

Cherwell District Council

Executive

6 November 2023

12-Month Climate Action Plan 2023 - 2024

Report of Corporate Director Communities and Climate Action Manager

This report is public

Purpose of report

To set out the background and content of a newly produced 12-month Action Plan for climate change, which is based on our 2020 Climate Change Framework.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To accept the ambitions of this Action Plan.
- 1.2 To recognise the implementation of this Action Plan will have on-going resource implications for council budgets and that additional requests will be forthcoming, as and when business cases are developed, e.g. for the provision of additional Solar PV to reduce energy bills. Each business case will be assessed and brought forward if affordable.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The 12-month Action Plan has been written to detail the actions that need to be taken over the next year, to help us achieve the ambitions of our Climate Change Framework. These include CDC becoming a carbon net zero organisation by 2030, and CDC supporting the wider district in its journey to become carbon net zero.

There are some key actions for the council to focus on in order to reduce our own emissions and those of the district. These include the largest source of emissions such as the council's building stock and fleet, as well as the district's buildings, transport system, businesses and energy supply.

- 2.2 Climate change is one of the CDC's key corporate priorities. It's importance as an area of council activity has increased significantly as the urgency to respond to climate change grows and the impacts become more tangible across the district. The 12-month Action Plan has been compiled in the recognition that further work is

required to embed climate activity into how the council develops and implements its policies.

3.0 Report Details

Background

- 3.1 This report builds on a significant body of work that the council has already delivered or is in the process of doing so, which supports our climate ambitions whilst providing a range of benefits to our residents and the district. Much of this work demonstrates our ambitions to be a leading authority in responding to climate change, for example the inclusion of extensive climate action policies in our emerging Local Plan. Planned work includes expanding the number of solar photovoltaic arrays and upgrading the incoming supply to Thorpe Lane Depot so that it can support the charging of electric RCVs.
- 3.2 Since CDC has decoupled from OCC, officers have been refocusing the council's climate change work and the Action Plan is the culmination of this activity. We now have very good understanding of both the council and the district's emissions, the technologies available, the required changes in behaviour and of the regional climate change landscape the influences our work.
- 3.3 The 12-month Action Plan, based on the Climate Change Framework, has been written by the Climate Action Manager, in consultation with Assistant Directors and others from across the authority. It also takes into account the CDC's Carbon Management Plan and Oxfordshire's Route Map and Action Plan (PaZCO) and the One Planet Living Gap Analysis of CDC's policies.
- 3.4 The Action Plan, lays out actions which need to be taken across the council to reduce our emissions, in particular from our buildings, our fleet, from staff behaviour and from our procurement.
- 3.5 It also sets out the areas of activity needed to support the district to reduce its emissions, including the emerging Local Plan, transport, housing, businesses, natural capital, energy, waste, adaptation, partnership working and governance.
- 3.6 The Climate Action Manager continues to work with Planning colleagues to strengthen the Local Plan and seek opportunities to ensure it reflects the principles of 'One Planet Living' and 'PaZCO' (see 3.10 below).
- 3.7 In recognition that many of the actions included are not currently planned for, the document distinguishes between actions which are already planned and those which are aspirational.
- 3.8 Following the completion of an earlier draft, the document was shared with our consultants Bioregional who carried out a detailed review. This included a gap analysis, and also an assessment of the actions in terms of those which are most impactful and those over which the council has the most influence. These are highlighted in green and can be found in all areas of the Action Plan.
- 3.9 The plan has been discussed and reviewed by the Climate Change Working Group and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.10 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Environment Advisory Groups (member and officer) have led the development of the *Pathways to A Zero Carbon Oxfordshire* (PaZCO) report and plan. PaZCO has been adopted by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) and by this council. The Climate Action Manager is a member of the FOP Environment Advisory Group and the Corporate Director Communities attends the wider FOP meetings.

Action Plan

3.11 The Action Plan covers the activities needed over the 12 months until November 2024, to reduce the emissions of both the council and the Cherwell district. Almost 120 actions have been identified.

3.12 Following the introductory text, the actions are laid out in a table, the columns of which include:

- The specific goal
- The actions needed to achieve the goal
- The service area of the council which will provide most support
- An indication of the level of carbon reduction from the action (high level only)
- An indication of the relative cost of the action (high level only)
- A RAG rating
- An indicative timescale

3.13 There are 17 goals, and the associated actions are categorised in three ways.

- Planned activities – these are already within operational plans and are budgeted for.
- Aspirational activities – these activities are required to meet the goal, but do not yet sit within existing plans
- Actions coloured in green – these have been identified by our consultants as being the activities over which we have most influence and which have the highest impact on emission reductions.

Current levels of emissions

3.15 The level of emissions for both the council and the district help to provide additional context for the Action Plan and are included in this report accordingly.

