

This Report will be made public on 16 February 2021

Report Number **C/20/76**

To: Cabinet
Date: 24 February 2021
Status: Key Decision
Responsible Officer: Charlotte Spendley – Director – Corporate Services
Cabinet Member: Cllr Lesley Whybrow – Cabinet Member for Environment

SUBJECT: CARBON ACTION PLAN AND CARBON FOOTPRINT STUDY

SUMMARY: This report gives an update on the Carbon Footprint Study and proposes the Council's first Carbon Action Plan. The plan is intended to start the Council on the journey to reduce its carbon emissions to zero by 2030, to meet the resolution of full Council from July 2019. The report also discusses the proposal for a framework to guide bids for the Climate change fund.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

These actions are required to fulfil the requirements of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Resolution passed 19th July 2019 and to initiate work to enable the Council to meet its ambition of reducing its carbon emissions to zero by 2030.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/20/76.
2. To adopt the Carbon Action Plan (Appendix 1)
3. To note the proposed framework to support the evaluation of bids for the use of the Climate Change reserve
4. To agree the proposed additional actions outlined in 2.9 regarding the Full Council motion tabled on 25 November 2020.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group met for the first time in October 2019, following the declaration of a climate emergency at full Council in July 2019.
- 1.2 The Working Group has received a number of officer presentations since its inception and has discussed a range of topics including:
 - Flood risk and climate change;
 - The work of Kent County Council tackling climate change;
 - Cycling infrastructure;
 - Electric charging points;
 - The work that the council's grounds maintenance team is undertaking to enhance the district's ecological assets;
 - Emerging findings from the council's green infrastructure strategy; and
 - The findings of the SCATTER Cities tool, which provides an assessment of the level of carbon emissions arising from general activities and buildings within the district, including homes, businesses, industrial processes, agriculture and transport.
- 1.3 Alongside this, work has been progressing on producing a draft Carbon Action Plan to address the district council's own carbon emissions.
- 1.4 This work has involved presentations by officers on the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, the internationally recognised standard that businesses and public sector organisations use to measure their emissions. Updates have been given by Laser Energy, the county council-owned company commissioned to undertake the assessment of the council's emissions. Laser Energy has undertaken similar studies for Kent County Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and lessons from these studies have informed the work for this council.
- 1.5 The Low Carbon & Sustainability Specialist has reviewed best practice in carbon action plans from a range of local authorities and reported this to the working group. A draft Carbon Action Plan was then presented to the group and discussed (outlined further in Section 2 below).
- 1.6 The baseline study of the council's carbon emissions has included input from across the organisation including the operations, procurement, estates, grounds maintenance, finance and housing teams. Additionally regular discussions with officers at Dover District Council and Canterbury City Council to learn from their respective approaches have been held.

2. Progress on the Baseline Study and Draft Carbon Action Plan

2.1 When the Climate and Ecological Emergency working group met in February 2020 it approved the commissioning of Laser to carry out a study to establish a baseline of the Council's own carbon emissions. Work on the baseline study has involved an extensive audit of records for electricity and gas use for the different properties within the council's control, as well as records for water usage, use of red diesel and other fuels and business mileage claimed by council officers. In addition consideration was given to the operational boundaries of the footprint and in scope emissions. This work is needed to meet the methodology and accounting standards set by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol.

Findings of the carbon footprint

2.2 Of particular note in the initial carbon footprint is that a majority of the emissions (58%) come from gas usage. This is in part due to the Hythe swimming pool and also the sheltered/semi-sheltered housing in the district for which the Council is responsible.

2.3 Of the total emissions 11% were from transport, the study highlighted the contribution of council-owned vehicles, particularly those fuelled from the central tank. There were smaller contributions from the grey fleet and other sources. The grey fleet (staff's own cars that they use for work) represented 22% of the transport emissions. The study identified a significant amount of large diesel/petrol vehicles used by staff.

Potential actions to reduce the carbon emissions

2.4 Six main areas of work will form the basis of actions required Energy; Behaviour Change; Transport; Water; Contracts; Biodiversity & Greenspace. These areas provide a framework for our future work and give focus to the priorities for reducing emissions.

2.5 Laser were commissioned to provide the Council with potential Carbon Reduction Options (CRO) based on the baseline findings, member input and their expertise. The CRO's provide options for immediate and future consideration & appraisal and highlights preferred replacement of energy sources, as well as the less favoured replacement of energy sources recognising the Council will need to take decisions about the energy it continues to consume.

2.6 One area identified through this process for immediate consideration is estate rationalisation. Cabinet considered a paper in January on a new Civic office and agreed for development and feasibility work to be undertaken which will ensure that any new facilities maximize the opportunity to be sustainable and offer net zero carbon or better. This project will make a positive contribution to the Council's ambitions.

