

# Cabinet

9 November 2023

## Sustainable Futures Strategy

### Recommendation

That Cabinet approves the Sustainable Futures Strategy and the supporting delivery plan.

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In 2019 the Council declared a Climate Emergency and the Council Plan 2022-2027 identifies the following strategic priority:

*"We want to be a County with a sustainable future which means adapting to and mitigating climate change and meeting our net zero commitments, so that our generation ensures future generations can live well and reap the benefits of a sustainable and thriving Warwickshire."*

- 1.2 The Sustainable Futures Strategy has been developed to support these commitments.

- 1.3 The draft strategy was considered by Cabinet in October 2022 and since then officers have undertaken significant public and stakeholder engagement. This has included public surveys, focus groups and written submissions from the public and stakeholders. Summary feedback was considered by Cabinet in June 2023.

- 1.4 In accordance with recommendations from June 2023 Cabinet, officers have carried out a series of expert panels to build on the strong support and appetite from business, public sector, academia and wider community experts to provide direction and support for the Council's ambitions. These focused on transport, built environment, energy, and cross-cutting themes such as biodiversity, waste, communities and skills. They were attended by 69 individuals from across a range of organisations including some of our most significant industries. They provided a strong sense of feedback and support for our direction of travel and provided significant opportunity to deepen partnerships and engagement.

- 1.5 During September 2023 all Overview and Scrutiny Committees have received a summary of the feedback and have been given the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Strategy and delivery plan.

- 1.6 The final version of the strategy has been developed based on all the feedback received to date. The development from the draft to the final version is summarised in the Analysis section of this report. The final version of the strategy can be found at **Appendix 1**, with the delivery plan at **Appendix 2**.

## **2. Expert Panels**

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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 kindly hosted by partners and included major local manufacturing and research and development organisations, alongside stakeholders from the agricultural and horticultural sector and Warwick University. The panels were attended by 69 individuals across a range of organisations, including some of our significant industries, research organisations, and local and regional partner organisations (e.g. district and boroughs, West Midlands Combined Authority, and others).
- 2.3 The panels reviewed ambitions and objectives, discussed a shared stakeholder delivery plan for Warwickshire, and reviewed delivery principles. This provided a strong sense of feedback and support for our direction of travel and provided significant opportunity to deepen partnerships and engagement.
- 2.4 Each panel session produced material that has been considered by the officer team and built into the final Sustainable Futures Strategy, the supporting delivery plan and the Council's Climate Change Programme. There was a strong sense of positive feedback from all panels and confirmation that the proposed strategy, objectives and direction of travel are correct. There were offers of ongoing collaboration, further advice and guidance and a willingness to work and learn in partnership over the long-term.
- 2.5 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 apprenticeship 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

## **3. Analysis**

3.1 Our draft Sustainable Futures Strategy originally set out the scale of the challenge required to tackle the climate change and biodiversity crises. It did this in a way that included strategic aims and ambitions needed for the Council to meet its net zero target of 2030 and net zero target for the county by 2050. It outlined how the Council would do this in terms of strategic enablers, funding the strategy, the role of wider partnerships and governance arrangements. The strategy sets out six key themes.

3.2 The initial feedback shared with Cabinet in June is summarised below. Described in italics are the actions officers have taken to address these within the final strategy:

- i.) The strategy, vision and ambitions for each theme were accepted by most stakeholders with some refinements suggested.
- ii.) There is strong willingness to work with the Council to share expertise, knowledge and project experience and ultimately support the Council on the journey of the Strategy. There are established working relationships with District & Borough Councils, and this should be built on to form greater links to industry, business and communities to progress the Council's influencing role.

This has been reinforced by the outcomes of the expert panels and is reflected in the final version of the Strategy.

- iii.) There was widespread comment on the need for an action plan to achieve our objectives for Warwickshire including our 2050 target.

This has been addressed through a new annex which outlines measures

and timelines against our themes and objectives alongside key actions for the Council to focus on in the first years. This annex will be regularly reviewed and form the framework for the Council's delivery programme.

- iv.) Distinct from the vision and theme-based ambitions, the ambition for decarbonisation was challenged by some, linked to the degree of offsetting projected, and in addition, the need for targets and timelines, a clear focus and proper resourcing.

