

Update on Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020) - Review of Progress

Report of the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development (Portfolio: Climate Emergency and Countryside)

Recommended:

That the progress update on the Climate Emergency Action Plan be considered.

SUMMARY:

- An update on the delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan is provided. This follows on from the previous report to the Committee in April 2022.

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 monitoring progress, with reports presented twice a year. The previous report was presented in April 2022.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The Corporate Action Plan 2019-2023: Year 4, contains '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 the changes since the last report to this Committee. The information is grouped by topic, which align with but do not directly replicate the themes within the CEAP. As has been indicated previously, the approach to action on some themes has altered taking account of the implications of the coronavirus pandemic and other factors in the period since the CEAP was prepared.

Council Buildings and Estate

- 4.2 Works are planned to improve the EPC ratings of our buildings, which includes upgrades to various thermal elements. Buildings currently rated as E or below are being prioritised in the context of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard legal requirements for certain commercial buildings. There is also a project being worked up to explore replacing the single glazing windows at the FMC.
- 4.3 The roll out of automatic meters is also continuing – this helps to improve data collection and the quality of information we hold on energy usage and therefore greenhouse gas emission data.

Fleet vehicles and plant

- 4.4 An additional electric vehicle has been added to the fleet – this was ordered some time ago but affected by global supply issues.
- 4.5 Options for electric alternatives to vehicles, machinery and plant continue to be investigated to inform decisions on future acquisitions. This includes exploring options on biofuels. The transition to electrically operated hand equipment now forms part of the business as usual position. Charging units for these are being installed.

Corporate Matters

- 4.6 The survey undertaken to help inform the 2023-2027 Corporate Plan incorporated a specific question around environmental sustainability actions. Analysis of this public engagement is underway, with deliberative engagement workshops providing an opportunity to delve into some issues in more detail. It has been noted that the appreciation of green spaces and wider environmental concerns were coming through in the feedback.
- 4.7 The updating of the Contract Standing Orders and Procurement Strategy is underway – this will include enhancing content on sustainable procurement, including in the context of the climate emergency. A number of teams already seek to include green and social credentials in their tendering.
- 4.8 The Portfolio Holder for Climate Emergency and Countryside and the Council's Management Team undertook Carbon Literacy training and are certified as carbon literate. A small group of officers also participated in a pilot using this training approach. At this stage we are not looking to further roll out Carbon Literacy training, which involves a full day of learning with a specific approach to the content. Instead, we will be exploring alternative approaches to training and engagement on this matter going forward that enable us to tailor the scope and content, as well as look to condense the duration of training reflecting a growing awareness of the background to the subject matter.

Digital working

- 4.9 In terms of printing statistics, the number of pages printed averaged at around 105,000 pages from July 2021 to June 2022. The lowest monthly figure being about 84,000 pages, with the highest at just over 158,000 pages. The higher figure was in September 2021 and related to printing associated with the Traveller injunction.
- 4.10 Most Member training is now undertaken virtually, as well as a number of internal group and panel meetings.
- 4.11 As at 1 August 2022, 24% of Council Tax and 41% of Non-Domestic Rates bills were issued via e-billing, with both figures higher than the previously reported position (22% and 39% respectively). Opportunities continue to be taken to promote the uptake of e-billing when talking to customers and through mail outs.
- 4.12 The levels of customer self-service remains about the same as previously reported (at about 50%), which is higher than the pre-pandemic level (around 35%).

Housing

- 4.13 In terms of schemes to enable residents to improve the performance of their homes, the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) 2 scheme has now closed, with LAD 3 and the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) now being implemented under the banner of the Green Homes Grant. These grants are focused on lower income households in the least efficient properties.
- 4.14 A lack of capacity within the managing agent affected the implementation of the LAD 2 scheme, with referrals that could not be progressed being passed over to the LAD 3 managing agent.
- 4.15 A package of measures have been put together to raise the awareness of the grants. This includes through Test Valley News, social media, the Council's e-newsletter (via GovDelivery), direct mail outs to targeted areas, as well as through sharing information via parish and town councils and our contacts through the Council's Communities team.
- 4.16 At the time of writing, the Council's Cabinet is due to consider issues relating to the cost of living in the context of supporting opportunities for households, particularly those on the lowest comes, to improve the energy and thermal performance of their homes.
- 4.17 Two members of the Housing & Environmental Health Service have been trained as Domestic Energy Assessors with a view to increasing their knowledge on retrofit measures to advise landlords on improvements needed. Funding has also been invested in an IT package that gives access to guidance, letters and enforcement notices linked to the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards.

- 4.18 The Landlord's Forum on 1 November included a briefing on energy efficiency in private rented properties.
- 4.19 The Council promoted round 2 of the Solar Together Hampshire scheme, including through social media and our e-newsletters. This is a group buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage being delivered by iChoosr in conjunction with Hampshire County Council.

