



Item

Public



Delivering the Shropshire Council Climate Change Action Plan

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1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report summarises Shropshire Council's climate change strategy, recent carbon performance, the work of the Climate Task Force and identifies potential future work priorities.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Shropshire Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and in December 2020 adopted a Climate Strategy and Action Plan, which established the objective of achieving net-zero carbon performance for Shropshire Council by 2030 and aims for an annual carbon reduction of 10% per year. The Climate Change Task Force was established to lead the Council's response in November 2019, supported by an internal officer working group. Shropshire Council supported a motion in September 2021, including 8 key points, to help position and retain improved climate mitigation, emissions reduction and biodiversity action at the very heart of Council decision making. A Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Advisory Board was established in September 2022 to act as a 'critical friend' and to assist the implementation and review of the Council's Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

- 2.2 Shropshire Council's corporate carbon performance was last reported to Cabinet on 7th June 2023 and this indicated that, during the financial year 2022-23, there had been an increase in direct emissions but a decrease in indirect emissions. Overall, there had been a 1% decrease in gross emissions against a target of a 10% reduction each year. Whilst this is disappointing, it reflects the fact that accurate data and monitoring and reporting systems for carbon performance are still being developed, and that all the data collected to date has been distorted by the significant impact of the Covid pandemic on service delivery.
- 2.3 The Council's (indirect) supply chain emissions account for around 93% of its total carbon footprint. The Council's direct carbon emissions derive from heating our buildings and the operation of Council vehicles, whilst indirect or supply-chain emissions derive from goods and services which we commission, including waste services, highway maintenance and the delivery of social care. Estimates of Shropshire Council's supply chain emissions vary significantly due to differences in methodology but are always much greater than our direct emissions.
- 2.4 The Climate Action Plan includes a range of projects and initiatives which continue to be developed and implemented by the Climate Task Force and a range of other council services. These projects will both help the Council improve its own performance and help foster similar action across the wider economy and communities in Shropshire, although most will take time to yield carbon savings. The efforts of the Task Force continue to be directed towards embedding and normalising climate change as a key consideration in the Council's corporate governance systems and to widen ownership of the issue through accredited carbon literacy training.

3. Recommendations

To be confirmed by the committee following their consideration of the topic

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4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Climate change represents a significant financial risk to the Council, since extreme weather associated with the climate crisis may significantly disrupt the delivery of Council services through damage to physical infrastructure such as roads and power infrastructure, and through impacts on staff health and wellbeing. Demand for services and service delivery costs such as highway maintenance are likely to increase significantly.
- 4.2 Action to update procurement policies to help accurately quantify and reduce indirect supply chain carbon emissions are likely to match those already being implemented by other commercial and public sector organisations. However, in the longer term there is a risk that this may increase supplier costs as they

implement measures to decarbonise their goods and services. On the other hand, adapting service delivery to address the impacts of extreme weather events will help reduce far more significant future financial risks.

- 4.3 An annual revenue budget of £0.5m has been established to provide for staff resources in the Climate Change team and to support bids for Government grant funding and work to develop and implement a wide range of projects associated with the key themes of the Council's adopted Climate Strategy. To date, the Climate Change Task Force has worked with colleagues across the Council to secure capital grants totalling over £3.8m and revenue funding of over £0.5m to support decarbonisation projects.

5. Climate Change Appraisal

- 5.1 **Energy and fuel consumption:** The Climate Action Plan includes a range of projects and initiatives which will contribute positively to the reduction of carbon emissions in future years by facilitating improved energy efficiency and carbon performance across Council Services.
- 5.2 **Renewable energy generation:** A number of projects in the Climate Action Plan are being developed to drive the delivery of additional generation of renewable energy from a range of technologies on Council land and buildings;
- 5.3 **Carbon offsetting or mitigation:** The management of Council land and our commissioned waste management service already make a key positive contribution to our carbon performance, but it is crucial that we do not rely on these and instead focus first on reducing emissions wherever possible. A range of additional projects and initiatives are being developed to drive the capture and storage of carbon and to mitigate the effects of climate change on biodiversity;
- 5.4 **Climate Change adaptation:** It is recommended that a Climate Adaptation Strategy is commissioned, working jointly with other public sector service delivery organisations and infrastructure providers to ensure that the risk which extreme weather associated with climate change presents to Council services is better recognised and to ensure that our assets and services are resilient in the face of the challenges of more extreme weather events.

