



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Audit Committee

31 January 2024

Telford and Wrekin Council Becoming Carbon Neutral and Plastic Free Update

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Carolyn Healy - Cabinet Member: Climate Action, Green Spaces, Heritage & Leisure
Lead Director:	Felicity Mercer - Director: Communities, Customer & Commercial Services
Service Area:	Communities, Customer & Commercial Services
Report Author:	Ian Wykes - Team Leader - Climate Change & Sustainability
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Cabinet - 19 October 2023 SMT - 16 January 2024 Audit Committee – 31 January 2024

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

Audit Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Note and review the update on Telford and Wrekin Council Becoming Carbon Neutral and Plastic Free.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To allow Audit Committee the opportunity to note and review the Council's progress on becoming Carbon Neutral and Plastic free as set out in the report to Cabinet on 19 October 2023 (See Appendix A.)

3.0 Background

3.1 Tackling climate change is one of five priorities set out in the current Council Plan. In July 2019 the Council declared a climate change emergency and made a commitment to reduce its carbon emissions to net zero by 2030. Through its support of a borough partnership the council is also playing a full part in helping the wider borough achieve the same target.

3.2 The Council has also made a commitment to remove single-use plastics from the Council's operations and activities, replacing them with sustainable alternatives, by the end of 2023.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 In summary the Cabinet report can be broken down into three sections

- It provides an update of the work undertaken by the Council since the last report in September 2022;
- It sets out the progress the Council has made against the net zero target and the way we measure emissions; and
- It includes an updated climate change action plan as set out in Appendix B.

4.2 The council achieved an overall reduction of 60% in CO₂e emissions from a baseline of 2018/19. This is considerably ahead of the 36% reduction based on a straight-line year on year reduction.

Particular highlights from 2022/23 include.

4.3 An overall reduction in gas usage across the Council's operational estate. This may be due, in part, to recent initiatives such as switching the heating of Newport Swimming pool from gas to an air source heat pump resulting in a 40% reduction in gas for the site.

4.4 The Council was awarded £683,370 from the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV), On-Street Residential Charge Point (ORCS) fund for the installation of 70 EV charge points across 21 Council car parks. In addition, the borough has been awarded an indicative amount (£1,020,000) by OZEV to increase the number of on-street EV charge points.

4.5 The Council continues to switch to low emission vehicles across its fleet. An additional 6 electric vehicles for the Highways and Enforcement Team, two electric minibuses for Arthog (funded through our municipal investment) and a vehicle for Libraries.

4.6 The publication of the Council's Climate Change supplementary planning document (SPD) setting out guidance on sustainable new build for developers.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The alternative option would be to do nothing and not deliver on the Council's climate change commitments. However, this could lead to serious reputational risks for the Council as a community leader.

Not addressing issues such as energy efficiency of buildings or development of renewable energy generation opportunities would also lead to significant cost implications through increase in fuel bills and loss of income. Doing nothing would also lead to a negative impact on the health and social / economic wellbeing of Telford and Wrekin businesses, communities, and residents.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 Committee Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk for the UK's third Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3), published in June 2021¹ sets out the priority climate change risks for the UK. In summary, risks in the report include:

- The impacts of climate change on the natural environment.
- An increase in the range, quantities, and consequences of pests, pathogens, and invasive species.
- The risk of climate change impacts, especially more frequent flooding, and coastal erosion, causing damage to infrastructure services.
- A reduction in public water supplies due to increasing periods of water scarcity.
- The impact of extreme temperatures, high winds, and lightning on the transport network.
- The impact of increasing high temperatures on people's health and wellbeing.
- Increased severity and frequency of flooding.
- Disruption to the delivery of health and social care services due to a greater frequency of extreme weather.
- Damage to cultural heritage assets as a result of temperature, precipitation, groundwater and landscape changes.
- Impacts internationally that may affect the UK, such as risks to food availability, safety and security, risks to international law and governance from climate change that will affect the UK, international trade routes, public health.

Therefore, there are significant risks as outlined should the Council fail to mitigate climate change and ensure that residents, businesses, and the natural environment are able to adapt to the future climate.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 The Councils' work on climate change and sustainability is a direct response to the Council's priority "Our natural environment is protected, and the Council has a

¹ <https://www.ukclimaterisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CCRA-Evidence-Report-England-Summary-Final.pdf>

leading role in addressing the climate emergency". However, as a cross cutting agenda it also has a significant contribution towards all other Council priorities including:

- Every child, young person, and adult lives well in their community.
- Everyone benefits from a thriving economy.
- All neighbourhoods are a great place to live.
- A community-focussed, innovative Council providing efficient, effective, and quality services.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 An approved allocation of £4m was included in the capital programme to support Climate Change initiatives; spend in previous years totalled £1.3m which leaves £2.7m available in 2023/24. This is being allocated to schemes in the Action Plan which are detailed in this report and appropriate finance support is being provided. Finance will also provide support in relation to any bids for external funding as required.
- 8.2 The Community Municipal Investment was launched in May 2022 and provides an opportunity for individuals to lend money to the Council which will be used to fund projects across Telford & Wrekin to help tackle the climate emergency. This is a new borrowing source for the Council (permitted in the approved Treasury Strategy), which is an alternative to loans from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) and is specifically aimed to support the Council's Climate Change Agenda. The cost of borrowing to the Council, including fees, was comparable with PWLB rates at the time of entering the arrangement.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended) establishes a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by 100% by 2050 when compared with the 1990 baseline. At a local level, Section 19(1A) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to include in their local plans, policies designed to secure that the development and use of land in the local planning authority's area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. In the management of its activities, provision of its services and performance of its functions, local Councils are in a position to play a vital role in meeting the challenges posed by climate change. The Council has wide scope to decide how best to address these challenges.
- 9.2 The Council has the legal power to undertake the activities set out in the report. Implementation of the proposals in this report may give rise to specific legal issues upon which specific legal advice will be provided as necessary.
- 9.3 There are no specific human resource implications arising from this report.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 This report has a borough wide impact.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 Climate change will continue to have a significant impact on the health of Telford and Wrekin's residents as well as on their social and economic wellbeing. For example, July 2022 saw the highest temperatures on record. Heatwaves can lead to very serious health implications particularly for the most vulnerable² Many of the actions set out in the climate change plan have considerable co-benefits. The Climate Change Fund supports businesses and community groups with energy efficiency measures which should help address recent rises in fuel prices.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 The Council's Climate Change Action Plan takes account of the legal requirement to pay due regard to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Key to this is consideration of people's specific needs based on their protected characteristics.

People who share protected characteristics of age, race, ethnicity, and disability are often disproportionately affected by climate change and its consequences. This is true locally and internationally. Extreme weather events, for example heat waves most detrimentally affect older residents and those with pre-existing respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.

The success of our climate change activity relies on active participation by the whole community. Steps are taken to make sure that events are inclusive, and the differing needs of individuals are considered so that they can access activities and contribute effectively.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 This report sets out the key areas as to how Telford and Wrekin Council is helping address climate change and environmental implications.

14.0 Appendices

- A [Telford and Wrekin Council Becoming Carbon Neutral and Plastic Free Update – Cabinet Report 19th October 2023](#)
- B [Corporate Climate Change Action Plan 2023/24](#)

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Finance	11/01/2024	11/01/2024	DR
Legal	08/01/2024	11/01/2024	RP

² [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)30434-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)30434-3/fulltext)