Working with Communities

- 4.20 The Community Asset Fund (CAF) and Councillor grants are being reviewed, including in relation to connections to the climate emergency. The website has been updated to clarify that climate related projects could be eligible for these grants. Work is underway to consider the scope to include criteria within the applications on this matter – a review has been undertaken of how others are approaching this. Opportunities are also being explored to prepare case studies to be used in the promotion of the grants that can highlight some of the wider benefits. It is also proposed to collate additional supporting information to help signpost to complementary resources and grants.
- 4.21 Officers attended the Romsey Green Energy Day in May – this event was organised by Transition Town Romsey. Officers have also been working with partners to support the delivery of Andover Vision's Andover Climate Day of Action programme that took place between 24 September and 2 October.
- 4.22 The Test Valley Association of Parish & Town Councils conference on 1 October included a workshop session on energy. This included sharing information on actions that can be taken (by community groups and individuals), information sources and some of the available funding opportunities.
- 4.23 The Council's bid for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)¹ included a project to provide a £100,000 fund over three years for community energy efficiency and decarbonisation projects within the Borough. At the time of writing the outcome of the bid was not known.

Working with Businesses

- 4.24 We are continuing to promote the LoCASE3² scheme. There have been 19 expressions of interest since the start of the programme. This has resulted in one successful applicant and there are four applications from Test Valley businesses in the pipeline.
- 4.25 A review has been undertaken of the Business Incentive Grant and Independent Retailer Grant. One of the outcomes of this process is that we will automatically discuss sustainability issues with businesses at the final meeting and refer to Greentech South (who are also able to provide support).

¹ The UK SPF bid, including all projects, totals £1 million. More details on this are available in the report to Cabinet in September 2022:

<https://democracy.testvalley.gov.uk/documents/s22656/UK%20Shared%20Prosperity%20Fund%20-%20Report.pdf>

² Business support programme aimed at small and medium enterprises to encourage the implementation of low carbon solutions and installation of energy efficiency measures. This is provided through a combination of support and grants.

- 4.26 A green business event was held on 21 September as part of Andover Business Week. Speakers comprised representatives from GreenTech South, LoCASE, the Enterprise M3 LEP Growth Hub, the Greater South East Net Zero Hub and the Federation of Small Businesses. There were 12 attendees to this event.
- 4.27 Our UKSPF bid included a project with a budget of £140,000 over three years to support technological, process and nature based innovation within our local rural land based businesses to enable measures to reduce their carbon footprint. At the time of writing the outcome of the bid was not known.

Natural Environment

- 4.28 The urban meadows initiative³ has been run for a second year, with a larger area covered through this scheme than in the first year. This has incorporated some Hampshire County Council highway verges and land at Bury Hill. A total of over 20 hectares has been managed in this way, focusing on locations in Andover, Romsey and Valley Park. Due to the dry conditions this year, the areas were cut earlier than has been the case in the previous year. A further review will be undertaken on the operation of this scheme to inform roll out in future years – this will take account of amenity and biodiversity considerations.
- 4.29 During the 2021/22 planting season, 19,325 trees were planted, relative to the target of 10,000 trees⁴. Over the forthcoming planting season (for 2022/23) we will be working towards planting a further 10,000 trees (primarily whips) – this is the second of three years in which this scale of tree planting is planned. As part of this, 2 hectares of woodland planting is planned for Bury Hill this planting season.

5 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting

Emissions for Test Valley Borough Council

- 5.1 The CEAP sets out the approach that has been taken to calculating the Council's greenhouse gas emissions. This concentrates on the energy (electricity and gas) used in the majority of the buildings we own and operate, as well as the fuel used in running the fleet vehicles and plant. The CEAP provided the position as at 2018/19 based on tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e)⁵. Data for 2019/20 and 2020/21 has previously been shared with the committee. The latest data for 2021/22 is currently being collated. There have been delays with bringing this information together while we resolve some discrepancies in aspects of the source data.
- 5.2 As the Committee will be aware, consultants were commissioned to review and advise on the scope of the Council's greenhouse gas emissions reporting and to provide recommendations on the approach to decarbonisation. This included the preparation of ten energy audits. The receipt of the outputs of this

³ See: <https://testvalley.gov.uk/communityandleisure/parksandgreenspaces/urban-meadow-creation>

⁴ This included the planting of 19,080 whips comprising mixed native species, including hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, beech, alder, oak and lime.

