

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>21 JUNE 2022</b>
<b>Heading:</b>	<b>SCRUTINY REVIEW: CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION</b>
<b>Executive Lead Member:</b>	<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>
<b>Ward/s:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Subject to Call-In:</b>	<b>NO</b>

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present Cabinet with the final report, including a set of recommendations, developed by Scrutiny Panel B at the conclusion of the Scrutiny Review: Climate Change Mitigation. This report sets out the information considered by Members throughout the review, the methodology used to conduct the review, as well as the reasoning behind each recommendation made to Cabinet.

Members of Scrutiny Panel B have worked in collaboration with the Assistant Director of Assets and Investments and Strategic Asset Manager throughout the Scrutiny Review: Climate Change Mitigation and were integral in the development of the draft Climate Change Strategy. In addition to the recommendations detailed in this report, Members have also provided strategic input, objectives, and preferred outcomes for the draft Climate Change Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan, to be presented to this meeting of Cabinet as a separate agenda item.

### Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is recommended to:

- a. Support the approval of a proposed target of net-zero by 2030 for the Council's Scope 1 and 2 emissions, as recommended in the *Climate Change Strategy* report.
- b. Support the approval of proposals to minimise Scope 3 emissions by 2050, as recommended in the *Climate Change Strategy* report.
- c. Support the approval of the Climate Change Strategy, Climate Change Action Plan, and Carbon Management Plan, as recommended in the *Climate Change Strategy* report.

## **Recommendation(s)**

- d. Continue to ensure an increase in the number of electric charging points available to the Council and the wider public.
- e. Continue the commitment towards the expansion of a greener transport fleet.
- f. Continue to invest appropriately in renewable technology opportunities.
- g. Promote low carbon and sustainable procurement across the Council.
- h. Continue to support tree planting schemes throughout Ashfield.
- i. Continue to support and promote energy saving initiatives to Ashfield residents.
- j. In addition to the Green Rewards Scheme, consider other targeted recognition initiatives aimed at communities, educational institutions, and businesses to increase innovation, action, and awareness in Ashfield.
- k. Work with schools and community groups to improve knowledge and understanding of climate change mitigation.
- l. Explore the possibility of establishing wildlife friendly verges across the District as part of the Council's commitment to supporting nature and wildlife.
- m. Ensure that local businesses and communities are involved in implementing the key objectives set out within the Climate Change Strategy.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

Climate Change Mitigation was added to the scrutiny work programme by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2020, having originally been set up as a separate scrutiny commission at Council. Members of Scrutiny Panel B have conducted a full review of the topic and formulated the recommendations above for consideration.

## **Alternative Options Considered**

Members of Scrutiny Panel B could have chosen not to submit any recommendations to Cabinet following the conclusion of the Scrutiny Review: Climate Change Mitigation. However, having examined all of the information available, Members felt it most appropriate to submit the above set of recommendations to Cabinet.

## **Detailed Information**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Climate Change Mitigation was added to the scrutiny work programme by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2020, having originally being set up as a separate scrutiny commission at Council.

Over the course of the review, Scrutiny Panel B has held five formal Panel meetings and three informal working group meetings. Members have considered a wide range of evidence and information, including guidance from the Local Government Association and Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, case study examples, emerging legislation and guidance, and developing documents within the Council.

Members have worked closely with the Council's Assistant Director – Assets and Investments and Strategic Asset Manager to gain a fuller understanding of the subject and actively take part in policy development.

## **GUIDANCE**

### Centre for Governance and Scrutiny: The Role of Scrutiny in Climate Change Programmes

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) have released a guide on how to go about scrutiny and inquiry on climate change at a local level, with a focus on the implications for Councils declaring climate emergencies. The guidance was produced with support from the LGA.

Please see below some details of the guidance document.

Initial key points the CfGS raise in the guidance:

- The 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report stated that at the current rate the world is on track to reach a global temperature rise of 3 degrees Celsius by the end of the century
- The general consensus is that significant impacts on humans and the biosphere will be apparent with 1.5 degrees of warming
- Limiting warming to this level may still be possible if concerted action is taken
- The Climate Change Act 2008 mandates some of this action – in particular reduction in emissions by at least 80 percent on 1990 levels by 2050, alongside legally binding carbon budgets and regular reporting of climate risks

Climate change is a critical global problem that will impact environments everywhere and individuals across all levels of society. Tackling climate change is a shared responsibility. It is deeply connected to other policy issues, there are no clearly defined solutions - certainly not at a local level - and new consequences are emerging. Currently, there is a great deal of uncertainty over who should respond to climate change and how this can be achieved. An effective response to climate change is not simply an issue that can be dealt with at the global scale; some form of local action is necessary for lasting environmental, social, and institutional change.

