

Meeting of the Council – 15th April, 2024

Report of the Cabinet

Dudley Council Climate Action Plan

Purpose of report

1. To note decisions made by the Cabinet and to endorse the Dudley Council Climate Action Plan, Phase 1 (2024-2027), (see Appendix A), as part of the Council's climate emergency declaration.

Recommendation

2. That this report and the action plan, setting out Council's response to the climate change emergency, be endorsed.

Background

Climate Change – Causes and Impacts

3. Human activity has caused irreversible climate change and its impacts are being felt around the world. Global temperatures have increased by around 1°C since pre-industrial times. The past decade has seen record breaking storms, forest fires, droughts, coral bleaching, heat waves and floods around the world.
4. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a United Nations body, founded in 1988, which evaluates climate change science. The IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, issued in October 2018 stated that in order to remain within a 1.5°C temperature increase, governments would have to significantly reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by 2030 to avoid the most catastrophic impacts, including food scarcity and loss of life.

Climate Emergency

5. Since the IPCC report, a Climate Emergency movement has emerged. Subsequently over 300 Local Authorities in the UK have declared a Climate Emergency to date. The most commonly set date for councils' operations and activities to be net zero is 2030. The UK Government has set a target for the UK to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. There is no single definition of what declaring a climate emergency means. The majority are defining a 'climate emergency' as reflecting a commitment to becoming net zero (given the results of the IPCC report) by 2030 to stop global temperatures rising above 1.5°C.

Climate Emergency Motion

6. The Council recognises that climate change is having a significant impact on the environment world-wide and is directly affecting our local area and communities. Over the last ten years, Dudley has experienced a wide range of extreme weather events including surface water flooding, heatwaves, heavy snow and storms which have impacted on the health, wellbeing and livelihoods of local people.
7. As such, the Council recognises it has leadership role to play by:
 - Setting a positive example by addressing the impact of our own operations and services;
 - Providing information and advice to the public and encouraging our staff to take action, and
 - Engaging with partners, residents, businesses and community groups to tackle climate change across the Borough.
8. In light of this, the Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2020. The declaration included the following specific commitments:
 - Establish a Council-wide Climate Change Group to develop and monitor the delivery of a Carbon Reduction Plan for Dudley;
 - Encourage partners to declare a Climate Emergency and take steps to achieve a net-zero carbon footprint;
 - Explore opportunities for investment in green businesses and support green business growth.
9. Following the declaration, the Council committed to become a net zero Council by 2030 and a net zero borough by 2041.

Net Zero Council

10. What we are already doing

Over the past year, the Council has made progress in reducing carbon emissions from its operations and activities, as well as the Borough, through initiatives illustrated in the table below:

Action	Potential Carbon Saving (Low / Medium / High / Enabling)
100% green energy purchased for the council estate	High
8 travel plans agreed with employers/educational establishments	Enabling
7 new or upgraded pedestrian/cycle phases	Enabling
5 new puffins/toucans/parallel crossings for pedestrians/cyclists	Enabling
2 new traffic signal junctions include LED lamps and extra low voltage power supply	Enabling
0.96km of new cycle footpaths	Enabling
50 EV charging points to be installed across the borough by April 2024	Enabling
23 fossil fuel based machinery replaced with electric machinery, such as leaf blowers and hedge cutters	Low
Purchased 5 electric quad bikes for street scene operations in lieu of petrol quad bikes	Medium
100 public recycling waste bins in-situ	Medium
Flytip recyclable items recycled	Medium

Trialling electric footway mechanical sweepers	Low
Undertaking a programme to change 30,000 streetlights to LED	High
90% of streets lights at Lister Road Depot are LED	Medium
More than 60 per cent of Dudley borough schools have a 20mph scheme in their locality with many others having traffic calming measures in place	Enabling
416 solar panels installed on the roof of Duncan Edwards Leisure Centre, saving 23 tonnes of CO2 a year	Medium
The council has committed £1million towards an Energy Development Fund to invest in renewable energy projects	High
First in the region to secure funding on a Net Zero Neighbourhoods pilot that will see 300 homes to be sustainably retrofitted including loft, cavity and solid wall insulation, solar PV schemes, electric vehicle street charging points, community food growing initiatives and nature-based solutions such as green roofs.	Enabling

Carbon Reduction Baseline

11. To reach the 2030 target, the Council will have to go further and reduce its emissions by a further 13,209.85 tonnes CO_{2e}.
12. In order to establish the Council's baseline, the Council has monitored emissions from each area of its activities including buildings where we can control usage (this excludes schools and the property investment portfolio) based on the methodology of the most widely-used accounting tool, the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol.
13. Scope 1 covers direct emissions from owned or controlled sources. Scope 2 covers indirect emissions from the generation of purchased

electricity, steam, heating and cooling consumed by the organisation. Scope 3 includes all other indirect emissions that occur e.g. in relation to contracted services.

