

## **Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 15 November 2023**

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



**Councillor Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change said,**

*"As a county council, we're driven by a powerful mission—to make Staffordshire Sustainable.*

*We've set our sights on an ambitious goal to achieve net zero carbon emissions as an organisation by 2050.*

*Back in 2019, we declared a climate change emergency. I am pleased to share that we have reduced our carbon emissions by 50%.*

*This achievement is a testament to our dedication and hard work. It's also a stark*

*reminder that our journey is far from over.*

*We've devised a comprehensive 'Climate Change Action Plan. This blueprint outlines our strategy for tackling the remaining half of our carbon emissions. It's a roadmap that signifies our determination to continue this vital work and pave the way toward a sustainable future."*

#### **Report Summary:**

Mitigating and adapting to Climate Change and becoming a net zero organisation by 2050 is a key priority for Staffordshire County Council and is a "green thread" throughout our Strategic Plan, we will tackle climate change, enhance our environment and make Staffordshire more sustainable.

The Annual Report records the significant 50% reduction in the councils carbon emissions that has been made since declaring a Climate Change Emergency in July 2019, with continued success in our fourth year. Demonstrating the pragmatic, action focussed approach by the Council.

Finally, the report seeks approval of the Climate Change Action Plan revision 3, November 2023 (CCAP) which contains specific actions to be undertaken by the Council prior to 2025 which will assist in our journey to become net carbon zero by 2050.

## **Recommendations**

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the Council's Climate Change 2022/2023 Annual Report which records the positive progress that has been made on our target to become net carbon zero by 2050.
- b. Approve the Climate Change Action Plan revision 3, November 2023 which lists our key climate change mitigating actions over the next 2 years.



## **Cabinet – Wednesday 15 November 2023**

### **Climate Change Annual Report (2022/2023) and Draft Climate Change Action Plan, revision 3 (November 2023)**

#### **Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change**

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the Council's Climate Change 2022/2023 Annual Report which records the positive progress that has been made on our target to become net carbon zero by 2050.
- b. Approve the Climate Change Action Plan, revision 3 which lists our key climate change mitigating actions over the next 2 years.

#### **Local Member Interest:**

N/A

#### **Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills**

#### **Reasons for Recommendations:**

#### **Background and Progress**

1. The Climate Change Action Plan, revision 2 (CCAP) containing 50 specific actions was approved and launched at the end of November 2022 and the Climate Change Strategic Development Framework was approved by Cabinet in February 2021.
2. Strong progress is being made on the 50 specific actions contained in CCAP and it should be noted that some actions have a timeframe of more than one year and are still present in this revision.
3. An internal project group, with officer representatives from all appropriate teams, has been meeting regularly since December 2020 and this group has been used to develop the initial Climate Change Action Plan revision in 2023. The CCAP is envisaged to be a plan which will be current until 2025, although it will be reviewed yearly to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.
4. It is clear that carbon sequestration will be key to the Council meeting its legal obligations. A study "Zero by Nature" has been commissioned

and shall highlight areas where there is potential for carbon sequestration on the SCC property portfolio.

5. The member led Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) has also explored the opportunities that land use change can offer the County with respect to carbon sequestration. These findings have been fed back to Scrutiny.
6. Collaboration and exploration of opportunities continues with the District and Borough Councils through the Staffordshire Sustainability Board, to jointly tackle climate change on a Countywide basis.
7. The County Council recognises it has a wider leadership role to play in collaborating with public and private partners in supporting the county of Staffordshire become net zero.

### **Annual Climate Change Report**

8. The annual climate change report is attached as **Appendix 1**.
9. The report notes a significant reduction in carbon emissions of c 2,611 tCo<sub>2</sub>e from 2021/22 to 2022/23, a reduction of some 9%. This reduction in emissions comes from a number of areas such as, reduction in gas use in corporate buildings, reduction in gas use in maintained school, reduction in electricity use within Waste Management and the use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) within some of our heavy fleet vehicles. It should be noted that this significant reduction in annual emissions is unlikely to be replicated going forward and future reporting is likely to show slower progress due to the nature of the challenge before the authority.
10. The report provides an indication of the carbon emissions by area of operation following an audit of the 2022/23 data. The format is consistent with the refresh of the 2018/19 carbon baseline carried out for Climate Change Strategic Development Framework.
11. 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 earlier versions of the CCAP.
12. The report provides details on the Climate Change Member Fund that continued into its third year, last year. As set out in the report, 290 grants were awarded and a total of £201,690 was given out in grants to community groups, schools, charities and Parish Councils over the past three years.

