

Appendix 3: Sustainable Futures Strategy, Project Progress & Projects in Development

The information below is an extract from the June 2023 Cabinet Paper where an update on progress was provided.

1. Progress Update

- 1.1 In the November 2022 Sustainability West Midlands Local Authority Benchmark report, the Council ranked 7th out of 21 participating authorities, improving on the prior year's overall score. Of 10 themes, resource efficiency, natural environment, social equity and health were ranked 2nd, 4th, and 5th respectively.
- 1.2 With regards to progress towards achieving our 2030 net zero target, the period to 2021/22 has seen an 8% reduction in carbon emissions expressed as tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalence (CO₂e) against our 2019/20 baseline. A reduced mileage from vehicles used by staff for business purposes and reductions in emissions associated with electricity for streetlighting and powering buildings have delivered the greatest reductions. This performance is in line with the trajectory required to meet our 2030 target. This has been aided by the impact of Covid-19 and it should be noted that reductions will become increasingly challenging over time. The largest single source of emissions is from the use of gas for heating buildings. Lower carbon technologies to either displace gas or improve efficiencies where gas is continued to be used will need large-scale capital investment and may present operational challenges. Solutions will need to begin to be rolled out over the next two years to meet an interim target of a 29% reduction in emissions against our 2019/20 baseline by 2026. The Council is developing a pipeline of projects designed to maintain progress against this target. It is proposed to publish progress against the Strategy and action plan on the Council's climate emergency website.
- 1.3 Actions to meet the Council's climate change commitment for net zero carbon emissions by 2030 has been published. Actions associated with delivering on our 2030 net zero commitment, alongside further actions to deliver on the Council's 2050 commitment and those in support of the delivery of the six strategy themes have been embedded into the Council's 2023-2025 Integrated Delivery Plan, agreed at Cabinet in May 2023. Direct staffing resourcing has also increased to support delivery.
- 1.4 **Transport.** Our work on the proposed New Local Transport Plan for Warwickshire (LTP4) (also on this Cabinet agenda) has reached final draft stage. With environment as a central theme, LTP4 is intended to provide travel options that will reduce reliance on private car usage and increase take-up of active travel, safe and convenient public transport and encourage a switch to electric vehicles. In addition to the health and air quality benefits this

will bring, this plan will be critically important in setting Warwickshire on the path to net zero carbon.

- 1.5 **Electric vehicle charging.** The Council has been allocated £3.295m capital to deliver electric vehicle charge points primarily for residents who do not have off-street parking. A dedicated strategy is in place and a policy officer has now been recruited to fully secure the grant. Subject to securing the grant, tranche 1 of the award will allow the Council to proceed to procurement in 2023/24 and delivery early in 2024/25. Numbers will depend on several factors with the current expectation being 300-350 charge points funded through the grant.
- 1.6 **Energy and renewables.** Work on developing a new Council energy strategy is well underway and will be presented to Cabinet for approval later this year. This is detailed in paragraph 4.3 (i). A part grant funded large scale solar installation at Eliot Park Innovation Centre started generating solar power in December 2021. When averaged over a year, 23% of the building's electricity demand is now from roof mounted solar which will continue to contribute to reductions in the Council's carbon footprint. A total of 42.8 tCO₂e from the date of installation to May 2023 has now been saved.
- 1.7 **Green shoots phase 2:** 38 projects were allocated funding in November 2022 bringing the total to 107 funded projects across two phases utilising £1m fund after operating costs. There is a roughly even distribution of funding across all Districts and Boroughs in the County per head of population for Phase 1 & 2 combined (£1.50 - £1.60) except in Stratford which received a considerable amount in Phase 1. As of May 2023, there are 27 case studies on the Council's Climate Emergency website designed to inspire and engage.
- 1.8 **Tree planting.** More than 2,000 trees have been planted using the Local Authority Treescape Fund. These supplement the trees planted by community groups using the Green Shoots grant, not least the Leasowe Farm Children's Forest project which has planted 2,600 trees on 4 ha of land. During 2023/24 the target is to plant 60,000 trees (30 ha) as part of the Council's commitment to plant one tree for every Warwickshire resident by 2030. Support will be provided by two newly recruited officers until March 2025 using a grant secured from the Woodland Creation Acceleration Fund.
- 1.9 **Tree nursery.** 20,000 acorns have been collected from trees on the nearby highway and planted at the recently established tree nursery demonstrating minimal carbon impact. The project will provide the trees at a sustainable cost and availability with a reduced carbon footprint and expand on the genetic stock to support the tree planting project and provide climate resilient trees for the future. Over time, the nursery will be self-sustaining with income from tree sales.
- 1.10 **Waste and recycling.** The recycling rate for 2022/23 was 36.7%, rising to 45.6% when confidential waste is included. This exceeds the corporate target set in March 2020 to reduce residual waste by 30% by March 2023. A new waste target for 2023 onwards is currently being developed.

