

North Somerset Council

Report to the Council

Date of Meeting: 12th January 2021

Subject of Report: CLIMATE EMERGENCY PROGRESS REPORT CLIMATE EMERGENCY 6 MONTH PROGRESS REPORT

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: BRIDGET PETTY / NICOLA WEBB

Key Decision: No

Reason:

For Information Only

Recommendations

- Members receive and consider the progress with specific initiatives within the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan
- Members consider the half-year update of council carbon footprint

1. Summary of Report

- 1.1 The report provides a progress update on a few key activities related to the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. It reports on the half-year update of council carbon footprint.
- 1.2 An annotated version of the climate emergency action plan, giving brief descriptions of progress is attached to this document (Annex 1).

2. Policy

- 2.1 North Somerset Council declared a Climate Emergency in February 2019 and part of this motion included reporting to Council every six months on progress. In November 2019, we published the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan and in February 2020, we published the Corporate Plan 2020-24; choosing the term 'greener' as one of three key themes. This means that we will include climate change as a deciding factor in all policy and strategy decisions going forward.
- 2.2 North Somerset Council has been invited to join the UK100 Countryside Climate Network in recognition that rural communities are at the frontline of feeling the effects of climate change, but also may have different barriers and opportunities when it comes to climate action. Officers suggest North Somerset Council participate to meet this pledge, seeing it as an opportunity to work collaboratively with other rural authorities; to add rural voices into national policy advocacy.

3. Details

- 3.1 In July 2020, the council published baseline evidence reports on the greenhouse gas emissions for the council own activities during the 2018/19 and 2019/20 financial years; and on greenhouse gas emissions for the whole area of North Somerset from 2005 to 2018. These reports and the datasets behind them form the basis of a programme of progress reporting. It also broadcast on YouTube and can be found on our website here: <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/council-democracy/priorities-strategies/climate-emergency/our-plans-tackle-climate-change>
- 3.2 An annotated version of the climate emergency action plan, giving brief descriptions of progress is attached to this document (Annex 1).
- 3.3 Half year emissions update:

Area-wide emissions can only be reported annually when national data becomes available, however, some corporate emissions can be reported more regularly as required. Due to the drastic changes to the way we are now working, a comparison has been produced of emissions for April-September 2019 and 2020. Not all corporate data are available for this period, but we are able to compare emissions for energy consumption in buildings (includes some schools) and streetlighting; business travel and commuting.

	Emissions (tonnes CO ₂ e)		Difference		Comment
	Apr-Sep 2019	Apr-Sep 2020	tonnes CO ₂ e	%	
Electricity (buildings)	1,213	795	-418	-34%	
Gas consumption	615	564	-51	-8%	
Business Travel	605	531	-73	-12%	
Commuting	350	70	-280	-80%	<i>Estimated based on usual work patterns</i>
Streetlighting	697	499	-197	-28%	<i>Due to LED replacement program</i>
Total	3,479	2,459	-1,020	-29%	

- 3.4 Action planning – prioritisation exercise and budget
- Since declaring a climate emergency, many potential actions have been discussed, and during summer 2019, an exercise of prioritisation took place to identify those which should be incorporated into the next budget. Actions were assessed on their ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, their cost, complexity, urgency and social and political acceptability.

This assessment was not a fully costed list of what is required to get the area of North Somerset to Net Zero, but an assessment of what we can and should be doing urgently. Decisions on project budgets are not being made in isolation but are forming part of Medium Term Financial Planning across the organisation.

Urgent actions fall into four broad categories:

- Decarbonising the council – this is within our direct control, with funding streams available and we must be taking a leadership role.

- Decarbonising transport – transport makes up 42% of North Somerset’s greenhouse gas emissions and continues to rise gradually, this is a high priority of central government and North Somerset has significant policy levers in this sector. The council can encourage walking and cycling, use of public transport (outside Covid pandemic).
- Policy development – research and development continues to be required to understand what can and must be done in North Somerset to meet the needs of the Climate Emergency.
- Communications, engagement & support – it is only through behavioural change that a large proportion of emissions can be reduced and resilience to a changing climate be improved.

3.5 Carbon Literacy: The Climate Emergency Action Plan states that the council needs to take a leadership role across the area to encourage, support and enable others to reduce carbon emissions.

One of the ways North Somerset Council is meeting this challenge is by bringing Carbon Literacy training to members and officers across the Council, ensuring that everyone is aware of the risks and opportunities of climate change in their day to day activities. This began with a day of training facilitated by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) for members and senior officers in October. This was the first course of its type to be run in the country and has now been adopted by the Carbon Literacy Project for use with other councils.

Following on from this, “Carbon Literacy for Local Authorities” is now being given to officers across the council. The training has received fantastic feedback, with personal action plans developed to feed into annual team plans. In December 2020, the Council was awarded the Carbon Literacy Bronze Award which is a visible ‘badge’ that shows we are both committed to Carbon Literacy and serious about establishing and maintaining a low carbon culture.

3.6 Transport Policy: Nationally, updated guidance for cycling infrastructure was published in July in the form of Local Transport Note (LTN) TN 1/20. This sets out for the first time that cycling must be placed at the heart of the transport network and no longer be treated as marginal or an afterthought. These principles have been incorporated into both the draft Active Travel Strategy and revised Parking Standards SPD, and complements our ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030.

3.7 Economic Plan: November 2020 saw the publication of our new Economic Plan, which responds to the challenges we know North Somerset businesses are facing as a result of Covid-19. The Plan sets out commitments to help us build a green, digital, people-centred recovery. It is also an opportunity to promote our visitor economy as a low-carbon alternative to travelling abroad (details can be found in the targeted Visitor Economy Action Plan). Focusing on low carbon investment such as retrofitting buildings and community renewable energy can maximise the environmental benefits of energy efficiency schemes while also ensuring local people have the right skills to make the most of job opportunities (further details on the approach to skills can be found in the Employment and Skills Strategy). All three documents can be found: <https://innorthsomerset.co.uk/why-north-somerset/north-somerset-economy-an-overview/>

4. Consultation

4.1 The action prioritisation process was completed with input from the Officers Working Group and has been presented and discussed with the Members Working Group and CLT. Updates on progress have been sought from the Officers Working Group

as well as other relevant officers. This report was presented to the Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel in November.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 This report is for progress update only, there are no financial implications. However, Members should be aware that Climate Emergency work is feeding into the MTFP and an action prioritisation process has been taking place to identify projects which should be taken forward in the next financial year.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

- 6.1 This report is for progress update only, there are no legal implications.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 7.1 The details in this report relate directly to the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. Projects described within this report and Annex 1, aim to support the transition to a zero carbon Council and area, through reduction of fossil fuel consumption; increasing renewable energy generation and improving communications and awareness around the Climate Crisis.

8. Risk Management

- 8.1 As projects are developed, detailed risk appraisals will be undertaken to anticipate and mitigate barriers to delivery. There will inevitably need to be consideration of risks and the agreement of compromises to achieve overall ambitions for North Somerset.

9. Equality Implications

- 9.1 No specific Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this progress update. However, Climate Emergency actions decisions will be assessed individually as required.

10. Corporate Implications

- 10.1 The Climate Emergency is a cross-cutting issue and a corporate priority; it is a key priority within the Corporate Plan and impacts everything the council does. It will be at the forefront of any future transformation programmes.

11. Options Considered

- 11.1 The February 2019 motion specifically required the preparation of a report on how to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. The council has chosen to prepare a positive Action Plan that identifies a set of initiatives, projects and policy changes that can help achieve that ambition.

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Appendices:

Annex 1 – North Somerset Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress October 2020

Background Papers:

None