3.16 The council set a base-line year for monitoring its greenhouse gas emissions, of 2008/2009 at which point they were at 6,804 tonnes of CO₂e per year. The most recent figures from 2021/2022 show that our emissions have fallen to 3988 tonnes of CO₂e. This in part reflects the decarbonisation of the national electricity grid, but also a range of other energy efficiency measures that have been taken across our building stock and fleet.

3.17 The council's emissions are recorded and reported on each year in a Greenhouse Gas Report, the latest of which is appended to this report. This is a key mechanism for us to measure progress annually on our climate work and will be used in the monitoring activity referenced in the Action Plan.

- 3.18 Several of the actions within the Plan set the council on the right trajectory to meet its 2030 target of becoming a net zero organisation. Reducing emissions from our leisure centres, our corporate building stock and from our fleet is the most important thing we can do to meet our 2030 target. Our focus must remain on these areas if we are to be successful. In achieving this, we will also be increasing our resilience to future energy price rises as well as contributing to better air quality and lower noise pollution across the district.
- 3.19 National government figures for Cherwell District show that CO₂ emissions were 1.6million t/CO₂ in 2005 and fell to 1.1 million t/CO₂ in 2019 (latest available figures).Whilst this fall is of course welcome, the district's emissions need to reduce by around 50% if Cherwell is to play its part in supporting the UK's net zero target of 2050.
- 3.20 Many of the actions within the Plan help to set the district on the right pathway for reductions in carbon emissions, such as improving the energy efficiency of buildings, increasing opportunities for active travel and supporting businesses to reduce their emissions. These are three of the most important areas that we must focus on, all of which are supported by a lower carbon and more flexible supply of energy.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The Action Plan is an ambitious set of actions that sets both the council and the district on the right pathways to reach carbon net zero. The Plan recognises that more work is required to embed climate change into the council's approach and operations, but equally, that a significant amount of work is already being done by the council to support the net zero targets.
- 4.2 The report begins with the actions to achieve six key goals that will lead to reductions in council emissions, across our fleet, our corporate estate and our operations. This is followed by a further eleven key goals with actions, set out to achieve a reduction in the district's emissions. The actions in green are those which our consultant recommends should be prioritised.
- 4.3 The Actions reflect activity which should take place right across the authority if the council is to be successful and fulfil its ambitions to be a climate leader.
- 4.4 The references to Carbon Saving and Relative Cost are included to help prioritise actions, although both of these are only high-level assumptions and further work and analysis would be needed if additional details were requested.
- 4.5 The Climate Change Framework 2020, included the council ambition to be a net zero organisation by 2030. Then, as now, this remains a very ambitious challenge requiring concerted and on-going efforts to achieve emissions reductions across our corporate estate and our fleet. Without a coherent plan, it is unlikely that the council will achieve its 2030 target or that we will in a position to support the district in also achieving significant reductions in emissions.

5.0 Consultation

All of the council's Assistant Directors were consulted in the writing of the Climate Action Plan, along with the Corporate Director for Communities.

As set out at paragraph 3.9, the plan has been discussed and reviewed by the Climate Change Working Group and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not adopt the Climate Action Plan but this leaves CDC with little chance of achieving its 2030 net zero target.

Option 2: Adopt a more ambitious Plan than this iteration, however that is unlikely to be affordable with current budget pressures.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 Revenue and capital budgets are available, where required, for those items in the Climate Action Plan identified as "planned activities". Those items identified as "future priorities" do not currently have budgets available (revenue or capital) and will not be able to progress until appropriate resources are identified. There is currently no indication of the level of resources that would be required to deliver these "future priority" activities.

Comments checked by:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer), 01295 221845,
michael.furness@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Legal Implications

7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

Shahin Ismail, Interim Legal Services Manager, Shahin.ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Risk Implications

7.3 There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. Any risk arising will be managed through the service operational risk register and escalated to the Leadership Risk Register if, as and when necessary.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 01295 221556
Celia.Prado-Teeling@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Equalities and Inclusion Implications

10.4 There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 01295 221556

Celia.Prado-Teeling@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Sustainability Implications

10.5 This report has positive implications for CDC, in that its entire purpose is to enable the council to become more sustainable.

Comments checked by:

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

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: No

Community Impact Threshold Met: Yes

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Sustainability is one of the four corporate priorities. This Action Plan links directly to it. It also builds on our 2020 strategy document, the Climate Change Framework.

Lead Councillor

Cllr Andrew McHugh, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix 1 - Climate Change Action Plan 2023-24
- Appendix 2 – Cherwell DC Climate Action Gap Analysis & materiality assessment
- Appendix 3 – Cherwell District Council Greenhouse Gas Report

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

Jo Miskin, Climate Action Manager, jo.miskin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk