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Cheltenham Borough Council

Heating and Energy Policy

This document has been written as an addendum to our 'Climate Emergency Action Plan' to specifically expand on policies and practices in respect of Energy, which comprises a significant portion of our current carbon and financial footprints.

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1 Introduction

Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and committed to becoming a carbon neutral council and Borough by 2030. The motion received unanimous support and committed the Council to:

- Declare a 'Climate Emergency';
- Pledge to make Cheltenham carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions;
- Call on the Government 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.

The production of Cheltenham Borough Council's 'Climate Emergency Action Plan' (CEAP) in 2022 set out our aim to achieve the 2030 target by acting holistically as a town, not just as a council working in isolation. It is well evidenced that climate action has a range of wider benefits for the health, equity and prosperity of towns and their citizens. We need to communicate our response to the climate and ecological emergencies and share good practice, including:-

- Influencing and shaping the development of strategy and policy for climate at county, regional and national levels;
- Making a positive impact to support the national effort to address climate change;
- Working in partnership to take forward projects and initiatives that will help to delay and reduce the impacts of climate change;
- Set an example to other local authorities yet to set a goal and pathway for becoming net zero.

This mitigation pathway is paving the way for Cheltenham to play its part in limiting the catastrophic impacts that will be and are being caused by climate change, harnessing the potential of our own residents, businesses, visitors and communities, to contribute locally to the national and global commitment required.

For clarity the relevant sections of the CEAP have been included to ensure the policies remain consistent.

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2 Carbon Footprint Calculations

2.1 CBC Carbon Footprint 2019-21

Table 1.0 below shows CBC's carbon footprint in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). We have striven to be as thorough as possible when calculating the carbon footprint and widened the scope in 2020/21 to include emissions from both waste and water. This means that some of the reductions in gas consumption resulting from the reduction in the use of our buildings during the Covid-19 pandemic were partially mitigated. This is presented next to our base year of 2019/20 as originally calculated, and the revised base year, which was calculated using the updated approach.

Table 1.0

	2020/21	2019/20 (Base Year)	2019/20 (revised)
Scope 1	2,954	3,620	3,650
Scope 2	1,047	868	1,279
Scope 3	1,069	1,134	1,178
TOTAL GROSS EMISSIONS	5,070	5,622	6,106
Carbon offsets	0		
Green tariffs	687		

2.2 Cheltenham Borough Carbon Footprint

Table 2.0

	2020	2019	2018
TOTAL GROSS EMISSIONS	539,856	555,568	570,993

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3 Buildings & Energy

Overview

Heating for homes and workspaces currently makes up almost a third of all UK carbon emissions. Excessive use of energy due to inefficiencies and sourcing from fossil fuels also contributes significantly to climate change. Improvements urgently need to be made to advance the energy efficiency of housing and non-domestic properties, ensuring they require less energy to heat, making them cheaper to run and more comfortable to live and work in, whilst reducing our dependence on imported energy. In turn, we hope to tackle fuel poverty and thereby improve the health and wellbeing of residents that struggle to cover the costs of energy, particularly during the winter months. This needs to apply to both new and existing housing stock and other types of assets that utilise energy.

Ongoing & Completed

In spring 2021, CBC was awarded over £380k to install an integrated utility metering platform with works commencing November 2021 and an expected completion date in March 2022. The platform brings together all the available energy and water data for some of our biggest buildings, via mechanisms such as a network of sub-meters providing real time data on energy usage. The data and ensuing analysis will inform a programme of behavioural change, to target a reduction in our energy wastage in these buildings.

This project has also generated a decarbonisation plan for each of the identified buildings, such as Leisure@ and the Pittville Pump Room, which consider the viability of removing gas heating and cooking elements from each building and explore the required funding and permissions necessary for the Council to proceed with such actions.

The continued strong partnership between the Council and Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) will be vital in ensuring an inclusive approach, guaranteeing that the benefits of investment and climate mitigation through retrofit activities and sustainable new developments are far reaching. Collaboration to deliver shared climate priorities is already underway between CBC and CBH.

