

Climate Emergency Action Plan

Report of the Climate Emergency and Countryside Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

1. That the Climate Emergency Action Plan, annexed to the report, be approved.
2. That the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development be given delegated authority to make changes of a minor nature to the Climate Emergency Action Plan in consultation with the Climate Emergency and Countryside Portfolio Holder prior to publication.

SUMMARY:

- The Corporate Action Plan includes an action for the Council to review its Climate Emergency Action Plan. The updated document has been shaped by the cross-party Climate Emergency Working Group.
- The updated Climate Emergency Action Plan is presented to Cabinet to seek approval.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents an updated Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) for approval.
- 1.2 The first CEAP was published in 2020 after the Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. The 2020 version along with the Council's Sustainability Framework (2017) would be replaced by the updated action plan.
- 1.3 The Climate Emergency Working Group (CEWG), a cross-party group comprising seven members, have, using their experience and expertise, guided and directed the content of the document. In line with the Cabinet's approval (15 November 2023) to establish the group, they will be involved with monitoring the progress of the delivery of actions moving forward.

2 Background

- 2.1 Since the production of the original CEAP in 2020, the Council have made progress in reducing our emissions, including transitioning from diesel to HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil) fuel amongst our fleet vehicles; decarbonising Council assets; and through working with communities and businesses to reduce borough wide emissions. It is recognised that our communities play a leading role in emissions reduction and there are opportunities to do more to ensure this progress continues.

- 2.2 The CEWG have shaped the direction and content of the CEAP, which has taken account of the progress in delivering the current CEAP, as well as other sources of information. The discussions included consideration of the scope and structure of the document, the different roles of the Council and the influence it has, and the approach to the actions.
- 2.3 The emerging document aligns with the timescales of the Corporate Plan and focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving resilience to the effects of climate change, both for the Council and supporting such actions, along with other parties, for the borough. Aligning with the Corporate Plan enables a specific focus on delivering actions and measuring their impact. The CEWG considered this focused remit as important to the momentum and a proactive approach on climate action, rather than a broader scope on wider environmental issues. However, the strong links with wider environmental and other themes are recognised, as summarised through the consideration of co-benefits. There are also other strategies and policies that will be relevant to some of these other topics, such as the forthcoming Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- 2.4 The proposed document sets out objectives that reflect the scope of the document, as well as being more explicit on the different means through which the Council can take action on the climate emergency. For example, while transport sector emissions are a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the borough, Hampshire County Council is the highway authority.

Proposed Approach to Actions

- 2.5 The emerging CEAP includes a comprehensive set of actions, designed to drive forward carbon reduction activity. As far as possible, the actions have timescales or milestones for delivery and are quantifiable to enable us to measure the impact on greenhouse gases over the next three years.
- 2.6 The CEWG provided a steer and feedback on the proposed actions and how they are presented so as to be clearer on how this relates to the level of influence the Council would have (e.g. direct control to awareness and engagement) and whether they were more likely to influence the Council's greenhouse gas emissions or those for the borough.
- 2.7 The actions have been presented in three tables - table 1 looks at those specific to the Council's emissions, table 2 covers actions that affect emissions external to the Council, and table 3 looks at actions focused on engagement, awareness and communication. The CEWG raised the importance of actions being framed to be specific and measurable to aid in monitoring – both in terms of the degree to which the action has been progressed relative to the expected timeline and the impact of the actions. This has not been possible for all actions, some of which are ongoing in nature. Additionally, some actions are investigative, therefore the outcome of such work should enable a clearer direction on next steps (e.g. the most effective approach to decarbonising certain Council assets). Although it is not possible to record a specific impact with the actions in table 3, the CEWG noted it is important to highlight where engagement and communication can play a role in changing habits, helping with wider emissions reduction and adaptation to climate change.

- 2.8 The CEWG sought the addition of a range of actions, including improving the quality of data we have access to, a specific action on exploring the creation of a climate emergency focused community grant, looking at options for carbon sequestration from the Council's assets, actions relating to our role in promoting and facilitating more active and sustainable travel, and actions about how we work with partners including in relation to climate resilience.
- 2.9 During the lifespan of the CEAP, additional actions may be identified. When these opportunities arise, they will be considered and responded to accordingly.

