

**CABINET – THURSDAY
12 OCTOBER 2023**

**Report of the Director Commercial and Economic Development
Lead Member: Executive Member for Climate Action, Net Zero, Property and
Assets**

Part A

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Purpose of Report

This report seeks adoption of the Climate Change Strategy 2023-2030 and Climate Change Strategy Action Plan 2023-2030.

Recommendations

1. That the Climate Change Strategy 2023-2030, contained in Appendix A, be approved.
2. That the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan 2023-2023, contained in Appendix B, be approved.
3. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Commercial and Economic Development, in consultation with the Lead Member for Climate Action, Net Zero, Property and Assets, to review and update the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan via the Climate Action Board.

Reasons

1. To enable the approval of a Climate Change Strategy that reflects the overall strategic direction of the Council in relation to its Climate Change commitment.
2. To enable actions for managing the Council's impact on Climate Change to be progressed.
3. To enable the Strategy and Action Plan to be kept up to date and amendments to be made as necessary to reflect changing circumstances, opportunities, and Council priorities.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Climate Change Strategy responds directly to the Council's 2020-2024 Corporate Strategy commitment to look after the environment for future generations.

A Climate Change motion on notice was approved by Full council on 24 June 2019 to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030. The Council also committed to work with residents, businesses and other public bodies across the borough to deliver this ambitious goal through all relevant technologies, strategies and plans. A new

strategy is now needed to provide focus up to 2030 for Council activities that respond to the challenges of climate change and to show leadership to others in the borough encouraging them to take similar steps.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions

The Climate Change Strategy covers the period 2023 to 2030. The strategy has been developed in consultation with service areas and lead officers across the Council. Individual projects and activities will be embedded in service and team plans as appropriate subject to their own individual project management, decision making and scrutiny processes. Overall progress towards delivery of the strategy will be overseen by the Climate action board and reviewed by Performance Scrutiny Panel.

Report Implications

Financial Implications

The cost of providing strategic management for the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy are currently met from within the Sustainability budget. There will be a need for concerted action from across the Council to successfully implement the strategy and additional resources will be required to ensure the Council achieves the commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.

There are a number of projects contained within the action plan which will either be funded from funding opportunities, where available, existing budgets of individual service areas or by the Climate Action Fund as approved by the capital budgeting process.

Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision Cabinet is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
Service areas across the Council not sufficiently engaged to deliver projects, resulting in failure to achieve actions.	Likely (3)	Serious (3)	Moderate (9)	Ensure there is a corporate response and engagement with key stakeholders throughout the Council to deliver the Carbon Neutral Plan. Project Board in place to monitor actions.
Resources unavailable to achieve actions identified	Likely (3)	Serious (3)	Moderate (9)	Influence service planning and resources and prioritise projects identified if necessary.
The Council fails to meet carbon neutral 2030 target outlined	Unlikely (2)	Significant (2)	Low (4)	Project Board in place to review performance throughout the plan

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
within its policy commitments				period.
Reputational risk to authority for not pursuing or meeting carbon reduction targets	Unlikely (2)	Significant (2)	Low (4)	Ensure there is a corporate response and engagement with key stakeholders throughout the Council to deliver the Climate Change Strategy

Equality and Diversity

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and attached at Appendix C.

Climate Change and Carbon Impact

The Climate Change Strategy will provide a significant contribution towards reducing carbon emissions and the impact on Climate Change.

Crime and Disorder

None identified

Wards Affected

All Wards

Publicity Arrangements

Not applicable

Consultations

A public consultation of the draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan took place between 23rd January and 6th March 2023. The consultation comprised an online survey posted on the “Current Consultations” page of the Council website and widely communicated through the website. Other channels used to publicise the consultation included:

- Social media channels to more than 20,000 followers.
- Shared with more than 16,000 subscribers to Charnwood Borough Council’s email alert service.
- Given press coverage in the Loughborough Echo and Leicester Mercury.
- Shared with more than 200 organisations, businesses, business groups, environmental and community groups and residents’ associations.
- Shared with all parish councils in the Charnwood Borough Council area along with schools, transport organisations and businesses.
- Circulated to employees of Charnwood Borough Council and Members of the Council

Young people were identified as a key demographic for additional engagement activities. This is the group that will experience the greatest impact from our changing climate, but younger people are less likely to respond to a conventional survey. To gain greater insight into the views of younger people, two small focus groups were run at Loughborough College on 1st March 2023.

