

To: Climate Change Advisory Panel
09 March 2022

Climate Change Action Plan Progress Report
Information Item
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 9th March 2022 and this paper summarises that update.

2 Supporting Information

- 2.1 The council published a Climate Change Strategy in January 2021. 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.
- 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 a quarterly update sheet, with those updates being transferred on to the action plan itself. A copy of the Action plan as at 31st December 2021 (the end of Q3) is attached as Appendix 1.
- 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

Climate Change Advisory Panel

- 3.1 The Climate Change Advisory Panel (CCAP) under the Chairmanship of Cllr Tony Virgo was established back in Q1 of 2021/22. In terms of frequency of meetings, the Panel meets bi-monthly and has now had four 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.

- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 Since the last update report provided in November 2021 the panel have considered one session devoted to domestic energy efficiency and another around Local Power generation via an anaerobic digestion plant.
- 3.4 At the first of these meetings the CCAP welcomed a presentation by the council's Sustainable Energy Officer summarising both historical, current and planned work projects aimed at improving the energy efficiency of our residents' homes. This update also included a short video commissioned at the request of the Executive Member for the Environment highlighting the outcomes from a recently completed green homes grant scheme. The panel also had an introduction as to how the council is working in partnership with a private landlord (Silva Homes), a view of the issues facing housing developers (Wimpey Homes) plus a presentation on the current benefits and drawbacks of (ground or air source) heat pumps. Two themes emerged from these discussions: capacity and cost. There are projected capacity issues around both the scale of retrofitting existing homes but also the ability and skill set to provide homes of the future. In addition, further stimuli to encourage private funding and investment will be required to make customer choices more affordable.
- 3.5 The second CCAP meeting focussed on investigations around the merits of anaerobic digestor plants which function by breaking down organic waste materials and producing either gas or fertilizers or both. Ahead of the session several members of the panel visited existing anaerobic digestion plants in Hampshire and Oxfordshire. Their own findings were mapped against a separate feasibility study completed by Atkins on the council's behalf to consider the option of installing a facility here within the borough. The overall conclusion was that whilst an AD plant would be of benefit, any lead on such a project should be left in the hands of the private sector to take forwards.
- 3.6 As with previous session outcomes, the key issues that the Panel presented to the Executive, were that the delivery of the council's plans was dependant both on emerging government strategy and private sector investment. This next update report, presented to the panel in March 2022, has a focus on the work of the council's property division, in leading the council's efforts to retrofit our estate of corporate, civic, and school buildings.
- 3.7 In term for the future agenda items for the panel, the current themes have been put on the forward plan for the panel are highlighted below:
- 9 March – Action plan update and retrofitting the BFC estate
 - 25 April – Biodiversity and the natural environment
 - 8 June – Review of the draft Annual report update
 - Sept - Local power generation – hydrogen
 - Nov - Action plan update and London Road options appraisal

Grant funding

- 3.8 Property Services are currently finalising a series of heat decarbonisation plans for all of the Council's property stock including schools not already funded. These plans were secured from £154k Salix funding and will enable Property Services to plan and prioritise any retrofitting works identified.
- 3.9 The Highways and Transport service has received a Department of Transport revenue grant of £160k for active travel initiatives (walking, cycling, etc.). The funds have helped expand cycling routes to Crowthorne and Sandhurst and have allowed the commissioning of promotional videos as well. These are to be supported by interactive maps, cycle led rides, family events, and working with businesses and schools to increase participation.
- 3.10 The council has also secured £100k funding to roll out 32 residential electric vehicle 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 that local community hubs, e.g. at shopping centres, would be the best locations.
- 3.11 Our shared Public Protection Partnership team secured £259k of DEFRA funding to help councils develop and implement measures to benefit schools, businesses and communities and reduce the impact of dirty air on people's health. Part of the funding has helped procure equipment to better monitor air quality levels around 14 specific schools located close to existing the borough's two existing Air Quality Management Areas. Gaining a better understanding of local concentrations of air pollutants is a key step towards planning future actions to reduce exposure. Whilst the project will help to identify future measures to reduce exposure at schools, the grant also allows us to act now on engine idling through education and awareness.
- 3.12 In addition to the above It is worth noting that the council applied for but was ultimately **unsuccessful** with the following funding bids. The effort required to bid for these monies is considerable and there is no separate budget heading for this work. This is therefore an area of concern. The failure bids list is:
- Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery: £1.3M to retrofit some of the borough's least energy efficient homes;
 - Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund: A £500k bid submitted on behalf of / in partnership with Silva Homes to retrofit private landlord housing;
 - Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund: a £500k bid to install a hybrid system of air source heat and a new gas boiler at Time Square
 - Department for Transport: a £30k bid to develop a detailed plan to improve cycling and walking between Crowthorne and Owlsmoor
- 3.13 Moving forwards there are a number of planned initiatives funded by Public Health monies which can contribute to supporting climate change work.