14. The scopes assist in defining the sources of pollutants and targeting action.
15. The research to establish the baseline has enabled the Council to identify the following:

Scope	Emissions Type	Emissions (tCO ₂ e)	Percentage of Total Emissions
Scope 1	Heating	4,081.53	30.9%
	Authority's Fleet	2,561.00	19.4%
Scope 2	Electricity	6,016.90	45.5%
	Transmission & Distribution Losses	550.41	4.2%
Total Emissions		13,209.85	100%

Dudley Council Climate Action Plan

16. The Dudley Council Climate Action Plan (Appendix 1) sets out actions to be delivered over the next three years 2024-2027. It is published in line with the Council's climate emergency declaration showing our commitment to take action on climate change - but it is not set in stone. The actions are based on a range of assumptions and current knowledge but recognises that learning from partners and communities, new technologies, changing public attitudes, public funding and government regulation are evolving that will influence the Action Plan. The Action Plan is therefore live and will be formally reviewed and updated annually.
17. The Action Plan is divided into 6 themes as follows:
 - Theme 1: Community and Business
 - Theme 2: Transport & Active Travel
 - Theme 3: Energy
 - Theme 4: Waste and Fleet
 - Theme 5: Land use planning, regeneration and biodiversity
 - Theme 6: Enabling Actions (these actions support delivery of individual actions, such as communications, fundraising and partnership working)

18. Examples of actions in the plan include:-

- Requesting developers to undertake a Sustainability Checklist as part of the planning application process
- Completing implementation of LED solutions for street lighting
- Producing a tree and woodland strategy for Dudley Borough to ensure tree coverage on council-owned land is maintained and increased
- Producing a sustainable events policy that emphasises minimisation of waste and encourages more sustainable options. This will be supported with guidance on sustainability best practice, options and suggestions for events that are held across the borough
- Developing a Waste Strategy to maximise recycling and reduce waste, including the collection of food waste
- Developing Sustainable Procurement Guidance and setting a 10% minimum social value contribution as part of the procurement process for new contracts

Dudley Council's approach to net zero will also realise co-benefits. For example, actions on sustainable travel modes will tackle air quality but this also has benefits to health from exercise and mental well-being, as well as reducing carbon emissions.

Biodiversity & Carbon Offsetting

19. Biodiversity has already been impacted by the current rise in average temperatures. Species distributions are changing, along with the timing of migration, breeding and flowering. Dudley Council recognises the need to address the Biodiversity Crisis alongside the Climate Emergency.
20. Nature-based solutions can play a key role in mitigating against, and adapting to, the impact of a changing climate. Natural solutions and sustainable land management practices can be used to maximise our natural habitat's ability to absorb carbon from the atmosphere through natural processes, known as carbon sequestration.
21. The Dudley Climate Action Plan states that, only after seeking to reduce carbon emissions to as close to zero as possible through organisational change, will the Council offset residual carbon budgets through local

carbon sequestration projects, such as habitat creation and enhancement schemes on local nature reserves and other wildlife sites.

22. As a minimum we are committing to:

- (i) Maintaining and undertaking restoration on Dudley Nature Reserves
- (ii) Creating opportunities on other green spaces for creation and enhancement of priority habitats including trees and woodlands, grassland and wetlands.

Net Zero Borough

23. The Council is setting an example and seeking to provide leadership by reducing its own carbon emissions and using the planning and regulatory powers local government has to shape and influence action on climate change in the Borough. However, the Council does not have the power to significantly reduce carbon emissions across the Borough as a whole, alone. Organisations, businesses, residents and community groups in Dudley are already exploring smarter, greener ways of working and living – and the Council recognises there is much to learn and share between partners. Following the launch of the Dudley Council's Climate Action Plan, the Council will be establishing a borough-wide Climate Partnership, where the Council will invite local organisations and representatives of the community to come together to explore and implement actions for the borough to become net zero by 2041.

