

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Communities (Introduced by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (Health and Wellbeing))	Cabinet	Wednesday, 13 October 2021

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	No
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## Progress on Climate Emergency and Air Quality Work

### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on the actions and progress that has been around the Climate Emergency and Air Quality work streams.

### Recommendations to Cabinet

2. To note the progress that has been achieved towards the Councils net-zero goal and completion of the air quality and Climate Emergency Action Plans.

### Reasons for recommendations

3. To provide members with an understanding of the work that has been achieved to date.

### Other options considered and rejected

4. The report is for information only no other options have been considered.

### Corporate priorities

5. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

## Background to the report

### Climate Emergency

6. The effects of man-made climate change are identified as one of, if not the biggest, threat to humankind and the wider environment. Understanding, acceptance and desire for action to combat this threat has grown over the last few years.
7. The most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has confirmed that the global warming target of 1.5°C will be exceeded within the next 20 years, with escalating and compounding impacts on severe weather events, flooding, climate refugees, food production and the spread of disease.
8. In 2021 the IPCC issued a new report stating *“it is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, oceans and cryosphere and biosphere have occurred.”*
9. It continues by identifying that *“global temperature rises will continue throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century under all modelled scenarios and a global temperature of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21<sup>st</sup> century unless deep reductions in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions occur in the coming decade”*
10. It is imperative that humans take all possible action to limit the impacts of the above events. The Council as a social leader, regulator, employer and developer has a morale and legal duty to minimise its emissions and impact on the environment, prepare for the impact of climate change, adapt and encourage others to do the same.
11. Please note that this document refers to emissions of “carbon” or “carbon dioxide”. This should be considered shorthand for all greenhouse gas emissions, not just carbon dioxide.
12. In July 2019 the Council declared that the effect of climate change within the borough poses an immediate danger to the Health and Wellbeing of our residents. The result was the declaration of a Climate Emergency, see Appendix 1, setting a goal of net-zero carbon emission by 2030 for both the Council activities and the borough as a whole.
13. A cross-party Climate Emergency Group were formed to work with officers to achieve this goal. The task group have met regularly to move the agenda forward.

### Air Quality

14. The borough of South Ribble has five declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's), located in Penwortham, Walton-le-Dalton, Bamber Bridge, Lostock Hall and Leyland. Each one of these areas has been declared due to the likely exceedance of the national annual mean objective for the pollutant Nitrogen Dioxide, NO<sub>2</sub>. The objective level being 40µg/m<sup>3</sup>.
15. In 2018 and updated Air Quality Action Plan was approved by Council covering the full borough. This action plan contained several measures to improve air quality across the borough, but specifically within the declared AQMAs.
16. Since that date public understanding and concern regarding poor air quality has increased.

17. Many of the measures identified within the action plan have been completed but there is still more to be done to improve air quality across the borough. Many of the actions are also mirrored in the above Climate Emergency Action Plan.

## **Update on progress**

## **Climate Emergency**

### **Climate Emergency Strategy**

18. In July 2020 members approved and adopted at Full Council, a Climate Emergency Strategy, this has since been updated, and official approved at Full Council in July 2021. The updated Strategy together with an annual greenhouse gas report detailing the carbon footprint of the both the Council and the borough is provided in Appendix 2.
19. The Climate Emergency Strategy (the Strategy) provides background to the Climate Emergency issue, our current position in terms of the Council and the borough and identified categories of areas to concentrate on to achieve the overall goal of net-carbon neutral by 2030.
20. The Climate Emergency Strategy will be regularly updated, currently this will be yearly and will detail any changes to the aims and objectives of the strategy. Importantly the document sets out the Council's current carbon footprint calculation and compares this to previous years and to the Council's identified baseline of 1990 allowing progress towards the Council's carbon neutral aim to be monitored.
21. It should be noted that the Council's footprint has increased over the previous year. This is as a result of several reasons. The waste service was brought back into Council control resulting in additional carbon emissions from fuel consumption. In addition, water consumption and wastewater treatment have also been included within the Council's footprint.
22. Next year's footprint is likely to increase again. In April 2021 the Leisure centres came back under direct Council control. These buildings now form four of the six largest energy using buildings within the Council estate. While the previous operators also declared a Climate Emergency and were working towards reducing their carbon emissions due to the enormity of the works required to the leisure centres and timing of the contracts no decarbonisation works have been undertaken at these sites.
23. However, since April the Council have undertaken decarbonisation plans for the six sites and work is underway to identify efficiency savings and funding to decarbonise these buildings.

### **Climate Emergency Action Plan**

24. In order to achieve the Council's goal to tackle the enormity of the task at hand buy in from all stakeholders is required along with a plan to move forward in a timely organised manner to achieve the net-zero goal.

