

## CABINET – 9TH DECEMBER 2021

### Report of the Chief Executive Lead Member: Councillor Rollings

#### Part A

#### ITEM 6 MOTION ON NOTICE: TOWARDS CARBON NEUTRALITY IN CHARNWOOD

##### Purpose of Report

To allow Cabinet to consider those elements of a motion on notice that was referred for further consideration at the full Council meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 that relate to executive (ie. Cabinet) responsibilities.

##### Recommendation

That Cabinet determine what, if any, action to take in response to the following resolutions that were included within the motion on notice, taking into account the officer advice on the relevant implications as set out in Part B of this report:

- (a) Appoint a dedicated member of staff to oversee the progress of the council towards its goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2025, ensure it is kept on track, and that any available external funding identified is applied for.
- (b) Ensure that the CBC Carbon Neutral Project Board is a democratic and politically balanced entity, comprising members from across the political spectrum. The climate crisis affects us all.
- (c) Introduce obligatory carbon literacy training for ALL officers.
- (d) Establish a Charnwood Climate Committee made up of knowledgeable representatives in the relevant fields of business & industry, research and academia and community, to look at ways businesses and residents in the borough of Charnwood can be supported and encouraged to reduce their carbon footprint.

##### Reason

To ensure that those elements of the motion on notice as referred by full Council that relate to executive responsibilities are given informed consideration.

##### Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

At the full Council meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 the following motion on notice was referred so that the relevant elements could be further considered by Council and by Cabinet, as appropriate, with the benefit of officer advice on the associated implications:

##### ***This Council notes that :***

*This year marks the 26th COP summit, taking place 1-12 November 2021 in the UK. The spotlight is now firmly on the UK to provide a level of global leadership that raises ambition and turns promises into desperately needed action to tackle the climate crisis.*

***This Council believes that :***

*Local authorities have their part to play in showing this leadership, by acknowledging the urgent need for action on climate change, taking steps to reduce their own carbon footprint, and encouraging and supporting local businesses and residents to do the same.*

***This Council resolves to:***

- 1) Appoint a dedicated member of staff to oversee the progress of the council towards its goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2025, ensure it is kept on track, and that any available external funding identified is applied for.*
- 2) Ensure that the CBC Carbon Neutral Project Board is a democratic and politically balanced entity, comprising members from across the political spectrum. The climate crisis affects us all.*
- 3) Introduce obligatory Carbon Literacy training for ALL officers and councillors.*
- 4) Commit to a minimum annual budget for carbon neutral projects for the next five years at least, to ensure progress doesn't stall due to lack of financial commitment.*
- 5) Establish a Charnwood Climate Committee made up of knowledgeable representatives in the relevant fields of business & industry, research and academia and community, to look at ways businesses and residents in the borough of Charnwood can be supported and encouraged to reduce their carbon footprint.*

The Monitoring Officer has determined that the proposed resolutions 1), 2), and 5) relate to executive responsibilities, and are therefore for Cabinet to consider.

In relation to 3), Member training is a Council function, overseen by the Member Development Member Reference Group, and officer training is an executive function. The officer training element is therefore considered within this report.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

Any decisions made by Cabinet would come into effect at such times as they may determine to be appropriate, subject to call-in provisions.

The resolutions which relate to Council functions, ie. the part of 3) which relates to Member training, and 4), will be referred back to the next full Council meeting with officer advice on their implications.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

*Financial Implications*

As set out in Part B.

*Risk Management*

Any risks associated with the proposed resolutions are set out in Part B.

Key Decision:

No

Background Papers:

None

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## Part B

Resolution (a): Appoint a dedicated member of staff to oversee the progress of the council towards its goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2025, ensure it is kept on track, and that any available external funding identified is applied for.

1. The appointment of staff and the detailed requirements of the staffing establishment are an operational responsibility of the Chief Executive in his role as head of paid service.
2. The Council's target date for achieving carbon neutrality is 2030, not 2025.
3. The Council has a part time member of staff focused on sustainability and carbon neutrality, and there is a budget proposal to make this a full-time role. Officers from across the Council are also engaged in the activities to help achieve carbon neutrality and to tackle climate change.
4. The Council is already monitoring the progress of its Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Neutral plans and reports on this matter to Members. The Council will apply for external funding where appropriate. There are often significant resource, eligibility, and deliverability considerations to make when applying for external funding.

Resolution (b): Ensure that the CBC Carbon Neutral Project Board is a democratic and politically balanced entity, comprising members from across the political spectrum. The climate crisis affects us all.

5. The Carbon Neutral Project Board is an operational body and not a formally constituted committee. Therefore, and also because it is an executive (ie. Cabinet) responsibility, political balance requirements do not apply.
6. Cllr Needham as the Council's Climate Change Champion sits on the Project Board, as does the Lead Member. The Lead Member could invite other Councillors to sit on the Board if that was felt to be desirable. However, officers would be cautious about having too many elected members sitting on the Project Board because, as noted previously, it is an operational body.
7. The Project Board is in the process of widening its terms of reference to ensure other relevant issues such as bio-diversity are fully covered. This will link to the wider climate change strategy action plan, which is due to be considered at Scrutiny Commission.

Resolution (c): Introduce obligatory Carbon Literacy training for ALL officers.

8. Officer training is an operational responsibility of the Chief Executive in his role as head of paid service.
9. Cabinet could resolve to request the Chief Executive to consider providing carbon literacy training to all officers, subject to any costs being within the available officer training budget. However, it is unlikely that officers would support mandatory carbon literacy training for all staff because it would not be relevant to many of their roles and responsibilities.

10. The Chief Executive is supportive of appropriate training being provided to officers where it is relevant to their role, and also offering such training to other officers who may be interested. The LGA have recently produced a training offering that may be relevant and this can be further investigated to assess its suitability.
11. We do also provide officers with access to relevant information via our various communication channels, and the staff forum is very engaged in sustainability issues.

Resolution (d): Establish a Charnwood Climate Committee made up of knowledgeable representatives in the relevant fields of business & industry, research and academia and community, to look at ways businesses and residents in the borough of Charnwood can be supported and encouraged to reduce their carbon footprint.

12. Cabinet could consider establishing an informal advisory group along the lines suggested within the motion. It cannot be a formally constituted committee because that would need to consist of Councillors, and would be subject to political balance requirements.
13. However, Cabinet will need consider the following factors in determining whether to establish such an advisory group.
14. Democratic Services currently do not have spare capacity to clerk and support the additional meetings that would be required. Resources to support the group would therefore have to be identified, which could potentially result in budget pressures for additional staffing.
15. It is unclear from the motion how any recommendations which the advisory group may make would be dealt with, including any potential budgetary or resource implications. It is likely that any recommendations arising would need to be referred to Cabinet for due consideration, to be accompanied by officer advice on any financial and other implications.
16. The motion also does not specify whether any allowances or expenses would be paid to the external representatives. Although these may not amount to a significant value there is currently no budget to meet any such costs.
17. If Cabinet do agree to establish such a group then the issues set out above will need to be resolved, including agreeing some terms of reference for the group.
18. Alternatively, Cabinet may wish to work through our existing relevant networks and partnerships. The widening remit of the Carbon Neutral Project Board may also contribute.