6. Background

- 6.1 Climate action and carbon reduction are integral to all aspects of the Shropshire Plan. For example, in the context of the 'Healthy People' priority, extreme weather associated with the climate crisis will adversely affect vulnerable residents and service users disproportionately. This is likely to drive significant future growth in the demand for social care services as well as generating significant impacts on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of staff.
- 6.2 The Council's corporate carbon footprint represents only around 1% of Shropshire's total footprint, but the Council is able to influence as much as 33% of emissions through its regulatory and support functions. The Council is already supporting a wide range of projects and initiatives designed to support local businesses and communities to reduce their carbon emissions and these allow the Council to make a demonstrable contribution to reducing the carbon footprint of the wider county, as well as 'leading by example' by reducing its own carbon footprint.

- 6.3 A motion adopted by Council in September 2021 confirmed that it is important to act with vigour across all directorates to address the Climate Emergency. Climate Emergency mitigation, carbon dioxide emission reduction and biodiversity retention need to be considered at the very heart of all policy making, all day-to-day management and all projects the council manages, including requiring the same standard in all service and other contracts with third party organisations and suppliers. A number of specific recommendations were also agreed:
1. Urgently expand the Climate Change Task Force
 2. Develop Climate Emergency mitigation training for all teams across the council, including cabinet and other members. Appoint champions in all departments
 3. Strengthen the council's procurement policy so that all suppliers and contractors operate appropriate and rigorous Climate Emergency mitigation practice aligned with our own
 4. Measure and count the performance of our suppliers and contractors when undertaking council operations against Shropshire Council's Climate Emergency performance
 5. Produce a monthly report detailing Climate Emergency performance and the impact of the management and operation of all council services and projects
 6. Proactively reduce the number of short car journeys taken, particularly in our towns at first: Act to discourage cars from our town centres, develop low traffic zones, create safe active travel routes and improve urban public transport
 7. Provide advice and support service to Shropshire companies, charities and organisations seeking to develop and implement Climate Emergency mitigation practices
 8. Identify means, such as providing office support, to enable Shropshire Climate Action Partnership to act as an exemplar
- 6.4 On 7 June 2023 Cabinet agreed that:
- i. Efforts to widen understanding and ownership of the need for urgent climate action and carbon reduction through training and the identification of a staff 'climate change' champion in each service.
 - ii. An Officer report should be prepared to explore how the Council's procurement policies can be updated to help accurately quantify and help suppliers to reduce indirect carbon emissions, which now account for around 93% of the Council's corporate carbon footprint.
 - iii. To ensure that the risk which extreme weather associated with climate change presents to Council services is better recognised and to ensure that our assets and services are resilient in the face of the challenges of more extreme climate events, a Climate Adaptation Strategy should be commissioned, working jointly with other public sector service delivery organisations and infrastructure providers.
- 6.5 To take account of the Council's climate and carbon performance to date and to reflect the availability of additional information and changes in context and technology, the Climate Task Force is proposing to carry out a mid-term review of the adopted Climate Strategy and Action Plan during 2025.

- 6.6 The effectiveness of the projects and initiatives being developed by the Climate Task Force are limited by its capacity. To make faster progress towards our objective of net-zero corporate carbon performance by 2030, it is essential that greater understanding and ownership of the challenge of the Climate Crisis is achieved throughout the organisation and its suppliers.
- 6.7 It is also crucial that any strategy review process should continue to benefit from the close working arrangements already enjoyed with community climate organisations such as Zero Carbon Shropshire, South Shropshire Climate Action and Save our Shropshire to maximise engagement with the wider community to build understanding and confidence around climate action. It will also be essential to work with the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and other relevant stakeholders such as the Marches Energy Agency to maximise the potential for green growth. We urgently need to explore how we can best work together to foster appropriate skills and capacity to significantly increase the retrofitting of energy efficiency measures in buildings and the installation of low carbon technologies and infrastructure.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

- 1 Adopted Climate Strategy and Action Plan:
<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/shropshire-climate-action/what-have-we-achieved/policies-strategies-and-guides/climate-strategy-and-action-plan/>
- 2 Minutes of Council <https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/documents/g4261/Printed%20minutes%2023rd-Sep-2021%2010.00%20Council.pdf?T=1>
- 3 Corporate Carbon Performance Monitoring Report 2022, Cabinet 7 June 2023
<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/documents/s34890/Cabinet%2019%20April%2023%20-%20Shropshire%20Council%20Climate%20and%20Carbon%20Progress.pdf>

Local Member: All

Appendices