This has been recognised within the final strategy and a commitment to developing a plan to deliver insetting and offsetting requirements by 2024. Setting the Council's objectives, measures and timelines are also clearer as set out in the accompanying annex.

- v.) Stakeholders challenged the need for greater detail on financial arrangements to fund the activity.

To address this challenge, we have reinforced the funding section of the strategy and will determine detailed funding at an individual scheme level. We have employed a dedicated funding officer to ensure we target appropriate external funding and are exploring a wider range of opportunities, including discussions with key partners and the private sector.

- vi.) Governance and monitoring needed to be more clearly explained in the Strategy.

This has been addressed.

- vii.) Feedback on the themes was generally positive and the need to incorporate climate change adaptation, and consider how to best communicate the theme of 'sustainable communities and green economy'.

This has been addressed.

- viii.) There is work to be done to improve awareness of the Strategy and engage with the seldom heard groups such as young people, those with young families, students and those early in their careers.

This is a priority within the ongoing communications plan that accompanies the Sustainable Futures work. This includes the continued engagement with partner and community networks, and to work with the Youth Council and Youth Conference.

- ix.) There are some considerations needed to address points in tone and language and also recent policy developments such as the Mission Zero report, UN Biodiversity Conference, and the March 2023 International Panel on Climate Change report.

The final document has been updated to include updates following the UN Biodiversity Conference and we have made changes to tone and language to position this strategy as one for the whole county, building on the Council's work on levelling-up and community power.

- 3.3 The final document also includes updates to our carbon emissions figures. These are a result of improved data being available and include:
- i.) A reduced baseline for our business travel emissions (from 19,500 tCO<sub>2</sub>e to 18,245 tCO<sub>2</sub>e).
  - ii.) A reduction in our estates emissions target to 2,743 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (from 3,100 tCO<sub>2</sub>e) for 2030 and 1,862 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (from 2,100 tCO<sub>2</sub>e) for 2026.
  - iii.) Our offsetting and insetting requirement has reduced to 9,816 tCO<sub>2</sub>e from the target published in our draft Strategy of 10,500 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.
- 3.4 Other key differences included within the final strategy include:
- i.) Bringing together Built Environment and Energy into a single theme.
  - ii.) Progress against each theme was included in the draft but this has now been removed and will be regularly updated on our webpages.
  - iii.) Describing objectives, measures and activity required to deliver against each theme. This includes the creation of a separate Annex which will be updated on a more regular basis than the body of the Strategy document
  - iv.) Improved alignment with other Council strategies, including the Local Transport Plan (LTP) 4, the emerging economic strategy and our Levelling-up approach.
  - v.) A greater emphasis on needing to understand our energy needs and working in partnership with others to do so.

## **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The adoption of the Sustainable Futures Strategy will incur costs associated with the individual schemes and projects. The ability to deliver the underpinning actions will be dependent on the strength of business cases and the available funding ultimately secured.
- 4.2 The strategy addresses this within a dedicated section that sets out an approach to funding opportunities. This includes a heavy reliance on securing external funding through a variety of mechanisms, including grants, developer contributions, private sector investment and potential revenue opportunities from our own net zero investments.

## **5. Environmental Implications**

- 5.1 This Strategy defines the Council's strategic direction and accompanying activity to meet its Climate Emergency commitments and the strategic priorities as set out in the Council Plan 2022-2027.
- 5.2 Delivering the associated actions to meet the 2030 net zero carbon estate target would result in emission reductions of 46% totalling 8,429 tCO<sub>2</sub>e and additionally require the removal of 9,816 tCO<sub>2</sub>e from the atmosphere through insetting and offsetting measures from 2030 and beyond calculated from the Council's 2019 baseline.
- 5.3 Delivering the net zero Warwickshire target in partnership with the public sector, residents, communities, and business, will result in emission reductions of close to 5,701,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2050 from the 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 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. 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.

## **6. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps**

- 6.1 Sustainable Futures Strategy and supporting delivery plan published November 2023.
- 6.2 Review of the Strategy every three years. Delivery plan to be reviewed and updated through our annual business planning cycle. Progress to be regularly reported to our Executive Director led Programme Board and at least quarterly to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1:** Final Sustainable Futures Strategy.

**Appendix 2:** Sustainable Futures delivery plan.

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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, Chilvers, Warwick, Birdi, Humphreys, Roodhouse, Barker. Holland,