

**19 July 2021****Agenda Item:4****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES****CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY AND THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Transport and Environment Committee on progress with the Corporate Environment Strategy and to ensure the Council's ambitions and actions are aligned with the recent declaration of a Climate Emergency, approve the commissioning of an assessment of the carbon impact of the Council's current activities, and consider the potential for switching the County Council to a fully renewable "green" electricity tariff.

**Information**Background

2. In 2018, the Government introduced its 25-year Environment Plan to protect and enhance the environment by improving air quality, creating richer habitats for wildlife and reducing plastic waste and subsequently committed the UK to achieving a legally binding target of net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050.
3. The latest (6<sup>th</sup>) UK Carbon Budget issued by the Climate Change Committee in 2020 has identified that in 2019 transport (22%), Industry (20%), Buildings (17%), and electricity generation and agriculture (10% each) were the main sources of CO<sub>2</sub>, alongside aviation (7%) and Waste (6%).
4. In May 2019, the County Council resolved to bring forward proposals for a new Environment Strategy to support these national aspirations. These proposals were approved by Policy Committee in September 2019 and covered the key activities of the Council interacting with the environment, including:
  - *Use of fuel, energy and water in our vehicles and buildings;*
  - *Waste generation, treatment and disposal relating to our buildings and activities;*
  - *The management of the Council's land;*
  - *New developments and projects;*
  - *Procurement of goods and services;*
  - *Use of goods and materials and their impact on the environment;*
  - *Council projects, strategies and policies.*
5. Following this, in March 2020 Policy Committee approved the new Corporate Environmental Policy as well as thirteen proposed key strategic ambitions for the environment strategy and in December 2020 considered an Environment strategy update report plus updates against

59 actions related to the above ambitions. The 59 actions previously proposed are repeated at Appendix A for convenience.

6. At this meeting Policy Committee agreed that the Place Department Leadership Team take operational oversight of the strategy, due to most of the actions sitting within the Place Department's operations, and approved the establishment of an environmental strategy manager post and a green investment fund to support delivery of the strategy. This post is currently out to advert and will be fundamental in delivering the Councils aspirations.
7. The Council's Environmental Policy is due to be reviewed and updated every 2 years, next due in March 2022.
8. At the first County Council Meeting of the current administration in May 2021 enhanced commitments were made when Members unanimously agreed that ***'This Council now formally agrees to declare a Climate Emergency, and to delegate the new Transport and Environment Committee to take the lead in considering, agreeing, and overseeing appropriate measures to achieve this authority's commitment to achieve carbon neutrality in all its activities by 2030'***.
9. And ***"All other Committees of the Council will be expected to ensure that the decisions they take within their remit adhere to this principle, and the relevant actions agreed across all of these committees will be reported to Full Council on a regular basis so that every Member has an ongoing overview of the progress being made"***.

