

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 September 2023

Sustainable Futures Strategy

1. Recommendation

That the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments upon the Sustainable Futures Strategy and supporting action plan attached at Appendix 1 and 2, prior to final consideration by Cabinet in November 2023.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to review and comment on the final draft of the Sustainable Futures Strategy. It also provides an update on progress made since reporting to Cabinet in June 2023 and sets out the planned next steps for the Strategy prior to consideration by Cabinet in November. The draft Strategy and Action Plan can be found in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.
- 2.2 The new Council Plan identifies Sustainable Futures as one of our top priorities as a Council and the draft Sustainable Futures Strategy has been developed to support this commitment. This was considered by Cabinet in October 2022. A public and stakeholder engagement programme was undertaken following the October Cabinet meeting, and feedback from this engagement programme has been used to finalise the strategy.
- 2.3 There has been wide engagement on the draft Sustainable Futures Strategy between November 2022 and February 2023. This has included public surveys, focus groups, and written submissions from the public and stakeholders. A series of expert panels have been engaged in August 2023.
- 2.4 Cabinet received a summary of the feedback available at that time and proposed next steps at its meeting on 15 June 2023. This included an update on the actions that are already progressing to support our climate change ambitions and the projects in development. An extract of the project progress and plans are included in Appendix 3.

- 2.5 In reviewing the feedback received, Cabinet supported further stakeholder engagement through a series of expert panels to take advantage of the strong willingness from a range of experts from business, public sector, academia and the wider community to work together to deliver on the Council's ambitions. These panels took place during August and were focused on transport, built environment, energy, and cross-cutting themes concerning how the Council works with partners and communities to deliver sustainable change fairly and affordably. They provided a strong sense of feedback and support for our direction of travel and provided significant opportunity to deepen partnerships and engagement.
- 2.6 The final version of the Sustainable Futures Strategy will take account of feedback received at all stages of stakeholder engagement, including the expert panels.

3. Draft Sustainable Futures Strategy

- 3.1 In the Council Plan 2022 – 2027 we have committed to becoming a County with a sustainable future, which means adapting to and mitigating climate change and meeting net zero commitments. To deliver this, a Sustainable Futures Strategy (the Strategy) has been developed which addresses:
- Our commitment to be a net zero carbon Council by 2030
 - Leading Warwickshire in becoming net zero by 2050
 - Our biodiversity commitments
 - Commitments to support and deliver on the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs)
- 3.2 The Committee is invited to review the draft Strategy and action plan in Appendix 1 and 2.
- 3.3 Key features of the Sustainable Futures Strategy are:
- 3.3.1 The use of six delivery themes to focus activity and assign objectives and actions for both the 2030 and 2050 targets. These themes are:
- Transport;
 - Energy;
 - Built environment;
 - Resources, waste and circular economy;
 - Green economy and sustainable communities; and
 - Natural capital and biodiversity.
- 3.3.2 The adoption of delivery principles that are essential to having the right approach to implementation, together with strategic enablers that are essential components to ensure the strategy is both deliverable and affordable.

- 3.3.3 Clarity on what is and is not within scope of our 2030 Council carbon footprint, with an emissions reduction trajectory to 2030.
 - 3.3.4 Alignment to WCC's approved Countywide approach to Levelling Up in Warwickshire, with Sustainable Futures being one of the four core elements of Levelling Up and defining what that means at county, place and community level.
- 3.4 The Strategy recognises that we cannot deliver the 2050 Warwickshire target alone and summarises the various levels of influence the Council has and the partnerships the Council maintains and establishes that will help to deliver on the ambitions of the Strategy, including engagement with residents, communities, and business. Furthermore, the Strategy recognises the need to secure governmental and regional funding and private sector investment to deliver on the objectives.
 - 3.5 Delivery of the Strategy through its Action Plan will enable the Council to accelerate progress towards meeting our net zero carbon commitment for the Council by 2030 and the 2050 net zero commitment for Warwickshire alongside our approach to Levelling Up.

4. Expert Panels

- 4.1 The Expert Panels took place during August and focused on transport, built environment, energy and cross-cutting themes concerning how the Council works with partners and communities to deliver sustainable change fairly and affordably.
- 4.2 Each theme convened a face-to-face panel and a further virtual panel to engage as many key stakeholders as possible. Face to face sessions were took place at MIRA (Nuneaton), Garden Organic (Ryton) and Warwick University. The panels were attended by 69 individuals across a range of organisations, including some of our significant industries.
- 4.3 The panels reviewed ambitions and objectives from the Strategy, discussed a shared stakeholder delivery plan for Warwickshire, and reviewed delivery principles. There was significant engagement by those present and the outputs (which included commitments to shared actions) will be built into the Climate Change Programme and Actions Plans supporting the Strategy..
- 4.4 The general feedback from all the panels was positive and there was strong support for the Council's strategy, and an agreement that the objectives and direction of travel is correct. There were offers of ongoing collaboration, further advice and guidance and a willingness to work and learn in partnership over the long-term.

