



Committee and Date

Performance Management
Scrutiny Committee,

29 July 2020

Item

Public

CLIMATE CHANGE

Responsible Officer Mark Barrow, Executive Director Place
e-mail: mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 258919

1. Summary

- 1.1 The mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation measures to build resilience are now essential to prevent the worst outcomes of the climate emergency. Shropshire Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and adopted a Climate Strategy Framework, which established the objective of achieving net-zero carbon performance for Shropshire Council by 2030 in December 2019. An internal officer working group was established in April 2019 and the Climate Change Task Force was established to lead the Council's response in November 2019.
- 1.2 The early work of the Task Force have been directed towards embedding and normalising climate change as a key consideration in the Council's strategies and corporate governance systems. A range of positive projects and initiatives are being developed to help the Council improve its own performance and to demonstrate 'leadership by example' to help foster similar action across the wider economy and communities in Shropshire.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the committee notes the progress being made towards embedding and normalising climate change in the Council's corporate governance, together with the projects and initiatives which are being developed as part of an action plan to help deliver net-zero performance by 2030.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 The climate crisis is a serious threat to civilised society and the lives of millions of people both globally and locally. The mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation measures to build resilience is now urgent and essential to prevent the worst outcomes of the climate crisis. Even if we are successful in mitigating the worst effects, we will continue to experience more pronounced and frequent episodes of extreme weather effects. Within 50

years there is a global threat to food supply chains and economic systems. The much greater frequency of extreme weather events will significantly increase insurance risks and disrupt financial markets. In addition to financial impacts, continued access to adequate energy, water, food and housing are all essential human necessities which affect the health, wellbeing and future resilience of our communities.

- 3.2 The climate crisis therefore represents a significant strategic risk to Shropshire and Council services. This risk is most likely to manifest itself in terms of financial impacts (e.g. operating costs, impacts on the Shropshire economy) and impacts on the health and well-being of staff and residents as service users.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. Measures to reduce Shropshire Council's carbon footprint and adapt service delivery to address the impacts of extreme weather events will significantly reduce financial risk and generate very real revenue savings to the public finances as well as delivering on our corporate responsibilities to the environment and our communities. Improving Shropshire Council's carbon performance and resilience will however require significant capital investment in energy efficiency and low carbon technologies.
- 4.2. However, failing to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and implement climate change adaptation measures represents a significant financial threat to both revenue costs and the value of the Council's capital assets. This means that there is a strong financial incentive for the Council to 'Invest to Save' to mitigate the risk of future costs.
- 4.3. Many measures to reduce dependence on greenhouse gasses also offer opportunities to both generate a financial return and to provide community leadership which highlights the 'clean growth' potential of new technologies and adaptation measures in the Shropshire context.

5. Climate Change Appraisal

- 5.1 **Energy and fuel consumption** The Climate Change Task Force has been established specifically to lead and co-ordinate the delivery of efforts to improve energy efficiency and carbon performance across Council Services and to support wider efforts to improve energy performance across the county as a whole;
- 5.2 **Renewable energy generation:** The Climate Change Task Force has been established specifically to lead and co-ordinate the delivery of efforts to increase the generation of renewable energy from a range of technologies on Council land and buildings and to foster the generation of renewable energy more widely in Shropshire;
- 5.3 **Carbon offsetting or mitigation:** The Climate Change Task Force has been established specifically to lead and co-ordinate the delivery of efforts to capture and store carbon on Council land, as well as exploring opportunities

to mitigate the effects of climate change on biodiversity and the natural environment;

- 5.4 **Climate Change adaptation:** The Climate Change Task Force has been established specifically to lead and co-ordinate the delivery of efforts to ensure that Council services and assets are resilient in the face of the challenges of more extreme weather events.

6. Background

- 6.1 Shropshire Council was already working to reduce its' carbon footprint and direct impact on the climate prior to the declaration of a climate emergency in May 2019. An internal officer working group was established in April 2019 and the Climate Change Task Force was established under the leadership of Adrian Cooper in November 2019. A Climate Strategy Framework, which established the objective of achieving net-zero carbon performance for Shropshire Council and set out the scale of the challenge, key objectives and principles and a route map for our response was approved by Council in December 2019.

