

Cheltenham Borough Council
Council – Monday 14 October 2019
Cabinet – Tuesday 5 November 2019
‘Carbon Neutral Cheltenham – Leadership through Stewardship’
report

Accountable members	<p>Councillor Alex Hegenbarth, cabinet member for corporate services (lead for carbon neutral council)</p> <p>Councillor Chris Coleman, cabinet member for clean and green environment (lead for carbon neutral borough)</p>
Accountable officers	<p>Darren Knight, Executive Director People & Change (lead for carbon neutral council)</p> <p>Mike Redman, Director of Environment (lead for carbon neutral borough)</p>
Ward(s) affected	All
Key decision	Yes
Executive summary	<p>In February 2019, Full Council unanimously called on the Cabinet to declare a Climate Emergency, which was duly announced in July 2019. As part of the motion, Council requested that a report be presented back within six months, with the local actions the Council could take to help address this emergency. This report outlines the actions needed and an indicative timetable, as well as recommending the initial resources required for the authority to effectively gear up to delivering the scale of actions required by 2030.</p>
Recommendations	<p>That Council considers the ‘Carbon Neutral Cheltenham – Leadership through Stewardship’ report and associated roadmap and recommends that Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers and endorses the findings of the ‘Carbon Neutral Cheltenham – Leadership through Stewardship’ report and its associated roadmap; • Writes to the relevant Secretary of State, setting out the Council’s climate concerns, ambition and roadmap to take action, formally requesting Government to provide the planning powers, guidance and resources to local government to make the 2030 target feasible; • Subject to available resources, considers setting a challenging interim community-wide target for achieving a reduction in borough-wide carbon emissions by 2025, to provide a clear signal of the scale of the local ambition to take effective action; • Considers, prioritises and identifies the resources needed to deliver the actions required to meet the 2030 carbon neutrality

targets;

- **Develops an annual reporting process to effectively track progress;**
- **Delegates authority to the Executive Director People & Change and the Director of Environment, to develop the roadmap into a realistic action plan for project delivery, with appropriate business case development taking account of the impact on the Council's financial position.**

Financial implications	See Section 7 below. Contact officer: Paul Jones paul.jones@cheltenham.gov.uk Tel: 01242 264365
Legal implications	None arising directly from the report. Where specific projects or actions are required going forward to support the project and implement the roadmap, further legal advice and support may be required. Contact officer: Sarah Farooqi sarah.farooqi@tewkesbury.gov.uk Tel: 01684 272012
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	Where the additional capacity required is identified as being directly employed staff, the HR team will support the recruitment campaigns to bring in the appropriate skills and expertise. Contact officer: Julie McCarthy, julie.mccarthy@publicagroup.uk Tel: 01242 264355
Key risks	See Appendix 1.
Corporate and community plan Implications	<p>Addressing the climate emergency is an essential and overarching policy principle, which will need to be applied in relation to all Council services and associated activities. Some of the current priorities identified in our corporate plan will need not be reviewed to ensure they are consistent with achieving climate emergency objectives. This will include optimising their contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring that any negative impacts are identified and either mitigated, or offset in the short term.</p> <p>Sustained and active public engagement on climate change will be of critical importance, including the empowerment of local communities to take actions themselves both in relation to carbon emission reductions and to in becoming more resilient, by helping to mitigate the impacts which rising temperatures will inevitably have.</p>

Equality impact	<p>Climate change will not impact all communities equally and further work needs to be done to analyse how best to tackle the inequalities that are likely to arise without targeted intervention. This could be as a result of global temperature impacts which are already predicted to happen, or as a result of specific actions taken in mitigation.</p> <p>In relation to the workstreams identified within the consultant's report at Appendix 2, projects will need to take careful account of equality impacts in accordance with the council's established approach, including assessments in relation to specific climate mitigation measures implemented under the direction of this authority.</p>
Environmental and climate change implications	<p>The primary purpose of addressing the climate emergency is to ensure Cheltenham contributes to the aim of limiting global warming to 1.5°C and the associated negative impacts of climate breakdown, in support of the IPCC's special report on global warming. It is of grave concern that we are currently on a trajectory which would see global temperatures significantly exceed 1.5°C by the end of this century.</p>
Property/Asset Implications	<p>There will be significant implications for the Council's own property stock, including investment needed to mitigate our carbon emissions and to increase the resilience of buildings in relation to the higher temperatures and more extreme weather events that are predicted in the future.</p> <p>As the borough invests further in commercial assets of high quality and becomes an institutional investor, the environmental considerations are critical to long term capital value. Coupled with tenant/occupier demands through their own corporate objectives and their sustainable goals, this will reinforce the need for CBC to recalibrate its investment criteria, taking careful account of climate change implications.</p> <p>Contact officer: Dominic Stead</p> <p>dominic.stead@cheltenham.gov.uk Tel: 01242 264151</p>

1. Background

1.1 The latest UN climate change report, released on 25th September, 2019, has issued another stark warning regarding the impact of climate change on the world's oceans and coastal communities.