Update on action 34: Climate Change Grant

- 2.10 Since reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 October (see section 4), the CEWG have met to discuss how to start shaping a climate change grant (relating to action 34 within the emerging CEAP). This action seeks to 'design and develop a community grant specifically related to climate change'. As part of the establishment of the CEWG, it was indicated that there would be an opportunity for this group to investigate a grant mechanism for supporting communities in undertaking projects linked to greenhouse gas emissions reduction.
- 2.11 This action was originally proposed to be completed by December 2024, however, in light of initial discussions of the CEWG, it would be valuable to have an opportunity to further explore and discuss the approach to such a grant. Therefore, it has proposed that the timescale for completing this action is changed to the end of March 2025.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- 2.12 The Council have reported on its greenhouse gas emissions within the CEAP for the majority of buildings that are Council owned and operated, as well as the fuel used in running the fleet vehicles and smaller machinery.
- 2.13 The CEAP (2020) provided the baseline position as at 2018/19 using the measure of tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e).
- 2.14 The Council reports on scope 1 and 2 emissions, but not scope 3¹ as it is currently not possible to report on these emissions due to the availability of appropriate data. Some of the proposed actions have the potential to reduce scope 3 emissions, even if it is not possible to measure this.
- 2.15 The impact on the Council's net emissions is outlined in figure 3 in the CEAP, which provides a trajectory from 2018-2027. The solid grey bars indicate figures from data that has previously been reported. The dashed grey bars outline an emissions trajectory from assumptions made based on the proposed actions.
- 2.16 The trajectory from 2018-2022 is based on data that the Council have already reported. This includes gas, electricity and fleet data.

¹ Definitions for these terms are set out within the CEAP, appended to this report.

- 2.17 The trajectory from 2023-27 is based on available information. For example, the drop from 2022/23 to 2023/24 is based on the transition to HVO in late April 2023. The reduction in 2024/25 is based on the additional month of HVO and the estimated impact of the decarbonisation project of Bourne House. For 2025/26, an estimate is made on potential further reductions based on the implementation of decarbonisation projects within the actions.
- 2.18 This trajectory will be kept under review as we move through the lifespan of the document.
- 2.19 A carbon sequestration calculation has also been undertaken to understand the impact the Council's tree planting on net emissions.
- 2.20 Figure 4 in the CEAP estimates the impact of the Council's tree planting on net greenhouse gas emissions. The section of the bars indicated in dashed green outlines the potential reduction in emissions as a result of carbon sequestration calculations. The total height of the trajectory figures is the same as the projections in figure 3, however, the green bar now outlines the estimated emissions that would be reduced as a result of the tree planting, leaving the grey dashed figure as the remainder of the trajectory figure if this was to be applied.
- 2.21 Figure 5 focuses in on the trajectory years and has been presented as a line graph to make the relationship between the Council's projected greenhouse gas emissions and the implications of the tree planting clearer.
- 2.22 There have been assumptions made for this calculation, in part reflecting that carbon sequestration calculation is a new science. The assumptions made include:
- Tree planting undertaken within 2021/22 finished at the end of March 2022 and therefore there is no impact on carbon sequestration in that year. As a result, the calculation started for 2022/23. This approach is repeated for subsequent years.
 - All standard trees survive and there will be a 10% failure for the whips planted, every year, for three years.
 - It does not differentiate the rate of carbon sequestration for tree types, species or conditions and both whips and standard trees are assumed to sequester an average of 10kg of carbon per year for the first 20 years.
- 2.23 As the science develops, the calculations will be kept under review.

Monitoring and Reporting

- 2.24 The Council will monitor and evaluate the progress of the action plan against the intended outcomes, and review and refine it based on lessons learnt. This will include monitoring the greenhouse gas emissions and progress on delivering the actions. This will be documented through an annual progress report, to include the metrics and qualitative updates associated with the delivery of the actions. This report would be prepared with input from the Climate Emergency Working Group (in line with the terms of reference) and presented to Cabinet.