- 1.11 **Climate change adaptation.** Work has completed on two major reports which are published on the Council's Climate Emergency website. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, Flood Risk Management, and Public Health have all now benefited from a process to assess climate change risk, establish new risk registers and develop action plans to better prepare these sensitive service areas to the impacts of climate change. This process will be rolled out to further service areas in 2023/24. Officers are engaging locally and regionally to discuss our priorities and to determine ways in which partners could help in accelerating adaptation.
- 1.12 **Marketing and Communications.** Since January 2023, the Council has produced a series of Sustainable Warwickshire podcasts to bring together an internal offer and external expert to discuss a topic related to the Sustainable Futures Strategy. Four have been produced and published to date.
- 1.13 **Climate Action Group.** Work continues to increase in-house engagement in sustainability. An established group of officers drawn from all parts and levels of the organisation meet and collaborate to help drive the Council to meet the Council and County net-zero targets. We are developing a proposal to take this to the next level by implementing carbon literacy training as detailed in paragraph 4.1 (vii).

2. Projects in development

- 2.1 A first phase of projects has been identified and it is planned to make applications to the Revenue Investment Fund in 2023/24 as follows;
- i. **Low carbon fuel.** A phased 5-year rollout of a certified waste derived low carbon biofuel across our vehicle fleet. A small-scale trial has been successfully completed in the fire service. This provides the basis for moving forward with a larger trial on a range of core fleet vehicle types, initially costing £37k of project support over two years and £58k of revenue and £30k of capital costs in 2024/25. Early estimates suggest this fuel could be applied to 160 of our 200 vehicle core fleet. When fully adopted, this initiative alone could allow us to deliver a third of our estate carbon target ahead of 2030. Officers are in discussions with District and Borough counterparts to establish how a collaboration of this type will support them to meet their targets.
 - ii. It is acknowledged that biofuels present only a temporary solution. Additional work is ongoing to define, cost and establish a time-bound **plan to fully decarbonise our vehicle fleet** and funding of around £50k will be needed to develop a strategy and action plan to move our Council fleet to sustainable energy for delivery during 2023/24.
 - iii. **Detailed building retrofit surveys.** An application for revenue grant funding of £187k with a focus on decarbonising high consuming buildings with boilers over 10 years old has been made. Grants will be awarded in June 2023 with work to be completed by March 2024.

- iv. Some project management support, costing an estimated £20k, for developing a **plan to remove inefficient, high consuming boilers** from our building stock and replacing with cleaner alternatives.
- v. **Support for schools to participate in eco-schools:** To further school engagement in climate change we are planning to fund 200 schools at the rate of 50 per year for them to participate in eco-schools and in parallel leverage a free first year subscription to take up a platform to score and act on sustainability. The tailored offer would seek to ensure even distribution of take-up across the County in support of our Countywide Approach to Levelling Up. This is estimated to cost in the region of £30k.
- vi. **An offer to local SMEs** to take up a platform to score and act on sustainability. Sustainability actions are scored providing the potential for SME's to demonstrate performance and engagement to customers and clients. As per the schools offer, tailoring would seek to ensure even distribution of take-up across the County. Our first-year cost is £25k which covers 100 subscriptions, with an additional 100 added by each of the supplier and the sponsor taking the total to 300. Should this prove successful we propose to invest a further £20k in year 2.
- vii. We have now introduced an introductory **carbon literacy** e-learning module which is being promoted for existing staff and all new starters. We are reviewing in person training. A range of options are being considered, one of which is an accredited offer to 250 officers and members costing circa £25k. We are also reviewing more substantive options which would involve employing a small team to deliver across the organisation at pace and provide training for our communities and as a traded service to businesses requiring an investment of an estimated £250k in year one.

2.2 The next phase of projects due for development in 2023/24 are;

- i. **Renewable energy plan.** To invest in exploring the installation of further renewables/energy technologies within buildings and land across the County estate.
- ii. **Offsetting and inseting plan.** A review of options, viability and costs to close the gap between decarbonised emissions and residual emissions to reach net zero. Example options include inseting initiatives which take place within the boundaries of Warwickshire, a prime example being the tree planting project. The plan will also review offsetting options, initiatives outside of Warwickshire, which need to be considered within an overall plan.
- iii. **A review of hydrogen for transport** to assess market opportunities, applications, barriers, costs and time horizons. This would link with the Council's fleet decarbonisation plan as well as delivering insight for Warwickshire-wide development opportunities.

2.3 Additional work planned or being delivered using internal resource is as follows;

- i. We are in the final stages of developing an **Energy Strategy** using existing internal resource. The strategy will establish a clear direction and action plan for sustainable energy management, how we plan to reduce, use, measure, and generate energy to support the council's net zero targets and ensure we meet all applicable energy legislation requirements. We intend the strategy will be brought forward for approval at Cabinet in July 2023.
- ii. We plan to explore opportunities to **target private domestic properties for energy efficiency improvements**, initially through a data driven work package delivered by Business Intelligence to determine clusters of poor energy performing properties and homeowners to work with.
- iii. **Greenshoots phase 3 or similar scheme**. Following on from the success of prior rounds of Greenshoots, we are considering options to run a further round in a financially sustainable way. One option to explore is the potential to leverage external funding and partner with a suitable organisation to assist in delivery and engagement.