Links to the Corporate Strategy

Caring for the Environment	Yes
Healthy Communities	No
A Thriving Economy	No
Your Council	No

Key Decision: Yes

Date included on Forward Plan 16/08/23

Background Papers: Carbon Neutral Plan 2030

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Part B

Background

1. Climate change is one of the key challenges facing Charnwood today. Action on climate change is taking place across the world. Policy commitments made by national Governments via international agreement has resulted in national policies designed to deliver on these commitments. The UK has pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. Ensuring that the Council fully contributes to local efforts to reduce the impacts of climate change is a priority for the Council.
2. In August 2022 Environmental Solutions through Partnership (ESP) were commissioned to assist the Council in updating a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. The Strategy aims to provide guidance and information on how to reduce the impact on climate change from our own operations and the Borough. Although total emissions for the Borough are outside of the Council's direct control, working in partnership, the Council can influence stakeholders to reduce their emissions. The Strategy will help the Council to meet its statutory environmental duties and address climate change risks.
3. The Corporate Plan 2020-2024 reiterates the commitment to caring for the environment to 'looking after it for future generations'. The Climate Change Strategy takes account of the Council's current position, new commitments, the importance of partnership working and the implementation of adaptation measures. The Strategy provides a framework that can reflect local priorities and opportunities for action on carbon reduction and climate resilience. In September 2021, the Charnwood Carbon Neutral Plan 2030, was approved to achieve carbon neutrality from the Council's own operations by 2030. The Carbon Neutral Plan is a subset of the Climate Change Strategy and its associated actions support the new Strategy.
4. A Climate Action Board was set up in May 2022 to take forward the actions contained in the Council's Carbon Neutral Plan, oversee and manage the Climate Change Strategy and oversee and manage other Council actions that contribute positively to climate change, for example, air quality. The Board members are Justin Henry - Director Commercial and Economic Development, Maria French - Sustainability Officer, Matt Bradford – Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment, Ian Browne – Head of Assets and Property, Mike Roberts – Communications Manager, Katie Mills – Group Leader Plans, Policy and Place Making, Lesley Tansey – Head of Finance, and Gareth Harvey - Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety.
5. The preparation of the strategy has been informed by engagement with officers from across the key service areas. The work was introduced to the Strategic Leadership Team on 20 April 2022. Interviews were held with key members of staff to inform the Strategy and focus the Council's climate change ambitions into objectives, targets and an associated action plan.
6. In February 2020 a Carbon Neutral action fund was awarded a three-year annual block sum of £500k in the Capital Plan 2020/21 to 2022/23 to support the delivery of carbon reduction projects. Due to the impact of the COVID-19

Pandemic the block sum was revised in October 2020 to £100k for the financial year 2020/21. The capital budget is £909,100 in 2023/24. Projects funded so far include LED lighting at the Town Hall and Southfield Road Offices, a Brompton electric pool bike for staff and EV charging points at Meadow Lane Industrial Estate and the Mayors garage.