4.5 In terms of specific activity for further consideration, the following are a summary of the panel discussions:

Buildings & Energy

- Place based approach to local area energy planning to understand demand and growth in energy needs across the county.
- Supporting new infrastructure through planning and regulatory frameworks
- Working with National Grid on capacity building and planning ahead for future needs
- Retrofit deliver models for homes and businesses.
- Making best use of external funding sources

Transport

- Progress on a decarbonised local transport plan
- Further investigation into alternative fuels including hydrogen, battery technology and fuel cells
- Providing transport connectivity and choices for all
- Investment in skills and employment opportunities

General

- Workforce capability and skills investment, including apprenticeships opportunities.
- Supporting SME's to make changes, working with the Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub,
- Taking a community powered approach to behavioural change, by finding small levers for change then scaling up activity, and providing routes to funding
- Sustainability impact assessment approach to decision making

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The financial implications have not altered since the June 2023 Cabinet Paper which confirmed that:

5.1.1 At the start of 2023/24 the Council's Revenue Investment Fund contained over £10 million revenue funding which will be topped up during the five-year period as our finances allow. The allocation of this funding is deliberately flexible and may be varied as bids emerge and are prioritised. The February 2023 budget resolution states that it is expected a minimum of £2 million will be allocated against each of the Best Lives, Sustainable Futures and Thriving Economy and Places blocks. In addition, the Capital Investment Fund currently has £90 million to invest in the Council's assets/infrastructure over the next five years. The revenue and capital funding for the delivery of the

Sustainable Futures strategy will need to be sourced from these Funds or from accessing external third party funding.

- 5.1.2 The initial actions in train (see Appendix 3) have an estimated revenue cost of £265k over the next two years plus £30k capital investment and £187k revenue from third party funding. Applications to the Revenue Investment Fund totalling £265k are expected to come forward for approval during Q3 once the work on the costs and expected benefits have been finalised. This demand will grow as new opportunities arise. In addition, several further schemes have been identified and it is expected that business cases for these will be prepared and brought forward for approval over the course of this financial year.
- 5.1.3 There will be significant capital and revenue implications in delivering the full action plan when it is brought forward for approval, which will inevitably and significantly exceed the Council's resources. There will also be savings which in the long term may outweigh the initial costs. A variety of internal, public, and private funding sources are expected to be required to finance these actions and seeking external funding will always be prioritised where it makes sense to do so minimising as far as possible the direct financial impact on the Council resources. We have created a Sustainable Futures Finance officer role from within existing resources with a specific remit to identify live and upcoming funding streams and assist in applications including co-ordinating joint partner funding bids. Potential funding sources have been established and mapped within the draft Strategy, but the full cost and likelihood of receiving that funding is not known. This will be understood progressively as the Strategy actions are developed in detail.

6. Environmental Implications

- 6.1 These environmental implications have not altered since the June 2023 Cabinet Paper which confirmed that:
- 6.1.1 This Strategy and associated action plan will define our strategic direction in meeting the aims of our sustainable futures strategic priorities and establish what actions need to take place to accelerate progress towards our linked targets.
- 6.1.2 Delivering the associated actions to meet our 2030 net zero carbon estate target would result in emission reductions of 46% totalling 8,430 tCO₂e and additionally require the removal of 9,816 tCO₂e from the atmosphere through inseting and offsetting measures from 2030 and beyond calculated from our 2019 baseline. Refer to paragraph 4.2 (ii) (Projects in development) for an example of the difference between inseting and offsetting.

6.1.3 Delivering our net zero Warwickshire target in partnership with the public sector, residents, communities, and business, will result in emission reductions of close to 5,509,000 tCO₂e in 2050 from our 2019 baseline following adoption of the fully inclusive greenhouse gas approach. Current national policy measures and technological assumptions project a gap of approximately 3,000,000 tCO₂e. Closing this gap is reliant on large scale behavioural change, partnering, technological developments, and change in all sectors accelerated by government, regional and local policy and significant additional funding. The need for a joined-up approach is illustrated by the 18% contribution that emissions from motorway travel has to Warwickshire's carbon footprint (2019 figures), a network that is the responsibility of National Highways. The need to deliver insetting and offsetting measures may also play a part as full decarbonisation will not be realised in all sectors.

7. Timescales and next steps

- 7.1 All expert panels have now taken place and work is underway to analyse the outputs from those sessions.
- 7.2 This paper will be presented to all Overview and Scrutiny Committees during September 2023 and feedback will be used to inform the final strategy.
- 7.3 The final Sustainable Futures Strategy and 2030/2050 action plan are expected to be presented to Cabinet for approval on 9th November 2023

Background Papers

- 1. Cabinet Report 15th June 2023, Sustainable Futures Strategy

Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Sustainable Futures Strategy

Appendix 2: Sustainable Futures Action Plan

Appendix 3: Project progress and those in development

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

Local Member(s): not applicable as this is a county wide report

Other members: Members of the Cross Party Climate Emergency members group: Councillors Birdi, Chilvers, Falp, Fradgley, Humphreys, Millar, Redford, Sinclair.

Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Councillors: Clarke, Warwick, Humphreys, Barker.