

Appendix 1 to the Sustainable Futures Strategy stakeholder feedback June 2023 Cabinet paper

Summary feedback and reasoning 17th May 2023

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Partnership, engagement and collaboration

Feedback summary: A strong willingness in working with the Council to share expertise, knowledge and project experience and ultimately support the Council on the journey of the Strategy. This is across a range of sectors and organisations including subject specialists and business, the public sector, VCS and special interest groups. There was some disappointment that engagement on the strategy had not begun earlier, and some have asked if there an opportunity to provide further comment on the draft Strategy. The development and sharing of the strategy has created an opportunity for a more joined up and ambitious approach for WCC to work in partnership with others.

Officer comment: The initial draft was informed by working with, and taking on-board stakeholder views and expertise, but not all organisations could be approached. The focus group and public survey sought to gather further feedback in order to produce a final draft strategy. We have established there is benefit in extending our stakeholder engagement work prior to bringing the draft final strategy back to Cabinet. Engagement and collaboration is a fundamental part of delivering the Strategy and this will need to continue once the Strategy is published.

Action plan for Warwickshire encompassing our 2050 target

Feedback summary: There was an overwhelming response from the focus groups, individual responses, and several in the Councillor session relating to the absence of an area based action plan to meet the ambitions for each of the six themes across Warwickshire. Comments suggested this left the strategy 'partial', 'generally vague', lacking 'a pathway to achieving the goals', with 'a lack of tangible targets and proper resourcing' and giving concern as to 'how we're actually going to achieve it'.

Officer comment: The Strategy as drafted contains objectives for each theme, which are designed to provide headline categories for actions. Actions have been developed, shared with service areas. Many have been rolled up into the deliverables within the 2023-2025 Integrated Delivery Plan, whilst more detailed actions are contained in service area plans. A comprehensive list is maintained in the Portfolio Management Office. We are in the final stages of developing a public version for publication. Plan development would benefit from further stakeholder engagement.

Ambition and offsetting

Feedback summary: Whilst not raised by many, it is a significant point in our net zero strategy. *"there is too much reliance on offsetting which is inadequate". "We're missing something that's an ambition to mitigate and minimize the offsetting when you enter the endpoint"*. With an individual written response stating *'WCC's strategy for dealing with remaining emissions seems to rely heavily on offsetting by tree planting and natural sequestration in plants and soil. Such levels of offsetting are completely unrealistic'*.

Officer comment: We have based our decarbonisation trajectory on what's known as the Science Based Targets. This widely used methodology puts us on a path towards achieving the Paris Agreement of limiting global warming to well-below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C. The gap between our decarbonised estate and zero are emissions

we need to remove from the atmosphere through insetting or offsetting measures, hence net zero. Insetting (our preferred approach) relates to delivering initiatives within the boundaries of Warwickshire, a prime example being the tree planting project which removes carbon from the atmosphere. Projects outside of Warwickshire are known as offsetting. The scientific consensus is that while carbon insetting and offsetting can be a useful tool in the fight against climate change, it shouldn't be seen as a substitute for decarbonisation and we will decarbonise as much as possible before turning to carbon offsetting, whilst at least meeting our science-based target. There are valid points here and we have committed to reviewing the options, quantifying and developing a strategy for insetting and offsetting during 2023/24.

Progress on decarbonisation targets

Progress update: It's been necessary to make an adjustment downwards to the baseline figure due to a change in the way grey fleet emissions have been calculated. Using a standard calculation there was an exceptional annual reduction in 2020 against our 2019 baseline due to impact of COVID-19 which then partially bounced back in 2021/22 leaving an 8% reduction against baseline in 2019. This is in line with our trajectory. We have a published interim target of a 29% reduction of carbon emissions against our 2019/20 baseline to be achieved by 2026, with our 2030 decarbonisation target representing at 46% reduction from baseline. We will need some large-scale capital schemes and operational measures to deliver these targets. Work will continue to communicate and disseminate progress on our climate emergency website.

2050 net zero target

Feedback summary: Provide more granular breakdown of Warwickshire emissions to allow improved targeting.

Officer comment: The data source (BEIS) does allow us to readily breakdown emissions on a Tier 2 Local Authority and sector basis. This would then put us in a position to be able to establish emission targets for the County by sector where this is useful. This is a sensible suggestion. In addition, there have been some technical recommendations that we intend to adopt.

Feedback summary: Not enough interim and long-term targets; The Council should set a 'high ambition' emissions target for Warwickshire for 2030.

Officer comment: We recognise the urgent need to reduce emissions and recognise the Climate Change Committee's advice to the Government on stepping stones to meet the national 2050 target. Achieving targets for Warwickshire is dependent on partner actions and we propose that over the period June to September, this point is reviewed.

Feedback summary: Include a metric for air quality.

Officer comment: We do not monitor air quality. It is the role of the Districts and Boroughs to monitor air quality, publish and delivery air quality improvements.

