

 <p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>	<p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p><b>COUNCIL 20 JULY 2022</b></p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p><b>AGENDA ITEM NO 11</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>CLIMATE ACTION BIENNIAL REPORT</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor Andrew Prosser, Cabinet Member for Climate Change Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.prosser@westoxon.gov.uk">andrew.prosser@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Ness Scott, Climate Change Manager Tel: 07525 802994; Email: <a href="mailto:vanessa.scott@publicagroup.uk">vanessa.scott@publicagroup.uk</a></p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>This paper presents to Full Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A biennial report on the climate action taken by West Oxfordshire District Council in response to the climate and ecological emergency during the last six months: February-July 2022.</li> </ul>
<p>Annex</p>	
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>(a) That the contents of the biennial report on climate action for West Oxfordshire be noted for information.</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To protect the environment whilst supporting the local economy</li> <li>2. Working with communities to meet the current and future needs and aspirations of residents</li> <li>3. To provide efficient and value for money services, whilst delivering quality front line services</li> </ol>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	The climate action biannual report has been developed by officers working as part of the Council's climate team.

## I. BACKGROUND

1.1. This paper presents to Full Council:

A biannual report on the climate action taken by West Oxfordshire District Council in response to the climate and ecological emergency during the last six months: January-July 2022.

## 2. CLIMATE ACTION REPORT

2.1. Progress and activities for climate action are reported under two headings:

- i) Carbon Action Plan (published Oct, 2020)
- ii) Climate Change Strategy for West Oxfordshire, 2021-2025 (published Feb, 2021)

2.2. These two documents currently provide the Council's framework for prioritising and taking forward a programme of work in response to the climate and ecological emergency.

Table 1: A report of the last six months.

### 2.3 CARBON ACTION PLAN

**Carbon offsetting strategy:** Work to develop a carbon offsetting mechanism is underway as evolving guidance for the Council in circumstances where service design will require an agreed mechanism for offset to achieve carbon-neutral status before 2030. This work is currently in its early stages and will come forward as a deliverable of the Recovery Plan during the course of the next twelve months.

### 2.4 Council Offices, Property and Sites

**Carbon account 2021/22:** The Council's carbon account for financial year 2021/22 is almost complete with BEIS carbon emission factors published very recently and for use in this account. Once all figures have been gathered and have been through an audit, results with a comparison against previous years will be published in the climate action biannual report to Full Council and as part of the Council's Annual Monitoring Report. The boundary and scope of the carbon accounts will also be reviewed and updated in line with best practice science-based reporting. e.g. inclusion of significant indirect Scope 3 emissions such as Downstream leased emissions and Purchased Goods & Services.

**Council offices:** A range of decarbonisation options and sustainability strategies have been developed for Woodgreen and Elmfield offices focusing on reduced energy and water use, renewables and increased access to forms of active and low-carbon travel. The opportunity to incorporate energy and sustainability measures at the Council offices is being considered as part of the Agile Working Strategy – currently a work in progress. There are also CO<sub>2</sub>e savings with staff reducing their commuting and the costs that they themselves incur. Whilst it's difficult to accurately calculate the carbon impact of staff commuting to and from work by vehicle - as vehicles will vary by size, fuel type, emissions and efficiency, not all staff work full time and some travel to different offices - a high level estimate based on distance from home address to main office location (usually the Publica office closest to home) can be calculated. This indicates that if all WODC/CDC/FODDC Publica staff did one return journey it would equate to just over 10,000 miles which is equivalent to a total 3,480 kg/CO<sub>2</sub>e (based on an average for diesel and petrol vehicles). Allowing for some reduction based on a proportion of staff only working part time and therefore not travelling 5 days a week, a broad weekly estimate would be in the region of 15,000 kg/CO<sub>2</sub>e, which could equate to as much as 775t/CO<sub>2</sub>e each year, once staff leave

is deducted. It is estimated that a move to agile working could see this figure reduced by 40 - 50%.

In terms of the emissions associated with energy used by staff at home, whilst remote working, Publica have been providing staff guidance and information to help make energy and cost savings.

Further to the above activities, engagement and awareness raising with Publica and Council staff and Councillors continues to be carried out in the form of carbon literacy training, staff Q&A sessions and online resources and information disseminated via the Publica portal. More recently, Publica launched the Ultra-Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) lease car, Salary Sacrifice Scheme with [www.nhsfleetsolutions.co.uk](http://www.nhsfleetsolutions.co.uk) designed to further incentivise staff moving to Electric Vehicles and ULEVs.