1.2 Here are some of its key findings:

- Sea levels are rising at unprecedented rates, accelerating in recent decades as ice has been melting increasingly fast on Greenland and Antarctica.
- Sea levels are set to rise at an increasing rate and will continue to do so beyond the year 2100, whatever level of emissions cuts are achieved.
- Sea levels are set to rise by 30-60cm by 2100 with strong action to cut emissions and by around 60-110cm with continuing high levels of pollution. Several metres of sea-level rise—Since the mid-20th century, shrinking ice in the Arctic and the world's high mountains have affected food and water security and quality, health, cultures of indigenous people, tourism and recreation such as skiing.
- Coastal communities are facing multiple threats linked to climate change, including more intense tropical cyclones, extreme sea levels and flooding, marine heatwaves, sea ice loss and melting permafrost (areas of previously permanently frozen ground).
- The risk of erosion and flooding will increase significantly under all scenarios for future emissions, with annual coastal flood damages projected to increase 100 to 1,000 times by 2100.
- Marine wildlife and fish stocks are set to decline, while marine heatwaves and more acidic oceans will harm corals.
- This century the ocean is set to shift to “unprecedented” conditions, with higher temperatures and more acidic waters as carbon dioxide dissolves into the seas, while extreme El Nino and La Nina events, which affect global temperatures and weather conditions, will become more frequent.
- Marine heatwaves have very likely doubled in frequency since 1982 and are increasing in intensity.
- Wildfires are set to increase across the tundra and cold northern forests, as well as some mountainous regions.
- Nearly half of the world's coastal wetlands, which protect from erosion and flooding and are important carbon stores, have been lost over the last 100 years, as a result of human activity, sea level rises, warming and extreme events.
- Fragile habitats such as seagrass meadows and kelp forests are at high risk if global warming exceeds 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures, while warm water corals are already at high risk and face “a very high risk” even if global warming is limited to 1.5°C.
- Some island nations are likely to become uninhabitable due to climate change.
- The resources provided by oceans and frozen areas can be supported by protecting and restoring them and reducing pollution and other pressures.
- Urgent and ambitious reductions in emissions are needed alongside coordinated, sustained and increasingly ambitious action, to help people adapt to the changes that already are and will take place in the future.

- 1.3** On 18 February 2019, Council approved a motion to declare a Climate Change Emergency, calling on the Cabinet to:
- Declare a 'Climate Emergency';
 - Pledge to make Cheltenham carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions;
 - Call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible;
 - Work with other governments (both within the UK and internationally) to determine and implement best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5°C;
 - Continue to work with partners across the town, county and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans;
 - Report to Full Council within six months with the actions the Council will take to address this emergency.
- 1.4** Cabinet formally declared a climate emergency on 9th July, 2019, following the request from Council.
- 1.5** Recognising the scale of the task, responsibility for the work has been split into two workstreams:
- (i) Carbon neutral council
Member lead: Cllr Alex Hegenbarth
Officer lead: Darren Knight, executive director people & change
 - (ii) Carbon neutral borough
Member lead: Cllr Chris Coleman
Officer lead: Mike Redman, director of environment
- 1.6** The resources required to prepare a report for Council was not immediately available and so consultants De Courcy Alexander (DCA) were brought in to deliver this piece of work.
- 1.7** The project has primarily been undertaken by [Simon Graham](#), Head of Innovation at DCA. Simon knows Cheltenham extremely well, having previously worked for a number of years at local company Commercial Ltd, driving the implementation of a very successful sustainability programme and achieving a number of 'firsts' for the company, one of which was first in the sector to be Carbon Neutral and Zero Waste.
- 1.8** The consultant's report 'Carbon Neutral Cheltenham – Leadership through Stewardship' is attached at Appendix 2.

