

ITEM 10

Draft Climate Emergency Action Plan

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

Recommended:

That OSCOM endorse the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan annexed to this report.

Recommended to Council

SUMMARY:

For OSCOM to consider the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan.

1 Introduction

1.1 This report introduces the draft Climate Emergency action plan. This is the culmination of the work undertaken by the cross party member and officer groups since September 2019.

2 Background

2.1 In October 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹ issued a special report in relation to global warming. This highlighted the latest understanding on global warming and a need for urgent action. Following this, a number of UK local authorities started declaring climate emergencies, reflecting the need for action at all scales. Further attention to this matter has arisen linked to the Extinction Rebellion movement² since early 2019.

2.2 In response to the increased focus on the climate, the Council declared a climate emergency on 4 September 2019. The Council agreed:-

i. That the Council declare a 'Climate Emergency' and commit to investigating clear and effective options to become a carbon-neutral organisation.

ii. That the Council invite the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to establish a cross party working group comprising Council Officers and Members (including the Environmental Portfolio Holder), 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.

¹ UN body for assessing science in relation to climate change.

² Seeking a commitment to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025.

iii. That the working group be requested to provide their draft recommendations within six months.

iv. That the Council work with our communities and partners to identify opportunities for making the Borough carbon neutral.

2.3 In order to deliver the Council resolution, OSCOM was tasked with establishing a cross party working group that would develop the draft action plan. At the OSCOM meeting of 16th October the draft scoping document was presented and agreed. This proposed seven cross party member/officer work streams should be established. These were:-

- Digital and smart working
- Premises and Asset Management
- Transport, Fleet and Plant
- Reducing, reusing, recycling
- Enhancing the natural environment
- Working with communities and businesses
- Infrastructure & built environment

2.4 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. The officer involvement was multi-disciplinary and helped to identify processes and projects already implemented by the Council to reduce emissions. This confirmed that the Council was not 'starting from scratch' but had begun the journey.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

3.1 The thread of tackling climate change runs implicitly through many of the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 2019-2023 'Growing Our Potential'. At its centre is our commitment to place-based working and enabling our communities to tackle the issues that are most important to them. This sets the context for working with our communities and partners to learn and share their ideas for tackling climate change.

4 Consultations/Communications

4.1 A specific element of the Council motion highlighted engaging with others to share experiences and learning. As part of drafting the action plan the 'working with communities and businesses' work stream have spoken and shared ideas with parish councils and other organisations. These conversations will continue both through the climate emergency and other forums, such as Romsey Future and Andover Vision. We have also taken account of comments submitted to the Council.

4.2 Through the process it was interesting to note that members were often unaware of the work that the Council had already undertaken in tackling climate change. In the context of greater awareness of climate change the progress, monitoring and delivery of any future action will need to have the advice of the Council's communications team.

5 Draft Climate Emergency Action Plan

- 5.1 In the relatively short window, OSCOM has been able to propose a draft action plan which will move the Council towards being a carbon neutral organisation. The actions plan sets out seven themes. These differ slightly from the work streams in order to reduce overlap and to use terms which are more relevant for a wider audience. Each work stream has identified a series of actions for both implementation and further investigation. The actions listed goes beyond 'business as usual'. Certain actions are already in train but some will often rely on behavioural change within the organisation as well as a shift in national policy or improvements in technology to enable the action to be achieved.
- 5.2 Through the process there was an inevitable overlap of the suggested actions and which theme they would best fit within. Officers have looked to remove any duplication. The actions have been put into short, medium and long term tranches. What is meant by the time frames will differ depending on the theme and action. In some circumstances the actions do not fall within a particular timeframe but have commenced and will continue throughout the life of action plan.
- 5.3 A separate theme of 'corporate action' has been included. This picks up those actions which are applicable to multiple work streams and also cut across the organisation. This includes the role the Council has in raising particular issues with Government.
- 5.4 An OSCOM round table session was held on 18 March. At that session members were keen to have priorities identified and officers have made a first attempt (those in bold within the action plan). This is not to indicate the importance of actions but reflects where current resources are to be focussed.
- 5.5 In drafting these actions, the work streams have understood the challenge that the Council faces. Opinion nationally remains divided on the pace required to meet this emergency, the impact certain measures will have, and the reliance on technologies some of which are in their infancy. This has led to variations in the approaches and claims of authorities, companies and communities on the best method to reach carbon neutrality and over what timescale. There does not appear to be a common definition or approach.
- 5.6 As the actions have emerged from the work streams, it has been identified that baseline information has been gathered for some elements but not all. There are on-line tools which could help to fill the evidence gap but these tend to provide data at a Borough level are not sufficient for an organisation as complex as a local authority. A greater understanding of the current picture is required. At this stage, OSCOM has identified the challenges and the way forward without a specific target being established but still demonstrating their ambition.

- 5.7 The ability of organisations to meet targets, especially those with a short timescales, depend on a number of variables e.g. the scope of their responsibilities and function; the geography of the area they cover; and their assets. This serves to highlight the lack of common definition or approach and that direct comparison should not be undertaken. Each organisation is different. Some organisations (including the private sector) rely on 'off-setting' to achieve carbon neutrality. There is a recognition that there will be a need for off-setting (e.g. increasing tree planting) to achieve carbon neutrality, especially for a rural Council and given the services the Council provides. This is contained in the action plan.
- 5.8 To really achieve carbon neutrality there does need to be a system change at all levels of government and within all sectors of the community. This action plan begins to do that. There has been a rapid change in technology, behaviour and government policy over the last 18-24 months to the extent that the time frames and priorities will change. As such, the action plan will need to be considered a 'living' document. This evolving picture will only make achieving carbon neutrality more likely and give the Council the opportunity to establish targets with the potential to exceed those set by Government and Hampshire County Council of carbon neutrality by 2050.
- 5.9 The Council will need to monitor and report on the action plans progress. Whilst this has been an OSCOM led process, member involvement has gone beyond the OSCOM membership. However, it is proposed that OSCOM continues to be the forum for formally monitoring progress. It is proposed that a monitoring report is produced annually. There would also be opportunity for the operational delivery of the actions to be monitored as part of the Council's established performance management arrangements as well as linking to the Corporate Action Plan monitoring process.

6 Resource Implications

- 6.1 Where the actions require a change in work practices they may also require additional resources to implement. It is too premature to estimate the level of resources (both financial and officer time) required and can only be properly gauged once the individual action is considered in more detail.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The draft action plan sets out how the Council intends to respond to the climate emergency. The actions focus on how the Council functions and its role as an employer and how it can move towards being carbon neutral.

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

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Confidentiality

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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