Councils across the UK have recognised a duty to act. Some are already acting on climate change – often by using their convening power to agree solutions across a whole area, rather than just focusing on the Council as an institution. Now, with many having declared a 'climate emergency', there is a growing understanding that response to the challenge needs to be holistic; but even here, there is some uncertainty about what such declarations commit Councils to in practice. Councils that have made this bold statement now need to show how they will prioritise and embed climate action in all policy areas.

The challenge has been thrown into sharper relief by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. At first glance it may seem that the impact of the pandemic will be positive for climate change. Globally, lockdown measures substantially reduced emissions, and in the UK measures by highways authorities have seen roadways reprioritised to focus on the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. But in the medium and long term, the position is more uncertain:

- Lessened use of public transport might make service levels unsustainable, leading to more people using cars and putting further public transport investment in danger – compounding the impact of pollution from private vehicles
- Councils' overall plans on climate change – written in the pre-COVID world and underpinned by assumptions about economic growth and personal behaviour – could now become undeliverable unless they are substantially redrafted
- Councils' financial situations focuses attention on immediate, in-year life and limb issues. Even before COVID, money to take action on long term issues was tight – the situation is now critical.

Both COVID-19 and the continuing threat of climate change demonstrate the needs for places and communities to become more resilient. Central to this is effective partnership working. Councils have a uniquely important role in using their buying power and resources to push forward action on climate change. They also have convening power in the local area – the ability to bring together a range of individuals and organisations and to work with them to develop a coherent and consistent approach to the issue. An approach to climate change which limits Councils to thinking and acting only on their conventional duties and responsibilities will not take advantage of these opportunities – and is likely to be ineffective.

The guidance explains that scrutiny has a critical role to play in the cross-cutting issues presented by climate change. Scrutiny functions can:

- Play an active role in stress-testing and querying assumptions in the development of climate action plans, particularly in light of the pandemic
- Secure wider political buy-in for long-term action, in the context of significant financial pressures which make such buy-in critical
- Play a formal accountability role as Councils come to make public commitments on climate action – in particular, the declaration of climate emergencies
- Support local people to engage with the Council on these complex and long-term issues
- Support the Council to engage with partners and others in the locality, to better understand and align priorities

The guidance sets out 10 questions that can be posed as part of the review process. The questions are as follows:

- How well does the Council understand the need to take action locally?
- How does the Council's leadership champion and direct action on climate change?

- How is the Council adopting a clear and detailed strategic plan, and how is it mainstreaming climate change mitigation and adaptation?
- Has the Council reviewed its investment strategy, supply chains, and procurement models to give due consideration to climate change impacts?
- How is the Council integrating sustainability and resilience into its transport and energy plans?
- How is the Council planning to understand and act on the need to adapt existing properties and estates to address the impacts of climate change – and to plan for new housing stock which is resilient to these impacts?
- How is the Council promoting climate change education, diversifying the labour market, and focusing on sectors that are sustainable?
- What measures are being taken to ensure that health and social care systems will be resilient with the extra pressures they will come under due to climate change?
- How does the Council identify those who are most at risk from the impacts of climate change, and what is being done to assist the most vulnerable?
- How is the Council supporting and working with all relevant private and civic actors in the area towards climate change mitigation and adaptation?

The questions put forward by the CfGS are exploratory in nature, designed to invite further supplementary questions depending on local circumstances. The above questions will be useful for:

- Scoping reviews to ensure focus in the context of a subject of significant potential breadth and depth. These questions could enable scrutiny to identify which areas the function could add most value.
- Planning local community involvement, giving a clearer sense of how best to engage the public and understand aspirations.
- Planning local business involvement to understand local context.
- Developing realistic, meaningful recommendations that engage both with the global challenge and the need for local action. The 10 questions can provide a basis on which to construct evidence-based recommendations that accurately reflect current plans, best practice, and activity.

## **CORPORATE PLAN**

The objectives set out within the Council's Corporate Plan relating to the commitment towards climate change mitigation have been central to the Panel's considerations throughout the review.

'Cleaner and Greener' is one of the five key priorities identified by the Council set out in the Corporate Plan. Within the Corporate Plan, the Council's vision for the 'Cleaner and Greener' priority is established:

*By 2023, we will create a cleaner and greener Ashfield, enabling communities and businesses to*

*thrive in a clean and tidy District, minimising waste, and recycling more.*

*Ashfield is pro-active in encouraging more recycling, tackling environmental crime, and finding innovative ways of delivering services that are responsive to the needs of our residents, visitors and businesses.*

*By working with our communities and businesses, the Council is better able to understand what matters and to shape services to help people enjoy living, visiting, and working in Ashfield.*

The Corporate Plan further outlines numerous key projects, programmes, and initiatives to be implemented within the next four years.