A 'fabric-first' approach is being taken with the existing council-owned homes managed by CBH which comprises housing stock of around 4,500 dwellings. Many of these homes are heated by GHG emitting gas boilers and improving the insulation and reviewing low carbon heating options will ensure that these homes are as energy efficient as possible. CBC and CBH have already been successful in a bid to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Demonstrator for a deep retrofit scheme¹. This has demonstrated the potential of our existing homes to be more energy efficient through fabric improvements and low carbon heating. Following on from this, we have been awarded £800k of grant funding as part of Wave 1 of the SHDF towards a £1.4m project to install ground source heat pumps into a sheltered accommodation scheme of 25 units and external wall insulation to a further 34 homes. We will bid for future rounds of these funds and, where beneficial, strengthen bids through partnerships with other local authorities.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-housing-decarbonisation-fund-demonstrator-successful-bids>

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New social housing developments in Cheltenham will seek to achieve the very highest standards of energy efficiency. CBC is working with CBH to regenerate existing redundant sites, as part of the commitment to provide 500 affordable homes delivered, or in the pipeline by 2026, made possible by £180m investment being made available by CBC to provide quality homes and support thriving communities. The work constitutes direct delivery of CBC's key priority to increase the supply of housing and investment to build resilient communities and CBH's priority to provide great homes to make Cheltenham a better place to live. CBH will also strive to make the best use of land in the interests of enhancing biodiversity performance, with insightful design for long-term ecological impact. The development of 320 Swindon Road² is an early example of this.

The below actions are taken from the CEAP and directly relate to our ambitions for improving the energy efficiency and sustainability of our built environment.

Actions

1. Measure the energy usage of CBC owned properties and develop a heating and energy efficiency strategy to set out actions needed to actively reduce energy consumption and move away from the use of fossil fuels. Introduce behaviour change programmes to reduce energy consumption in council owned buildings. Support businesses and residents to similarly reduce their consumption.
2. Retrofit council-owned social housing, focusing first on the homes most at risk of fuel poverty.
3. Develop a new 'Sustainability Design Code' for the Golden Valley Development, as a vision for integrated living in West Cheltenham that promotes a low carbon lifestyle. Our aspiration is for this thinking to then be replicated across the town, or within other districts and regions.
4. Explore the viability of a shared low-carbon heat network, to help reduce borough-wide emissions.
5. Retrofit council-owned properties with sustainable, energy-efficient solutions where feasible.
6. Help owner-occupiers to create more energy efficient homes. For example, by supporting energy companies to provide fuel-poor or vulnerable households with insulation, or by helping influence the retrofit market to ensure there is effective demand for energy efficient measures by those that are classified as "able to pay". This may include supporting the provision of skills-training for local workers, actively encouraging applications for new installations, and facilitating the applications of funding bids from home owners. Seek to invest in renewable energy generation by identifying suitable areas in future Planning Policy documents, such as the Cheltenham Plan and Joint Strategic Plan. Review the feasibility of alternative energy sources, new technologies and innovations and the potential to be a net contributor.
7. Commit to using 100% renewable electricity across council owned assets, including those operated by key partners. Support businesses and residents to do the same. Encourage developers to commit to renewable energy by stipulating requirements in a new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). (now adopted)
8. Engage with landlords to improve the energy efficiency of homes in the private rented sector and commercial properties and encourage them to achieve good insulation.
9. Look for potential to align Conservation Area policies with climate emergency goals.

² <https://www.cbh.org/proposed-development-of-320-swindon-road/>

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4 Vision and Statement of Commitment

4.1 Overview

The use of energy is vital to the delivery of Council services and day to day Council operations. With massively increasing energy costs, carbon reduction legislation and concerns over climate change, effective energy management is essential to the Council. This policy covers management of energy within the Council's commercial and residential portfolio, including those occupied by The Cheltenham Trust, Ubico, Cheltenham Borough Homes and others, especially where the energy costs are still borne by the Council.

The Council will ensure that:

- Sufficient resources are in place to meet adopted policy targets and objectives;
- Energy and carbon reduction initiatives will be recorded on Clearview (or the appropriate internal reporting platform), regularly reviewed and targets and objectives amended accordingly;
- There is a continued commitment from all staff to improve energy performance;
- There is a commitment to meeting the training and development needs of energy management staff and to raise the climate and energy awareness of all staff.
- We will continue to buy the greenest energy that is financially viable.