## 2.5 Leisure Centres and Facilities

Energy assessment and decarbonisation reports, including Solar PV studies, are complete for Carterton Leisure Centre, Witney ATP, and Carterton Pavilion. These were done in 2021 to understand the full extent of potential measures needed: i) to improve the energy efficiency of the building (reducing energy demand); ii) to decarbonise the heating; and iii) to provide an on-site supply of renewable energy as power to a new heating and hot water system. These assessments are now informing the Council's short and longer-term plans for decarbonisation.

**Carterton Leisure Centre:** Carterton has been selected as the first leisure centre to decarbonise out of the Council's leisure buildings because the main gas-fired heating system is approaching the end of serviceable life. In 2021/22, the Council submitted a £1,293,361 bid through phase 3 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, via the Government Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), and secured funding for the decarbonisation of the leisure centre in 2022/23 financial year as part of a single-year project due for completion by 31 March 2023.

Recognised within the Council's PSDS 3 proposals was a need to complete a second and more detailed stage of assessment for the Leisure Centre ahead of any investment grade proposals being commissioned, giving the Council a full understanding of the detailed design required for a financially- and technically-viable heating system replacement with consideration to electricity infrastructure upgrades and the running costs to maintain and heat a building, once decarbonised. A stage 2 assessment was commissioned and a detailed RIBA stage 3 design for Carterton Leisure Centre and Life Cycle Costing Assessment (LCCA) was completed to inform a business case assessing a life-for-like replacement of the existing gas boilers alongside a decarbonisation strategy and replacement of existing gas boilers with a heat pump system and Solar PV array. The LCCA was completed and includes the maintenance, repair, servicing and replacement of all new systems across their lifetime and for the building as a whole (50 years). The cost of utilities to power the building under each scenario has also been assessed. RIBA stage 3 design work, although complete, has led to the requirement for further analysis as part of an Investment Grade Design process.

In order to progress the current PSDS3 programme for Carterton Leisure Centre, an Investment Grade Design is now to be commissioned using a Framework, Design and Build Contractor, and as a first stage appointment on the PSDS3 project. By completing an Investment Grade Proposal (IGP) at this stage, there are a number of benefits:

- Points requiring clarification as part of the business case being produced by the Council's Finance Team can be addressed under this scope of work and reviewed as a component of IGP sign-off.
- The existing RIBA stage 3 design, which incorporates a recommendation for an air source heat pump with water source heat pump and Solar PV, can be peer reviewed and, if appropriate, alternatives considered ensuring there is a balance between carbon savings and in-built energy resilience and running costs ahead of any systems being purchased or orders placed for the capital works.
- Capital project costs can be checked against the original costs included in an application to PSDS3 (sourced over nine months ago) with consideration to inflation and supply-chain issues.
- Stakeholder consultation with GLL can be carried out as integral to the IGP development process, ensuring all parties' questions can be answered.
- The Council will have an IGP required for its submissions to the Council's Development Management Team for planning permission and separately to SSE - the local District Network Operator (DNO) - an application to upgrade the electrical infrastructure for the Leisure Centre. Each of these applications can take up to ten weeks to process and receive a response/decision, so progressing on to IGP now is essential.

The outputs from an IGP, coupled with a refined business case, will go to Scrutiny Committee ahead of formal approvals.

## 2.6 Council Vehicle Fleet, Machinery and Transport

**ESIP - the Environmental Services Innovation Programme:** focuses on efficiency measures which deliver CO<sub>2</sub>e savings. Initiatives have included, for example, Ubico reducing fuel consumption through driving awareness courses and in-cab technology which will, in turn, help to minimise missed collections. In addition, the programmes to remove the bring sites and review/implement a new approach for street litter/dog waste bins have also contributed positively to reducing fuel consumption and delivering CO<sub>2</sub>e savings. The Council has replaced older fleet vehicles with alternative-fuelled equivalents, such as the EV sweeper and EV supervisor's inspection vehicle. Three new EV street cleansing vans are also in the process of being purchased which will mean that three old diesel combustion vans at the end of their life can be removed from the fleet inventory.

Changes to ground maintenance regimes that fall under the **Land Management Plans** are designed to generate benefits in terms of reducing fuel demand from Ubico vehicles, e.g. relaxed mowing regimes reduce the number of times the grass is cut and the fuel being used to operate mowers.