Parks & Countryside

- 3.14 The service has recently finished a busy tree planting period incorporating 2,795 trees over 20 sites as part of highways improvements and improvements to public green spaces.
- 3.15 The total area of Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) has increased by 50.97 hectares mainly due to new mapping of ponds across the borough. 700 ponds were identified which support biodiversity, store water, reduce flooding and act as carbon sinks.
- 3.16 The total area of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) has also been increased by 17.7 hectares with the re-designation of Lily Hill Park. In the climate change context, Lily Hill Park has woodland and meadows that provide urban cooling, carbon storage and support the survival of biodiversity.
- 3.17 A project to finalise the installation of a ground source heating pump at Westmoreland Park Pavilion is ongoing and the service are also looking at increasing rainwater harvesting at a number of sites following successful trials at the Look Out and Westmoreland Park.
- 3.18 The team continues to review items on the action plan with an ambition to tighten their targets and measures of progress.

Environmental Services – Greening our Waste Strategy

- 3.19 Performance on the council's food waste recycling service has remained strong throughout the first three quarters. By the end of December the service had diverted over 5,000 tonnes of food waste from landfill which equates to 2.75Kg per household per week and a proportion of the borough's flats will soon be added to the scheme.
- 3.20 The average overall recycling rate has also remained high at around 58%. It is expected this rate will drop slightly by year end as a consequence of seasonal factors but should still be in excess of 55%, reflecting more than a 12% improvement on last year. Participation in the food waste scheme has also been sustained at an exceptionally high 90% of eligible households. This compares to an average of around 60%-70% in other schemes.
- 3.21 Efforts to reduce the total amount of waste ending up as landfill have also been successful representing around 7% of all waste currently – below our annual target of 10%.
- 3.22 The service has also started collecting and analysing waste fleet vehicle emissions. A metric will be available at the end of the financial year and will serve as a benchmark for future measurements.

Highways and Transport

- 3.23 Two revenue grant successes have already been covered but funding has also been secured to work on a bus service improvement plan (BSIP). The BSIP sets out the combined vision for improving bus services in the borough. The Partnership with local bus operators is now working to publish an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme which will set out actions to help deliver the BSIP aims.

- 3.24 The service is currently looking to develop a database to demonstrate the cumulative carbon reduction benefits of all the work completed within the Transport Department. The aim is to combine all the active travel measures, construction work, supply chains and other work streams to demonstrate that the department is working in a cleaner way.
- 3.25 Partnership work with the Eco Rewards scheme has continued to incentivize local schools and residents to choose sustainable travel options. At the end of quarter 3 there are now 9 schools participating in the scheme, and 45,000 green miles were reported during the quarter, increasing the overall total to 245,000 since launch.
- 3.26 Moving forwards the service will be undertaking a widespread consultation on walking and cycling habits within the borough during Q4 to better inform planning on improving infrastructure and supporting a greater transition to these sustainable modes.

Public Protection Partnership – air quality

- 3.27 The PPP ran an anti-idling car bumper sticker design competition for primary schools. School children across the three local authorities were asked to create a design for a car sticker which would encourage the driver behind them to switch off their engines when appropriate to do so, saving emissions from idling. From a grand total of 348 entries, the winning impactful design was submitted by a year 6 pupil from Ascot Heath Primary School. Copies of the sticker are available on request.
- 3.28 A project to start education around engine idling and idling enforcement will be a focus for the service over the coming year. This programme will initially target taxi ranks, schools and known hot spot areas around the borough.

Economic Development

- 3.29 Following the success of The Forest Giants events in the Lexicon in the Summer of 2021 work is now underway for a Forest Springs event highlighting the importance of water conservation. There are further plans for a return of the Giants later in 2022 to help broaden the borough's messages around protecting and enhancing our natural environment.
- 3.30 The council has recently been appraised of the outcomes of the 2021 Bracknell Forest Council Business Survey which was undertaken with over 500 local businesses primarily to understand the impact of COVID-19 and Brexit. The survey also asked for the views of local businesses around the green agenda. Among many outcomes the results showed that just 51 per cent of businesses have the intention of being more environmentally friendly, just 12 per cent have set a specific target or aim to achieve net-zero and just five per cent have set a deadline to this commitment. This clearly demonstrates an opportunity for greater engagement and collaboration over the coming year.

Domestic Energy Efficiency

- 3.31 Work has continued to better understand the condition of residential properties in the borough from an energy performance point of view. The section continues to build energy efficiency data on as many borough homes as possible and now has an almost complete data set. During the year the cumulative efforts to capture data and retrofit homes with energy efficiency measures has resulted in the borough achieving

an average 'C' energy rating for all homes. A key Government target is for every home to have a C rating by 2035.

4 Communications plan

- 4.1 A detailed communication plan has been developed and good progress has been made in profiling key programme successes. Climate change news stories have been pushed out every two weeks since the start of May 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-newsletters, e.g. Parks & Countryside, Waste & Recycling, etc., in addition to Town and Country, as its other routes for messaging.
- 4.3 Looking forward, the team will be exploring the most effective ways to communicate with schools more regularly with headteachers' updates plus supporting a planned schools' climate change conference in May 2022. They are also working on more targeted messaging for groups like older residents, or faith and community groups. We have also started producing weekly tips for residents with a focus on everyday things that can be built into daily routines, such as shorter showers and sustainable cooking.
- 4.4 Internal communications are equally as important. Messages and articles have been put in the staff newspapers, Forest Views and Forest Views Extra helping to make the climate change strategy more visible to all staff and Members. There is also now a Climate Change Yammer group through which all staff and Members can post ideas or signpost others to articles of interest around climate change. The use of such internal staff channels 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.

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 Dec 2021

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