

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/	<b>Council</b>	
MEETING DATE:	<b>21 January 2020</b>	
TITLE:	<b>Climate &amp; Ecological Emergency Progress Report</b>	
WARD:	All	
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>		
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b> Please list all the appendices here, clearly indicating any which are exempt and the reasons for exemption		

### 1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This report updates Council on the action the Council has taken since the last Climate Emergency progress report in October 2019, further to the update and review of strategies and plans at the Climate Emergency and Sustainability PDS Panel in March 2020.
- 1.2 This report includes an update on the Council's response to the Ecological Emergency declared in July 2020.
- 1.3 This report explains how the new Renewal Programme and the Renewal Vision workstream are enabling progress on the commitments made in both environmental emergency declarations.

### 2 RECOMMENDATION

#### The Council is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the wide-ranging action that is being taken to tackle the climate and ecological emergency including:
  - a) Strategic re-positioning of the core climate and ecological emergency policy through the new Renewal Programme to the heart of the Council's place-based work;
  - b) The development of the Renewal Vision with 'green recovery' at its heart, in order to create a stronger, more diverse and greener economy in the future;

- c) The range of specific service actions undertaken or in hand, including, but not limited to: the Local Plan Partial Update in order to response to the climate and ecological emergency and the Liveable Neighbourhood development;
- d) The climate leadership training for members and senior officers that will be rolled out in 2021 followed by the carbon literacy training for staff.

**2.2** Note the specialist work underway that will inform further detailed action planning on renewable energy development.

**2.3** Note the degree of community engagement activity achieved despite the Covid constraints, enabling residents to have a bigger say.

**2.4** Note the initial response to the ecological emergency.

**2.5** Note the delay, due to Covid, in undertaking the annual carbon footprint review of the area and the review of the pathway to net zero carbon and endorse the recommendation that the results of this review are reported to the Climate Emergency & Sustainability PDS Panel meeting on 16 March 2021.

### **3 THE REPORT**

#### **3.1 Introduction – Climate & Ecological Emergency**

- (1) In March 2019 the Council committed to providing the leadership to enable Bath and North East Somerset to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. As a first step, the Council commissioned the first area wide carbon foot-printing study, which enabled the identification of three priority areas for action:
  - a) Buildings' energy efficiency and zero carbon new build;
  - b) Shift to mass transport, walking and cycling;
  - c) Rapid and large-scale increase in renewable energy.
- (2) In October 2019, the outline action plan identified the following strategic enabling actions:
  - a) To develop place-based partnership working to drive action across the area;
  - b) To embed action within key Council services;
  - c) To commission further specialist work to enable action planning on each of the key priorities;
  - d) To engage with the community.
- (3) The following section 3.2 will outline the action taken in relation to the above in the context of the impact of the Covid pandemic and the development of the Council's Renewal Programme and Renewal Vision Workstream.

- (4) The Council declared an ecological emergency in July 2019. A summary of the response to the commitments in this declaration and next steps are outlined in section 3.3 below.

### **3.2 Progress Update – Climate Emergency Action Plan & Renewal Vision**

- (1) The Covid pandemic caused a delay to some of the action planned for 2020, but progress has been made corporately and services have risen to the challenge, taking a wide range of actions, including a considerable amount of community engagement.
- (2) The Corporate Strategy (2020 -2024) adopted in February 2020 highlights tackling the climate and nature emergency as one of two core policies and notes the need for a step change across the public, private and community sectors in our area to achieve the net zero 2030 goal and commits the Council to ensuring this policy shapes everything the Council does, along with giving people a bigger say.
- (3) The Corporate Delivery Programme 2020-21, published alongside the Corporate Strategy in February 2020, included over 150 specific actions identified by services to respond to the Climate Emergency declaration commitments and the outline October 2019 action plan.
- (4) Part of the Council's response to the Covid pandemic has been to set up the Renewal Programme, which is enabling a strategic re-positioning in order to drive action on the Council's priorities. The programme is creating a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to driving climate and nature emergency action across services and accelerating policy and resource alignment through the Renewal Vision workstream.
- (5) Another part of the Covid response has been the setting up of the B&NES Economic Recovery and Renewal Board, which consists of leaders from a variety of sectors including engineering, legal, tourism, the arts and digital, along with higher and further education and is chaired by the Leader of the Council. Initially, the Board focussed on the immediate priorities of supporting local business during lock-down, for example through the Bath Unlimited project, and supporting young people and those who have lost their jobs through a host of skills development projects.
- (6) New internal governance and coordination arrangements have been put in place, bringing together all the place-based services, along with key corporate services, to improve collaboration and efficiency, reporting to and steered by the new member Sustainable Place Board.
- (7) The Renewal Vision workstream includes facilitating the development of One Shared Vision for Bath and North East Somerset that all parts of the community can get behind. This work is driven by the need to tackle the weaknesses in the local economy that the pandemic has highlighted, to build on some of the positive changes that have taken place such as the shift to home working and reduction in commuting, and to create a stronger, more diverse and greener local economy that encompasses the 2030 net zero goal and our climate and nature emergency commitments. This work is being carried out in conjunction with the B&NES Economic Recovery and Renewal Board.