**Council's waste service review:** Work is now underway to complete a waste service review which will consider environmental and CO<sub>2</sub>e impact. The outputs of an options appraisal will go onto informing waste vehicle fleet replacement plans. This work package remains on track to inform decision making processes and the climate team is working closely with the contracts team as part of the options review.

## CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

### 2.7 Theme One: Protecting and restoring natural ecosystems

The Council are now implementing the first year of their newly-published five-year **Land Management Plans (LMPs)** for twelve of the Council's key open green spaces. The LMPs are designed to achieve multiple co-benefits resulting from changes to the way the land is maintained, improving natural capital assets across the Council's estate including carbon storage, flood management and pollination.

Work to deliver the LMPs is separated into:

- Biodiversity enhancements on a site-by-site basis to be incorporated as part of a revised grounds maintenance schedule being implemented by Ubico on behalf of the Council. These changes to land management have been designed as cost-neutral, and include a new regime is selected sites such as a reduction in the number of annual grass cuts across Council owned public open spaces on estates;; the creation of new wildflower meadow areas; the establishment of historical grass cutting regimes on floodplain meadows and additional support for volunteer groups managing some of the sites.
- Longer-term biodiversity projects have been defined on a site-by-site basis and look to restore and improve existing natural habitats and biodiversity value and/or look to create new wildlife habitats. These projects remain subject to internal and/or external funding being secured.

Short-term, one-year projects, given funding support at Full Council in October 2021 are now being delivered as year two objectives under the Recovery Plan, tied to funding for the two-year, fixed-term Biodiversity and Countryside Land Management Officer post. These activities include a mix of:

- Habitat creation schemes such as tree and hedgerow planting, due in the Autumn of this year;
- Owl boxes at North Leigh Common;
- A new volunteer group established for Kilkenny Lane Country Park assisting in recording and nature conservation activities linked to the LMPs; and
- A public wildlife recording 'Bioblitz' day at Kilkenny Lane Country Park planned for 7<sup>th</sup> August 2022.

### 2.8 Theme Two: Energy

The **PRS MEES**, Government-funded project, finished at the end of March 2022 with a Landlord's Forum and database containing details of all non-compliant private-sector landlords as two key outputs. This database is now held by the ERS Team, as a reference point for ongoing engagement with landlords and enforcement action, ensuring ongoing compliance with MEES. 155 letters were sent to landlords in the District and over 1,000 letters directly to tenants in non-compliant properties. In response to this initial letter, six free MEES surveys were taken up by private landlords within the District.

**Sustainable Warmth** builds on Phase 1 and 2 of LAD (Local Authority Delivery) national schemes investing in retrofit. The most prominent change to these previous phases is refining the scope to mains gas fuelled homes only. In addition, £150m has been made available nationally to support low-income households off the gas grid through the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) Phase 1. Both these fuel poverty categories have now been brought into a single funding delivery for Local Authorities.

The two schemes that make up the Sustainable Warmth funding have a shared goal to:

- Tackle fuel poverty by increasing low-income homes' energy efficiency rating while reducing their energy bills.
- Deliver cost effective carbon savings to carbon budgets and progress towards the UK's target for net zero by 2050.
- Support clean growth and ensure homes are thermally comfortable, efficient, and well-adapted to climate change.
- Support economic resilience and a green recovery in response to the economic impacts of Covid19.

Via the Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH), WODC submitted as part of a SE regional application to BEIS, an additional £1 million funding allocation under the scheme for the specific take up by homeowners in West Oxfordshire. Owing to the fact the Home Upgrade Grant, Phase 1, targets rural areas and householders off gas, added capacity and funding to deliver energy retrofit and decarbonisation for householders in fuel poverty was viewed as beneficial.

The funding was subsequently awarded by BEIS to GSENZH to deliver Sustainable Warmth in the financial year 2022/23, which includes the £1 million allocation made to West Oxfordshire. Cabinet approvals were given on 22<sup>nd</sup> June with delegated approval given to the Head of Paid Service to enter into an Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) with the coordinating authority, on behalf of the Council. A £10,000 capacity and capability grant is due and will be received by the Council to assist in the marketing and promotions of the scheme to communities in West Oxfordshire.

The Council is currently awaiting the final details from the IAA before taking steps to launch and promote the scheme.