2. The work programme

- 2.1** In order to develop the report, meetings and interviews were conducted with:
- A range of officers from across the council;
 - Key members;
 - A number of external organisations including GCHQ, Superdry and the LEP;
 - Key partners including Gloucestershire County Council, Ubico, the Cheltenham Trust and the emergency services.
- 2.2** All members were able to provide their input through a members' brainstorming session facilitated by Simon Graham; he also attended the public assembly held in August as an observer to listen to the views of the wider community.
- 2.3** A desktop examination of the council's key strategies and plans was undertaken together with data analysis to establish emission baselines for the Council and the Borough.

3. Initial findings and report headlines

- 3.1 The scale of the challenge cannot be underestimated, however Cheltenham is well placed to demonstrate leadership in responding to the climate emergency and this also aligns with the vision for the future of Cheltenham.
- 3.2 There is a genuine, widespread commitment to tackling the climate emergency and many thoughts and ideas about how this can be achieved, which need to be prioritised and directed to maximum effect. There is a wealth of activity already underway within the council and in the wider community on the climate change agenda but, currently, no mechanism exists to effectively share information, so much of the activity isn't known about and opportunities for a more joined-up approach risk being missed.
- 3.3 Baseline emissions, from which progress will be measured, are as follows (further detail available in the report):
- (i) Cheltenham BC annual emissions: 5,060 tonnes CO₂e
 - (ii) Cheltenham Borough total emissions: 459,491 tonnes CO₂e
- 3.4 Significant investment will be required, both in terms of activity and financial resource, to deliver the commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030, but it is achievable.
- 3.5 In terms of activity, the report identifies four major initiatives:-
- (i) The Cheltenham Standard - Creating an identity that shows that activities etc. in Cheltenham are of necessity to a higher standard with a lower carbon impact, aligning with the Cheltenham marketing strategy. For example, to ensure that new developments are 'net positive carbon' dwellings with green space, promote zero-carbon emission transport and are architecturally in keeping with the townscape;
 - (ii) Cheltenham Green Deal - Creating an investment fund that can be used within Cheltenham to achieve the carbon target through individual, community, or collaborative action. For example, to provide low income households with a low-cost loan to update their home to become lower carbon, with repayments coming from their reduced energy costs.
 - (iii) Cheltenham Ultra-Low Emission Zone - Designating an area for zero emission vehicles. The timescale allows operators sufficient time to replace buses, taxis, private hire vehicles, delivery vehicles etc. with zero emission vehicles. Introducing a zone will also reduce congestion and improve air quality.
 - (iv) Cheltenham Energy - Cheltenham already has about 20 Megawatts (MW) of installed renewable capacity. Cheltenham Energy would be an entity that enables the Council, businesses and residents to purchase zero-carbon energy, primarily from local sources.
- 3.6 Initiatives and activities will require robust business cases to be developed, to ensure that the likelihood of successful delivery is optimised. There is a significant opportunity for partnership working across Gloucestershire, especially with other Councils having also declared a climate emergency.
- 3.7 In terms of resource, investment will be required to build additional capacity and to bring in appropriate skills and expertise. Collaboration with partners will be a critical component of various elements of the roadmap; however, retaining local control of resources will help maintain focus on Cheltenham's own commitment and enhance the opportunities for action and success.
- 3.8 The report stresses the importance of wide-reaching engagement and communication to articulate the benefits of carbon neutrality and to ensure that citizens have the opportunity to be fully involved in the project.
- 3.9 Actions have already commenced in relation to the Climate Emergency motion; these are briefly summarised in the Table 1.0 below:

Table 1.0

Climate Emergency Motion	Progress
“Declare a ‘Climate Emergency’”	Completed - Climate emergency declared at July’s Cabinet
“Pledge to make Cheltenham carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions”	Completed - Climate emergency declared at July’s Cabinet meeting
“Report to Full Council within six months with the actions the Council will take to address this emergency”	DCA commissioned to advise on what resources are needed and what needs to be done - see report attached at Appendix 2
“Call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible”	In progress – the recommendation is to send a letter from the Leader of the Council to Government with the Council’s action plan requesting “the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible”
“Work with other governments (both within the UK and internationally) to determine and implement best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5°C;”	In progress – commitment made to work in partnership with other organisations
“Continue to work with partners across the town, county and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans”	DCA commissioned to advise on what resources needed to meet the 2030 target for Council and Cabinet to consider

3.10 Reasons for recommendations

3.10.1 The adoption of an interim target is considered to be an important commitment and driver for early action. The report highlights that a percentage reduction is readily achievable, but to achieve zero carbon by 2030 will require a number of ‘big ticket’ items to be put in train early on, due to the lead-in time for setup and delivery of the associated reductions in emissions.