Review of existing Climate Change Strategy

7. The Climate Change Strategy 2018-2030 was developed in 2018, prior to the call for action by local authorities to address the Climate Emergency Crisis. The scope of the Strategy is centred on reducing the Council's own carbon emissions and influencing change at a district level. It sets out the Council's commitment to local action on climate change.
8. The Charnwood Climate Strategy 2018-2030 review comes at a challenging time. The UK is recovering from the economic effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic and changes to modes of working. There is significant pressure on energy prices, potential disruption to energy supplies, a war in Ukraine and rising inflation. Many UK councils have declared a climate emergency. It is anticipated that councils will declare an ecological emergency. The Covid-19 Pandemic initiated a change in the Council's priorities, finances and resources contributed to many actions being halted and continuing into 2022.
9. The conclusion of this review was that whilst the existing Strategy was appropriate when published, a refreshed Strategy based on the Council's own climate ambition, agreed vision and objectives, will provide focus for actions required to support it.

Climate Action Scorecard

10. In 2022, all UK councils' written Climate Action Plans were assessed and scored by Climate Emergency UK, an independent pressure group. The assessment for Charnwood delivered a low score as it was based solely on the Climate Change Strategy 2018 – 2030 and Action Plan. Other councils had multiple documents on their websites, with information that contributed to giving them higher scores than Charnwood. A gap analysis has been conducted as part of informing a review of 'The Climate Change Strategy 2018 – 2030 and Action Plan'.
11. Since the assessment Charnwood have added these documents to the website:
 - Carbon Neutral Plan 2030
 - Charnwood Borough Council Corporate Strategy 2020-24
 - Corporate Delivery Plan 2022-23
 - Charnwood Local Plan 2021-37 and Delivery Plan (consultation document available online)

Had these documents been available at the time of the assessment, this gap analysis shows that Charnwood could have achieved a higher score, comparable with the average council.

12. Further improvements in the scoring would be achieved by taking action on the following considerations:
 - Declaring a Climate and Ecological Emergency.
 - Declaring Charnwood's Net-Zero ambition for the district.
 - Setting SMART climate action targets and monitoring their progress.

Amendments to The Strategy have considered the requirements of Climate Emergency UK and the Climate Action Scorecard alongside the Council's own climate change strategic priorities.

Appraisal of the Council's Carbon Neutral Action Plan

13. On 16th September 2021, the Charnwood Carbon Neutral Plan 2030, an ambitious plan to achieve carbon neutrality from the Council's own operations by 2030 was adopted by Cabinet. The Carbon Neutral Plan is a subset of the Climate Change Strategy. A new 2018-2019 baseline was established of a carbon footprint of 1,130 tCO₂e which took into account the decision to procure renewable electricity. The 2021-2022 footprint was calculated as 1,130 tCO₂e. This shows only a 3% increase from 2020-2021 (1,092 tCO₂e) which is encouraging since activities were normalising post the COVID-19 pandemic. Council buildings continue to be decarbonised particularly where we use electricity. To facilitate action, the Climate Action Board, meets bi-monthly to provide a conduit for ensuring the monitoring of actions that were agreed and to enhance or modify actions as appropriate.

Appraisal of the Net-zero-carbon Leicestershire 2045 Strategy and Action Plan

14. An appraisal of the Leicestershire Net Zero Carbon 2045 Strategy and Action Plan has been conducted to understand what implications this will have for the Council. The most important consideration being the County wide Climate change ambition:
 - Leicestershire County Council have stated a target for a 'Net Zero Carbon Leicestershire by 2045'

The trajectory provided for Leicestershire to reach net zero carbon by 2045 cannot be achieved without action on a huge scale, a sense of urgency, and important strategic partnerships with all stakeholders. The Leicestershire Net Zero Pathways demonstrates the scale of action required; a 95% reduction in emissions is estimated to take the County close to the 2045 net zero carbon target, but not to achieve it.

15. The Leicestershire action plan contains themes, aims, objectives and SMART actions. The actions will require the cooperation of all Leicestershire local authorities and other identified stakeholders. Following a review of the Leicestershire actions by theme, appropriate actions have been considered for inclusion in the Charnwood action plan.
16. Leicestershire County Council state whether they will 'Lead, Ask or Influence' those involved to achieve each action. The County Council intend to establish a Stakeholder Forum, which could include representation from local

government, business, statutory/governmental bodies, infrastructure providers, voluntary organisations, communities, health, education and universities. Partnerships and dialogue with the County have been established to assist Charnwood to deliver positive climate change actions. Climate actions taken by the Council will lead to a reduction in emissions within the Borough and, in turn, the County.

