

To: **Executive Briefing (Climate Change Advisory Panel)**
02 November 2021

Climate Change Action Plan Progress Report **Executive Director of Delivery**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The council has committed itself to becoming a net-zero carbon authority by 2050 and has created a Climate Change Strategy and supporting action plan to deliver this objective. Members have requested an annual progress report to be submitted to full council in the summer of each year. The first report is due in the Summer of 2022. As part of the action plan tracking process, six monthly updates have been scheduled to the Executive, via the Executive Briefing process and then on to the Climate Change Advisory Panel. The next update is due on 3rd November 2021 and this paper summarises that update.

2 Supporting Information

- 2.1 The council published a Climate Change Strategy in January of this year. The strategy had an action plan, detailing the projects and programmes, from across the council, that link directly to mitigating the impacts of man-made climate change.
- 2.2 The action plan is a live document with updates being managed by the Climate Change Officer board, which has representatives from each directorate and major project areas. The projects are grouped by directorate and Executive Member and updates are based on information provided by specific Officers named as project leads within the action plan. A copy of the Action plan as at 31st August 2021 is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.3 The Officer Board meets each quarter to discuss and report on achievements related to the action plan. At the end of each financial quarter Officers complete an action plan quarterly update sheet (Appendix 2), with those updates being transferred on to the action plan itself.
- 2.4 Under the Leader's schedule of appointments, noted by Council on 28 April 2021, the Climate Change Advisory Panel, was established. The Executive Director of Delivery, as the Officer lead for Climate Change, supports this panel, and provides the panel with a summary of progress made against the action plan three times a year.

3 Highlights

- 3.1 The council's Climate Change Strategy was added to the 2021/22 corporate audit plan, with the audit taking place in August 2021. The objectives of the audit were to evaluate the controls in place to manage and deliver the council's Climate Change Strategy and action plan, with a view to delivering reasonable assurance as to the adequacy of the design of the internal control systems and their application in practice. Although the audit confirmed that there is an "adequate" level of assurance around the governance of the programme, and that there are, "...a *number of areas of good practice*", work is now needed on the governance around adding new projects onto the action plan, as this was an area of improvement suggested by the auditor. Therefore, the team are looking at adding a template to deal with new actions, so that there is a sign off process before new actions are added to the action

plan itself. This will ensure that these new projects have approval from directorate management teams, and if appropriate, the Executive Member for that area of work. This will give more rigour around adding new additional items to the plan.

Climate Change Advisory Panel

- 3.2 The Climate Change Advisory Panel (CCAP) under the Chairmanship of Cllr Tony Virgo has been established and has now had two meetings. The role of CCAP is to advise Executive Members on issues around climate change. The CCAP provides a useful public forum for sharing the council's journey to net zero and to demonstrate that there is credible performance management of our projects.
- 3.3 The meetings are broadcast on YouTube and the papers are published via Mod.gov, like any other council meeting. However, the Terms of Reference for this Advisory Panel gives it the freedom from being a formal "council committee", giving it the space to investigate and feedback learning that would be helpful to the Executive and therefore support the council in achieving its objective of being carbon net zero by 2050.
- 3.4 In terms of frequency of meetings, the Panel meets bi-monthly. It has also now been agreed with the Chair that each CCAP meeting will either be themed around a topic or will be a quarterly update on the council's work programme. All members of CCAP are on the council's Yammer site (an internal Facebook / social media tool) and therefore have a rich evidence base to look at, as Officers from the Officer group are posting items of interest to the site and updates on their work.
- 3.5 At the first meeting of the CCAP, the panel received the action plan highlights, and then discussed the work commissioned by the Executive on developing an anaerobic digester plant for BFC. The update was provided by the Panel chair, in advance of the meeting, and although the meeting covered the main points of the updates, it was agreed that using the normal report distribution systems would be a better approach for Panel members. Therefore, this report follows this more standard format.
- 3.6 The CCAP meeting of the 20 September, was the first of the themed meetings, focusing on Electric Vehicles (EV) and associated deployment issues. This meeting was timed to be part of "the Big Green Week", part of a national campaign of green events. The Agenda featured a presentation of the council's EV policy, along with presentations from Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (energy provider) and Bloor Homes, representing the new home builders. The informative presentations highlighted that the council's current strategy was ahead of government policy and therefore needed government to take the next enabling step before the council could progress with its plans. SSEN highlighted that energy generation issues for EV's is very local as each substation needs to be calibrated to the load in that area and therefore good modelling of demand is necessary. Finally, the house builders were contending with power management within their developments, to help plan for safe charging and what the current demand would be.
- 3.7 So, in summary the key issues that the Panel presented to the Executive, were that the delivery of the council's plans was dependant on government publishing its own zero emissions plan. This was because that document is the enabling policy that will unlock next steps for everyone involved in taking forward this programme of work. The Panel also noted that with zero emission vehicles on the horizon, EVs may be only a steppingstone in the process of decarbonisation of the UK vehicle fleet. Finally, that the private sector was the best placed to balance the risks and rewards from investment in the infrastructure. It is for the market to ensure that the provision

is in the right places, to meet users' needs, as only the marketplace can accurately model the take up of vehicles and put the electrical capacity in the right places to meet this need.