## Environment

- Deliver against our Environmental Charter
- Refresh the Green Business Scheme to engage businesses and promote environmentally sustainable behaviours
- Work with community volunteers and local business volunteers to encourage an increase in ownership of community open spaces
- Contribute to a reduction of CO2 emissions by increasing tree coverage in Ashfield
- Develop a Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan

## **EMPLOYEE SURVEY 2019 – CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION**

As part of the Employee Survey 2019, respondents were asked to suggest ideas and actions that the Council could or should implement to support climate change mitigation.

As part of this survey, over 100 suggestions were made, with all suggestions fed into the Council's project to develop its policy and strategy approach to climate change.

Panel Members examined the most submitted suggestions:

### Fleet and Personal Vehicles

- Implement electric vehicle fleet by phasing out petrol and diesel vehicles
- Promote car share schemes
- Encourage use of personal electric vehicles through changes to car user designations
- Provide solar powered electric charging points

### Paperless Meetings/Offices & Reduced Paper Use

- Phase out use of paper agendas
- Have paper free offices
- Reduce printing
- Reduce leaflet drops

## Recycling

- Make household recycling easier/increase what can be recycled
- Introduce food waste collections

## Smarter Working

- Expand agile working/working from home
- Improve options to reduce customer visits

## Energy & Resources

- Maximise provision of solar panels and use of solar technology
- Reduce use of single use plastics

## Policy

- Ensure planning policies include carbon neutral and energy efficient homes
- Use Future High Streets/Town Funds to invest in and support green technologies
- Ensure procurement exercises include climate considerations
- Phase out single use plastic
- Provide subsidised use of public transport

## Awareness Raising

- Raise awareness of actions that the Council is taking
- Host climate change conversation sessions for employees
- Provide a climate change suggestion box on the intranet
- Undertake awareness campaigns

## **ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL – CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION**

In 2019, Ashfield District Council commissioned Nottingham City Council (one of the UK's leading green Councils) to produce a draft Carbon Management Plan for Ashfield. This work included creating an all-important carbon baseline from 2015/16. This baseline is used to measure the Council's progress on carbon reduction thereafter.

Using Ashfield data, Nottingham City Council have analysed the Council's progress, examined the current carbon make up and given suggestions as to how the Council can improve.

The analysis is broken down in to 3 key emission areas which require different courses of action.

- Scope 1 - Direct (Ashfield District Council offices and fleet to provide services)
- Scope 2 – Indirect utilities (purchasing utilities for offices and communal housing courts)
- Scope 3 – Indirect other (Ashfield District Council investment properties, housing stock, staff commuting, purchased goods/materials)

In parallel with the work undertaken by the Nottingham City Council, Ashfield District Council has an internal working group to discuss actions and initiatives across departments that have the most

direct impact on climate change. This includes officers from: Assets & Investments, Place & Well Being, Waste & Environment, Planning, Procurement and Finance.

Work achieved by the internal working group so far includes:

- Staff Commuting Survey
- Waste Management Plan
- Energy Review
- Public Sector Decarbonising Bid
- Flood Protection Measures

Other key initiatives include the move to green electricity across the Council's assets, expanded use of photo voltaic (PV) power generation, biomass boilers, and external wall and general insulation on Council properties.

Of the Council's Scope 1 and 2 emissions (emissions that the Council directly control) the largest emissions are as follows:

- Fleet – 41%
- Gas usage – 39%
- Electric usage – 20%

Of the Council's Scope 3 emissions, whilst there are positives, the fact that the Council has acquired properties through the former commercial investment agenda has had a net negative effect.

Overall, Ashfield District Council as an operator has reduced 26% of its scope 3 emissions since 2015/16 (mainly investment in housing stock) but increased emissions by 77% overall due to the purchase of investment/commercial properties.

At this stage (subject to wider consultation with the Corporate Leadership Team and elected Members) the Council's overarching ambition is as follows:

- Ashfield District Council intends to reach net zero for Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030, and Scope 3 emissions will be continually reviewed with the target of reducing net emissions for 2050.*
- Ashfield District Council will work towards reducing net emissions by 14% year on year with a view of achieving net zero by 2050.*
- Ashfield District Council will use its influence and look to work with the wider community to reduce scope 3 emissions, whilst continuing to carry out direct actions to reduce the Council's own Scope 1 & 2 emissions.*

Proposed Strategic Actions Moving Forward:

The following strategic actions are currently being considered as part of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

- Apply for future funding for all Scope emissions - £2m funding already secured.
- Improve the efficiency of current fleet use and consider share of electric vehicles.
- Increase the availability of electric pool cars.



