

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

25th March, 2024

Climate Emergency Overview

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed.

1) Why has this come to scrutiny?

On 4th September, the Climate Emergency team presented its work to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to provide an oversight of work undertaken since the previous presentation to O&S in 2022. The current review has been scheduled to brief the Committee on the progress made and actions taken in response to the LGA recommendations.

2) Summary of the Issue

In July 2023, LGA Peer Report recommended that the Climate Action Plan be revised to include performance measures and milestones, alongside suggesting a broader implementation of targets.

The prior report submitted to Overview and Scrutiny in September 2023 underlined the:

- i) need for far greater understanding around the inherent challenges involved reaching net zero internally and borough-wide;
- ii) criticality of the full council engaging in actions to deliver against the climate agenda;
- iii) need to deliver a cultural shift to ensure all decisions take climate implications seriously into consideration;
- iv) scale and significance of the shift required in partnership from those living and working in Cheltenham, as well as businesses.

To this we need to add highlight the independencies with Gloucestershire wide policies and Central Government legislation.

3) Summary of evidence/information

Since previously presenting its work to the Overview and Scrutiny Community on 4th September 2023, the authority has continued to make strides towards the Council's net zero ambitions. Together with a review of the resources required for the team has also undertaken a review of the Climate Emergency Action Plan. This has been done to focus on key actions that will enable deliver against internal net zero targets, with more concerted action focused on the key areas of emissions boroughwide, to inform specific targets/milestones for 2024/5, alongside a review of the roadmap beyond this.

These are summarised in the attached appendix document:

- i) the update of performance against the existing goals outlined in the Climate Emergency Action Plan to date, at the end of the 1st phase of the Action Plan at the end of 2023 that it is envisaged should be shared more widely.
- ii) A review of key goals looking forwards to deliver against the 2030 target;

- iii) an updated suite of targets for the Climate Emergency Action Plan, including actions for 2024/5 that can be incorporated into departmental and individual goals.

Beyond this review, there have been the following areas of progress during the last 6 months:

- i) **CBC Carbon Footprint:** In December, the CBC Carbon Footprint was produced. To build understanding around progress and challenges, the carbon footprint has been shared with Councillors and internally within leadership, during whole staff calls and at the staff wide climate forum, which meets monthly.
- ii) **Major Asset Decarbonisation Plans:** The solar appraisal in respect of our major operational properties, completed in 2023 is being incorporated into a costed emission reduction plan being formulated for the Council's key assets; Cheltenham Leisure Centre, Prince of Wales Stadium, Municipal Offices, Pittville Pump Room and Swindon Road.
- iii) **Heat Networks:** Following on from the Heat Network Zones Pilot CBC took part in to inform forward looking policy enshrined within the Energy Bill, work has now commenced on a detailed feasibility study, to explore the potential to develop heat networks at the Golden Valley Development site and in the Town Centre. Heat networks generally avoid the need for individual boilers or electric heaters in every building and are able to use local sources of low carbon heat which would otherwise go to waste. This technology is not entirely new and has been successfully deployed in Europe and in the UK. It is envisaged that these networks could save up to 20,000 tonnes CO2 boroughwide.
- iv) **Cheltenham Borough Homes:** Retrofit is challenging, requiring long-term planning. Cheltenham Borough Homes has produced a costed carbon reduction action plan; a programme of planned investment to deliver and exceed governmental efficiency targets by 2030. During 2023, £800k Wave 1 funding delivered fabric improvements to 34 homes and fabric improvements together with installation of ground source heat pumps (GSHP) for space heating at a 25 unit sheltered scheme. Wave 2.1 will deliver £2.2m grant funding over 2 years between 2023/24 towards the fabric improvement of 175 homes with a further 12 homes identified to receive ASHPs. Delivering Net Zero retrofit across the 4,500 houses will cost approximately 4 times the available funding, so retrofit will be accelerated as funding becomes available.
- v) **CBC & Ubico Vehicle Emission Reduction:** Use of HVO alongside a small number of electric vehicles has reduced emissions by 278 tonnes of CO2 over the year.
- vi) **Cheltenham Zero initiative:** delivered in tandem the local Vision 21 charity, membership has exceeded 164 local businesses and community groups committed to working together to help propel the town towards zero emissions by 2030. Moving into the delivery phase, 64 businesses now have an active carbon reduction plan on the Zellar platform. Alongside Zellar, practical mentoring support is being provided both via consultants and through the Growth Hub.
- vii) **Business & Community Grants:** Industrial, Commercial and Public Sector Emissions Currently make up 34% of the borough wide emissions tracked within government's greenhouse gas index. The current focus is on delivering £100,000 of grant funding alongside practical support and tools to help SMEs and community groups across the borough to reduce their emissions via the Cheltenham Zero initiative and a six-month programme of face to face and

