

Cherwell District Council

Overview & Scrutiny

14 March 2023

Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan

Report of Assistant Director Environmental Services

This report is public

Purpose of report

To provide an overview of the “Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan” which can be found in Appendix I. The report sets out the context for the production of the Route Map and Action Plan, along with detail of the structure and key areas of activity, such as decarbonising buildings and transport across the district.

During recent years, Cherwell has worked collaboratively on the climate change agenda with the county council and other authorities in Oxfordshire leading to successful outcomes, such as the Park & Charge EV infrastructure in our car parks. This approach has led to investment in the district, whilst minimising the resource impact upon staff, e.g. to deal with procurement, project management etc. The Route Map and Action Plan focus on the areas of activity which can be enabled through joint working with our local authority partners.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to:

- 1.1 Support the proposed Route Map and Action Plan which seeks to deliver the ambitions of the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO) 2021 report.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Route Map and Action Plan is a high level document, which brings the work of the county’s local authorities together, with the ambition for Oxfordshire to become carbon net zero by 2050.

The various actions are compatible with our Climate Change Framework, in which we have pledged to work to support the district to become carbon net zero.

Whilst there are not yet any indicative costs associated with the 2050 target, these will emerge as work streams begin and evidence is generated around the required

finance, e.g. to increase the amount of Solar PV. The costs of meeting 2050, will be spread across the public sector, the private sector, central government and the public.

- 2.2 During the last few years, CDC has taken a very proactive role in responding to the climate emergency, both in supporting carbon reductions in its own emissions, whilst also supporting the district to do the same, e.g. through the Park & Charge scheme, resulting in EV charging points in our public car parks.

The Action Plan and Route Map builds on this recent work, giving additional focus to how we support the district in its journey to becoming net zero.

- 2.3 The initial work on producing the PaZCO was commissioned and agreed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) and was presented at Executive BPM in June 2021. This Route Map and Action Plan builds on that report, updates relevant evidence and sets out collaboratively developed actions that are ambitious, locally owned and aligned to existing initiatives. It will support Oxfordshire's local authorities and other key partners to develop an evidence-led approach to delivering a net zero Oxfordshire.

FOP will provide the governance and performance management arrangements for this work. This will enable joint oversight for all authorities thereby providing a level of assurance that each one will have the opportunity to influence outcomes.

- 2.4 The study sets out a Net Zero Route Map which represents a viable, recommended pathway to net zero in the context of the current policy and technological landscape. The Route Map provides a sense of the scale, timing and types of measures that need to be adopted to put Oxfordshire on a path to net zero by 2050 – or sooner.

Modelling has been carried out on a sector-based approach to form sector-specific Route Maps and Actions, with a focus on several key areas. The Pathway Modelling has demonstrated that dramatic changes are required in each sector to reach a sufficient level of decarbonisation and achieve net zero.

Five high-level Route Maps have been produced to deconstruct the often-distant 2050 net zero target into clear and tangible intermediate goals aligned to milestones at 2025, 2030, 2040 and 2050. These include four sectoral Route Maps (based on the highest emitting sectors explored within the net zero pathway modelling) and one overarching decarbonisation Route Map which provides an overview of Oxfordshire's interim targets.

- 2.5 The Action Plan provides direction and specific steps on how key interim emission milestones can be achieved, thereby maintaining progress towards the wider net zero goal. It consists of a portfolio of 14 actions, ranging from actions that will deliver measurable results over the short-term to empower and demonstrate success, and others that will span across multi-year programmes.

The key focus of the Action Plan is to support accelerated measures towards decarbonisation, with a specific focus on the priorities for the next three to five years.

3.0 Report Details

3.1 Pathways and data analysis

- 3.1.1 The PaZCO report identified three potential *pathways* which the county could follow in its net zero journey. The most ambitious of these was adopted, entitled Oxfordshire Leading the Way. This however, recognises there are factors outside of local authority control and, as the report demonstrates, businesses, policy makers and residents in Oxfordshire have a crucial role in supporting, developing and delivering the changes necessary to enable net zero.
- 3.1.2 The Action Plan indicates that the transport sector is responsible for 42% of the county's emissions, housing for 26% and businesses 27%.
- 3.1.3 Different types of energy supply are also discussed, e.g. hydrogen for space heating, which could account for 20% of supply by 2030, but with no increase likely beyond then. To meet the ambitious pathway, Oxfordshire's share of the UK's solar PV capacity reaches 6% by 2050 (currently c.3%). It is assumed that 25% of existing households would be retrofitted with solar PV by 2050.
- 3.1.4 Analysis is provided of the energy demand of the transport, domestic and business sectors through to 2050, with the growth of the business and transport sectors in particular, off-setting earlier reductions in energy demand.
- 3.1.5 The transport sector has been modelled to achieve the largest emissions reduction (99% against the base year), driven by reductions in demand, modal shift, and a 100% switch to electric and other ZEVs to decarbonise residual emissions. The remaining sectors also achieve deep reductions in emissions through a mixture of energy saving measures and fuel switching to electricity or low-carbon fuels.
- 3.1.6 Five-year cumulative carbon budgets are provided, which with the use of BECCS (Bioenergy, Carbon Capture and Storage), indicate that the county could reach *negative* carbon intensity by 2050, i.e. have gone beyond carbon net zero.
- 3.1.7 The report includes detailed analysis of net zero pathway modelling as well as the route maps based on the transport, domestic and business sectors.