- Promote more sustainable methods of employee commuting, such as cycle to work schemes, car sharing and electric vehicle charging points.
- Invest in walking and cycling infrastructure and pedestrianising the high street where possible.
- Reduce the total volume of waste generated where possible through greater reuse, and behavioural change campaigns.
- Investigate the potential to increase water reuse, for example through grey water recovery systems to reduce wastewater.
- Flood management and biodiversity.
- Tree planting.
- Support local businesses and promote good sustainable behaviours with a Green Business Scheme.
- Work with and influence community volunteers and local businesses to help with climate change mitigation to encourage an increase in ownership of community open spaces.
- Asset rationalisation and enhancement.
- Internal reviews such as procurement, waste/recycling etc.

## **CASE STUDIES**

As part of a councillor workbook focussing on acting on climate change, the Local Government Association (LGA) have compiled a series of case studies highlighting the work of local authorities across the country towards climate change mitigation.

### Kirklees Council

Kirklees Council is working to ensure all residents can afford to heat their homes. More than 50,000 homes have been improved to-date. Total benefits by 2050 are estimated to be £250 million from an initial investment of £11 million from the Council plus £10 million from energy suppliers.

### Devon County Council

Devon County Council have worked in partnership with local authorities to implement a package of measures to improve local resilience in 24 communities, including establishing training volunteer 'Flood Warden' groups.

### Stroud District Council

Stroud District Council is working with local community flood groups, landowners, farmers, and partner organisations to implement a range of measures that will reduce flood risk but also improve water quality and enhance the biodiversity of the streams and brooks in the area.

### Bristol City Council

Bristol is seeking to make trips by bike the natural choice for their increasing number of commuters to tackle congestion and reduce emissions. As part of this initiative, Bristol City Council has committed to:

- Consulting on shared use routes
- Improving signage legibility in shared use areas to make it clearer to those on bike and foot
- Delivering improved on-street cycle parking
- Ensuring promotion of new infrastructure to employees, schools, and the wider community through new residential developments and a developed network of community groups
- Providing loan bikes, cycle training, and route planning

- Ensuring new cycling infrastructure is included in developments

### Mansfield District Council

'Bee Kind' is a campaign that aims to inform residents about the importance of bees on our environment to improve biodiversity in our neighbourhoods. Mansfield District Council have placed 39 planters with wildflowers around the town centre and wider District to help attract wildlife and improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

### 'Bee-Friendly' Bus Stops

Plant-topped bus shelters nicknamed 'bee-stops' are to be introduced in the city of Leicester. The living roofs will feature a mixture of pollinator friendly wildflowers and succulent plants, designed to help support Britain's declining bee population. Plans are also in place to fit bus shelters with solar panels and smart lighting to help manage energy use and lower the city's carbon footprint.

### **NET ZERO STRATEGY: BUILD BACK GREENER**

On the 19 October 2021, the *Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener* policy paper was published by Government. The strategy sets out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet a net zero target by 2050.

The Net Zero Strategy includes:

- The Government's decarbonisation pathways to net zero by 2050, including illustrative scenarios
- Policies and proposals to reduce emissions for each sector
- Cross-cutting action to support the transition

Key policies outlined within this section are:

- Deliver at least £1.5 billion of funding to support net zero innovation projects.
- Use the UK Infrastructure Bank to crowd in private finance, support more than £40 billion of investment, and pull through low carbon technologies and sectors to maturity and scale.
- Introduce a new Sustainability Disclosures Regime, including mandatory climate related financial disclosures and a UK green taxonomy.
- Reform the skills system so that training providers, employers, and learners are incentivised and equipped to play their part in delivering the transition to net zero.
- Publish an annual progress update against a set of key indicators for achieving climate goals.

It continues with:

*“We will also take a place-based approach to net zero, working with local government to ensure that all local areas have the capability and capacity for net zero delivery as we level up the country”.<sup>1</sup>*

The Strategy sets out that the Government will be embedding climate considerations into policy and spending decisions, increasing the transparency of progress against climate goals, and providing funding to ambitious emissions reductions in schools and hospitals. Furthermore, it is stated that the Government will play a pivotal role in catalysing the role of local government in the transition, by financing strategic infrastructure projects led by local authorities, and providing advice and expertise in order to strengthen the pipeline of investable projects.

The *Local Climate Action* section goes into more detail on how the Government will be supporting decarbonisation and regeneration in local areas and communities. The following key commitments have been outlined in this section:

- Set clearer expectations on how central and local government interact in the delivery of net zero.
- Build on existing engagement with local actors by establishing a Local Net Zero Forum to bring together national and local government senior officials on a regular basis to discuss policy and delivery options on net zero.
- Continue the Local Net Zero Programme to support all local areas with their capability and capacity to meet net zero. This includes provisions to:
  - Continue with Local Net Zero Hubs to support all areas of England to reach net zero, including those lacking capacity and capability, or those facing unique challenges.
  - Promote best practice and support local authorities to develop net zero projects that can attract commercial investment.
  - Increase knowledge sharing to demonstrate and share successful net zero system solutions.