## Progress to Date

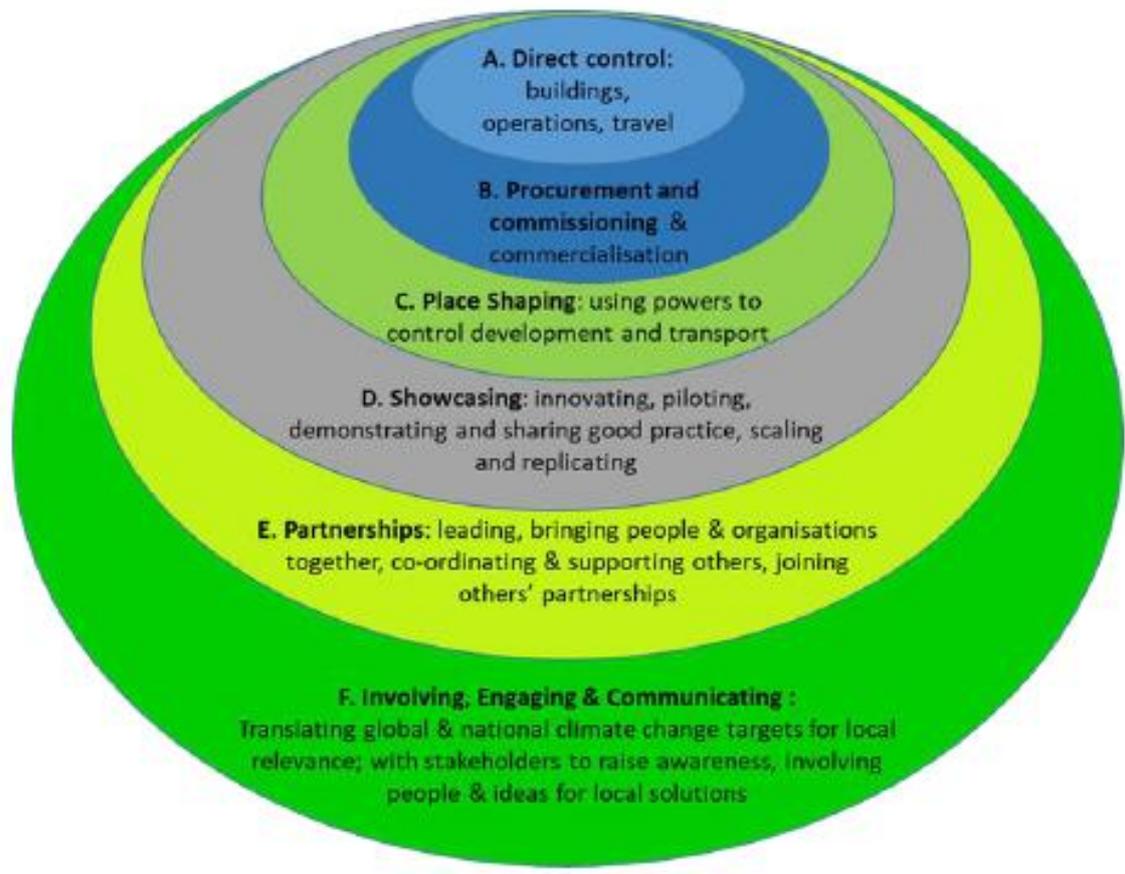
10. The County Council has over the last few years made substantial progress in delivering carbon reduction measures across various service areas;
  - a. In 2019/20 less than 5% of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste went to Landfill.
  - b. 70,000 LED street lights are now installed across the County, with a plan in place to complete the programme, saving 71k tonnes of carbon and 81m kwh of electricity overall.
  - c. We operate a £2.5m revolving interest free loan scheme with Salix Finance to support renewable and low carbon investments in schools and our estate which saves 4,500tpa of CO2 and £1m in energy costs every year.
  - d. Numerous council offices, including County Hall now have LED lighting installations and others have low carbon and energy efficient heating systems funded through either our revolving loan fund or other capital projects.
  - e. We are working with Arc developing a new set of building design standards to deliver low emission buildings.
  - f. We currently have solar Photovoltaic Panels (PV) on over 40 Council buildings generating about 1million kWh of electricity per year and providing a net benefit of c. £300,000 p.a. from Feed in Tariff payments and saved electricity costs.
  - g. A study of potential ground mounted solar PV on Council owned sites, originally completed in 2015, is in the process of being refreshed.
  - h. We have a Trees for Climate programme in place to plant 250,000 new trees in 5 years.
  - i. The Council's Energy and Carbon Manager chairs the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Local Authority Energy Partnership (LAEP) and the council attends D2N2's low carbon growth and other climate change groups.
  - j. Officers are supporting the Midlands Engine Green Growth Action Plan and have responded to the recent consultation.

11. The actions above, together with the implementation of smarter working principles and property rationalisation have already helped the Council reduce carbon emission from its estate and highways assets by over 50% in the last 5 years.

**Implications of the Climate Emergency declaration**

12. The climate emergency declaration has heightened expectations further and the Council needs to confirm the scope of it's declaration and decide what additional resources it intends to make available to achieve its aspirations.

13. For context it needs to be remembered that the County Council only contributes 1-5% from activities within its direct control to overall county wide GHG emissions - represented by section A in the 'spheres of influence' diagram below. The Council has varying degrees of influence over these remaining emissions, but can impact positively through policy making, place shaping, commissioning and providing wider civic leadership.



14. To move towards net zero by 2030 in our own operations will require a further step change in performance, and significant investment to deliver services in a different way and update our buildings and equipment.

**Ongoing and Potential Actions**

15. Understanding better the Councils current carbon impact is essential if we are to move forward in a structured and efficient way, and work is required to fully assess the best way of identifying priorities. More work will be undertaken during the summer on this by commissioning external

support to assess the carbon impacts of the County Councils current activities by producing a GHG report, subject to the approval of the recommendation below.