2.7 There are 33 proposed actions within the action plan which vary in timescale and complexity to implement. Particular measures, such as the replacement of heating systems, will require detailed surveys of buildings and plant and specialist knowledge that will need to be externally sourced.

A number of actions contained within the action plan are focused around increasing knowledge and awareness within the organisation, so there is a culture of climate impact consideration within all aspects of our work. Actions include Carbon literacy training for staff and members, climate change staff champions and the introduction of climate impact statements on decision making reports.

Motion to Full Council - 25 November 2020

2.8A motion was tabled to full council in November 2020 regarding the adoption of the Kent & Medway Energy & Low Emissions Strategy, the Kent Biodiversity Strategy and Kent's Plan Bee. Additionally the motion sought that the Council consider an improved recycling target to benefit from the incentives in the new waste contract, provided more opportunity for those in flats and houses in multiple occupation to recycle, considered a Biodiversity Net Gain policy and options for improvements to natural capital such as wildlife corridors.

2.9 The Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group discussed the motion in detail in December and as a result proposes that Cabinet:

- Adopts the Kent and Medway Low Emissions Strategy in as far as the actions are within the Council's control and it has the resources to do so.
- Supports the objectives of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy.
- Supports Kent's Plan Bee
- Keeps the policy background regarding net biodiversity gain under review and reassesses the situation when the Environment Bill is enacted and supporting regulations brought into force.
- Explores options for improving the district's natural capital through the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Local Recovery Strategy when the Environment Bill is enacted and supporting regulations brought into force.
- Keeps the policy background regarding the environmental standards of new homes under review and reassesses the situation when the Government's roadmap for the Future Homes Standard is published.

Climate Change Reserve

2.10 The Council has earmarked £5m through the Climate Change reserve to support initiatives to reduce its carbon emissions by 2030. It is suggested that an internal mechanism should be set up to assess proposals for the funding from officers across council service areas who initiate and manage council projects. This would enable bids to be assessed in a consistent way and ensure that spending achieves the maximum reduction in the Council's carbon emissions. It is proposed this could take the form of a checklist that highlights key factors which would be used to assess bids for funding.

2.11 The checklist would use a 'red-amber-green' framework for assessing bids to see how proposals might meet the Council's climate change objectives.

2.12 It is proposed that the assessment process would be governed by the following key principles:

- **How far the bid would address the key sources of the Council's emissions**

- **How quickly the bid could secure a reduction in emissions**
- **To what extent the bid would provide value for money**
- **Whether the project is already identified in a plan or programme and**
- **To what extent the bid would provide wider benefits e.g. Corporate Plan ambition**

2.13 If Cabinet agree the proposed key principles of the assessment process officers will continue to develop the framework. The framework will not replace the requirement for growth items and capital bids to be evaluated through the Councils normal decision making mechanisms.

3. SUMMARY AND REVIEW

3.1 The proposed action plan brings together the findings of the Working Group to date. An annual review of emissions (using the Local Government Association model) to assess progress against the ambition of target zero by 2030 will be undertaken. The action plan itself will continue to evolve and an annual review will be tabled to Cabinet next year.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

4.1 Perceived risks are as set out in the table below.

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
That the council does not meet its commitment to achieve zero net carbon emissions by 2030.	High	Medium	The commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 is an ambitious target, but the Carbon Action Plan and analysis by Laser demonstrates that it can be achieved and other local authorities are pursuing similar targets. Progress towards the target will be monitored annually As set out in the recommendations to this report, amendments may need to be made to the Carbon Action Plan, for example, as projects are completed, assessments are

			made that conclude that certain projects do not deliver sufficient benefit or new technologies are developed that offer greater opportunities for carbon reduction.

7. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

7.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There is no legal requirement to produce a Carbon Action Plan, and no legal requirement for the Council to hit specific carbon saving targets. However, the Council is under a general duty to have regard to the environment in all decisions it makes, and national government has set a legally binding target to reduce national carbon emissions to net-zero by 2050.

7.2 Finance Officer's Comments (LW/DH)

The Council's £5m funding commitment through the earmarked Climate Change reserve is outlined in the report. To date, £40k has been approved from the reserve towards the Electric Vehicle Charging Points scheme in the General Fund capital programme. In addition to the £40K commitment for the EV charging points scheme, the salary for the Low Carbon & Sustainability Specialist is also funded by the £5M Climate Change Reserve (£54K salary). An additional post is being considered to assist the Low Carbon & Sustainability Specialist with the workload to move the Climate Change program forward. The post will be a Grade G/H to attract the right candidate and will also be funded by the Climate Change reserve. (£54-£60K salary).

7.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)

There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report

8. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Carbon Action Plan