

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Monday 6 November 2023

Climate Change Annual Report (2023) and Draft Climate Change Action Plan, revision 3 (November 2023)

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Review the Climate Change Annual Report (2022/23), note the progress that has been made and make recommendations which can be considered for next year's climate change annual report.
- b. Review the draft Climate Change Action Plan, revision 3 (November 2023) and make suggestions for any required amendments prior to formal Cabinet approval in November 2023.
- c. Note the risk register has been reviewed and RAG ratings updated.

Report of Councillor Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. This report provides Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members with an update on progress with one of the core priorities in our Strategic Plan namely 'Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable'.
2. The report references three key documents; our annual Climate Change progress (as required by the approved Climate Change Strategic Development Framework) and the draft Climate Change Action Plan, revision 3 (November 2023) and the risk register.
3. It is intended that an annual report will be produced and submitted to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee each year so that progress on our commitment to become net carbon zero by 2050 can be tracked. The 2022/23 report is the third to be produced since the Council declared a climate change emergency in July 2019 and Committee

Members are asked for comments on how the report can be improved in subsequent years.

4. Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP), revision 3 (November 2023) follows on from CCAP 1 which was approved and launched in autumn 2020 and revised in 2022. The latest CCAP revision is currently in draft and will be formally approved by Cabinet in November 2023. Committee Members are asked to help shape the final document before it is approved although it should be noted this revision is a light touch revision from the previous version and will stay current until 2025. Work will start in the New Year to develop a more extensive revision in combination with a climate change adaptation plan. It is anticipated this process will take around 12 months to complete.

Report

Background

5. The County Council has championed the climate change agenda for many years and our previous carbon reduction strategy, Green Shoots, published in 2011 built on previous commitments to this agenda.
6. With the setting of new legislation in May 2019 the UK became the first major economy to pass a law requiring the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050. This means that the country needs to remove as much carbon from the atmosphere as it emits.
7. Following the publication of the new legislation the County Council committed itself to this agenda by declaring a climate change emergency and setting up an all-party group to review progress made to date and suggest initial ideas to reduce the County Council's CO₂ emissions further. This work resulted in the publication of a Climate Change Action Plan 1 (CCAP 1) in November 2020, followed revisions in October 2021, November 2022, and this latest revision.
8. Strong progress is being made and a significant 50% reduction in emissions has been achieved since declaring our climate change emergency in 2019.
9. The Climate Change Action Plan, revision 2 (CCAP) containing fifty specific actions was approved and launched at the end of November 2022. Strong progress is being made with thirteen actions being marked as completed since 2022 and 27 actions completed since 2021.
10. It is recognised we have a wider leadership role to play in collaborating with public and private partners. Collaboration and exploration of

opportunities continues with the District and Borough Councils in part through the Staffordshire Sustainability Board, to jointly tackle climate change on a Countywide basis for maximum impact. The Board has refreshed its commitment to ten pledges including publishing carbon reduction achievements annually.

Annual Climate Change Report

11. The annual climate change report is attached as Appendix 1.
12. We have changed the timing for collecting and analysing data to allow achievements for the year reported on in the annual report to correspond with the emissions reported against. This year's annual report therefore provides emission reporting for 21/22 and 22/23.
13. The report notes a significant reduction in carbon emissions of c. nine hundred tonnes Co2e from 2021/22 and a further c.2,600 in 2022/23 achieving an overall 50% reduction in emissions since 2018/19.
14. The report provides an indication of the carbon emissions by area of operation illustrating where the greatest savings have been made since declaring a climate change emergency.
15. The report also provides an overview of achievements around the five core themes contained in the Climate Change Strategic Development Framework which link to the actions in CCAP.
16. The report provides details on the Climate Change Member Fund that continued community engagement last year. As set out in the report, seventy-three grants were awarded totalling £85,546 of grant funding being distributed through the County. Projects included upgrading lighting to LED, tree planting, increasing insulation and encouraging active travel through installation of bike racks.
17. Information on the distribution of the awards by district/borough areas in 2022/23 is provided below:
 - a. CCDC Area £7,878
 - b. ESBC Area £11,646
 - c. LDC Area £9,500
 - d. NULBC Area £7,805
 - e. SSDC Area £9,649
 - f. SBC Area £11,544
 - g. SMDC Area £7,162
 - h. TBC Area £7,500

18. Committee Members are asked to review the annual report (attached as Appendix 1) and consider what improvements can be made to the reporting format in future years.

Draft Climate Change Action Plan, revision 3 (November 2023)

19. The draft CCAP, revision three is attached as Appendix 2 and is intended to be a current until 2025.
20. The revised CCAP has been developed with input from officers of an internal officer group as well as oversight from the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change.
21. Several actions in the initial CCAP have a timescale greater than 1 year. Where appropriate CCAP, revision two actions have been continued into this CCAP, revision 3.
22. Committee Members are asked to review the information in the Climate Change Action Plan (attached as Appendix 2) and suggest amendments prior to formal approval by Cabinet in November 2023. As outlined in paragraph 4 and paragraph 18 this plan will be in place until the new combined climate change mitigation and adaptation plan is launched in 2025.
23. Supporting the CCAP is a risk register to help track where the greatest risks are and how these can be mitigated. A number of areas are currently flagged as high/medium risk, some due to circumstances out with our control and other due to crossing many years. This register is reviewed annually.
24. One risk worth highlighting is number 19, which confirms that if we are to seek the sequestration of our residual emissions through natural means, then this activity needs to commence soon to ensure the habitats can mature ahead of our 2050 target, to ensure we reach net zero.

Summary

25. Positive progress has been made on the Climate Change agenda and a 50% reduction in our emissions has been achieved since declaring a climate change emergency.
26. The 2022/23 Annual Report outlines the main achievements made and outlines some of the key projects delivered.

27. It is intended to formally approve the CCAP, revision 3 in November 2023 once any recommendations made by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been carefully considered.

Link to Strategic Plan

28. The information in this report has a direct link to the Council's Strategic Plan as Climate Change is one of the five priorities which help shape all that we do.
29. The annual report will help us track our progress on this important agenda and the actions contained in the CCAP will ensure that all relevant areas of the Council are able to contribute to the target of becoming net carbon zero by 2050.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

30. As climate change runs through all of the Council's operations and activities this is a matter that is likely to be of increasing interest to all overview and scrutiny committees going forward.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Draft Climate Change Action Plan, revision 3
Appendix 2 – Climate Change Annual Report (2022/23)
Appendix 3 – Risk register

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