3.2 Action Planning

- 3.2.1 The Action Plan provides a portfolio of actions. Some actions will deliver measurable results over the next 3-5 years to empower and demonstrate success. Others will be multi-year programmes supporting longer-term success, thereby helping to set Oxfordshire on the right trajectory to address the Route Map targets.

Successful progress across the portfolio of actions will demonstrate that significant savings can be delivered through local action.

- 3.2.2 The success of the Action Plan will be underpinned by collaboration including from businesses, policy makers and residents. As a result, the actions have been informed by an extensive stakeholder engagement process
- 3.2.3 Fourteen actions have been identified - these actions build on existing activities to support the significant scale up of measures required to meet Oxfordshire's net zero commitments. Whilst ambitious, these short-term actions are embedded in realism to support successful delivery.
- 3.2.4 The actions cover: Building Decarbonisation; Net Zero Carbon Energy Systems Programme; Decarbonisation of Transport; Circular Economy; Nature Recovery and Carbon Sequestration

3.3 Key Findings and next steps

- 3.3.1 Oxfordshire has championed noteworthy decarbonisation efforts over the last decade. However, even with this strong track record in emissions reductions, the scale of the challenge to achieve net zero carbon by 2050 at latest remains significant.
- 3.3.1 It is important to recognise that delivery of the priority actions set out in this programme will not meet the scale of change needed to deliver countywide decarbonisation, but will sit within a wider programme being delivered through strategies, policies, action plans, guidance documents and projects already operating across the county.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 This Action Plan and Pathway which aim to achieve a zero carbon Oxfordshire, is a detailed study of the work and actions needed to achieve the county-wide 2050 target. The actions are based on the most 'ambitious' pathway to achieve 2050, with an interim target of reducing our emissions by half by 2030. It has been written with Cherwell in mind, and there are many aspects that we will be responsible for delivering ourselves.
- 4.2 By working jointly with our local authority partners on this Route Map and Action Plan, we place ourselves in the strongest position possible to meet our climate change objectives.
- 4.3 Examples of areas of work where working collaboratively is particularly beneficial include regional retrofitting of homes, conserving and enhancing our natural capital and planning to meet future energy needs.

- 4.4 The entire body of work required to achieve the 2050 target is not contained within this study, although there is a wider programme of work already taking place, of which this study is a part.
- 4.5 The delivery of significant and high impact decarbonisation solutions is dependent on building and sustaining successful and productive co-working relationships across the public, private and third sectors. Oxfordshire is fortunate enough to have strong existing partnerships and collaborations on which to build.
- 4.6 Securing the appropriate funding to execute the priority actions is an integral part of Oxfordshire's net zero journey, with finance acting as either a key enabler or barrier to success. Whilst a fundamental component, finance is historically difficult to secure. It requires ongoing attention, critically taking forward the enabling action to identify innovative approaches to sit alongside conventional funding sources (including grants from national government and the allocation of local authority budgets).
- 4.7 An innovative approach to delivering the actions will be needed. This includes sourcing and accessing alternative funding opportunities, supporting and bringing inventive technology into the mainstream, and encouraging communities to adopt novel solutions to local problems.

5.0 Consultation

Not required

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative option has been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not support the Pathway and Action Plan. This work supports our own ambitions around reducing greenhouse gas emissions and is an important body of evidence that can underpin our own action planning for carbon net zero.

Pursuing Option 1 option however, would mean that Cherwell DC would not benefit from wider opportunities that are presented from joint working with other local authorities. Climate action is almost always more effective when taken collaboratively leading to joint benefits achieved at a greater scale.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications – Mandatory paragraph

- 7.1 There are no immediate financial commitments associated with this report. However, the report points out that there are likely to be financial implications identified as specific proposals are developed.

Prior to the Council committing to any specific scheme that it must ensure that a full business case has been carried out to understand the full lifetime costs of proposals (including the costs of borrowing) and any funding that may be available. Where there is a net additional budget requirement to the Council, schemes should not proceed until this has been identified.

Additionally the Council should also consider whether there are ways to comply through reductions in what it currently does as well as investing in new technologies to continue our processes in similar ways to those currently adopted.

Comments checked by:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer),
Michael.furness@cherwell-dc.gov.uk, 01925 221845

Legal Implications – Mandatory paragraph

- 7.2 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services, shahin.ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Risk Implications - Mandatory paragraph

- 7.3 There are no immediate risk implications associated directly with this report. Any arising risks will be managed through the project and service operational risk, and escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when necessary.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader

Celia.Prado-Teeling@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk, 01295 221556

Equalities and Inclusion Implications

- 7.4 There are no immediate equalities nor inclusion implications associated directly with this report. All council's proposals, changes and decisions are done taken careful consideration of our commitments to equalities and inclusion as set in our equalities framework, keeping those principles at the core of all we do.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader

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Sustainability Implications

- 7.5 This report is entirely in line with the council's ambitions to become a net zero organisation whilst also supporting the district to become carbon net zero.

Comments checked by:

Ed Potter, Assistant Director, Environmental Services. ed.potter@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
01295 221574

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision N/A

Financial Threshold Met: N/A

Community Impact Threshold Met: N/A

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

The work contributes to the Council's strategic priorities around supporting the council to become a carbon net zero organisation and the district to become carbon net zero too.

Lead Councillor

Councillor Dan Sames, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix 1 - Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

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