A future proposal (2023/24 onwards) is being developed by Oxfordshire County Council for the existing **Affordable Warmth Network and Better Housing Better Health** service run by the National Energy Foundation. The focus being on a service that is part of a wider offering to residents and communities on how to manage and find support on the current Cost of Living Crisis. In order to extend and maximise the reach of Better Housing Better Health in the future, to as many people in the community as possible, a collaborative approach between the Council's Climate Team, Community Team, ERS Team and Citizens Advice is being explored – the focus being to consider the best way forward, within existing resource, achieving maximum benefit to communities.

## 2.9 Theme Three: Low-carbon transport and active travel

Under the roll out of the Park and Charge Oxfordshire project into West Oxfordshire, Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) have been installed in five of the Council-owned car parks at: Woodford Way in Witney; New Street in Chipping Norton; Black Bourton Road in Carterton; Hensington Road in Woodstock and Back Lane in Eynsham. This makes a valuable contribution to delivering Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure at sites in Council ownership, meeting the ambitions of the Oxfordshire EV Infrastructure Strategy to reach a target of 7.5% of local authority-managed car parking bays providing Electric Vehicle charging by 2025. A total of 32 EV charging units under Park and Charge Oxfordshire - providing 64 EV charged parking bays – has delivered 23% of the Council's total 7.5% target by 2025. The new EVCPs have been well received by local communities with usage figures for the first quarter of 2022/23 financial year indicating a strong and increasing uptake of the chargers, month on month.

## Park and Charge Oxfordshire, first quarter figures.

### Utilisation Apr-Jun 2022

Car Park	Apr-22				May-22				Jun-22			
	kWh used	Avg. kWh per day	Total sessions	Avg. session duration (hrs)	kWh used	Avg. kWh per day	Total sessions	Avg. session duration (hrs)	kWh used	Avg. kWh per day	Total sessions	Avg. session duration (hrs)
Witney Woodford Way (WWW)	1,099.5	42.3	93	2:18	2,608.62	84.15	150	2:36	2960.74	98.69	179	2:37
Eynsham Back Lane (EBL)	322.14	17.9	39	1:51	969.98	31.29	55	3:16	952.61	31.75	50	3:46
Woodstock Hensington Road (WHR)	970.51	88.2	67	2:31	2966.7	95.7	179	3:07	3118.76	103.96	185	3:13
Carterton Black Bourton Road (CBB)	528.92	48.1	48	1:32	1428.59	46.08	111	1:56	1760.12	58.67	111	2:18
Chipping Norton New Street (CNN)	209.43	52.4	29	3:48	2169.93	70	164	4:16	2116.56	70.552	176	3:13

Continuing the emphasis on partnership to deliver EV infrastructure across the District and County as a whole, the Council recently joined Oxfordshire County Council in a collaborative County-wide bid for funding under Government's new scheme: Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI). A OXLEVI collaborative project proposal to accelerate Electric Vehicle (EV) uptake for Oxfordshire households without off-street parking was recently submitted and includes, within this submission, provision for e-Gul on-street charging capabilities as well as new off-street EV charging hubs at Carterton Leisure Centre in Carterton, Marriotts Walk in Witney and Spendlove Centre in Charlbury. A total of 14 EVCPs - serving 28 parking bays – have been incorporated for West Oxfordshire within the bid.

#### 2.10 Theme four: Standards in new development

The Council's **Net Zero Carbon Toolkit** - produced in 2021 to assist small developers, planning consultants and householders in the design and construction of standards of net zero carbon - was earlier this year shortlisted under the LGC Awards 2022. The awards ceremony will take place in London in the evening of Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July, at which point the Council – together with its partners: Cotswold District Council and Forest of Dean District Council – will hear whether it has won the 'Climate Response' category.

The **Sustainability Standards Checklist**, originally developed in 2020 as a mechanism for raising standards within development proposals, was resourced and taken forward by a dedicated Sustainable Planning Specialist in Development Management during financial year 2021/22. This post was funded for a period of 12 months through the Recovery Plan and came to an end in April 2022.