13. The Council's third Annual Climate Change Report was reviewed by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 6 November 2023. The report was welcomed by the Committee.

### **Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP)**

14. The CCAP is a corporate action plan owned and delivered by the whole organisation. The Sustainability Team, based in the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Directorate has a role to co-ordinate and support the delivery of net zero, but it will only be achieved by the whole organisation. As both the annual review and the CCAP demonstrate, tackling Climate Change is everyone's responsibility.
15. The draft CCAP revision 3 was reviewed by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 6 November 2023. The final version of draft CCAP revision 3 is attached as **Appendix 2**.
16. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members did not suggest any changes or additions to the actions contained in the plan.
17. As mentioned previously the CCAP includes actions until 2025 although it is intended that the plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains relevant and fit for purpose.
18. As mentioned previously, the rate of progress towards net zero going forward is likely to be slower than in the last few years and this is reflected in the Programme Roadmap contained within the CCAP.
19. It is intended that progress on specific actions contained in the plan will be reviewed and recorded in subsequent climate change annual reports.
20. This will ensure that progress is tracked, and Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee have asked that the Climate Change Annual Report is presented on a yearly basis along with any intended changes to specific actions contained in the CCAP.

### **Timescale**

21. The Council has made a commitment to become net carbon zero by 2050. The developing roadmap shows this to be possible, but it is likely to be a major challenge which will require significant carbon sequestration to avoid carbon emissions that we cannot reduce.
22. The actions contained in the CCAP will in some cases take longer than one year to fully action, but it is hoped that all will be completed by 2025.

23. It is proposed that the future Climate Change Annual Reports and any changes to the draft CCAP will be presented to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.
24. The Climate Change Members Action Fund (round 4) was launched in July 2023.

### **Legal Implications**

25. The Council has made a commitment to become net carbon zero by 2050.
26. The measures outlined in this report will assist the Council in reaching net zero targets aligning with the governments legal obligation to achieve net zero by 2050.

### **Risks Identified**

27. The task of achieving net carbon zero for the authority by 2050 is going to be challenging and is likely to require significant carbon offsetting. The road map to achieve net zero is set out in the back of the CCAP and the Zero by Nature study that is currently in progress will identify opportunities for carbon sequestration on SCC owned land.
28. The aim of achieving net carbon zero for Staffordshire is a much bigger task as the Council emits less than 1% of the c.5.8m tonnes of carbon produced in Staffordshire annually. Action on that will need to be co-ordinated at a national, regional, and local level if this is to be achieved.
29. Financial provision has been made in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which spans a period of five years. Future iterations of the MTFS will consider any long-term financial support requirements. Individual projects (such as sequestration) that require funding will have individual business cases.

### **Resource and Value for Money Implications**

30. Budget provision has been made in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to support climate change activities.
31. The budget available in 2023/24 is being used to support actions in CCAP and will be used to support CCAP revision activities once approved.

### **Climate Change Implications**

32. To reach net zero everyone within the organisation will have to play their role in reducing carbon emissions that lie within the financial boundary of the Council. Although this CCAP will continue the organisation on a



positive downward trend with our emissions, some technologies are yet to be developed at scale to allow us to consider them as feasible.

33. We should also bear in mind that some technologies are prohibitively expensive at this current time, to facilitate a rapid reduction in emissions across all sectors. We must therefore consider our target date to achieve Net zero with this in mind.

## **Summary**

34. Positive progress has been made on the Climate Change agenda since our declaration.

35. The 2023 Annual Report outlines the main achievements made and records a significant reduction in the Council's carbon emissions from 2021/22 to 2022/23.

36. The attached CCAP is a considered list of actions which will assist the Council in reaching its ambition to become net carbon zero by 2050. The plan contains activities which will be relevant until 2025 although it is proposed to review annually to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

## **List of Background Documents/Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Climate Change Annual Report (2023)

Appendix 2 – Climate Change Action Plan, revision 3

Appendix 3 – Draft comments Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
06nov23

Community Impact Assessment

## **Contact Details**

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