- 2.25 Any additional information or relevant updates will also be provided through this monitoring approach, such as any additional opportunities that may arise within the three years of this plan.
- 2.26 The CEAP will continue to be reviewed in line with the cycles of the preparation of Corporate Plan.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan for the period 2023-27 (A Place for Everyone – Supporting our communities to thrive) was approved by Council in April 2023. The Corporate Plan is one of the key documents that forms the Council's policy framework, setting out strategic priorities and the overarching strategic plans for the Council. The 'environment' strategic priority recognises the community leadership role we have in relation to climate change, as well as noting that we will take action to become a carbon neutral organisation as soon as possible.
- 3.2 The year 2 Corporate Action Plan includes an item relating to the delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan. As part of this it was indicated that there would be a focus on a number of items including updating the CEAP, with support from the Climate Emergency Working Group.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 The CEWG have shaped the direction and content of the CEAP, which has taken account of the progress in delivering the current CEAP, as well as other sources of information. The discussions included consideration of the scope and structure of the document, the different roles of the Council and the influence it has, the approach to the actions.
- 4.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the draft updated CEAP on 9 October 2024. The Committee resolved that the document be noted and endorsed, with a recommendation to Cabinet that it be recommended.

5 Options

- 5.1 The options available are whether to approve the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), as appended to the report, make amendments to the CEAP before approving it, or not to approve it.

6 Option Appraisal

Option 1 (approve the Climate Emergency Action Plan)

- 6.1 The CEAP has been prepared with significant support from the Climate Emergency Working Group on the scope of the document and the actions to be included. It has also been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in section 4, with one subsequent amendment made to the timing of a proposed action as described above (paragraphs 2.10 and 2.11). It has sought to identify the ways in which the Council can take action on the climate emergency, both in terms of the organisation and the role we play as a community leader. It is therefore recommended that this option is pursued.

Option 2 (approve the Climate Emergency Action Plan with amendments from that shown in the Annex)

- 6.2 The CEAP shown in the Annex has been subject to rigorous review by officers and a cross-party working group. It is also supported by OSCOM. Given the weight of support and evidence used in prepared the CEAP, changes are not recommended.

Option 3 (do not approve the Climate Emergency Action Plan)

- 6.3 Should the CEAP not be approved, the 2020 document would continue to apply. Many of the actions within this document have been completed, therefore the Council would not have a clear framework for how it intends to take action in relation to the climate emergency. It would also be challenging to monitor our performance in the absence of such a framework.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 An evaluation of the risks has been undertaken. Whilst risks of a medium priority were identified, controls have been put in place resulting in no significant risks being outstanding.

8 Resource Implications

- 8.1 There are no resource implications from approval of the CEAP, as recommended in this report.
- 8.2 Where the actions require a change in work practices or project delivery they may require additional resources to implement and / or maintain. It is too premature to estimate the level of resources required (both financial and officer time). This can only be properly gauged once the individual action is considered in more detail.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 There is no legal obligation to prepare a Climate Emergency Action Plan. The Council will act in accordance with legal obligations in relation to climate change matters, whilst having regard to other legislative requirements when implementing the actions.

10 Equality Issues

- 10.1 The EQIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Equalities issues will be taken into account through any more detailed consideration of the implementation of actions.

11 Other Issues

- 11.1 Community Safety – none identified
- 11.2 Environmental Health Issues – none identified

- 11.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate – The CEAP sets out actions to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the lifespan on the Corporate Plan, up to 2027. This includes actions to reduce Council emissions, and emissions within the borough, while also planning appropriately for the long term. This document will be monitored annually and new opportunities to reduce emissions will be explored if they arise.
- 11.4 Property Issues - A number of the actions relate to the way we manage our land and property, so as to reduce our energy consumption for example. The Property and Asset Management Service have been involved in the preparation of the Action Plan. Assessment of the implication for property will be given when each action is considered in more detail.
- 11.5 Wards/Communities Affected – All

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 The appended Climate Emergency Action Plan has been prepared to update and replace to the 2020 CEAP and the Council's Sustainability Framework (2017). It is proposed that the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan is approved.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
Corporate Plan 2023-27: A Place for Everyone – Supporting our communities to Thrive			
Corporate Action Plan 2023-27: Year 2			
Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020)			
Sustainability Framework (2017)			
<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
(Portfolio: Climate Emergency and Countryside) Councillor A Johnston			
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	20 November 2024