Climate Task Force - Progress to Date

- 6.2 The early efforts of the Task Force have been directed towards embedding and normalising climate change as a key consideration in the Council's strategies and corporate governance systems. This is reflected in the fact that climate action appraisals are an integral part of all committee reports and major development and investment projects. Key staff from across the full range of council services have been provided with carbon literacy training to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to broaden ownership of the issue and improve our corporate performance.
- 6.3 The current focus is on the development of a Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan which will summarise the best available information about the Council's current direct and indirect carbon emissions and identify the scale of reductions and residual offsetting which will be required to reach our objective of net-zero performance by 2030. Finally, the Action Plan element of the document will identify a range of specific projects to help deliver progress. It is anticipated that the Action Plan will be reviewed and published annually to report progress. Whilst it had originally been planned that the draft strategy would be considered by members in July, the impact of Covid 19 and opportunities to ensure that it is fully synchronised with other Council strategies means that the draft will not now be available until autumn 2020.
- 6.4 The work of the Task Force is currently focussed on a number of key themes:
- i. Energy efficiency - Buildings;
 - ii. Energy efficiency – Transport;
 - iii. Renewable energy generation;
 - iv. Resource efficiency and waste;
 - v. Carbon capture, biodiversity and climate adaptation;
 - vi. Staff training and culture;
 - vii. Community engagement and leadership.

Buildings

- 6.5 About 80% of the Council's current direct carbon footprint is generated by the operation of its buildings and officers are continuing to work across council services to develop and implement design guidance for new Council buildings, and to improve the performance of existing ones. A number of Council buildings such as the Shrewsbury indoor market and Greenacres Farm have already benefitted from improvements funded through grants from the SePuBu scheme (sustainable energy in public buildings), which is a retrofit programme installing innovative interventions such as solid wall installation, solar PV and energy efficient controls. A further phase of improvements to additional buildings is planned. Since September 2019, all of the electricity consumed by Shropshire Council has been supplied purely from renewable sources. Staff from the Task Force are working closely with colleagues from Estates Services, the Property Services Group, Learning & Skills and Children's Services in particular to provide advice on energy and environmental performance as part of the commissioning of new buildings. Most recently Shropshire Council has taken a decision to significantly reduce its property and carbon footprint by disposing of the Shirehall. The building generates around 1,044 tonnes of carbon per year and costs about £316,000 p.a. (19/20 electric and gas). In addition to carbon savings from buildings the need for staff to take fewer longer journeys will significantly reduce carbon emissions and encourage more staff to work in an agile way using technology. Active transport options will be considered to further reduce emissions and promote healthy lifestyles;

Transport

- 6.6 For a number of years officers have been working to reduce the carbon impact of transport across the county including the recent successful trials with electric buses. Several expressions of interest have recently been made for funding from the Department of Transport and were recently successful in our initial bid for funding to improve part of the current public transport offer. We are also hoping to electrify the Shrewsbury bus fleet and to improve rural transport solutions to reduce the need for longer journeys. In addition to this, we are currently drafting a new Park & Ride Strategy for Shrewsbury which will prove a 'Next Generation Transport System' and compliment active travel within the town. As well as all of these initiatives, we are also exploring opportunities to electrify our own vehicle fleet. The Council has already converted over 3,300 street lights to LED lighting, but over the next three years, we will be investing around £6.83 million to convert the remaining 16,253 street lights reducing energy consumption by 56% saving 794.5 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year;

Renewable Energy

- 6.7 In 2019, Government data showed that Shropshire was ranked fifth nationally for installed renewable energy capacity. Shropshire Council's own assets contribute to this and, since the first installation in 2012, solar PV installed on Shropshire Council assets has generated enough to power 2,000 homes for a year. A GIS mapping feature has now been added to the Council's website to highlight technical details and how much each site is expected to save. Further potential sites across Shropshire Council's estate on both land and

buildings are being assessed for their potential for renewable energy. Through grant funding, solar PV has been installed at Greenacres Farm and Shrewsbury Market Hall and we have installed energy efficiency measures including LED lighting at Theatre Severn, Shropshire Archives, Bridgnorth Library as well as an air-source-heat-pump at Severn Valley Country Park. Further details of these schemes are available on the Council's web pages. The Task Force is currently working with colleagues from across Council services to explore the feasibility of further renewable energy schemes on Council land across the county;