17. On 28th February 2023 Charnwood Borough Council supported a pact to tackle climate change, nature decline and carbon reduction in Leicestershire. The Leicestershire Climate and Nature Pact is based on the principles of the Glasgow Climate Pact, signed by the UK government in November 2021. The core requirements of the pact include the need to act quickly on reducing the impacts of climate change, reducing carbon emissions to net zero, halting ecological decline, supporting climate recovery, and working together to deliver action on climate change.

Climate Change Strategy

18. The Climate Change Strategy, contained in Appendix A, provides an unchanging vision for 2030 together with themes, broad aims and objectives. The seven themes are Transport, Planning Land Use and Biodiversity, Buildings Housing & Heating (energy), Resources and Waste, Business and Economy, Governance and Finance and Partnership and Communications. Each theme contains an aim, objectives, climate change risks and information on managing, mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Climate Change Strategy Action Plan

19. The Climate Change Action Plan, contained in Appendix B, will help to protect and improve the environment of the Borough that will benefit the community, economy and environment for future generations. The action Plan provides a roadmap of key climate achievements from 2005 to date. A table of key SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, timebound) actions. These will be monitored bi-monthly by the Climate Action Board and annually by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee.

Consultation

20. A public consultation was carried out of the draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan between 23rd January and 6th March 2023. A full report on the findings is provided in Appendix D. There were 129 responses to the survey and 18 students from Loughborough College participated in the focus groups. In addition, five organisations and one individual submitted detailed and in-depth responses to the survey.
21. A wide range of views were expressed by those participating in the consultation. The consultation process demonstrated that the residents of the Borough broadly support action taken by the Council to reduce the impact of Climate Change and adapt to the consequences. Suggestions about what people want to see from the Council going forward included:
 - Embedding the issue of Climate Change within our decision-making processes

- Decisions that contradict Climate Change Policy should be fully explained and justified
 - Lead by example
 - Take action to reduce emissions and impact
 - Provide honest and impartial information to residents
 - Continue measures to reduce waste and increase recycling and to protect and enhance the natural environment
22. Following a review of the responses, having considered the availability of resources, where appropriate and practicable the draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan has been amended.

Communication

23. The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will be made publicly available on the Council's website and communicated to all staff and Members. Progress updates will be reported to the Climate Action Board, to staff via One Charnwood and Members. To raise staff awareness of the Strategy and Action Plan an on-line environmental induction module is available to all new and current staff. The Green Rewards Sustainability engagement scheme enables staff and Members to take actions to reduce their individual carbon footprint. The Council communications team will be highlighting internally and externally any key milestones and achievements which are linked to the strategy, utilising the Council's website, social media accounts and email alerts as well as the local media. The action plan also includes proposals to raise awareness of various environmental issues which themselves can be an opportunity to highlight the strategy and the Council's commitment to tackling climate change.

Conclusion

24. It is essential to have an up-to-date Strategy in place to help the Council reduce carbon emissions and provide a framework to report this to our stakeholders. By doing so it encourages others to take actions. The Council is leading by example and is in a strong position to influence the wider community. By addressing climate change through our corporate decision making, we influence planning, development, transport infrastructure, provision of services, the local economy and community initiatives. Embedding climate change into our own operations will help secure maximum benefit for present and future generations. It is to be expected that not all actions will come to fruition and other opportunities may present themselves. Therefore, the Action Plan will be subject to change whilst moving towards the aim of reducing carbon emissions.

Appendices

Appendix A - Climate Change Strategy 2023-2030

Appendix B - Climate Change Strategy Action Plan 2023-2030

Appendix C – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix D – Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2023 – 2030 Consultation Report (March 2023)