Engagement and Communications

24. On 1st November 2023, the Council launched its climate change webpage – Dudley Climate Action – providing information on the climate emergency declaration and the Council's vision for climate change.

25. The webpage will continue to evolve and develop to include information on:

- Ideas for climate action for community groups and businesses;
- Funding and support available for climate action; and
- Sharing best practice, case studies and toolkits.

Next Steps

26. The Council's newly appointed Climate Policy Manager will work with officers across the authority to implement the Climate Action Plan and engage with borough partners to start work on development of the borough climate action plan.
27. This report was considered by the Cabinet on 20th March, 2024. The Cabinet decided:
 - That Dudley Council's Climate Action Plan, Phase 1 (2024-2027) be approved.
 - That the requirement for an annual update of the Action plan to address rapidly changing international/national/regional/local context and to review the data and evidence, monitor progress and insert new actions to further reduce the Council's carbon footprint, be noted.
 - That the Director of Environment, be authorised to amend and/or make additions to the Action Plan in the interest of achieving the objectives of mitigating and adapting to climate change both in respect of the Council's own operations and activities borough-wide.
 - That the establishment of a Borough Climate Partnership, as set out in the Action Plan, be approved.
 - That the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, be authorised to implement arrangements for the operation of the Partnership.
 - That the report be referred to Full Council to endorse the Council's response to the climate change emergency.

Finance

28. External funding will be utilised to fund any costs that are not currently within existing budgets.

Law

29. The Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2020 and has committed to become a net zero Council by 2030 and a net zero Borough by 2041. The UK Government has set a target for the UK to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Risk Management

30. There are a number of key risks both for the Council and more widely which could impact on the success of the Action Plan:
- Currently not all the necessary infrastructure, finance and regulation is in place to enable the changes needed, with a burgeoning impact of the cost of living crisis on current and future patterns of expenditure at both a personal and organisational level.
 - The UK will only meet its emissions reduction targets if central government, regional bodies and local authorities, amongst others, work together to resolve some of these key barriers, noting that local authorities only have powers or influence over roughly a third of greenhouse gas emissions in their local areas.
 - Failure to develop and approve the Action Plan would present a reputational risk to the Council.

Equality Impact

31. In order to comply with Public Sector Equality Duty, and the Dudley Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy 2022-2025, for any activity undertaken under the action plan that has an impact on people, an Equality Impact Assessment shall be undertaken, to ensure there has been due regard of impact on differing groups.
32. Initial work with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager has highlighted how climate change has a varying impact on those falling into different categories and protected groups, such as the disparities caused by health status, disability status, age, pregnancy/ maternity, race, voluntary and community sectors; alongside the impact on public cohesion.
33. Notwithstanding this, in our changing borough, there is also the socioeconomic impact that should be considered, in terms of poverty and financial inclusion.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

34. Delivery of the Council's Climate Action Plan is based on current staffing resources and departmental headcount, and therefore this proposal has no direct HR impacts.

Commercial/Procurement

35. Procurement are working to build sustainability into the procurement process and note the desire to make Social Value a 10% weighting in all

tenders. However, noting the Council's current financial position and its ability to monitor the delivery of social value this is something that should be brought in over time.

36. From a commercial perspective, the actions of the Council's Climate Plan could lead to increased pressure on the Council's current budgetary position.

Environment/Climate Change

37. This decision will support the Council in delivering a carbon reduction/climate action plan and define existing sources of the Council's carbon emissions under Scopes 1 and 2 of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and set a carbon budget to net zero by 2030 for council operations and activities.

Council Priorities and Projects

38. Forging a Future for All
Our climate commitment is creating a sustainable borough on its way to net zero carbon emissions, improved air quality, reduced fuel poverty and outstanding waste and recycling services.

United Nations 17 goals, ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

39. The recommendations from this plan will have a direct and positive impact on air quality, transport and travel emissions, housing efficiency, energy security and affordability/cost of living, provision of green skills and jobs and biodiversity.



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Leader of the Council

Background Document

[IPCC, 2018: Summary for Policymakers. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C](#)