Along with the Strategy, the Government has also published a response to the 2021 Committee on Climate Change progress report.

The full 368-page *Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener* can be viewed through the following link: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1026655/net-zero-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1026655/net-zero-strategy.pdf).

#### Climate Change Committee: 2021 Progress Report to Parliament

The Climate Change Committee is an independent, statutory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008. The purpose of the Committee is to advise the UK and devolved governments on emissions targets and to report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change.<sup>2</sup>

As part of the 2021 Progress Report, the Climate Change Committee published some key messages, stating that:

---

<sup>1</sup> Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, *Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener*, October 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Climate Change Committee, *About the Climate Change Committee*, 2021.

*“The Government has made historic climate promises in the past year, for which it deserves credit. However, it has been too slow to follow these with delivery. This defining year for the UK’s climate credentials have been marred by uncertainty and delay to a host of new climate strategies. Those that have emerged have too often missed the mark. With every month of inaction, it is harder for the UK to get on track.”<sup>3</sup>*

#### Progress on Net Zero:

- Lockdown measures led to a record decrease in UK emissions in 2020 of 13% from the previous year. Sustained reductions in emissions require sustained Government leadership, underpinned by a strong Net Zero Strategy.
  - A Net Zero Test would ensure that all Government policy, including planning decisions, is compatible with UK climate targets.
  - An ambitious Heat and Buildings Strategy, that works for consumers, is urgently needed.
  - Delayed plans on surface transport, aviation, hydrogen, biomass, and food must be delivered.
  - Plans for the power sector, industrial decarbonisation, the North Sea, peat, and energy from waste must be strengthened.
  - The big cross-cutting challenges of public engagement, fair funding, and local delivery must be tackled.

The Climate Change Committee also published the below figure detailing changes in UK emissions by sector:

#### Progress on Adaptation in England:

- Only five of 34 sectors assessed have shown notable progress in the past two years, and no sector is yet scoring highly in lowering its level of risk. The Climate Change Committee have provided 50 recommendations, including:
  - Restore 100% of upland peat by 2045, including through a ban on rotational burning
  - Bring forward proposed plans to address overheating risk in homes through Building Regulations.
  - Make the Government’s next round of Adaptation Reporting mandatory for all infrastructure sectors.
  - Build a strong emergency resilience capability for the UK against climate shocks, learning from the COVID-19 response.
  - Implement a public engagement programme on climate change adaptation.

---

<sup>3</sup> Climate Change Committee, *2021 Progress Report to Parliament*, 2021.

Full details of the recommendations made by the Climate Change Committee can be viewed through the following link: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CCC-Joint-Recommendations-2021-Report-to-Parliament.pdf>.

In response to the report and recommendations made by the Climate Change Committee, *Government Response to Climate Change Committee* was published on 19 October 2021 along with the Net Zero Strategy. The response can be viewed through the following link: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1026734/government-response-ccc-progress-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1026734/government-response-ccc-progress-report.pdf).

## **DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

### Climate Change Strategy

As part of the Council's ongoing commitment to climate change mitigation, a Climate Change Strategy has been developed.

As stated within the draft:

*"The Climate Change Strategy sets out a roadmap for reducing carbon emissions across Ashfield District Council's operations and services. The Council provides a wide range of services to its local residents across the District and is one of the largest employers in the area. These services include Housing, Parks and Green Spaces, Waste and Environmental Services, Environmental Health, and Planning and Economic Regeneration. Therefore, the Council is well placed to have a positive impact on climate change in the area, which can be achieved through:*

- *Establishing and understanding current emissions (carbon baseline)*
- *Setting carbon reduction targets*
- *Setting out key actions to reduce carbon emissions (Carbon Management Plan)*
- *Gathering and maintaining high quality emissions data and monitoring improvements over time*
- *Supporting decarbonisation of the District*

*The Strategy will be reviewed annually and/or when significant change occurs in order to take consideration of emerging renewable technologies, changes to Government targets, legislation, and funding opportunities, along with taking advantage of existing and emerging opportunities and developments in the energy market."*

The draft Strategy goes on to detail policy context, Ashfield District Council's Emissions and Carbon Footprint, as well as a roadmap for reducing carbon emissions. Furthermore, the draft Strategy sets out key delivery themes as follows:

- Transport
- Housing
- Energy
- Waste
- Procured Goods and Services
- Investments
- Climate Resilience and Biodiversity
- Partnership and Collaboration

Scrutiny Panel B Members have had the opportunity to examine the Strategy in draft stage and provide feedback on the contents within the document.