- 3.8 This next update report will be accompanied by a video presentation from the Energy Sustainability Officer, on the home decarbonisation project on the Green Homes Grants, plus a series of slides summarising the work including forward planning to support Silva homes on their intended Social Housing decarbonisation Fund bid. Silva homes will also be attending the meeting to update on their plans, which have now come under the umbrella of our strategy.

- 3.9 The forward plan for the panel is:

- 11 January – local power generation
- 9 March – action plan update
- May 2022 - zero emissions builder / buildings

The panel will be looking for topics to build their programme for 2022/23 shortly.

Big Green week (18 -26 September)

- 3.10 The Big Green Week is a national initiative to encourage companies, groups and individuals from private and public sectors to showcase what they are doing for the climate change agenda. The council moved the CCAP to be the centrepiece of its contribution to this programme of events. The council also moved its annual recycling Roadshow to the week too. A number of press releases were also targeted to the week; many of the projects are detailed within this report.

Grant funding

- 3.11 In terms of the home decarbonisation project on the Green Homes Grants (GHG), the council has now completed the works from GHG bid 1 (£900k grant received). The Energy Sustainability Officer has just started on the planned works under GHG bid 2 (£274k received). They have also made another bid for sustainable warmth (GHG bid 3). The outcome of this bid is expected later in the Autumn.
- 3.12 The Energy Sustainability Officer is also supporting Silva Homes in their bid for £500k under the Social Housing Decarbonisation fund for 223 properties, that are EPC rated C or below. This would bring these up to a more sustainable energy rating, which is good for the environment but also good for those living in these properties.
- 3.13 Property Services have also been successful in Salix – GOL - LCSF2 bid, securing £154k of funding for preparing heat decarbonisation plans for all of the Council's property stock including schools not already funded. This is in addition to the £775k secured under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, which will go to the Schools estate, with £350k going to Sandhurst School specifically.

Parks & Countryside

- 3.14 The team are investigating a ground source heat pump system for Westmorland park, as the existing gas system is not working well. The project has progressed to receiving and evaluating quotations.

- 3.15 The service has had some staff changes which now require a new service primary link Officer for Climate Change. So, some items of the action plan are on pause while a replacement is appointed and has time to pick up on the actions.
- 3.16 The Bracknell Forest Giants event took place at the Lexicon in August. The communication plan in place for the Forest Giants, links in with the climate change objectives, as these are heavily influenced by our tree strategy. The legacy target for this project was to use the concept of forest gardens and getting youngsters involved in tree planting programmes. Some of the events during the programme featured rolling videos in an empty unit in Princess Square. These videos were from the Woodland Trust and highlighted why it's so important to plant trees. The legacy work will come into play in September/October, but the ambition is to encourage the planting of trees by schools in locations across the borough. Parks & Countryside have identified areas for future tree planting and using the Forest Giants theme will enable this work to continue beyond August. The service will also be pushing forward to get schools involved. This work also links to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee trees planting call, which will be wrapped into this work, with ideas currently being explored.

Environmental Services – Greening our Waste Strategy

- 3.17 Performance on the council's food waste recycling service remains strong. The service has diverted over 3,100 tonnes of food waste from landfill. This has produced a carbon saving of over 1.9 million kg of Co2e (carbon dioxide equivalent emissions) being prevented from entering the atmosphere due to the diversion away from landfill. The 3 weekly residual waste collection has been a major factor in the success of the food waste scheme. The quarter 1 recycling rate is higher than last year, at 58%. However, it is expected that rates will settle around 54% by the end of the year, which is still more than 10% improvement on last year. Participation in the food waste scheme remains exceptionally high at around 90% of households. This compares to an average of around 60%-70% in other schemes. The Executive has recently approved plans to roll out the scheme to up to 20% of flats in the Borough.
- 3.18 Some waste measurements have been impacted by COVID, waste from domestic collections and street waste, is higher than normal, which makes it difficult to do a year on year comparison, so we will continue to use 2019 as the reference year.
- 3.19 The next area of focus around this project is the vehicle emissions and efficiency. The service will be doing some tweaking of the action plan to reflect the need to be cognisant around emissions from domestic waste i.e. look at this point more holistically. We need to incorporate this factor into our disposal waste reductions.