3.10.2 The roadmap sets out how the council’s objectives of a carbon neutral council and borough by 2030 can be achieved, but the report also makes clear this cannot be delivered within the council’s existing staffing capacity; investment in additional resources to bring in appropriate skills and expertise will be crucial and the recommended minimum initial level of investment is £150k.

3.10.3 It is important that this investment is not viewed in isolation, as many of the mitigating actions in relation to the climate emergency will deliver positive benefits in other areas, such as alleviating poverty, adding social value, benefiting the economy and promoting community cohesion and resilience. A number of the activities are also capable of generating an income, which could then be reinvested, creating a virtuous cycle. However, members need to appreciate there will be a need for capital as well as revenue investment and whilst some of this may have ‘invest to save’ potential, this will not always be the case.

3.10.4 The roadmap lays the foundations for activity, but will clearly need to be developed into a more detailed and deliverable action plan, including business cases which will have to be drawn up and specifically agreed for the more ambitious initiatives.

4. Alternative options considered

4.1 Do nothing - in declaring a climate emergency, the Council has already acknowledged both the science and the urgency of tackling the emissions which are accelerating climate change and therefore, the option of doing nothing has been debated and rejected. The report, compiled by

independent experts, sets out the roadmap and early actions that would enable the Council to achieve the objectives of a carbon neutral Council and carbon neutral Borough by 2030. A lesser plan would by definition not achieve those objectives.

- 4.2 Seek to achieve carbon neutrality for the Council and Borough by 2025** – whilst the Council is committed to act speedily, the 2030 target is already ambitious and compares very favourably with the government's proposals for zero carbon 2050. The authority, whilst willing to lead by example, does not have direct control of how third party individuals and organisations respond to the emergency. As such, we would advise that our ambitions do need to be tempered with a degree of realism, to avoid undermining the credibility of the proposed programme.

5. How this initiative contributes to the corporate plan

- 5.1** Addressing the climate emergency will be an overarching principle which will need to be applied in relation to all Council activity. Some of the current priorities identified in our corporate plan will need to be reviewed to ensure they are consistent with achieving climate emergency objectives.
- 5.2** This will include optimising their contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring that any negative impacts are identified and either mitigated, or offset in the short term.
- 5.3** Climate change will not impact all communities equally and further work needs to be done to analyse how best to tackle the inequalities that are likely to arise without targeted intervention. This could be as a result of global temperature impacts which are already likely to happen, or as a result of action taken in mitigation.

6. Consultation and feedback

- 6.1** Overview & Scrutiny Committee was asked to consider a number of concepts and questions and commented as follows:-
- CBH is a key player and it is important that the council provides as much guidance and support as may be needed;
 - The question of retrofit or new build was an important one, but there was also a question about whether the council should be building lower-carbon homes at a moderately higher cost, or a lesser number of carbon zero homes at a much higher cost;
 - Some political groups in the area might be more progressive than others and therefore, there was a concern about establishing a joint assembly, where it might not be possible to secure agreement on targets;
 - One project option would be for the council to bulk purchase from a green energy supplier on behalf of a large number of commercial and domestic customers, thereby securing a more competitive price for local people;
 - Planning could generate very positive outcomes and though this might present an initial challenge for developers, a higher up front price may be of benefit to buyers over the long term as they benefit from the reduced bills and carbon emissions associated with higher energy efficiency standards;
 - Subsidising bus fares would likely encourage more people to use it as a form of public transport in preference to car use.
- 6.2** The Chair felt that the fundamental problem was that those things that were killing the planet were also those things that made life more comfortable and certain people the most money. She felt that the carrot was always more successful than the stick, but acknowledged that this was something that would need to be tackled in partnership with other organisations.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1** The DCA report recommends initial 'seed funding' of £150,000 per year, to fund additional staffing resources in order to create the capacity and capability to develop the business cases for the initiatives outlined in the roadmap and to identify and secure external funding to enable climate emergency projects to progress.
- 7.2** The Council does not currently have the capacity and range of capabilities to fully take forward such an ambitious agenda and so additional funding will need to be identified, as part of the Council's budget setting process for 2020-21.
- 7.3** In terms of capital investment, the authority will need to have careful regard to the business case for individual projects, to ensure that these can be supported within the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. As the issue of climate change is a priority by definition of the Council's declaration of an emergency, it would be sensible for the Council to review all of its existing and planned expenditure commitments with a view to their potential climate impact.

