

# Climate Emergency Working Group

Report of the Climate Emergency and Countryside Portfolio Holder

## Recommended:

1. That a **Climate Emergency Working Group** be established.
2. That the **Climate Emergency Working Group** shall be politically proportionate and comprise seven Councillors with its members to be nominated by political group leaders.
3. That the **Terms of Reference** set out at **Annex 1** to the report be approved.

### SUMMARY:

The report seeks approval for the creation of a Climate Emergency Working Group.

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend the creation of a Climate Emergency Working Group in order to advise on the content of the refresh of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan and to maintain momentum following the approval of the document.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 The Council declared a climate emergency on 4 September 2019. The Council invited the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSCOM) to establish a cross-party working group with a remit to draw together the existing work of the Council in reducing the impacts of climate change and develop an action plan that identifies the steps the Council can take to achieve carbon neutrality as quickly as possible.
- 2.2 On 10 June 2020, the Council approved the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP). This set out a series of actions that could be investigated and taken. It was recognised that the CEAP should be seen as a living document to allow it to be amended as opportunities arise. This was done because the picture around climate change is ever evolving through advances in technology, government policy and people's behaviour.
- 2.3 The cross-party working groups, supported by officers from various services, each followed one of several themes. All members, not just those on OSCOM, had the opportunity to be part of the work streams. They, along with officers, provided their own experiences and knowledge and explored existing practices and future possibilities. This allowed the Council to establish a starting point of recognising current projects and identifying possibilities.

- 2.4 No amendments have been made to the CEAP but opportunities have been taken to deliver additional actions where they have arisen. Biannual progress reports on delivery have been presented to OSCOM, with annual summary reports published on the website. Workshops and briefings have also been held with Councillors.
- 2.5 Since the CEAP's production there have been two OSCOM panels that related specifically to this area of work. The first, chaired by Councillor Gwynne, recommended aspirational targets of carbon neutrality 2035 for Council operations and 2040 for defined parts of the community and economy as influenced and supported by the Council, as well as a series of specific recommendations for actions. The second, chaired by Councillor Lodge, related to the consideration of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill but included recommendations that future reviews of the CEAP think about re-focusing on biodiversity (taking account of the Environment Act 2021) and add targets and milestones to the CEAP.

### **3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities**

- 3.1 The current CEAP is a living document with the ability to be updated and amended subject to approval. It does not cover a particular time period. The Corporate Plan (CP) 2023-27 sets out a strategic priority for the environment in which addressing a changing climate is a key focus. The CP will influence the future development of the CEAP both in terms of the role the Council can play in reducing its own emissions and the community leadership role in supporting local communities.
- 3.2 In August 2023, Cabinet approved the Corporate Action Plan 2023-27 (Year 1). This included the theme of delivering the actions in the CEAP, with one of the areas of focus being to produce an updated CEAP. This provides the mandate and timeline in which to undertake and monitor the refreshed document through the standard corporate plan process.

### **4 Consultations/Communications**

- 4.1 The recommended approach was outlined by the Climate Emergency and Countryside Portfolio Holder at the OSCOM meeting of 11 October 2023.

### **5 Options**

- 5.1 The option to consider is whether to establish the councillor working group, or not. A further option is whether to repeat the previous approach to councillor involvement.

### **6 Option Appraisal**

- 6.1 In establishing the group, it would serve in an advisory capacity [to Cabinet] with regards to the direction of travel for the CEAP refresh. The scope of the group would be to consider policy development and identifying those actions with which to focus Council resources on to achieve the greatest impact,

including in terms of greenhouse gas emissions reduction. As part of this, there would be an opportunity to investigate a grant mechanism for supporting communities in undertaking projects linked to greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

- 6.2 The group would also be a mechanism to maintain momentum across the Council and our communities post the completion of the updated document.
- 6.3 The proposal is for a cross party councillor working group to be established comprising 7 Councillors. It is proposed that the group would be proportionate and the membership would be chosen by the Leader of the Council and Leader of the Minority group. The Terms of Reference for the group are attached at annex 1.
- 6.4 The alternative option is to not establish a Councillor working group. Whilst work would still progress with the CEAP refresh there would be a missed opportunity of achieving an additional role for Councillors in informing the direction of travel for the revised document.
- 6.5 There is the option of repeating the wider Councillor engagement which helped to create the original CEAP. Involving all members in the production of the CEAP was a valuable exercise albeit resource intensive. As the Council has the existing document to build upon, plus the work of OSCOM and other sources, and the proposed timeframe for completing the CEAP refresh it is not proposed to repeat this approach.

## **7 Risk Management**

- 7.1 There are no significant risks identified as a result of the recommendations of this report.

## **8 Resource Implications**

- 8.1 The creation and administration of the working group would be met from existing budgets. Any budget implications arising from the actions proposed within the CEAP refresh would be the subject of a separate report.

## **9 Legal Implications**

- 9.1 There are no legal issues identified as a result of the recommendations of this report.

## **10 Equality Issues**

- 10.1 No equality issues are identified as a result of the recommendation in this report. Should any equality issues arise in the course of the work of the group, these issues would be addressed and considered as necessary.

## **11 Other Issues**

- 11.1 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate

11.1.1 The recommendation in this report is connected with how the Council intends to create the CEAP refresh document to continue to make progress in addressing climate change.

## 11.2 Property Issues

11.2.1 There are no property issues directly associated with the recommendation of this report. It should be noted that the future actions may identify projects that effect Council property.

## 11.3 Wards/Communities Affected

11.3.1 The recommendation in this report is connected with how the Council intends to create the CEAP refresh document. Once the document is completed it will affect all Wards/communities.

## 12 Conclusion

12.1 The report seeks approval for the creation of a Climate Emergency Working Group to aid with refreshing the Climate Emergency Action Plan and support its implementation post-completion.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u> <a href="#">Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020)</a>			
<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	File Ref:	N/A
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