Waste & Resources

- 6.8 The Council's waste management contract continues to perform strongly in carbon terms. High levels of recycling performance and energy recovery mean that very little waste is now landfilled and this has generated a net carbon saving overall. Despite Covid-19 our corporate Warp-it (waste action re-use programme) membership has grown to 237 staff, with over 17 tonnes CO₂e saved, nearly 8 tonnes of waste has been avoided, and we are still on target for £50k financial savings by the end of this year;

Carbon Capture and the Natural Environment

- 6.9 As a Council, we also recognise that there is a crisis in the natural world, and we are looking at opportunities to both reduce climate impacts and enhance wildlife at the same time, both on the Council's own land holdings and more widely, for example by fostering the planting of trees and the restoration of carbon-storing soils and wetlands;

Staff Training and Culture

- 6.10 In addition to Carbon Literacy training (6.2 above), the Task Force is working with colleagues to expand the range of staff training on climate change and to support improvements to energy efficiency and carbon performance from sustaining higher levels of home working (see 6.13 below);

Community Engagement and Leadership

- 6.11 Efforts to mitigate the Council's own carbon footprint and adapt its services to the challenge of the climate crisis will allow the Council to 'lead by example', using its direct and indirect influence to foster positive changes by other public and private sector organisations, communities and individual residents in Shropshire. In February 2020, the Council held a climate action workshop which was attended by over 100 people drawn from a wide range of sectors including business and agriculture as well as community groups. The workshop was very well received and generated valuable suggestions for future projects and interventions. The event has also led to the establishment of an informal stakeholder working group which is now playing a pivotal role in shaping our future plans. Officers are also working jointly with this group and Telford & Wrekin Borough Council to develop a 'Climate Action Partnership' of stakeholders to foster the development of a Shropshire-wide climate action strategy.

Future Projects and Initiatives

- 6.12 Council has agreed the principle of preparing an annual Carbon Impact Budget which will identify the greenhouse gas impacts of Council services and major projects and will report on annual performance trends in parallel with the Council's financial budget. The starting point for this budget will be best available information about our current corporate footprint, which will be included as part of the planned corporate Strategy and Action Plan in the autumn (see 6.3 above);
- 6.13 Given the undoubted climate benefits we have seen globally during the lockdown caused by COVID-19, we are carefully examining opportunities for the Council to '*build back better*' and permanently sustain higher levels of home working to help us to achieve our ambition of being carbon net zero by 2030 at the latest. We have also updated and refreshed our cycle to work scheme to help reduce the carbon footprint of our office accommodation and staff journeys to work. A 'salary sacrifice' scheme is planned to provide greater opportunities for staff to access climate friendly vehicles both for work and for personal use;
- 6.14 Staff from the Task Force are working Veolia and colleagues from Economic Growth to explore the feasibility of establishing a heat network to capture the value of the waste heat from the Battlefield ERF and have recently joined a midlands-wide initiative to foster the establishment of a hydrogen economy to manufacture 'green hydrogen' as a vehicle fuel for goods vehicles. We are also looking to join the Good Homes Alliance, a group of the most forward-thinking local authorities aiming to drive up the standard of new build properties in both the private and social housing sectors. In response to a recent request from Government, officers recently put forward an expression of interest for grant funding for a Whole House Retrofit scheme for Shropshire. This has been very well received and, if successful, would not only greatly reduce carbon emissions and virtually eliminate fuel poverty in the county but would also spur green businesses to invest in Shropshire to meet the demand for skills and services for this type of work.

Conclusions

- 6.15 Whilst the transition to net-zero performance will not be easy or quick to achieve, a positive start has been made to identifying the scale of the challenge and putting in place the mechanisms and actions which will be required.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Shropshire Council Climate Change Strategy Framework (December 2019)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Dean Carroll

Local Member
All
Appendices
None