The Council has now received modifications from the Planning Inspector completing the examination of **Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP)**. A policy for biodiversity net gain has been given support by the Planning Inspector. However, Policy 2 requiring net zero carbon development was the focus of a main modification. This was received as follows:

*"Policy 2*



*Replace first paragraph with 'Proposals for development at Salt Cross will be required to demonstrate an ambitious approach to the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings. An energy statement will be required for all major development, which should include the consideration of the feasibility of incorporating the following principles. Redraft the remainder of Policy 2 to remove references to absolute requirements and KPIs that must be met and instead to reframe as standards for consideration as part of an energy statement.'*

A letter from the Inspector accompanying the main modifications states:

*... "We anticipate that our conclusions in relation to Policy 2 (Net Zero Carbon Development) will come as a disappointment. As such, we will say at this stage that we are not satisfied that Policy 2 is either consistent with national policy or justified. As such, we are unable to conclude that the policy is sound. Our fuller reasoning on this matter will be set out in our report."*

These modifications are currently in the process of being reviewed by the Planning Policy Team.

## 2.11 Theme Five: Engage, support & educate

Since the last biannual report, Winter and Spring **Climate Action Bulletin** have been produced and issued to all members of the Council's Climate Action Network. The number of people subscribing to the Council's Climate Action Network continues to increase. Back editions are available online:

<https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/>

**Climate action webpages** remain up-to-date with new resources; with progress on climate initiatives; and advice on ways people can get involved in climate action.

**Community engagement** and education has taken the form of outreach and wildflower planting on Trefoil Way, Shilton Park (Carterton) with pupils from St John the Evangelist C of E Primary School. This was organised in the Spring of 2022 to involve local young people in taking care of the many forms of wildlife that will benefit from the flowers when they grow.

A new **Kilkenny Lane Country Park Volunteer Group** has also been launched in May 2022 to increase community engagement and participation in nature conservation activities. Events are being coordinated on a monthly basis.

Advice to groups including parish councils such as Charlbury Town Council and schools in Witney and Carterton on land management to improve the sites they own for wildlife.

In terms of capacity building and partnership working across the District and County:

Members of the Climate Team remain stakeholders and Steering Group members in the Low Carbon Hub pilot initiative developing a Zero Carbon Energy Action Plan for Eynsham - this project will demonstrate the role of community action in driving carbon reduction and zero-carbon goals.

Plans are being formulated to significantly increase the reach, scale and urgency of climate action through greater partnership working with other councils, and through engagement in the wider community, including businesses, parish and town councils, community action groups, schools, and residents directly. These plans are being developed with a focus on some of the largest impact areas of building retrofit and energy generation, food and land

management, and travel. Particular attention will be given to where there are co-benefits of carbon emissions reduction, climate resilience/adaptation, and ecology enhancement.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. The Council's 2020/21 budget originally included a provision of £200,000 and a commitment to review the possibility of adding further funds to climate projects in the subsequent two financial years.
- 3.2. Approximately £98,000 has, to date, either been spent or allocated in financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23 to the implementation of climate projects.
- 3.3. As with all capital projects, the budget available for climate projects is constrained: which is the reason why the Climate Team has dedicated a large proportion of their time to Government-funded partnership projects (such as Park and Charge Oxfordshire, Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme), fundraising activities and specialist bid development as a means of delivering work contributing towards the Council's climate priority.
- 3.4. The Council's Local Recovery Fund (October 2020) is now funding the three remaining, fixed-term positions within the Council's climate team and provides the resource and capacity to not only deliver the agreed deliverables as part of the Local Recovery Plan, but also the capacity to carry out fundraising activity.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. There are no perceived legal implications associated with the proposals within this report.

### **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1. There are no immediate risks considered to be arising from the contents of this report.

### **6. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 6.1. The design of all projects as a response to the climate and ecological emergency have an equal impact across Council functions, for all customers and staff.

### **7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The proposals within this report will have a direct, positive impact on the Council's operations with regard to energy and resource efficiency, water efficiency, waste reduction and recycling and associated carbon reduction. In addition, multiple cross-benefits towards climate change mitigation and adaptation are planned district-wide through work across functions and with partner organisations.

### **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 8.1. One alternative option is to take no action at all.

### **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1. The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:
  - Meeting minutes and motion agreed at Full Council on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

- Meeting minutes and motions agreed at Full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020.
- Climate action biannual report at Full Council on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020.
- Carbon Action Plan and report at Full Council on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
- Local Recovery Plan and report at Full Council on 28<sup>th</sup> Council 2020.
- Climate action biannual report at Full Council on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021.
- Climate action biannual report at Full Council on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021.
- Climate action biannual report at Full Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022.

9.2. These documents will be available for inspection at the Council Offices at Woodgreen during normal office hours for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. Please contact the author of the report.