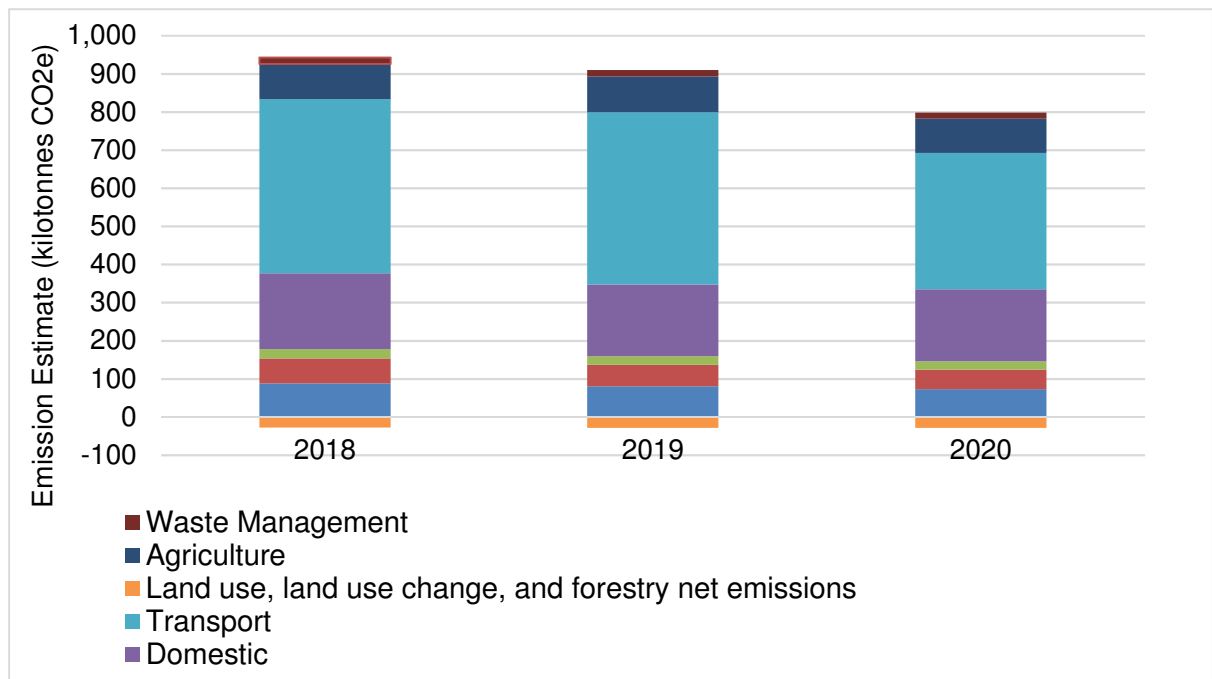
⁵ This is the unit of measurement advocated for use by the Government to report on greenhouse gas emissions. It looks beyond carbon dioxide, for example covering methane and nitrous oxide. It records the global warming potential of each greenhouse gas, expressed in terms of the global warming potential of one unit of carbon dioxide.

work was delayed, which has had knock on implications for timescales for considering the outcomes of this work. Additionally, time has been spent on putting bids together for Government funding that have strict deadlines and timescales, which has also delayed progress on reviewing our action plan. The approach to and timescales for undertaking this work are being revisited.

Emissions for Borough of Test Valley

- 5.3 There are a number of sources of information reporting on area based emissions. These capture different sources and are updated at differing intervals. The CEAP referred to the data published by the Government for carbon dioxide emissions for local authority areas, reflecting that this source is readily available and published every year (based on calendar years). Additionally, this source is consistent with the UK total emissions figure that is used for wider reporting. The latest data release⁶ has broadened the range of greenhouse gas emissions that are reported on to include methane and nitrous oxide (back dated to 2018).
- 5.4 The below table sets out the total greenhouse gas emissions arising in the Borough as reported through this source. It also provides the data on a per person basis. The graph indicates the split of the emissions based on the key categories in the dataset.

Year	Total emissions estimate (kilo tonnes CO ₂ e)	Per person emissions estimate (tonnes CO ₂ e)
2018	915.4	7.3
2019	881.7	7.0
2020	769.9	6.1



⁶ Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics>

5.5 For comparison in 2020, the per person emissions for Hampshire was 4.5 tonnes CO2e, and for England was 5.1 tonnes CO2e. The higher figure for Test Valley is likely to at least in part relate to the rural nature of the Borough.

5.6 The coronavirus pandemic will have influenced the 2020 emissions, therefore future releases are likely to show a rebound – this is already being picked up in national datasets (which are available sooner than the local figures).

6 Conclusion

6.1 An update has been provided on the implementation of the Climate Emergency Action Plan following on from the most recent report in April 2022.

6.2 The Committee is asked to consider the update report.

<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:	None		
Author:	Karen Eastley	Ext:	8258
File Ref:	n/a		
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	2 November 2022