Highways and Transport

- 3.20 The Highways and Transport service has received a revenue grant, from the Department of Transport, over the last quarter aimed at active travel initiatives. £160k has been provided to look at cycling and walking plans. The service will expand cycling routes to Crowthorne and Sandhurst and has commissioned some promotional videos as well. This will be supported by interactive maps, cycle led rides, family events, and working with businesses and schools to increase participation.
- 3.21 Funding has also been received to help with a bus service improvement plan. By working with planners to produce a new travel plan policy, this will give us more control over sustainable mode initiatives and will bring in more resources than

before. This will also enable the service to look at appropriate funding mechanisms like, a roof levy per house.

- 3.22 The Assistant Director: Highways and Transport, provided the September CCAP with a presentation on the council's policy around Electric Vehicles (EV). In this presentation he confirmed that the council has secured £100k funding to roll out 32 residential charging points across the borough. These will be low wattage / slow chargers, aimed at overnight charging. Having reviewed the best locations for these, it has been agreed local community hubs, e.g. at shopping centres, would be the best locations. Next phase of this work would be to bid for funding aimed at rapid chargers. BFC are working with a pan-Berkshire group of councils to do this bid and ensure that BFC's network, meshes in with the rest of the county.

Public Protection Partnership – air quality

- 3.23 The anti-idling project, focused primarily around the schools, has appointed a new member of staff to work on this project. They will be attending the Officer board, to ensure that the board has the most up to date information on this project. The next step will be the procurement of equipment.
- 3.24 Licensing liaison Officers will be attending taxi ranks and starting the education around idling and idling enforcement. This programme will then expand to known hot spot areas around the borough. This will be in addition to September's work on coordinating the beginning of school term with these project objectives.

Economic Development

- 3.25 The Forest Giants events in the Lexicon have now been added to the action plan. This event has brought attention to the borough and the borough's messages around protecting and enhancing our natural environment.
- 3.26 The council has engaged the Bracknell Improvement District (BID) as part of the CC strategy and the Executive Director was invited to present to their board. The BID represents circa 300 businesses. Businesses in the borough and are a key group to engage with in addressing and tackling climate change. The council will therefore be publishing some information that businesses can use and share. The council is also looking to create a virtual space, where the business community can share updates and good practise.

4 Communications plan

- 4.1 A detailed communication plan is being developed. However, good progress has been made in getting profile for key programme successes. At the moment the communications team have set themselves the objective of publishing a climate change news story every two weeks. This has been achieved since May 2021. There have been over 15 different climate change stories issued by the council from April 2021 until August 2021.
- 4.2 Social media: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, have been key communication channels. The council has over 13,000 followers on Facebook, so it is one of the most important platforms to put communication messages out through. This also has the benefit of being two-way communication, with posts generating much debate between the users and messages back to the council. The council also uses e-news letters, e.g. Parks & Countryside, Waste & Recycling, etc., in addition to Town and Country, as its other routes for messaging.

- 4.3 The team's press releases have been used by the Bracknell News, and on local radio and BBC radio Berkshire. Cllr Hayes has done a number of interviews with BBC Radio Berkshire which have received good publicity, particularly when a food recycling truck was named "Dame Foodie Dench", prompting a video response from Dame Judi herself. Having local events like the Forest Giants has generated a real focus on the area and the council's work around climate change. We are therefore now exploring if additional budget for communications can be secured to extend the work to billboards, radio ads, leaflets, letter drops, etc.
- 4.4 Looking forward, the team will be exploring the most effective ways to communicate with schools more regularly, e.g. headteachers updates, etc. Also, more targeted messaging for groups like older residents, faith groups, etc. Our climate change Officer has started producing weekly tips for residents for these different resident channels. The focus is on everyday things that residents can build into their routines, e.g. shorter showers, sustainable cooking, etc.
- 4.5 Internal communications are equally as important. Messages and articles have been put in the staff newspaper, Forest Views and recently the front page featured the new Climate Change Officer, helping to make the post and the strategy more visible to all staff and Members. Using the internal staff channels more, has opened up new internal debates around efficiencies that the council can make in its operations, such as staff talking about working from home in a more sustainable way, etc. Having now secured a monthly slot in forest views for climate change content should mean that the council's priority in this area stays front and centre in staff's thinking and planning.

5 Equalities Impact Assessment

- 5.1 Specific EIA's are completed by Officers for their individual projects within the Action Plan.

6 Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.1 The Council is committed to becoming a net zero carbon authority by 2050. All actions that the council undertakes should be assessed for their environmental impacts prior to receiving executive approval.

Background Papers

Appendix 1: Climate Change Action Plan updated to 31 Aug 2021

Appendix 2: Action Plan quarterly update template

Contact for further information

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