
- 5.6 The emissions associated with the electricity usage dropped by about 29% (based on national grid conversion rates, not allowing for the REGO backed tariff), and emissions related to gas use were about 3% lower relative to the previous reporting year. The pandemic would have been a significant factor in this. For gas and electricity use, there are difference on a site by site basis. For information, while some buildings were close for public use, some of the systems may still have been operating, for example for health and safety compliance reasons.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 An update has been provided on the actions within the CEAP since March 2021. In addition, an overview has been provided of the Council's greenhouse gas emissions for 2020/21.

¹¹ Data not available for gas usage at Picket Twenty Sports Pavilion for this reporting period – this is also reflected in the graph.

¹² This includes an assumption on the proportion of street lighting that would have been covered by a REGO backed tariff as the data is not available split based on when this tariff came into effect.

6.2 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:	0		
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File Ref:	n/a		
Report to:	OSCOM	Date:	6 October 2021