

Report To:	CABINET
Date:	21ST JUNE 2022
Heading:	CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY
Executive Lead Member:	COUNCILLOR DAVID HENNIGAN, EXECUTIVE LEAD MEMBER FOR CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS
Ward/s:	ALL
Key Decision:	YES
Subject to Call-In:	YES

Purpose of Report

This report provides an overview of the actions that the Council is proposing to undertake to help combat climate change. The report includes details of documents that have been produced to establish the Council's CO₂ emissions data (carbon footprint) and identify opportunities for reducing emissions along with setting carbon neutral targets for the Council.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

1. To consider and approve a proposed target of net-zero by 2030 for the Council's Scope 1 and 2 emissions. These emissions are within the Council's direct control.
2. To consider and approve proposals to minimise Scope 3 emissions by 2050. These emissions are not within the Council's direct control.
3. To consider and approve proposals for the Council to work with the wider community to reduce Ashfield's overall carbon footprint with the aim of reaching net zero by 2050, in line with national targets.
4. To consider and approve the following documents:
 - i. Climate Change Strategy
 - ii. Carbon Management Plan
5. To approve the publication on the Council's website of the Carbon Management Plan and Climate Change Strategy.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To reduce the Council's and District's CO₂e emissions (carbon footprint) and therefore helping to combat the effects of Climate Change such as rising global temperatures, extreme weather causing floods, droughts, forest fires etc.

Carbon Budget

A carbon budget is an upper limit of total carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions associated with remaining below a specific global average temperature. In 2015, members of The Paris Agreement (a legally binding international treaty on climate change) agreed to substantially reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to limit the global temperature increase in this century to 2 degrees Celsius while pursuing efforts to limit the increase even further to 1.5 degrees. It was agreed last year at COP 26 that countries should come back this year to submit stronger 2030 emissions reduction targets with the aim of closing the gap to limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. Current levels are at 1.2 degrees.

It is important that the Council reduces its carbon footprint to prevent further contribution towards exceeding the carbon budget set for the Ashfield area. Carbon budgets are relevant to climate change mitigation because they indicate a finite amount of carbon dioxide that can be emitted over time, before resulting in dangerous levels of global warming.

The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research suggests the Ashfield area has a carbon budget of 4 MtCO₂ for Scope 1 and 2 (direct) emissions between 2020 and 2100. If Ashfield emissions continued on the historic trend unmitigated, this budget would be used up during 2028. All emissions past this point would be contributing to a dangerously warmer world. In order to keep emissions below this carbon budget and achieve full net zero emissions by 2050, in line with national targets, annual emissions reduction rates must be in the region of 14% per year, from 2022 to 2050.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council can choose to do nothing or set lesser targets however this is not considered to be a reasonable option given global climate reduction targets and may result in a failure by the Government to meet its target of Net Zero emissions by 2050 and a 78% reduction by 2035.

Detailed Information

The Climate Change Act was passed in 2008 and set out a legally binding emissions reduction target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050. However, in May 2019 a report by the Committee on Climate change resulted in Central Government revising its targets to achieving Net Zero emissions by 2050 and with an interim target of 78% reductions by 2035. This is a big challenge and Ashfield District Council will need to play its part in achieving the target.

Ashfield District Council recognises the scale and urgency of the global challenge from climate change and that local action on global warming can make a difference. In a Council meeting on 26th September 2019, a commitment was made to do everything possible to combat climate change.

The recommendations and documents put forward for consideration as part of this report build on this commitment.

The urgency of addressing Climate Change is getting more prevalent with time. On 17th March 2021, a study by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies estimated that globally between September 2020 and February 2021, 12.5 million people were displaced by adverse impacts of climate change, the annual average exceeding 20 million.

The Council has already made considerable progress in reducing its emissions through multiple different projects, including installing solar PV on many Council owned buildings, switching to a Green Energy tariff, operating smarter working practices in its Council offices and launching a Climate Change Officer Working Group to collaboratively drive reductions in carbon emissions. Also, Council decision making now includes assessments of impact on sustainability and the environment. The impact of these projects, actions, and other influential factors has meant that Council emissions have already reduced by 25% since 2015/16, when compared to 2019/2020.