social media engagement and publicity around the programme.

<https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/chelt-zero-business-fund> We are using this programme of support to inform our strategy to deliver improve energy efficiency and drive down carbon emissions to meet our 2030 target.

- viii) **Climate Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT):** Developed in conjunction with West Oxfordshire District Council and applied within our decision-making process to help ensure that new projects and policies are aligned with the Council's commitment to climate action. The tool, already been shared with 22 Councils, has been widely acclaimed. It been successfully used to improve sustainability of the Ice Rink, where emissions were reduced by 98.7%. The tool is currently being reviewed to:
- Evaluate its impact
 - Identify how it can be better used across the Council
 - deliver a suite of improvements
- ix) Alongside active social media profile, Green Spaces Team have produced and published an excellent yearly review to communicate their activities.
- x) **Increasing Treecover:** 1000 trees have been planted during 2023 and support has been secured from GCC to plant a further 600 looking forwards. These were a mix of native and non-native species, large and small, short- and long-lived, with both insect and wind pollinated species and include the restoration of Weavers Field Orchard. Increasing the diversity of tree species grown in Cheltenham is a key adaptation strategy for building resilience to climate change-related threats.
- xi) **Managing Council Owned Land to Increase Biodiversity:** CBC is recruiting an ecologist to support the development of the Council's approach to BNG, alongside its inclusion within the Strategic Local Plan and work being undertaken to develop habitat banks to support this activity.
- xii) **Central Cycle Hub:** UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) is being used to develop a central cycle hub to securely store their bikes which should be completed during 2024.
- xiii) **Climate Changemakers:** An 8 month project with Planet Cheltenham and GCC supported 11 Cheltenham residents over 8 months to put their sustainability ideas into action to make their part of Cheltenham better for both people and planet.
- xiv) **Climate SPD and Development of the Strategic Local Plan.** The effectiveness of the Climate SPD is currently being reviewed, to inform both the development of policies required within the forthcoming Strategic Local Plan and any training or development needs that arise from this.



4) Next Steps

Internal Emission Reduction: In order to make major inroads into emission reduction, there is a need:

- i) For a costed plan to drive energy efficiency and decarbonisation for each major asset to be integrated into an overarching long term proactive maintenance plan for existing assets, (including consideration of how CBH plan can be integrated with CBC's footprint and trajectory).
- ii) To consider the need for a long term 10-15 year capital plan to enable the requisite planning to replace major assets reaching end of life, or that are unable to accommodate the infrastructure necessary to support net zero technologies.
- iii) To implement the strategy and plan to deliver net zero for scope 3 supply chain emissions.

Borough Wide Emission Reduction:

- i) Transport: working in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council via Climate Leadership Group to deliver the identified strategy.
- ii) Domestic Heat Emissions: The need to leverage the pilot project to develop a coherent strategy, recognising the large proportion of historic buildings across Cheltenham alongside the absence of established community energy groups.
- iii) Business, Industry and Community Groups: Roll out of the segmented strategy to address emissions from business, industry and community groups across the borough. This is being considered at the moment via a restructure of the Cheltenham Zero initiative.

Adaptation:

Work required locally to undertake a Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, alongside the work being undertaken at County level, to inform the Risk Framework and strategic local plan priorities.

Background Documents
Contact Officer
Accountability

[Climate Emergency Action Plan: Pathway to Net Zero](#)

Maizy McCann, Climate Officer.

Cllr Alisha Lewis, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency