

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

27 November 2019

Draft Report and Recommendations of the Climate Change Adaptation Task and Finish Group

Recommendation

That the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the report of the Climate Change Adaptation Task and Finish Group and approves the following recommendations to be forwarded to Cabinet for endorsement:

1. Adopts the Met Office's UK Climate Projections as the basis of Warwickshire County Council's expectation of the climate in 2050 and plans to this effect.
2. Provide clear direction through the Council Plan 2020-2025 detailing actions that will be taken to prepare Warwickshire for the change in climate to come.
3. Considers how projected climate change could be taken into account when considering the programme of capital investments.
4. Produces an updated Climate Impact Assessment for Warwickshire assessing the economic and social impact of the expected changes in climate on key areas of the Council's responsibility and use this to identify priorities.
5. Establishes a standing group comprised of members from all political groups and officers, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Heritage & Culture to advance work on climate change adaptation.
 - i) That the standing group uses the themes identified in this report to develop an action plan within six months setting out the activity to be undertaken by the County Council in the short, medium and long term.
 - ii) That consideration be given to the establishment of a dedicated resource to coordinate climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

1. Report of the Task and Finish Group

- 1.1 In a motion passed at Full Council in October 2018, Members recognised the importance of the Council considering how it can work to adapt to changes in the climate. It was determined that a Task and Finish Group be convened to review the impacts of climate change on the County and its effect on Council services.

- 1.2 The Task and Finish Group (the Group) was established in July 2019. The members of the Group were Councillors Jonathan Chilvers, Jenny Fradgley and Seb Gran.
- 1.3 The Group reviewed the Met Office's UK Climate Projections (UKCP) (2018) as well as other research to assess the likely implications of climate change.
- 1.4 Officers within Warwickshire County Council were contacted, and a workshop was held in September 2019 to identify areas of vulnerability, work already being undertaken and opportunities for improved resilience across the County.
- 1.5 The evidence from the workshop was analysed and structured into key themes. The findings were presented in the report 'Making Warwickshire Sustainable for Future Generations'.

2.0 Financial Implications

- 2.1 The Group has concluded that adapting to climate change and ensuring continued provision of effective services will require long-term planning and investment. The effect of inertia in the climate system means that weather conditions in Warwickshire will change irrespective of future global emission levels. It was recommended that the financial implications of investment be weighed against the likely cost of inaction.
- 2.2 As part of a proposed Climate Impact Assessment, it was recommended that the economic impact of expected changes in the climate be assessed and that priority areas for investment be identified and quantified. It is likely that individual schemes for improved resilience will be costed as part of a programme of adaptation initiatives. The production of a Climate Impact Assessment would require the short-term commitment of some officer resource.
- 2.3 If Recommendation 5(ii) were to be taken forward, it would have ongoing financial implications for the life of project.

3.0 Environmental Implications

- 3.1 Consideration of the environment was a core element of the Group's process. It is likely that many of the initiatives resulting from the recommendations of this report will have a positive effect on the environment as well as a benefit to improved adaptability to extreme weather. For example, tree planting results in greater resilience to flooding and improved shade during extreme heat, but also carbon sequestration.

4.0 Action Planning

- 4.1 The Group has recommended a series of measures designed to stimulate action and investment in initiatives to improve Warwickshire's resilience to extreme weather events. It was recommended that a standing group comprised of members and officers be established to advance work on climate change adaptation and develop an action plan within six months, setting out the activity to be undertaken by the County Council in the short, medium and long term.

Background Papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Task and Finish Group members: Councillors Chilvers, Fradgley and Gran.