

**FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
1ST MARCH 2022**

**Report of Strategic Director - Commercial Development, Assets and Leisure
Lead Member: Cllr Rollings**

ITEM 9 UPDATE ON CARBON NEUTRAL PLAN AND ACTIONS

Purpose of Report

To provide further information to the Committee on the progress of the Carbon Neutral Plan.

Action Requested

The Committee is requested to note the report.

Reason

To ensure that Members are aware of progress with the action plan laid out in the Carbon Neutral Plan.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

In June 2019, Charnwood Borough Council committed to achieving carbon neutrality for the Council's own operations by 2030. This builds on the success of our 2015-2020 Carbon Management Plan, which saw us reduce our carbon footprint by 37% between 2012 and 2018. Since then, our footprint has fallen by a further 3%.

The Council's Carbon Neutral Plan, approved at Cabinet on 16th September 2021, sets out a series of actions (also approved) to move the Council further towards its carbon neutral target. Actions 15-18 come under energy feasibility studies for which this report seeks approval to progress.

Implementation Timetable including future decisions

This report has no implementation timetable

Report Implications

Financial Implications

There are no identified financial implications associated with this report

Risk Management

There are no identified risks associated with this report

Equality and Diversity

No implications

Crime and Disorder

No implications

Sustainability

No implications

Background Papers: Carbon Neutral Plan (Cabinet report):

<https://charnwood.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s8253/Cab%2016%20Sept%202021%20Item%2009%20Carbon%20Neutral%20Plan.pdf>

Renewable Energy Feasibility Study

Appendices: None

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Part B

1. The Council's Carbon Neutral Plan (with associated actions) was approved by Cabinet on the 16th September 2021.
2. The plan addresses the 3 major challenges that the Council faces in our move to become Carbon Neutral by 2030. Each Challenge has a series of associated actions. Below, the challenges and their associated actions are shown in tables with current activity to address the challenge detailed below.

Challenge: Gas use must be reduced or eliminated (Buildings)
Install a solid and better insulating door at the rear entrance of the Town Hall (stage door) to eliminate the current loss of heat and cold draughts.
Commission a technical feasibility study for low or zero carbon heating options in the Town Hall. This replace the 20-year-old boiler and would be installed as part of a full building renovation.
Renew quotes for double glazing and flat roof insulation at Charnwood Museum and procure the best option.
Complete LED installations in Museum staff areas with person-in-room sensors.
Continue to replace bulbs when needed with best available LED option across the estate.
Procure renewable gas

3. Specific challenges exist with moves to reduce carbon emissions in Council-owned buildings. For example, many Council-owned and occupied properties are of a significant age and are either listed or locally listed, effectively either limiting changes that we might otherwise be able to make (e.g. replacing windows with double glazing, insulating etc) or making changes much more expensive than might be allowed. Options will continue to be evaluated.
4. With regards to the Council offices at Southfield Road, Cabinet has approved and delegated authority to invest capital in feasibility work to build new premises on the site of the Southfields Extension Car Park (Item 31, Cabinet, 16th September 2021). Part of this work will be to understand if and how the Council can build a smaller, more financially and environmentally efficient office. This will be funded from a separate Capital "pot" to the Carbon Action Fund currently in the Capital Plan. This has the potentially to significantly reduce the carbon

footprint of the Council. Equally, if new construction is not feasible, a programme to renovate the Southfield office or to relocate and refurbish an existing property will be examined.

5. Where lighting replacement is needed as part of general repair and maintenance, LED lighting is the chosen option by default as previous technologies are becoming more difficult to source and more expensive. In terms of wholesale replacement, questions of future accommodation prevent action at the present (i.e. any investment in a premises must payback during in an acceptable timeframe. If we were to replace all lighting at Southfields only to vacate the building 3 years later, we would not have achieved payback and the investment could not be considered prudent).
6. Renewable gas has been investigated – currently there is a spot-market premium of roughly 700% for renewable gas purchase. Procuring gas at this price currently would lift the annual gas consumption cost for the Council offices from £15,000 per year to £105,000. Officers will continue to investigate this option as renewable gas matures as a commodity. Electric based heating options will be examined as the technology improves.

Challenge: Council-owned fleet of vehicles are biggest contributor to our carbon footprint and must be decarbonised (Transport)
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Upgrade and switch to electric vehicles in the street management & pest control fleet.
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Smart bin feasibility study.

Cross-service electric pool car and charging feasibility study.

Cross-service maintenance vehicle feasibility & pilot

7. Officers are currently investigating the implementation of electric pool cars for use by officers when out in the Borough conducting business. Currently envisioned to be 6 to 8 vehicles, feasibility work to determine the affordability and practicalities (e.g. charging infrastructure, cost, availability of vehicles).
8. Other fleet possibilities will be investigated, specifically around the waste fleet and the potential use of HVO (Biodiesel) and/or electric vehicles. There are a number of challenges that remain to be addressed, such as the nature of the Council's contract for waste services as well as geographic/infrastructure issues.

Challenge: We will need to invest in projects that will create a positive carbon footprint (Offsetting)
Progress tree programme including 13,000 to 14,000 trees at Hathern during Autumn/Winter 2021-2022.
Embedding Nature P.O.Sitive in the Carbon Neutral Plan
Site feasibility studies for Solar PV installations on Council owned land, including land purchased for the purpose.
Borough-wide feasibility study for land-based solar PV installations, for example at Council-owned car parks.
Feasibility study for rooftop solar PV installations across our built estate
Site feasibility studies for wind energy generation taking account of Local Plan Opportunity Areas

9. Carbon offsetting, in the form of renewable energy installations, provides the best opportunity to significantly reduce the Council's carbon footprint in the shorter term.
10. On 10th February 2022, Cabinet approved the use of up to £150,000 to commission feasibility work regarding Solar PV installations in the borough.
11. This feasibility work will examine the potential to generate energy via solar farm, rooftop installation and in carparks.
12. Outcomes of the work with a suggested course of action and a business plan for the same will be subject to governance requirements and approvals through established routes.

General Comments

13. The Council's financial challenges remain and are the most single pressing issue the Council faces in the near term. Any capital spend or investment has a revenue cost implication which must be affordable for the Council. Therefore, any work that progresses to implementation must be financially sustainable for the Council to not endanger overall service delivery by straining limited financial resources in the General Fund Revenue Account.
14. The action plans and areas under investigation in this report will be subject to change. Such changes will be communicated transparently and appropriately.