### Climate Change Action Plan

Alongside development of the Climate Change Strategy, a Climate Change Action Plan has been established. The Action Plan itemises individual actions under priority themes identified by the Council, which are:

- Delivery
- Fleet Use
- Gas and Electricity Consumption
- Fugitive Emissions
- Procurement of Goods, Services, and Capital Goods
- Waste Generated in Operations
- Business Travel
- Employee Commuting
- Sustainable Transport in the District
- Investments
- Engagement
- Raising Awareness
- Area Wide Actions
- Funding and Reporting Procedures
- Additional Actions

Each action within the Plan is tagged as high, medium, or low priority with a timeframe of short, medium, or long term. The draft Climate Change Action Plan is intended to be implemented as a working document with detailed actions, priorities, and timeframes being reviewed regularly.

All service areas within the Council need to contribute towards the delivery of the Plan, and also need to take responsibility for actions listed and lead on implementation. Actions set out within the Plan need to be SMART: simple, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound.

### **INFORMAL WORKING GROUPS**

Throughout this review, Scrutiny Panel B Members have utilised informal working groups to enable more efficient and effective evidence gathering.

#### January 2021

The first informal working group of the review was held on 20 January with attendance from Members and both the Assistant Director of Assets and Investment and Strategic Asset Manager.

The Assistant Director - Assets and Investment provided Members with a comprehensive update regarding the ongoing work of the Council and the commitment to mitigate climate change.

Members were informed that effective collaborative work is imperative and a key priority in climate change mitigation. A Climate Change Officers Working Group has been established, with representation from all sections of the Council, to enable Officers to effectively disseminate ideas and work in the same direction. The Council has also been working in partnership with the Lead Officers Energy Group, the Midlands Energy Hub, and the Local Enterprise partnership.

Work has been undertaken, in collaboration with partners, to have a fuller understanding of the Council's climate position. This includes:

- Energy audits
- Energy data analysis
- Carbon baseline
- Employee commuting survey
- Carbon footprint exercise

Work is being undertaken to establish the Council's carbon baseline, which includes electricity, gas, water, and fuel usage, as well as the carbon cost of purchasing. This carbon baseline will allow the Council to plot future reductions more decisively in emissions.

The Council is also working to explore all available funding streams; however, Members were informed that often potential funding streams have difficult deadlines and hard to deliver projects. Nevertheless, opportunities will continue to be explored and pursued where appropriate.

Members also discussed the difficulty in achieving the right balance in procurement exercises. Often, superior green credentials will come at a higher cost – is that something the Council can afford to do?

Further discussions were held on:

- Awareness campaigns
- Grant application processes
- Resourcing
- Housing stock conditions/developing housing strategy
- Training requirements
- Towns Fund
- Leisure centre impact on emissions

Overall, the working group proved extremely useful at this exploratory stage of the review, and the insight provided by the Assistant Director of Assets and Investment and Strategic Asset Manager will enable the Panel to focus on the key issues where scrutiny can have the most positive impact.

### October 2021

A further informal working group was held on 5 October 2021 with attendance from the Assistant Director – Assets and Investments and the Strategic Asset Manager. Members of the working group took the opportunity to discuss the following:

- Climate change priorities for the Council
- Leading by example
- Financial challenges of change
- Climate change priorities for the District
- Small steps/long term results
- Environmental impacts

Members agreed to consider the principles of the draft Climate Change Strategy at the next formal meeting of the Panel. In addition, it was identified consideration should also be given to how the Council can utilise its position as a Community Leader to continue to discuss climate change issues, carbon footprint reductions and long-term solutions.

## February 2022

A final informal working group took place on 4 February 2022 with attendance from the Strategic Asset Manager. Members had the opportunity to examine the developing Climate Change Action Plan, with the Strategic Asset Manager taking the time to explain the actions detailed within.

Members were made aware that the Climate Change Action Plan would be a working document subject to change over time, and that it was not intended for the Action Plan to be made available for the public, it will be an internal document to guide Officers. Furthermore, the draft Plan was yet to be fully costed.

The Strategic Asset Manager drew Members' attention to some key actions within the developing plan for discussion. These included:

- Fleet review
- Business Travel
- Employee Commuting
- Cost effective use of buildings
- Investments
- Engagement
- Raising awareness
- Area wide actions
- Funding Streams
- Recruitment

Following lengthy discussions, Members agreed that a draft final report should be prepared for Members to consider at the next formal meeting of Scrutiny Panel B. The final report would include details of all information considered over the course of the review, along with a set of formulated recommendations for Cabinet to consider for approval and implementation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

At the conclusion of the Scrutiny Review: Climate Change Mitigation, Scrutiny Panel B Members formulated the following recommendations.