- (8) The One Shared Vision work has identified an emerging consensus on the need to rebuild the local economy around 'green recovery', recognising the opportunities for new jobs from the action that needs to be taken across, for example, home energy retrofitting, developing new renewable energy generation, creating new electric vehicle charging infrastructure, increasing local food production, increasing and managing tree cover, increasing biodiversity, natural flood defence and nature-based approaches to carbon sequestration.
- (9) The One Shared Vision work started in early autumn and has included interviews with over 70 local stakeholders. The analysis of this evidence base produced a number of emerging themes for the future vision, around which eight virtual workshops were held in December. This has been accompanied by an opportunity for any resident to contribute ideas and comment on the emerging themes that runs through to early January 2021.
- (10) Further work will be undertaken with the B&NES Economic Recovery & Renewal Board in the New Year on the emerging vision, including leadership and partnership development and further engagement. It is recognised that delivery on the climate and ecological emergency and giving people a bigger say means developing better working relationships with partners and local communities.
- (11) A number of key partners have also taken action on the climate and nature emergencies in the last year; both universities have formally declared Climate Emergencies and the Royal United Hospital and Avon Fire and Rescue have developed their own climate strategies.
- (12) Specific action plan progress:
  - a) The annual review of the area's carbon footprint was delayed by Covid, but is now underway, and will report in late January 2021. The report will include a review of the original pathway to net zero carbon 2030 and an update on the Council's direct carbon emissions. Given the delay, it is recommended that the footprint review is reported to the Climate Emergency & Sustainability PDS Panel in March 2021.
  - b) The Corporate Estate review, reported to Cabinet in December 2020 embeds carbon reduction, environmental sustainability and future climate-proofing in the approach to future management. From April 2021 the Council's energy contracts will be 100% renewable energy.
  - c) In the 2021/22 budget setting process, the emerging capital programme will include dedicated capital for retrofitting the Council's own buildings, alongside allocation for the development of renewable energy projects within the estate and beyond.
  - d) An analysis by the South West Energy Hub has identified options within the Council's estate for potential renewable energy projects, subject to satisfactory detailed business case development.
  - e) The new Climate Emergency Procurement & Commissioning Strategy is being developed to take into account the complex changes to the public procurement landscape, as a result of leaving the EU and the recently

published Green Paper 'Transforming Public Procurement'. A likely change is that the evaluation of tenders will be based on the Most Advantageous Tender (MAT) and not Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT). There will therefore be scope for the Council to consider wider social benefits, such as economic, social and environmental factors, when assessing which supplier to award a contract to. It is expected that in future, as a result of some of these government changes, the Council will be able to apply award criteria that drive supplier behaviour to achieve environmental targets.

- f) A climate literacy training programme has been developed and will be piloted in the first quarter of 2021, prior to full roll-out to staff later in the year. This includes a day long climate leadership course for members and senior managers in March.
- g) A Climate and Ecological Emergency Performance Monitoring Framework has been developed as part of the Council's Integrated Performance Framework to record and monitor actions and progress taking place to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies across all service areas. It brings all key projects and indicators together in one place to facilitate insightful analysis and data communication, and feeds into the Quarterly Corporate Performance Reports that go to the Strategic Leadership Team, including the Chief Executive.
- h) A study has been commissioned to analyse the job creation potential in B&NES of the 'green' actions we need to take locally to deliver on the environmental emergency commitments, helping us to understand what the new green recovery opportunities could mean for our economy. This will report in late January and will inform the next stage of the One Shared Vision work.
- i) A study has been commissioned on the financial aspects of developing local renewable energy at the scale and pace needed to deliver our 2030 net zero carbon goal. The report is expected in late January 2021 and will inform further action planning in relation to potential investment and support for community energy that will take place during 2021.
- j) Further specialist work will be undertaken in 2021 to enable more detailed action planning on the climate emergency priority areas for action.
- k) The Planning service has begun a Partial Review of the Local Plan in order to update and align planning policies with climate and ecological emergency requirements and is due to come into force in early 2022. Following the options consultation in Jan/Feb 2021, a draft Plan is scheduled for Spring 2021. B&NES is also working with WECA to ensure that carbon reduction is a key driver in the preparation of the new Spatial Development Strategy.
- l) Alongside this, work is underway in the West of England to review renewable energy capacity, with results expected in early 2021, which will inform Local Plan policy development. A WECA carbon assessment tool is also in development, which will be used to assess the carbon impact of development locations, transport measures and capital items at the early options stage through more detailed design, making carbon impacts visible

through the decision-making process. The tool is being developed by a working group of WECA and the four West of England LA's and is due for completion in March 2021.

