



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and Date of Committee	<b>EXECUTIVE – 14 FEBRUARY 2024</b>
Subject	<b>CLIMATE CHANGE OFFICER</b>
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Andrew Prosser – Executive Member for Climate Change. Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.prosser@westoxon.gov.uk">andrew.prosser@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable Officer	Charlie Jackson – Assistant Director, Planning and Sustainability. Email: <a href="mailto:charlie.jackson@publicagroup.uk">charlie.jackson@publicagroup.uk</a>
Report Author	Hannah Kenyon – Climate Change Manager. Email: <a href="mailto:hannah.kenyon@publicagroup.uk">hannah.kenyon@publicagroup.uk</a>
Purpose	To set out the business case to make the Climate Change Officer post permanent.
Annexes	Nil
Recommendation	That the Executive Resolves to:  I. Agree to make the Climate Change Officer post permanent at a total cost of £50,155 per annum.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Putting Residents First</li><li>• A Good Quality of Life for All</li><li>• A Better Environment for People and Wildlife</li><li>• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency</li><li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li></ul>
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Councillor Andrew Prosser

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1** The Climate Change Officer has contributed significantly to the delivery of carbon reduction projects in the West Oxfordshire District Council's Carbon Action Plan and the Climate Change Strategy for West Oxfordshire 2021-25 to date.
- 1.2** The post should be made permanent to retain sufficient resource to continue to deliver projects in the Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change Strategy to meet the Council's 2030 carbon neutrality target and the 2050 district net zero target.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** West Oxfordshire District Council (the Council) declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and committed to become a carbon neutral council by 2030. This means reducing the council's emissions to as close to zero as possible then offsetting the remainder through verified schemes. The decision was taken at a Full Council meeting on 26 June 2019.
- 2.2** Nature and climate action is one of the Council's five priorities and is a key part of the corporate strategy.
- 2.3** The Carbon Action Plan was approved by the Council on 28 October 2020 and sets out actions to become carbon neutral. An updated plan has been drafted and is being consulted on. It includes actions up to 2030.
- 2.4** The Climate Change Strategy for West Oxfordshire 2021-25 was approved by Full Council on 24 February 2021 and includes actions to meet the 2050 district net zero target.
- 2.5** The Council's greenhouse gas emissions are reported on annually and show progress made towards the Council's carbon neutral target by 2030.
- 2.6** A considerable number of projects in the Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change Strategy are underway and more are in the pipeline.
- 2.7** A Climate Change Officer post was filled on 21 July 2021, under a temporary 24-month contract. In May 2023, the contract was extended by 12 months to 19 July 2024.
- 2.8** The other climate officers in the team are the Climate Change Manager, who has a permanent, full-time contract, and a Climate Support Officer, who is also permanent and works part-time (1.5 days a week) for West Oxfordshire District Council. The Climate Support Officer is a shared resource with Cotswold District Council.

## **3. MAIN POINTS**

- 3.1** The Climate Change Officer has been critical to delivering the Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change Strategy.
- 3.2** The Climate Change Officer has secured external funding far in excess of their cost of employment. There is an increasing number of funding opportunities, and the Climate Change Officer will continue to play an important part in securing these funds.
- 3.3** Main achievements to date are:

- Secured £1.3m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) 3a funding to decarbonise Carterton Leisure Centre in 2021.
- Secured £1.6m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) 3b funding to decarbonise Carterton Leisure Centre and submitted a strong application for £1.6m PSDS 3c funding for the decarbonisation of Windrush Leisure Centre.
- Secured £20k of the Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) to commission energy audits for three council owned buildings.
- Submitted a strong Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) application to Sport England for £301,798 to improve the financial viability of the district's leisure centres.
- Redrafted the Carbon Action Plan, including pathways to net zero.
- Lead officer on the Climate Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT). Presented at the APSE Energy conference and to over 100 councils at a follow-up webinar. Shared the tool with more than 40 councils who are exploring its use within their own processes. Winner of bronze award for innovation at the iESE Public Sector Awards.
- Coordinated a review of tenanted buildings across the three councils as part of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) project.
- Supports the Solar PV project.
- Contributed to the Eynsham Community Action Plan for Zero Carbon Energy (CAPZero), which is the first local energy action plan in the UK developed at a community level and supports the delivery of this plan.
- Continues to improve carbon reporting processes.
- Supported the launch of Greenlight and responsible for project review and content updates.
- Produces the quarterly climate bulletin.

**3.4** Making the post permanent will secure resource to continue to deliver the Climate Action Plan and Climate Change Strategy to meet our carbon neutrality and net zero targets.

**3.5** The new Carbon Action Plan contains a series of large workstreams that require the Climate Change Officer to drive forward and facilitate. These include:

- Avoid future emissions
- Whole building retrofit of Council sites
- Whole building retrofit of leisure sites
- Whole building retrofit of leased assets
- Minimise water demand at Council sites
- Minimise consumption and waste in Council buildings
- Minimise emissions from grey fleet (business travel)
- Minimise emissions from Council fleet
- Minimise emissions from procurement
- Offset residual emissions.

**3.6** The Climate Change Officer's contract expires in July 2024 and due to the increasing demand in this sector the Council is at risk of losing the colleague currently in post to permanent roles offered externally.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 The current fixed term contract for the Climate Officer post could be extended. This is unlikely to retain the existing climate officer or attract talent should this officer need to be replaced. This is because the requirement by other Local Authorities and businesses for expertise within the Climate sector is growing, and candidates are more likely to seek permanent employment.
- 4.2 Not employing a Climate Change Officer beyond the current contract would provide insufficient resource to deliver projects in the Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change Strategy. We would be unable to fulfil the requirements listed in 3.4 and the Council would be at risk of missing set targets or demonstrate that it continues to work towards its priorities around carbon reduction and the declared Climate Emergency.

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The Council is committed to responding to the climate and ecological emergencies by taking climate and nature action.
- 5.2 The new Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change Strategy will include actions up to 2030 and 2050, respectively. A permanent Climate Change Officer is required to deliver the Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change Strategy.
- 5.3 Making the post permanent will help to retain the current Climate Change Officer.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The salary of the Climate Change Officer is £36,450.00 per annum. The total cost of employing the officer is £50,155 per annum. This figure includes the Climate Change Officer's salary (£36,450.00), employer NI contribution (£3,523.32) and employer pension contribution (£1,822.50).

#### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None.

#### **8. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 None.

#### **9. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 9.1 None.

#### **10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 A permanent post would secure the delivery of carbon reduction projects and the Council's response to the climate and ecological emergencies.

#### **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.  
(END)