- a. Support the approval of a proposed target of net-zero by 2030 for the Council's scope 1 and 2 emissions*

The draft Climate Change Strategy sets out a target for the Council to reach net-zero for the Council's direct and indirect (scope 1 and 2) emissions by 2030. Panel Members support this target in recognition of the Climate Change Act 2008 and the emissions reduction targets set out within. Members also acknowledge the significant steps the Council has made in reducing carbon emissions, such as installing solar PV panels on many Council owned buildings, operating smarter working practices, and launching a Climate Change Officer Working Group.

- b. Support the approval of proposals to minimise scope 3 emissions by 2050*

The draft Climate Change Strategy also sets out a target to minimise scope 3 emissions (outside the Council's direct control) by 2050. Panel Members recognise the extra difficulty of this target due to the nature of scope 3 emissions. However, the Panel is confident the Council can utilise its position as a community leader to work towards achieving this target.



*c. Support the approval of the Climate Change Strategy, Climate Change Action Plan, and Carbon Management Plan*

Understanding the Council's developing policies regarding climate change mitigation was a key objective of the Panel as part of the review process. Members were made aware of the developing draft Climate Change Strategy, Climate Change Action Plan, and the Carbon Management Plan at an early stage of the review. Policy development is one of the key roles of scrutiny, and Panel Members have worked closely with the Assistant Director of Assets and Investments and Strategic Asset Manager to have input into the developing documents.

Members fully support the steps that are being taken to ensure that the Council has robust policies in place regarding climate change mitigation and recommend that Cabinet approve and adopt the draft documents.

*d. Continue to ensure an increase in the number of electric charging points available to the Council and the wider public*

Central Government have announced that from 2030, the sale of new petrol and diesel cars will no longer be permissible. This announcement, alongside the continued advancement in electric vehicle technology, will lead to increased demand for electric charging points throughout the District.

Panel Members are recommending that Cabinet ensure that this increase in demand is met.

*e. Continue the commitment towards the expansion of a greener transport fleet*

As stated in the draft Climate Change Strategy, in 2019/20, the Council's fleet accounted for 39.9% of the Council's scope 1 and 2 emissions. Because of this, one of the main priorities of the Council's aim to achieve net-zero in scope 1 and 2 emissions will be the decarbonisation of the Council's fleet.

The Panel have been made aware that the Council will be undertaking a full fleet management review, with strong consideration given to full electrification of the Council's fleet. Panel Members welcome the fleet management review, and also endorse other initiatives undertaken by the Council to reduce transport and fleet emissions, such as promoting agile working to reduce commuting and encouraging carsharing.

*f. Continue to invest appropriately in renewable technology opportunities*

Members are aware that there continues to be advancements in renewable technologies, such as electric vehicles, and recommend that Cabinet continues to identify and invest in opportunities that will contribute to a reduction in emissions. This could include opportunities such as continued investment in solar PV technology, achieving a greener transport fleet, and exploring renewable technologies in house building and repairs, subject to available funding.

Panel Members would also like to see, where possible, renewable measures implemented in the Council's leisure centres.

*g. Promote low carbon and sustainable procurement across the Council*

Panel Members recommend that the Council promotes and embeds sustainable procurement within the organisation. As set out by the Local Government Association in the *Sustainable Procurement – Delivery Local Economic, Social, and Environmental Priorities* toolkit, sustainable procurement is a

process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works, and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the local economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment.

*h. Continue to support tree planting schemes throughout Ashfield*

Members agreed that continuing to establish tree planting schemes throughout Ashfield will be an important step to helping the Council achieve its emission reduction goals. Tree planting is an effective method used to offset emissions that cannot be removed. Furthermore, tree planting is an important step to support biodiversity.

The Forestry Commission's *Plant Your Future: The Case for Trees* details the wide-ranging benefits of tree planting schemes for businesses, land, local communities, and nature and the environment. These include:

- Carbon offsetting
- Natural flood management
- Cutting pollution
- Supporting health and wellbeing
- Improving air quality
- Boosting biodiversity

*i. Continue to support and promote energy saving initiatives to Ashfield residents*

Panel Members agreed that ensuring residents have the most up-to-date knowledge and information regarding climate change mitigation and energy saving initiatives is pivotal. The Council already puts out messages on the website, through social media, and inside the Ashfield Matters magazine.

Ensuring that residents are aware of energy saving methods and initiatives will be especially important with the rise in cost of living and the dramatic rise in energy prices in 2022.

*j. In addition to the Green Rewards Scheme, consider other targeted recognition initiatives aimed at communities, educational institutions, and businesses to increase innovation, action, and awareness in Ashfield*

In recognising the importance of raising knowledge and the profile of climate change mitigation initiatives, Members of the Panel agreed that developing other District-wide targeted schemes, in addition to the Green Rewards Scheme, would be valuable. These schemes could recognise where schools, local businesses, communities, and residents have made exceptional efforts to contribute towards reducing carbon emissions.