4.2 Benchmarking

1. The Council will analyse and benchmark every building that is part of the occupied current estate, based on its best energy use trend from either 2019/20 or 2021/22
2. We will install smart meters in every property to enable this exercise
3. These benchmarks will be utilised to identify targets which the internal teams will be asked to achieve (see responsible persons)
4. Buildings which are wholly leased will be reviewed as they become vacant and will be metered appropriately, ensuring that future occupiers are responsible for energy management and utility bills going forward.

4.3 Refurbishments and New Builds

1. The Council will incorporate energy efficiency measures, material selection, whole life costing and the recycling of building materials into the design and construction of all new build/ refurbishment schemes costing more than £5k.
2. The Council will conduct post occupancy assessments across new and refurbished sites.
3. The authority will have a presumption against the demolition and redevelopment of buildings, unless there is a robust financial and environmental case for doing so. This reflects the embodied carbon within existing structures and the carbon and environmental costs associated with any redevelopment proposal.
4. The authority will have a presumption against the installation of new or replacement appliances that burn fossil fuels.

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5. Land and properties that are to be sold for development purposes will be offered for sale with the intention of securing the most energy efficient buildings.

4.4 Data Transparency

1. Energy, gas and water usage will no longer be included in service charges for new tenants; tenants will be responsible for viewing and managing their own consumption.
2. As the Council grants new Leases or Renewals, the energy arrangements will be updated to reflect this policy and the climate team will be consulted.
3. Energy data will be available for all users of buildings.
4. Reports on all usage will be given to building managers and where there is evidence of high usage this will be tackled in consultation with the energy officer.
5. New sites will have smart meters installed on purchase and will be tracked against targets as set out below.
6. If tenants approach the Council for consent for alterations, these must comply with our Net Zero ambitions including the highest standards of energy efficiency.
7. Standard provisions will henceforth be included in legal agreements to accommodate this, including the use of a standard legal agreement.
8. Managing agents will be expected to apply and enforce this agreement on our behalf.

4.5 Responsible Persons

1. Each operational building, or each area of a building where appropriate, will have an identified person responsible for managing energy use.
2. Responsible persons will:
 - a. receive automated regular emails (from the Stark energy portal) detailing energy usage in their area.
 - b. work in conjunction with the Energy Officer and potentially an appropriate surveyor /contractors to develop a shared understanding of current energy usage and work towards achievable reductions including reducing wastage.
3. Any planned increased in the consumption of energy above the budget/baseline must be part of a business case presented to the Property Team, which should be mitigated with at least balancing reductions in other areas.

4.6 All Staff

4.6.1 Awareness raising

1. The Council understands that energy/gas/water are scarce resources and especially considering the carbon implications, will endeavour to utilise them carefully.
2. The Council will implement a structured staff awareness programme as part of its training programmes (including new staff induction) in relation to energy management and good housekeeping in Council buildings.
3. An energy awareness week will be held annually.
4. Posters and information sheets will be posted regularly in all staff rooms/ kitchens etc.
5. Schemes will be run quarterly to show energy usage in comparison with other similar buildings.

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4.6.2 Behaviour Change Campaign

1. The Council commits to developing an appropriate behaviour program for each of its occupied buildings to set expectations of both staff and customers
2. Energy usage will be published in each area including costs.
3. The behaviour change campaign will cover opening times/temperature settings/use of rooms etc.
4. Staff will be expected to take collective responsibility for their buildings – including following an energy efficient opening and closing process for every area of every building.
5. Staff will be asked to make sensible choices in relation to their use of council buildings outside standard hours, to ensure that heat and power is used in the most efficient way – for example, utilising the same shared space after 5:30pm in the Municipal Offices.
6. Staff will be expected to manage the energy usage of their own workstation/areas.
7. Staff will be offered advice and support to reduce their energy use at work and at home as part of hybrid working arrangements.