25. As the Council's goal included not only the Council operations but that of the wider borough, it was essential that the public and business communities within South Ribble were included within the formulation of the action plan.
26. A full public consultation was undertaken, asking for suggestions in how we can achieve this goal. Unfortunately, the consultation was undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic, many businesses were closed, including schools and many people had more immediate concerns.
27. The Climate Emergency Action Plan, attached in Appendix 3, was subsequently written based on the responses received and the work undertaken by the cross-part Climate Emergency Group was approved at Full Council in July 2021.
28. The Action Plan sets out short, medium, and long-term goals under each of the Climate Emergency Strategy's five key categories. It sets out the actions which the Council will concentrate on over the coming years to achieve the stated goal of net carbon neutral by 2030.
29. Work is currently underway to ensure each action is provided with a detailed description and methodology, including where possible timescales and costings for completion of the action.
30. The Climate Emergency Action Plan will undergo regular reviews. This is essential to maintain the document, consider new technologies, legislation and policy that will emerge over the coming years and ensure the council's goal is achieved.
31. During the next year the emphasis of the work to be undertaken as part of the Action Plan will be on internal operations to showcase the Council as a community leader and on building community interaction through schools, businesses and community groups.
32. It is envisaged that the next review will follow a wider public consultation following the lifting of restrictions imposed as part of the pandemic. This is hoped to identify further actions that can be included to reduce the carbon emissions within the community.

### **Activities undertaken to date**

33. Since the 2019 declaration work has progressed in several areas to move the overall Climate Emergency agenda forward. This section provides a brief overview of some of the progress made.

### **Funding Streams**

34. The work to decarbonise the Council's activities will involve capital expenditure and changes to the way we currently operate. As a result, a significant amount of time has been spent by officers in attempting to secure external funding.
35. The Council have applied for several Government Grants over the last 12 months to assist with the decarbonisation of the council's estate.

36. Grant bids have principally been made to secure funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), through their Low Carbon Skills Funding and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Grants.
37. The Council have been awarded £145,004 through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to make energy efficiency improvements to the Civic Centre. These works included:
  - a. LED lighting throughout the building,
  - b. solar panel installation to the roof,
  - c. a new Building Management system to monitor and control energy usage within the building, and across the estate in the future.
  - d. New energy efficient water heaters,
  - e. Battery storage for the solar panels.
38. At the same time the Council have completed decarbonisation plans for six of the largest energy using buildings within the portfolio. These being the Civic Centre, Moss Side Depot, Leyland, Penwortham and Bamber Bridge Leisure Centres and the South Ribble Tennis Centre, collectively referred to as 'the Big 6'.
39. The Decarbonisation Plans identify what works will be required to each building to decarbonise, i.e. to reduce the carbon emissions of the building through improved energy efficiency and alternative technologies. The Decarbonisation Plans are presented in Appendix 4.
40. The Council have just been awarded £223,000 through the Low Carbon Skills Fund to undertake feasibility studies on the implementation of the measures identified for the Big 6 buildings and to undertake further decarbonisation reports for the remainder of the Council's estate.
41. Further grant funding, £45,000, has also been obtained to assist with the enforcement of the Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations. These regulations require a minimum level of energy efficiency within privately rented properties and over 1400 properties have been identified within South Ribble which fail to achieve the required standard.
42. The funding will be used to identify the individual properties failing to achieve the minimum standard of an EPC rating E and to take enforcement action against the landlords. The work will also identify owner occupied properties failing to achieve this minimum standard and those occupiers will be sign posted to the available energy efficiency grants offered by the Council.
43. Thus, improving the lives of many of the most vulnerable people within the Borough will helping to lower the carbon footprint of the current housing stock.
44. Finally, officers are just completing two further bid applications. The first is for another round of Public Sector Decarbonisation works to the remaining five buildings forming the Big 6 energy users. This is likely to consist of a bid for £4-5 million, however the Council will be required to contribute towards the bid at an equivalent cost of replacing the current technology for a like for like replacement. i.e. a fossil fuel heating system for another fossil fuel heating system.

45. The second bid will be for grant funding from this year's Air Quality Grant through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural affairs (DEFRA). The grant bid will be 100% funded from the grant with no contributions required from the Council.

46. This grant application is being considered but is anticipated to include a request for funding to cover:

- Education campaign to be piloted at Leyland Methodist school for encouraging active transport and anti-idling – campaign then to be rolled out across all other schools in the Borough
- Traffic monitoring to enable traffic light optimisation in the AQMA
- Improved Signage to encourage the use of alternative routes away from declared AQMA's
- Cycle storage and maintenance pilot schemes to encourage active travel within the borough.

### **Green Agenda Program**

47. Towards the end of 2020 the Council reviewed its corporate priorities and introduced a Green Agenda program. The Green Agenda Program brought together a number of different actions from across the Council. In total 10 projects were identified under the program and these have been progressed over the previous year.