Such schemes could include:

- Primary and secondary school category
- College category
- Community group/individual category
- Business category

This would differ from the Green Reward Scheme, which offers financial incentives, instead focussing on a possible annual awards ceremony at Ashfield District Council. Such events not only raise the profile of the issue, but also continue to encourage participation and interaction.

*k. Work with schools and community groups to improve knowledge and understanding of climate change mitigation*

It is globally recognised that young people play a critical part in future climate change action and long-term changes. In addition to recommendation J, the Panel also acknowledges the importance of keeping schools and community groups informed and engaged on climate change issues.

Such interactions and engagement ensure that both local impact and short- and longer-term initiatives can drive both behavioural, consumer and business changes that help Ashfield continue to achieve collective objectives of reducing carbon emissions and improving the local environment for generations to come.

*l. Explore the possibility of establishing wildlife friendly verges across the District as part of the Council's commitment to supporting nature and wildlife*

Panel Members were interested in understanding what measures other Councils have taken in working towards the commitment of climate change mitigation. One such measure Members became interested in was the utilisation of road verges to establish wildlife areas.

Members studied various case study examples of road verges being used in this manner, including:

- Leicestershire County Council established a 'Develop your own wildlife area' scheme in response to public interest. This scheme offers parish, town, borough, and district councils the opportunity to turn urban roadside verges into dedicated wildlife verges.
- Cornwall Council noticed a large rise in native wildflowers and meadow plants as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic reducing grounds maintenance. They have since implemented a policy including reducing the number of times grass on verges is cut, ensuring that cutting is done after flowers have been set, and using special mowers to allow meadow plants to establish.
- Dorset Council launched a 'Love Your Verge' campaign as a countywide collaboration to raise awareness about the Council's work to increase and maintain biodiversity in verges, in response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency. By increasing awareness about the importance of Dorset's thriving verges, the campaign also aims to deter people from littering on roadsides.

Since formulating this recommendation, Members are aware that the Council has set out plans to establish 'bee highways' on Titchfield Park and Kenbrook Road in Hucknall, Teversal Trail in Skegby, and Derby Road in Kirkby. Panel Members are keen to see the Council continue to expand on this innovative scheme.

*m. Ensure that local businesses and communities are involved in implementing the key objectives set out within the Climate Change Strategy*

The aims and objectives established within the Climate Change Strategy are wide-ranging, requiring the Council to work in partnership with local businesses and communities to achieve them. In order for this plan to be an operational living document that demonstrates ongoing progress, it is

critical that the Council continues to establish and maintain relationships with key partners, businesses, and the community alike.

## **Implications**

### **Corporate Plan:**

'Cleaner and Greener' is one of the five key priorities set out within Ashfield District Council's Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023. The vision for 'Cleaner and Greener' is set out:

*"By 2023, we will create a cleaner and greener Ashfield, enabling communities and businesses to thrive in a clean and tidy district, minimising waste, and recycling more.*

*Ashfield is pro-active in encouraging more recycling, tackling environmental crime, and finding innovative ways of delivering services that are responsive to the needs of our residents, visitors, and businesses.*

*By working with our communities and businesses, the Council is better able to understand what matters and to shape services to help people enjoy living, visiting, and working in Ashfield."*

### **Legal:**

Adoption of the recommendations would assist the Council to achieve the Government's targets. [RLD 27/05/2022]

**Finance:** There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. [PH 26/05/22].

<b>Budget Area</b>	<b>Implication</b>
General Fund – Revenue Budget	Not applicable
General Fund – Capital Programme	Not applicable
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	Not applicable
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	Not applicable

### **Risk:**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
None at this stage.	None at this stage.

### **Human Resources:**

There are no direct HR implications resulting from the recommendations within this report.

## **Environmental/Sustainability:**

Environmental and sustainability implications are central to the Scrutiny Review: Climate Change Mitigation. Members will be examining Council policies and action plans relating to climate change and the 'Cleaner and Greener' agenda.

## **Equalities:**

There are no equalities implications resulting from this report.

## **Other Implications:**

There are no other implications resulting from this report.

## **Reason(s) for Urgency**

None.

## **Reason(s) for Exemption**

None.

## **Background Papers**

None.

## **Report Author and Contact Officer**

Shane Wright  
Scrutiny Research Officer  
[shane.wright@ashfield.gov.uk](mailto:shane.wright@ashfield.gov.uk)  
01623 457318

## **Sponsoring Director**

Ruth Dennis  
Director of Legal and Governance  
[ruth.dennis@ashfield.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.dennis@ashfield.gov.uk)  
01623 457009