16. Changes in working practices resulting from the Covid 19 pandemic, such as more agile and flexible working, and remote working and teleconferencing, can be embedded to help minimise carbon impacts. Work on this is well underway by implementing a Hybrid Working Model within the Council, and this will have major local carbon, and financial benefits.
17. Staff business travel within the Council fell by around 55% during the pandemic (with commuting no doubt significantly more), and with transport accounting for over 20% of overall carbon emissions globally, making these changes permanent must be a priority.
18. The Council buys it's electricity and gas supplies through an evergreen contract with Crown Commercial Services (CCS - the former Government Procurement Service) and as a result benefits from savings and price security underpinned by the bulk purchasing power of much of the public sector.
19. The Council has investigated the potential to switch electricity suppliers within the CCS arrangements to a "green" tariff, where electricity is purchased from fully renewable sources rather than a mix of rewable and fossil fuel generation as at present. Whilst switching would not improve the Councils "Carbon Footprint" as such, it would demonstrate a clear intent to improve our environmental performance.
20. The cost of switching to a fully green tariff would be circa £50kpa for the corporate estate and highways (at current consumption levels) as an add on to the current spend of around £5m, so a 1% increase, although it expected that reductions in energy use going forward would offset these costs to a substantial degree.
21. Many schools also purchase their energy vial the Councils CCS arrangements and they could also be offered the option to switch, although that would have to be their choice given the potential cost implications which they would need to manage or budget for.
22. Simply moving away from gas boilers for our buildings to air or ground source heating or biomass boilers would result in additional capital investment costs, although net savings in fuel costs would produce long term benefits, alongside significant carbon reductions.
23. How we capture these long term financial and carbon savings will be the key to making informed investment decisions, and may require changes to how we assess Value for Money when evaluating projects or service decisions through the Committee system. This will be particularly important in light of the long term impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic on the global and local economy.

### **Areas for Consideration**

24. Members are asked to consider the information in this report and the accompanying presentation and decide whether the scope of the current draft Environment Strategy and Action plan is sufficient to meet the heightened ambitions of the Council to **achieve carbon neutrality in all its activities by 2030**, and approve the commissioning of a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) assessment for the County Council operations to establish a baseline for future decision making.

25. The oversight of the CCS energy procurement arrangements fall under the remit of the Economic Development & Asset Management Committee, and Members of this Committee are asked to recommend moving the Council onto a fully green electricity tariff, and refer this to the Economic Development & Asset Management Committee for consideration.

### **Other Options Considered**

26. None. It is essential that the Council takes immediate action in response to the climate emergency and to minimise the impacts of its operations on the wider environment if we are to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

27. It is important that the Council takes targeted actions if it is to meet its aspirations in a timely and cost effective manner, therefore establishing priorities which will maximise carbon reduction benefits and can be delivered effectively and efficiently will be crucial to progress.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

28. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

29. The staffing costs for the Environment Strategy Manager and the £500k capital cost of the Green Investment Fund for 2021/22 was approved as part of the Councils budget setting process.

30. The costs of commissioning a GHG report to assess the carbon impacts of the County Councils current activities will be met from existing energy and carbon management budgets.

31. If Members consider that additional resources are required to deliver the enhanced ambitions of the Council this will need to be subject to further discussions and approvals as required by the constitution.

### **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

32. Making a step change in the delivery of projects, programmes and services across the whole Council will be necessary if the County Council is to meet its enhanced aspirations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Committee:

- 1) Considers the report and presentation and identifies other priorities to be captured in the Corporate Environment Strategy and Action Plan, and identifies any other resources required to deliver those priorities within the context of the declaration of a Climate Emergency and the aspiration to achieve carbon neutrality in all its activities by 2030;

- 2) Approves a GHG report to assess the current carbon emissions from the County Councils activities being commissioned, and funded through existing energy and carbon management budgets.
- 3) Recommends that the County Council moves onto a fully renewable “green” electricity tariff and refers the matter to the Economic Development and Asset Management Committee to consider in more detail.
- 4) Agrees that a further report on the finalisation of the Environment Strategy and any enhanced actions is presented to the Committee in the Autumn.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Place and Communities**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Mick Allen, Group Manager Place Commissioning, Tel: 0115 9774684

### **Constitutional Comments (EP 24/06/2021)**

33. The recommendations in this report are within the remit of the Transport and Environment Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (SES 23/06/2021)**

34. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 29 to 31 of the report.

35. The staffing costs for the Environment Strategy Manager and the £500k capital cost of the Green Investment Fund for 2021/22 were approved as part of the budget setting process.

36. The costs of commissioning an assessment of the carbon impacts of the County Councils current activities will be met from existing energy and carbon management budgets.

37. If Members consider that additional resources are required to deliver the enhanced ambitions of the Council this will need to be subject to further discussions and approvals as required by the constitution.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All