48. These include:

1. Improvement of the borough's green infrastructure
  - ▶ Installation of 5Km of Cycle/Pedestrian pathways
  - ▶ Improvements to 8Km of footpaths across the green links programme
  - ▶ Delivery of the OLEV grant bid to install four electric vehicle rapid charging points across the borough
  - ▶ Plant 27,500 trees by March 2021
2. Raising awareness and promoting action:
  - ▶ Host the council's first event to contribute to the annual 'World Environment Day' in 2021
  - ▶ 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' campaign to promote, encourage and increase recycling and reduction in single use plastics
  - ▶ Promotion of affordable energy saving schemes
3. Developing actions for the Council as an employer and organisation
  - ▶ Paper audit of the organisation
  - ▶ Energy audit of the Civic Centre
  - ▶ Audit of corporate travel
  - ▶ Installation of solar panels at the civic centre
  - ▶ New cycle storage facilities at Moss Side depot

49. The cycle and footpaths extensions and improvements have been completed.

50. The electric vehicle charging point installation is due to be completed by the end of the October, with further grant bids to be submitted for additional charging points across the borough.

51. A total of 62,274 trees have been planted in the last two years over halfway towards the Council's four-year target of 110,000 trees.
52. Due to the Covid Pandemic the World Environment Day event was virtual, with regular social media posts and additional information provided on our website.
53. The 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' campaign was introduced to improve recycling rates across the borough and reduce waste contamination. Overall, the project has proved to be a great success, feedback from Lancashire Renewables has indicated a significant reduction in contamination of mixed recycling.
54. The figures have continued to reduce over the life of the project, although February has seen a slight increase in contamination, the project finished on the 12th March and overall there has been a significant reduction in contaminated bins since the start of the project of 2636 bins which represents a reduction of 75% in contaminated bins presented on a weekly basis.
55. Work has progress to advertise the various energy saving schemes and grant work available to residents to improve energy efficiency within the housing sector. Combined with the above-mentioned Housing enforcement action around the MEES regulations this work will help to further reduce energy demand and lower the carbon footprint from this sector.
56. The audits for paper usage, energy consumption and internal travel are currently under way, with data being collected.
57. Two phases of solar panels have been installed at the civic centre and these are currently producing clean renewable energy, reducing the Council's energy costs and lowing the carbon emissions.
58. New cycle storage facilities have been installed at Moss Side Depot and conjunction with the facilities at the Civic Centre, including changing facility provide a suitable and realistic alternative to travel by car for employees.

### **Engagement and influencing Others**

59. To achieve the council's goal will require the involvement of not only Council employees but the whole borough, from businesses, residents and educational and community groups.
60. As such engagement with stakeholders has been identified as a key component of the Climate Emergency (and Air Quality) Action Plan. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic prevented many of the planned activities.
61. However, the council have been working with colleagues across Lancashire to move the Climate Emergency agenda forward, particularly at Chorley in addition to regular meetings with the borough's largest housing provider Progress Housing. This early work has assisted with the developing new ideas, and the identification of opportunities to achieve

the council's goal while building partnerships that will help and support the Council in the future.

62. Work with the Councils Communication teams is progressing to actively use social media to communicate with the residents and businesses and a two year Climate Engagement Officer role has just been advertised with the ultimate aim of engaging, educating, and encouraging residents, businesses, schools and community groups to think along the net-zero carbon lines and promote opportunities to lower carbon emissions across the borough.
63. A consideration of the impact of all decision on the Council's carbon emissions is to be included on all Council decisions. Additional guidance and wording will be provided over the coming months to enhance this consideration and it is hoped that eventually the issue is to be embedded in all decisions with a consideration of actual changes to carbon emissions being considered.

### **Air Quality**

64. As with the work on the climate emergency the Covid pandemic has significant interfered with many of the actions planned against the air quality action plan, particularly those around engagement and encouraging the use of public transport.
65. As a requirement of the Environment Act 1995, which sets out the Local Air Quality Management requirements and Annual Status Report (ASR) on air quality is required to be submitted to DEFRA.
66. This report details the latest pollutant monitoring results and updates on any actions taken within an Action Plan.
67. The latest ASR, covering the year 2020 has been submitted to DEFRA and the is attached in Appendix 5.

### **Climate change and air quality**

68. The work noted in this report impacts directly on air quality and the Climate Emergency declaration. The Report is however for information only and no actions are recommended from the report. As such there will be no impact on air quality or carbon emissions from the report.

### **Equality and diversity**

69. There are no equality or diversity implications from this report.

### **Risk**

70. There are no addition risks associated with this report.

### **Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer**

71. The report is for information only and there are no financial implications of the report.

### **Comments of the Monitoring Officer**

72. The importance of the Climate Emergency & Air Quality Action Plans cannot be overstated. Clearly, we must do everything to implement that. This report is for information only, and there are no direct legal issues identified from the report.

### **Appendices**

(Appendices 2 – 5 are web links)

Appendix 1 – Climate Emergency Declaration 2019

[Appendix 2 – Climate Emergency Strategy 2021](#)

[Appendix 3 – Climate Emergency Action Plan 2021](#)

[Appendix 4 – Decarbonisation Plans for the 'Big 6'](#)

[Appendix 5 – Air Quality Action Plan 2018](#)

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