8. Community engagement

- 8.1** The Council acknowledges that in pursuit of the 2030 target, we will require a comprehensive approach to engagement involving residents, communities, businesses and partner organisations.
- 8.2** The Council also recognises that much work has been done on this previously, for example through the excellent work of Vision 21 and the Severn Wye Energy Agency, but we will need more support to re-energise this approach, which will involve a financial ask of government.

9. Progress in reducing emissions

- 9.1** Since declaring a climate emergency, the Council has reviewed its electricity purchase arrangements and since 1st July, its renewable supply now comes from 100% renewable sources (solar, wind and hydro/wave) and doesn't involve biomass. This relates to all operational buildings where the authority pays for the power supply.
- 9.2** In 2012, through the Council's ALMO Cheltenham Borough Homes, the Council approved the development and funding of a Sustainability and Energy Reduction Strategy for the housing stock, this included a pilot project to install solar photovoltaic systems (PV); systems were installed on 49 homes between November 2012 and early 2013.
- 9.3** Following the successful delivery of this project and a review of the housing portfolio to determine which other properties would be suitable for the installation of PV, a capital budget of £3m was obtained to deliver a programme of installations providing energy savings to customers, with the expectation that the capital outlay would largely be recovered (allowing for maintenance costs) through the Feed-in-Tariff (FiT) the installations would attract over 20 years. Due to the implications of right to buy, flats, with the exception of those in sheltered schemes, were excluded from the project. The majority of systems were fitted in 2014, with a total equivalent of over 800 systems being fitted; with larger systems being attributable to communal systems at sheltered schemes where it was not possible to connect to individual flats.
- 9.4** These PV systems are providing enough electricity to power about 350 homes (almost 1.5 million kWh or units of electricity) each year. Savings for customers over the whole operating period to date is estimated to be £493,000 (based on an assumed 50% usage and 14p/kWh)
- 9.5** FiT grant received to date is already approximately £1.2million, so the original investment is well on-track to be repaid over the lifetime of the grant and the CO₂ saving is estimated at about 750 tonnes per annum.

9.6 The SAP rating of properties fitted with PV was raised by approximately 8 points, giving an overall 2.2 point rise in the average SAP across the Council’s housing stock.

10. Performance management –monitoring and review

10.1 The report sets out the requirement for an annual calculation of carbon emissions, which will be used to measure and critique the direction of travel. The recommendation to develop the roadmap into an action plan will also involve setting milestones against which to report annual progress.

10.2 Progress against the 2030 ‘net zero’ target will also need to be integrated with the Council’s performance management and monitoring framework.

Report authors	Contact officers Mike Redman, Director of Environment, mike.redman@cheltenham.gov.uk Tel: 01242 264160 Darren Knight, Executive Director of People and Change darren.knight@cheltenham.gov.uk Tel: 01242 264137
Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Risk Assessment2. ‘Carbon Neutral Cheltenham – Leadership through Stewardship’ consultant’s report
Background information	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.

The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
	If the roadmap is not agreed then the pledge for the council and borough to become carbon neutral by 2030 will not be achievable, resulting in increasing local criticism and associated reputational damage	ELT	Sep 2019	5	6	30	Reduce	Accept report recommendations		Darren Knight Mike Redman	
	If elements of the roadmap are not agreed then the ability to deliver a carbon neutral council and borough by 2030 will be severely impacted	ELT	Sep 2019	4	5	20	Reduce	Accept report recommendations		Darren Knight Mike Redman	
	If the Council does not act to reduce its own emissions and facilitate a reduction in the wider borough, it will weaken its local leadership position	ELT	Sep 2019	5	4	20	Reduce	Accept report recommendations		Darren Knight Mike Redman	
	If effective action is not taken to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the consequences of climate change, vulnerable groups are likely to be more severely impacted than others	ELT	Sep 2019	4	6	24	Reduce	Accept report recommendations		Darren Knight Mike Redman	
	If the Council does not identify sufficient funding and staffing resources to	ELT	Sep 2019	5	6	30	Reduce	Accept report recommendations		Darren Knight	

	deal with the scale of the emergency, the delivery of the roadmap will be compromised									Mike Redman	
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Explanatory notes

Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical)

Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6
(1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability)

Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close