4.6.3 Meeting Policy

1. As part of utilising every building in the most energy efficient manner we ask that staff consider virtual meetings in favour of 'in person' meetings at Council buildings.
2. When deciding to meet face to face or in person staff should consider the following recommendations:-
 - a. **Should this be a meeting?** Less is more: The fewer meetings we have, the more valuable the ones we have become. It all comes down to purpose. Ask yourself: Why are you meeting?
 - b. **Are my meeting goals relationship-based, or task-based?** Task-based goals such as briefing staff or planning an event can often be accomplished in a virtual meeting. Relationship-based goals, which involve strengthening bonds between team members, are usually accomplished most effectively in person.
 - c. **How complex are my objectives?** The more complex the goals, the more efficient it is to meet in person.
 - d. **Could my meeting take an entirely different shape or form?** Could it be a learning module instead, for example?
 - e. **What type of meeting will be most inclusive?** Virtual meetings tend to be more accessible.

4.7 Members of the Public and the Local Community

1. The transition to a Net Zero Council will involve us reducing our energy use and placing more reliance on renewable heat sources. This may change internal conditions and trading hours in some of our buildings. Therefore, this transition can only be achieved with the full support of the local community.
2. Changes in properties open to the general public will be accompanied by announcements and press releases to help garner support and understanding for our efficiency aims
3. Consultations will occur when appropriate.
4. The council will also explore ways to make the most use of any essential energy use so it has a wider impact especially during winter months.

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4.8 Council Members

1. Council Members will be expected to consider the energy implications of their own meetings and to adhere to this Building Heating and Energy Efficiency Policy when utilising council buildings.
2. Council Members will be expected to publicly support and effectively communicate this policy when appropriate.

4.9 Energy Saving Technology

1. The Council will review and test energy saving technologies by utilising the sub-meters on site to track and report on actual savings.
2. The Council will commit to reviewing and potentially upgrading the current building management systems where these are not performing effectively.
3. The Council will strongly consider any opportunities that are identified to install proven energy saving technology, particularly where the expected payback is less than five years.
4. The council will also install PIR/ sensors in all areas of intermittent use such as stairwells/ corridors/toilets etc. and will do so whenever reasonably practicable and affordable.

4.10 Reliance on Fossil fuels

1. Where fossil fuelled CHP units are active, the Council will prioritise their review and explore alternatives which utilise renewable energy, having regard to current leasing arrangements.
2. Renewable energy alternatives will also be investigated in more depth where any current heating systems are reliant on fossil fuels
3. The Energy Officer will continue to explore external funding as part of their current remit, including applications to various government funding streams.
4. As part of our carbon neutrality objectives, we will work to remove all gas heating and cooking systems by 2030.

5 Social Housing

1. The council's housing stock is managed by CBH and although the majority of tenants arrange their own energy provider and are responsible for their energy use, the council is currently responsible for purchasing energy for a number of domestic properties (258) on behalf of CBH. CBC will review this contract in March 2023 and purchase from renewable energy sources where viable.
2. The current system of recharging tenants is based on annual arrears agreements which fail to incentivise tenants to reduce their consumption. We will therefore ask our partners to review this charging arrangement by again utilising smart meters. This should enable dynamic rebilling and ensure easy access for tenants to be able to view and thus help to reduce their usage.

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6 Continuous Improvement

1. Progress on the implementation of this policy and the meeting of targets will be reported via Clearview (or the appropriate internal monitoring system), with quarterly staff briefings at the 'all employee' WebEx
2. Progress towards the targeted reduction (for buildings) and the development of targets for other key areas of consumption will be reviewed and reported on annually to Council Members

7 Summary

This policy sets out the key commitments which will be applied to all energy activity within the Council and Council-owned Properties. Compliance with this policy, associated procedures and other linked policies is mandatory. Where the Council employs third party organisations to undertake activity on its behalf and there is an impact on energy consumption, they shall be required to comply with this policy. Interventions where this is not the case could include curtailment of activities, requests for financial contributions etc.

Delivery of the objectives stated in this policy will be supported through the development and implementation of an energy action plan. This will include:

- Communications
- Measuring and monitoring arrangements
- Energy and emissions reporting
- A sustainable procurement statement
- Building refurbishment guidelines
- Building energy performance review

There has never been a better time to review and reduce our energy consumption; the coming winter could well be the most expensive on record. By supporting staff to reduce consumption at work, we hope to introduce a wider culture of energy saving across the borough with benefits for financial, social and environmental well-being.