- m) The Housing service has taken advantage of the government's new Green Homes Grant scheme, winning £500k under the local authority led element of the scheme to expand our existing Affordable Warmth Grant scheme and support low income and vulnerable residents to undertake energy efficiency works. This sits alongside their Energy at Home advice service and a partnership with Lendology to offer B&NES residents a low interest home improvement loan. Specialist work is planned in 2021 to inform what further action can be taken to support home energy efficiency.
  - n) The Transport service is running a number of key projects that will enable the shift to more sustainable transport modes and reduce transport related emissions, such as the Liveable Neighbourhood development; Residents' Parking Zones; the Wiltshire Whippet; electric vehicle charging infrastructure development and a WECA project to improve mass transit between Bath and Bristol.
  - o) An update on the Climate Emergency Action Plan was brought to the Climate Emergency & Sustainability PDS Panel in March and the timetable setting out the review of relevant strategies and plans was noted, with most key strategies being reviewed during 2020. It is proposed that the results of the annual carbon footprint and 2030 pathway work is reported to this Panel during the first quarter of 2021.
  - p) We have worked closely with WECA, who declared a Climate Emergency and committed to net zero carbon 2030 in July 2019, following demands from the West of England authorities, led by Bath & North East Somerset Council, and have continued to support the development of the WECA Climate Emergency Action Plan. We have also been working with others in key networks such as ADEPT (Association of Development, Environment, Planning and Transport directors) to press national government for the further powers and resources local government needs in order to deliver on the environmental emergencies.
  - q) However, we recognise that for local government to be able to provide the leadership to enable the area to achieve net zero carbon by 2030 and make its own operations net zero goes beyond support for particular measures, requiring fundamental action by central government to the funding structure for local government and to drive the wider system change, that is beyond local government control. On both these issues the Council is active in lobbying central government for change. This is done partly via WECA, but also via national initiatives, such as UK100, to articulate strategic local government demands and broker dialogue with ministers. The Leader, Cllr Dine Romero is one of the local authority leaders at the forefront on this initiative.
- (13) Community engagement was identified as a key element in the October 2019 Climate Emergency Action Plan, bringing together and delivering both core policies (tackling the climate and ecological emergency and giving people a bigger say). A Community Engagement Programme was developed in early 2020 and was about to launch with a community conference planned for April

2020, when Covid hit. This led to a re-think in our approach in order deliver as much as we could within Covid restrictions, using Zoom webinar technology and trialling a new online dialogue platform called Delib. The following community engagement work has been delivered:

- a) A community group survey, completed by 70 groups in early 2020 on what they were doing on climate, was followed up with a Council hosted virtual networking event on 6 October, enabling groups to share experience and work together;
- b) Presentations on the climate emergency and action that parishes can take were delivered in late 2019/early 2020 at the Community Forums and the Parish Liaison Committee and updates delivered via Zoom during October and November 2020. A Parish Council Climate Toolkit was developed to help parishes. To date, nine parishes have declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. On 26 November 2020, we put on an all-day training session for parishes on how to develop a local climate action plan, led by the Centre for Sustainable Energy.
- c) In December 2019, the Council supported the development and launch of the B&NES Schools' Climate Network. Since then, fifteen schools in B&NES have declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency.
- d) A series of public webinars have been held over the last nine months on different aspects of climate and ecological emergency action, including showcasing the work of community groups. The first phase of webinars in the summer of 2020 were entitled 'Climate Conversations' with Cllr Sarah Warren, the lead member for Climate Emergency. These webinars have enabled engagement on, for example, waste and recycling (Share and Repair), tree planting (More Trees for Bath), sustainable farming (Community Farm), meadows and carbon (Emoresgate Seeds), parish action (Freshford Parish Council), youth climate voices and school action (Polly & Elsa France). More recent webinars this autumn have run under the banner of Renewal Vision and Green Recovery and have covered topics such as green skills and home energy efficiency.
- e) At the time of writing, a pilot is being run using the Delib online dialogue platform to enable residents to comment on the emerging themes from the Renewal Vision development process and to contribute their own ideas.
- f) In 2021, further engagement work will be carried out using a mixture of webinars and Delib. Before Covid, a Citizens' Jury had been planned for this year, but has had to be delayed. A review of the value of Citizens' Juries will be conducted in early 2021, as part of the development of the next phase of the Community Engagement Programme.