With growing pressure on Local Authorities to be actors in the shift towards a low carbon economy, the Council is striving to pursue a proactive approach towards the decarbonisation of its assets and operations, as well as decarbonisation of the wider District where the opportunity arises.

For the Council and the wider community to work towards net zero emissions, investment is required putting significant pressure on existing budgets, with a clear gap between investment requirements and available budgets. To this end, the Council will, where possible, make use of external funding opportunities associated with carbon reduction activity to maximise carbon reduction within the District.

There will be Government support via funding to assist Councils to achieve their ambitions however these are currently sporadic and intermittent. Such funding will be critical in enabling Councils to meet the Government's targets. The Council has already been successful in bidding for a number of funding streams to assist the District in reducing emissions including Green Homes Grant Phase 1B (£1.046m), Green Homes Grant Phase 2 (£700k), the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund (£40k), the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (£1.2m), and the Towns Fund - Green Ashfield (£2.2m with £800k ADC funding).

Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan

The Council engaged Nottingham City Council to assist in the development of a new Carbon Management Plan for the Council including establishing the Council's baseline emissions against the various categories of emissions. This updated baseline will allow the Council to track changes in emissions over time and assist in setting and monitoring carbon reduction targets and performance respectively. The Carbon Management Plan has been used to inform the development of an overarching Climate Change Strategy.

Two documents have been produced for approval. These documents are required for the Council to establish key actions and monitor its activities in relation to Climate Change:

1. **The Carbon Management Plan**; provides a detailed assessment of the Council's emissions (carbon footprint) across all its activities, along with setting a baseline which the Council must work from to reduce its emissions to net-zero. The Plan also sets out key actions for the Council to take to reduce emissions, as well as actions to improve data quality and monitoring of the Council's emissions footprint. Alongside reducing the Council's own emissions, it recognises the importance of supporting the decarbonisation of the whole Ashfield District, in line with UK Government targets of achieving net-zero by 2050 and the international target of keeping global temperature rise well below 2°C.

- 2. Climate Change Strategy;** this document overarches the Carbon Management Plan, and sets out the current challenges and opportunities faced, and how meaningful change can be achieved within this context.

In bringing these plans and strategies to Cabinet/Council the documents have been reviewed by the Climate Change Working Group, Leadership, CLT, the Portfolio Member, all Senior Managers, and two Scrutiny Committees. Moving forward the Scrutiny Committee will review progress against the Action Plan.

Ultimately the Strategy and Carbon Management Plan are ambitious, notably due to the cost implications involved, the uncertainty of Central Government funding, the further development of technology which will assist carbon reduction and the timing of the Council’s own work and replacement programmes to enable the most appropriate time to enable the switch over to lower carbon producing methods.

The ask of Members is to approve Ashfield District Council’s commitment to work towards 2030 as a target date to be carbon net-zero in all of its direct operations and approve the attached plans and strategy as a means to achieve it.

One of the next steps is for the Council to engage with a specialist consultant to provide a detailed assessment of measures required to be installed to the Council’s non-domestic assets to attain near net-zero, and the associated costs. Such proposals (including measures and costings/budget requirements) will be subject to separate future consideration/approval.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

Cleaner and Greener – to reduce the Council’s carbon footprint and reduce energy costs.

Legal:

The recommendations in the report will ensure the Council has a strategy for meeting government targets.

Legal support will be provided in respect of specific elements of carbon reduction activity. [RLD 23/05/2022]

Finance: No direct additional cost implications arising from this report. [PH 18/05/22].

Budget Area	Implication
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:

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to implement schemes to achieve net-zero by 2030.	<i>To seek assistance from relevant departments relating to their respective specialisms e.g. Finance, Legal; to use an existing framework for delivery of such works to engage specialists with the appropriate expertise and to reduce procurement timeframes.</i>

Human Resources:

There are no direct HR implications contained within the report [KH 17/05/22].

Environmental/Sustainability

The works covered by this exercise will result in a reduction of paid energy usage, which in turn will contribute towards the overall reduction in the District's CO2e emissions.

Equalities:

There are no perceived Equalities implications.

Other Implications:

Not applicable

Reason(s) for Urgency

Not applicable

Reason(s) for Exemption

Not applicable

Background Papers

Please see attached Climate Change Strategy, Carbon Management Plan and Action Plan

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