

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Communities (Introduced by the Cabinet Member (Neighbourhood and Waste Services))	Council	Wednesday, 19 July 2023

Climate Emergency, Air Quality, and Biodiversity Action Plan Updates & Annual Greenhouse Gas Report

Is this report confidential?	No
Is this decision key?	Not applicable

Purpose of the Report

- To provide an update on the actions and progress that has been around the Climate Emergency and Air Quality and Biodiversity work streams.
- To provide members with an update on the Council's and borough's carbon footprint.

Recommendations to Council

- 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, and the Biodiversity Strategy and Interim Action plan.
- That members note the current carbon footprint of both the Council and the borough.
- Council approves that the portfolio holder for Neighbourhood and Waste writes to the Secretary of State to express the Council's concerns about the plans to drop the £11.6bn climate and nature pledge funding.

Reasons for recommendations

- Further to the Council declaring a climate emergency and adoption of the Climate Emergency Strategy a commitment was made to present each year an update of the progress made towards the carbon net-zero goal by 2030, improvements on air quality and biodiversity, including the updated carbon footprint for the Council and the borough.
- The Climate Emergency Strategy provided a background to the carbon footprint 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.

8. This update report and the attached annual Greenhouse Gas report provides an annual update on the actions taken to date towards the goal of carbon net zero, cleaner air and improved Biodiversity within the borough together with an appreciation of the emissions arising from the Council 's own estate and operations, the borough as a whole.
9. Both members and our residents have expressed concerns that plans have been made by the government to drop the UK's flagship £11.6bn climate and nature funding. This funding has been seen as a vital tool in the government's commitment to tackle climate change internationally. This funding was linked to supporting developing countries to deal with the causes of climate change, including preventing deforestation and reducing carbon emissions, as well as preparing for its effects.

Other options considered and rejected

10. No other options have been considered as a commitment was given by the Task Group and accepted by Full Council that an annual update would be provided each year on the progress being made and the Councils and boroughs Carbon footprint.

Corporate priorities

11. 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

12. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) latest report states "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" and 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.
13. 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.
14. In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report which advised that we must limit global warming to 1.5°C, as opposed to the previous target of 2°C. Their review of over 6,000 sources of evidence found that, with a rise of 1.5°C, there would be risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth. It warned that we have only 12 years left within which to take the serious action required to avert this crisis and avoid the worst impacts.
15. In 2021 the IPCC 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."
16. 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 moral

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.

17. In July 2019 this Council declared that the effect of climate change within the borough poses an immediate danger to the health and well-being of our residents and therefore proclaimed a Climate Emergency with immediate effect.
18. To combat this threat, the Council set a goal of rendering the borough carbon neutral by the year 2030, against 1990 emission figures. For avoidance of doubt, this goal means the borough shall produce no net carbon emissions by this date, taking into account of actions that have the effect of removing carbon from the environment.
19. In order to implement this decision, a Standing Working Group on the Climate Emergency was created. In July 2020 members approved and adopted a Climate Emergency Strategy, followed by an Action Plan in 2021. Five key categories were identified on which any future actions would be aligned to assist with achieving the net carbon neutral goal.

These categories were;
 - Transport
 - Energy and Built Environment
 - Waste and water
 - Consumption
 - Resilience – preparing for the consequences of climate change
20. The Task Group also committed to providing a yearly update to Full Council on the progress being made towards the Councils Goals, including a Green House Gas Emissions inventory.
21. The annual Greenhouse Gas report, for Council operated buildings and other operations is attached in Appendix 2 of this report.
22. The report includes greenhouse gas emissions (measured as CO₂ equivalent) from energy and water use in our buildings (eg. The Civic Centre, leisure centres, depot) along with fuel used by our fleet and by staff-owned cars as part of their work.

Air Quality

23. Poor Air Quality affects the most deprived within our society, but no-one is immune from the harmful effects. As a result, over 38,000 premature deaths are caused each year across the country and 4.6% of all premature deaths in South Ribble are attributed to poor air quality.
24. Much of the work on air quality is linked to that being undertaken for Climate Emergency with both areas looking at similar outcomes.
25. The Council currently has five declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's) all of which have been declared for the likely exceedance of the annual mean Nitrogen Dioxide Emissions value of 40µg/m³.
26. The Council have continued to monitor air quality across the borough through the network of diffusion tubes, and following additional funding obtained towards the end of 2022 has now employed a further three continuous analysers. These allow the monitoring of Particulate Matter in addition to Nitrogen Dioxide.

27. Monitoring results indicate that pollutant levels across the borough are generally declining and the continuous monitor data suggests that the particulate matter levels are not currently at significantly high enough levels to require any formal action by the Council.
28. It is also planned to carry out a further consultation in later half of 2023 to revise the Air Quality Action Plan.