### **3.3 Ecological Emergency Declaration Response**

- (1) The Council has a long and strong history of work on bio-diversity, landscape and ecology, which means that there is a considerable amount of action already underway in Bath and North East Somerset and within the wider context of the West of England, though existing excellent local and regional partnership working.

- (2) As a first step, an analysis has been conducted across services to draw together and understand what action is taking place against each commitment and to identify gaps.
- (3) Key actions include:
- a) Building on existing planning policies designed to protect and enhance wildlife, the Local Plan Partial Review, currently underway, will strengthen policies taking into account the emergency declaration and updating in relation to the Environment Bill, particularly the new bio-diversity net gain requirement; and including an update of green infrastructure policy;
  - b) This is reflected in West of England actions such as West of England Guidelines for Biodiversity Net Gain; Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy and Tree and Woodland Strategy.
  - c) The Parks team are implementing key aspects of the B&NES Pollinator Strategy and reviewing parks and green spaces management regimes to deliver habitat improvement.
  - d) The Environment & Design team manage a range of projects that contribute to tackling the ecological emergency, nature-based solutions and habitat restoration, such as: Bathscape; Bath River Line; Waterspace Programme; Somer Valley Rediscovered; connecting the Cotswold and Mendip AoNBs; Chew Valley Catchment project. The Bathscape project provides support and guidance to landowners and other local stakeholders on biodiversity, tree-planting and management.
  - e) The new West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy and B&NES Green Infrastructure strategy are being actively implemented within major developments.
  - f) An increase in biodiversity net gain above the Environment Bill requirement is being developed within the Local Plan Partial Review, with a view to raising it from 10% to 15% locally.
  - g) Work is underway within the West of England to develop a Nature Recovery Network Implementation Strategy; a West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy is being finalised.
  - h) A B&NES Tree and Woodland officer task and finish group has been established to develop the B&NES Tree & Woodland Delivery Plan, which will be completed by March 2021. The B&NES Tree and Woodland Delivery Plan will be aligned to the regional West of England Nature Partnership's (WENP) Tree and Woodland Plan, which aims to double urban and rural tree cover by 2060. There is planting underway this winter in pursuit of the target to plant 100,000 trees by May 2023. Approximately 5,000 trees will be planted on Council and private land in 2020/21.
- (4) The main gaps identified relate to the need for improved coordination between the different delivery services and the need to improve connection with the implementation of climate emergency action. This is being addressed through the new Renewal Programme and its associated governance arrangements, with all strategy and delivery on the climate and ecological emergencies

encompassed by the Programme and embedded as key drivers of the Renewal Vision workstream.

- (5) Further action planning will be developed during 2021 alongside the climate emergency action planning within the Renewal Vision workstream.

#### **4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 The activity outlined in this report is fully in line with the expectation on local authorities to take local action on the climate issue contained in the Climate Change Act 2008 and with the Climate Change Committee's recommendations; with the impending Environment Bill. Further, it is in line with the 2018 UN Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change report on the need to reduce carbon emissions more quickly in order to prevent the world from warming by more than 1.5°C and the UN Inter-governmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services report 2019, highlighting the alarming decline in nature worldwide.

#### **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)**

- 5.1 The activity outlined in this report will be staffed and funded by the Climate Emergency budget approved in the Council's February 2020 Budget for 2020 to 2023, by existing service budgets and by capital budget items proposed in the budget-setting process for 2021/22.
- 5.2 As mentioned above at 3.2 (12) q), the Council recognises that delivery of net zero by 2030 in the Council's operations as well as across the whole of B&NES, requires strategic change to local government funding and central government action to delivery the wider system change required.

#### **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

#### **7 EQUALITIES**

- 7.1 The climate emergency research programme in 2019 included a review of per capita carbon emissions, showing higher carbon emissions for higher income households. This analysis informs the development of the Council's work to ensure support for lower income and vulnerable residents such as the Housing service's work on home energy efficiency and fuel poverty alleviation.
- 7.2 The Renewal Vision engagement process has been informed by advice from the Council's equality officer and used the Community Engagement Charter, which has also informed the wider community engagement programme.

#### **8 CLIMATE CHANGE**

- 8.1 This report updates on the corporate effort to drive, coordinate and support action across the Council and the area in pursuit of commitments made in the Climate Emergency Progress Report to Council in October 2020, to enable delivery of the March 2019 Climate Emergency Declaration.

## 9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None.

## 10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The report has been reviewed and signed off by the Renewal Board and Informal Cabinet, including the Chief Executive, the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.

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<b>Background papers</b>	
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	