Funding

Feedback summary: The overwhelming feedback recognises that access to finance will restrict our ability to meet our ambitions and goals. The majority in our public survey expect that funding would be provided by Central Government. Some in the focus group fed back that bidding for grant money is complex, resource intensive and competitive (a point also made in the recent Mission Zero independent report for HM Government). Some suggested banks and industry have a role to play. Others recommended we bid jointly with others. There was useful comment on developing an

investment stream from renewables and positively, there is interest from some survey respondents helping fund through mechanisms including green bonds, community investment, shared ownership.

Officer comment: Pages 22-23 of the draft Strategy recognises this challenge and identifies several specific sources and categories including loans, grants, commercial sources, bonds, possible funding through a devolution deal and an innovative natural capital investment approach. As projects are developed, we will prioritise external funding where it makes sense to do so and avoid direct Council spend. However, currently the cost of many actions is unknown and indeed many are in themselves activities to build up a cost estimate or put the Council in a position to apply for funding internally or externally. Our degree of preparedness to secure funding varies across the organisation and pipeline reviews are ongoing. In addition, we are advertising for a finance manager for Sustainable Futures with the specific remit of horizon scanning, improving preparedness and aggregating projects.

Governance and reporting

Feedback summary: There are calls for the strategy to be clearer on accountability, leadership and authority and a commitment to deliver. On reporting, feedback calls for relevant targets and an explicit explanation of how we will repeatedly act, measure, report, learn and revise our actions to stay on track against our targets. The inclusion of KPI's for each theme objective was praised.

Officer summary: Programme governance is strong and there are clear lines of reporting. This needs to be brought out in a re-draft of the Strategy. Specifically, programme accountability and reporting lines. The existing Climate Emergency members groups, and auditing processes. On reporting, detail needs to be included on how we will report progress and links to the corporate performance portal. To include significant risks with issues along with the mitigating measures and actions taken. Ongoing is work to align all affected service areas with the priorities of this Strategy through a continuous improvement approach which needs to be apparent through actions taken.

Strategy themes

Feedback summary: Overall support although a need for relevant targets and frameworks to demonstrate how the goals can be delivered. We identified there may be challenges communicating the joint aims of the sustainable communities and green economy theme to our audience. Food was cited as a major omission and should be considered as a stand-alone theme. Others that climate change adaptation should be included. Also, that a seventh cross-cutting theme could be introduced to capture human capital, pooling knowledge, and bringing experts together.

Officer comment: We will review linkages within the sustainable communities and green economy theme and how we can best communicate the aims and objectives to our audience. We have made major steps in identifying how we work on climate change adaptation and have published action plans on our Climate Emergency website. We are now in the position to integrate adaptation in the strategy but time is needed to consider how best to do this for maximum effect. There is already a Council strategy for food and it is not proposed we create a theme for this, although we can bring this more to the fore in final drafting. There is a chart showing the interaction of the Strategy with other Council strategies, however this is at the very end of the document. We would lift this and place it earlier in the document. We will consider integrating human capital into the delivery principles.

Communications

Feedback summary: It was clear from breakdown of respondents in the survey and the focus group recruitment resulted in disproportionate representation despite best efforts to gather views from

all. It was fed back to us that there is work to be done to improve awareness of the strategy. Some members of the focus groups recognise the difficulty of appealing to some groups. These particularly include young people, students, people early in their careers and those with young families. We were also able to gather feedback on preferred communication methods.

Officer comment: The majority of the Warwickshire population shows no or little interest in climate change, possibly because many of our residents are faced with more immediate challenges in their lives. Climate change can feel too big and, because they don't see a direct impact on them personally, it is easy to ignore. We have small pockets of very interested and invested individuals and groups, who want access to our detailed plans and the opportunity to give feedback and challenge .

We use a variety of channels and work to improve awareness and encourage behaviour change across a range of themes. A priority in our climate change comms plan in 2023/24 is to increase the focus in using our partner and community networks and be present at events or spaces managed by other groups. This is the route to reaching young people, the seldom heard and the generally disengaged. This is currently in the approval stage.

Tone and language

One of delivery principles as drafted is 'emphasise prosperity as a focus for sustainable growth'. This didn't sit well with some. Additionally, there were reoccurring comments of this nature around the 'deliver a strategy that is value for money' principle. In these and similar instances, we will be reviewing how we communicate our approach to delivery.

The Strategy foreword states we are 'committed to acting decisively to tackle climate change and the biodiversity crisis'. This was written prior to the new March 2023 International Panel on Climate Change report which delivered a "final warning" on the climate crisis stating that only swift and drastic action can avert irrevocable damage to world. In addition, COP15, the UN Biodiversity Conference resulted in a range of clear targets and expressed the need for urgent action. There were some comments relating to the latter and we will consider both when in working up a final draft.