Biodiversity

29. Biodiversity is the term that describes the biological variety of our planet. It includes all plants and animals and the ecosystems that supports them and us. At a local level biodiversity shapes the landscape of our area, our local distinctiveness and our economic prosperity. It contributes to good mental health and a sense of wellbeing. It has a role to play in our response to climate change, flood management, air, water and land quality.
30. In 2022 the Council adopted the Biodiversity Strategy which identifies the strategic vision for the borough – ‘For a Borough where biodiversity is bigger, better and more joined up’ and the objectives.
31. An interim action plan was proposed and adopted to cover the year, during which a full public consultation would and has been undertaken and a draft Action Plan written for submission to Full Council for adoption.
32. Biodiversity is not just something the Council are working on. Section 40 of the Environment Act 2021 places a legal responsibility on public authorities in England to have due regard for habitats and species of the greatest conservation importance, whilst protecting all biodiversity.
33. A requirement under the act stipulates that Local Authorities must publish biodiversity reports which summarise the actions the authority has taken and the plans for the next five years.
34. By January 2024 all Local authorities must consider the actions they will take on Biodiversity and must report formally by January 2026. We are therefore ahead of most Local Authorities in this regard.
35. Biodiversity must also be considered under the planning regime, with the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in November 2023, where eligible applications must demonstrate a minimum of 10% BNG as part of the development, either delivered on site or off site at registered locations.

Progress Update

36. A summary of the key achievements over the last year are detailed below, in addition Appendix A of this report contains a more in-depth list of the actions that have been achieved over the last year.

Climate Emergency

37. The Council have continued, since the previous update report, to make progress on the adopted action plan. Achieving the aims is not the sole responsibility of any particular member or officer and everyone needs to do their part to reduce carbon emissions, from

recycling waste, turning off the lights or considering the carbon impact from larger projects.

38. Work has continued with the PSDS decarbonisation works of the largest five buildings under the Council ownership, with solar panels, LED lighting and Air Source Heat Pumps now being delivered and commissioned. Along with the installation of Air Source Heat Pumps at the Coach House, Hurst Grange Park.
39. Energy reduction and improvements has been delivered through the “South Ribble Business Energy Efficiency” (BEE) Scheme, helping businesses to carry out energy audits and grant funding to purchase equipment to reduce energy usage. In addition to this the minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) enforcement project was successful in increasing EPC ratings of rental properties.
40. Help for low income families and vulnerable households and owner occupiers was delivered to improve energy efficiency of properties and lower household bills through ECO4:
 - LAD2 – administered by CHiL – low income properties with an EPC banding of E - G
 - HUG – Energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating for low income households or those in receipt of benefits without gas central heating.
 - Affordable Warmth Scheme – LCC funding for low income households with additional vulnerabilities
 - Household Support Fund – for those in receipt of Disabilities facilities Grants
41. Development of retrofit action plan was completed, following officer training on retrofit. The plan sets out how the Council will consider improvements to existing housing stock to ensure the owners have the necessary information to reduce the carbon footprint of their properties.
42. The Council signed up to the don't let go campaign, banning the use, sale and distribution of balloons and sky lanterns on our land. All thanks to a letter sent in by a local primary school pupil.

Air Quality

43. The Council has continued of the air quality monitoring program and has added in real time monitoring.
44. Grant funding of £54k has been secured to enable all schools within South Ribble to have access to an air quality online resource and lesson plans, Clean Air Crew, to raise awareness across the borough. Through immediate and extended family and friends this message will reach the majority of the borough's population.
45. 19 Electric Vehicles Charging units have been installed with proposals for a further installation of 21 charging points being progressed.
46. The Council has purchased electric vehicles within the council's fleet and replacement of petrol-powered hand tools with electric battery-operated ones.

47. The team are continuing to request EV charging points on planning applications and to have air quality assessed as part of these.

Biodiversity

48. Officers have produced a baseline GIS mapping of current key biodiversity information across the borough.
49. The team have completed the Biodiversity Action Plan Consultation and writing the draft Action Plan is on the Council Agenda for approval.
50. Work has started on the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in November through the planning process.
51. Continued to plant trees across the borough with the help of businesses, schools, community groups, and tree giveaways. Exceeding the target of 27,500 trees planted for the fourth year running.
52. The council are also an active member of the Lancashire Nature Partnership allowing information sharing and collaborative working on green infrastructure projects.

Climate change and air quality

53. The work noted in this report provides the result of the direct impacts the Council is having on the climate change and sustainability targets of the Council's Green Agenda.

Equality and diversity

49. The report does not have any equality or diversity impacts associated with it. It is acknowledged that the wider work being undertaken on the climate emergency agenda may have impacts that need to be addressed as the work progresses.

Risk

50. Please Climate change is one of the biggest if not the biggest threat to human-kind (if action is not taken now). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has identified that we must prevent a 1.5°C rise in global temperatures to prevent a significant risk to risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth.
51. The Council has made a commitment to achieving a net-zero carbon emissions by 2030, along with a commitment to review the Climate Emergency Strategy and provide an update on the Council's current carbon footprint. Failure to understand the current situation and the level of carbon emissions being generated by the Council and the borough will hamper any attempts to achieve this goal.
52. The revised strategy and associated greenhouse gas emissions report is therefore a key component to achieving this overarching goal and minimising the risk to both council and the borough as a whole from the impacts of climate change.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

53. This report presents an update on the progress of the delivery of the Air Quality and Climate Emergency Action plans and the Biodiversity Strategy. As such, there are no financial implications arising from the report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

54. This is an update report and there are no legal comments.

Background documents

Climate Emergency Strategy revised July 2021

Climate Emergency Action Plan, July 2021

Air Quality Action Plan, 2018

Biodiversity Strategy 2022

Biodiversity Interim Action Plan 2022

Retrofit Action Plan 2023

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Overview of progress towards the Climate Emergency, Air Quality and Biodiversity work, quarterly updates to task group and four yearly review.

Appendix 2 – Annual Greenhouse Gas Report

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