

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Climate Change

**SUBJECT:** Towards a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Executive Board of the steps being taken to develop a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for the Council and seek approval to number of principles to help inform and guide that strategy.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the Board:

- i) **Acknowledges the progress made to date by the Council in reducing its own Carbon emissions;**
- ii) **Approves, in principle that the Council sets its target to reach a carbon neutral status as 2040;**
- iii) **Agrees that in terms of the Council's initial approach that the focus should be on buildings and vehicles as these two areas contribute the most to the Council's existing emissions, together with the continued development of the borough's green infrastructure;**
- iv) **Supports the approach outlined in the report in relation to developing a detailed action in 2022 to support the Council's objective of being carbon neutral by 2040**
- v) **Agrees that as part of that action plan that a methodology is developed to ensure that carbon reduction is considered both as part of any key decisions the Council is taking itself and as part of its formal procurement processes; and**
- vi) **Following the development of the Council's Action, a broader Borough-wide Strategy be developed in consultation with partners and the community.**

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The United Nations and the international scientific community have made clear the potentially severe global human, environmental and

economic impacts that man-made climate change poses. The very recent COP 26 Summit held in Glasgow brought the worlds focus to the challenges that Climate Change is and will bring to the worlds communities if action is not taken. It is not the purpose of this report to repeat all the analysis and academic study that has been published on this crucial issue but to recognise that both the Council and the wider Halton Community has a role to play in reducing the amount of carbon that is released into the atmosphere.

- 3.2 The Council is has been addressing this agenda for many years and has a strong track record of reducing its own Carbon emissions over many years. It developed its own Carbon Management Plan in 2008 and while this lapsed some years ago the Council has continued to drive the agenda forward. This is highlighted by the fact that the Council reduced its own carbon footprint from 26338 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> to 9770 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over the period 2006/072019/20. It does recognise that it has further to go and one of the issues discussed further in this report is what target it wishes to set to reach net zero for its own carbon output.
- 3.3 The Council, at its meeting held in October 2019, approved its own Climate Emergency Motion demonstrating its commitment.
- 3.4 Detailed below are some of the successful initiatives the Council has pursued in recent years in order to reduce its own carbon emissions. There are many others which are currently in the developmental stages around EV charging points, further sustainably transport initiatives and additional investment in the Council's green spaces.
- 3.5 **Street Lighting**

The roll out of the LED programme commenced in 2015. Currently around 16,800 of the Council owned street lighting stock of around 20,440 columns have been upgraded to LED.

All the residential areas and side roads are completed, with current work focussed on distributor roads, secondary/primary roads and Principal Routes.

Officers are now in the process of designing up and issuing the schemes for this year, which is expected to be around 1500-2000 more upgrades, leaving the remaining to be carried out next financial year.

Traffic signals are now fully LED, and traffic signs are around 95% LED. The programme is achieving around 70% energy savings with each scheme. Emissions from street lighting have reduced from 4637 tonnes in 2015/16 to 1502 tonnes in 2020/21.

## **Roof Top Solar and Biomass**

The Solar PV on Council buildings has generated approximately 974,245 kilowatts of renewable energy, which equates to approximately 230 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The Biomass boilers at Brookvale Leisure Centre and Norton Priory have used approximately 4,858,500 and 625,200 Kilowatts, respectively. This equates to a CO<sub>2</sub> reduction of approximately 1000 tonnes

## **Solar Farm**

The 1MW solar farm on the former St Michael's Golf Course has been operational for just over a year. This scheme provides renewable energy via a private wire to the Stadium.

The system has produced 1,131,467 in year one, which exceeded the target of £850,000kwh per annum. The energy generated by the Solar Farm will reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 380 tonnes per annum.

The Council has developed plans to extending the farm and connecting it to the new Leisure Centre in Moor Lane, Lower House Lane and Municipal Building. The project is also looking to provide EV charging infrastructure at the Lowerhouse Lane Depot and will allow Air Source Heat pumps to be installed at the new Halton Leisure Centre, which will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of that new building.

## **Public Sector decarbonisation Fund**

Towards the end of 2020, the Government launched a Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund of 1bn of grant funding, up to 100% of capital costs for energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within public sector nondomestic buildings.

The purpose of the Scheme was to help make eligible buildings more energy efficient and install low carbon heating measures, for example; insulation, glazing, heating controls, and heat pumps. All bids had to include some form of heat decarbonisation of a building by installation of a low carbon heating technology. For example, heat pumps or connections to low carbon heat networks. The cost to save a tonne of carbon (Co<sub>2</sub>e) over the lifetime of the project must also be no more than £500.

The Council developed a bid focussed on the Stadium, which included replacing the current gas boilers with air source heat pumps; replacing existing lighting fittings with new energy efficient LED lighting; replacing single glazed windows; and installing additional insulation.

The improvements will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the building and support the Council's commitment to reduce its impact on the environment.

## **Transport**

A number of transport projects have been completed and these are set out below:-

- Improve the Council Fleet - Vehicle Fleet Efficiency 2 Electric Vehicles (service vehicles, meals on wheels / passenger transport service).
- Small trial introduction of HVO fuel in the summer of 2022 for a small number of public space vehicles.
- Bus Strategy - Opportunity to improve bus services and facilities on key corridors. Strategy document with action plan, started March 2021 and due for completion December 2021.
- Workplace charging points at Council Offices.
- Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) - allowed the Council to implement a number of temporary cycle schemes across the borough whilst in lockdown, all but one has now been taken out.

The Runcorn Busway from Halton Hospital to Murdishaw Local Centre cycleway has been awarded monies to become permanent and should be completed in the next 12 months.

- The EATF has also allowed us to work with 6 schools to encourage walking and cycling to school when coming out of lockdown. This is in partnership with Living Streets and is part of the WoW programme.
- The Delinking of redundant structures connecting to the SJB and the re-alignment of the carriageway has allowed Halton to add a permanent cycle corridor over the SJB connecting Widnes and Runcorn Town Centres. Initial findings showed a dramatic increase in usage by sustainable methods in the first 3 months.
- An EV taxi event was held in September 2021. The aim was to encourage Halton registered Taxi drivers to consider moving over to Electric / Hybrid.
- The Daresbury to SJB Cycle Link via Manor Park is currently in design and we looking to delivery in 2022-23.
- The Council has completed the roll out of 29 EV charging points in residential areas and plans for further phases are being developed.

### 3.6 THE WAY FORWARD

3.7 As can be seen above the Council has achieved a great deal but clearly has more to do and needs to develop a more detailed Action Plan in order to make further progress. In relation to that a number of steps have been identified in order to get to that position in 2022.

They are as follows –

Collate all relevant projects

- Highlight themes for action
- Identify responsible individuals and timetables for projects
- Identify the resource requirements
- Record ongoing projects as well as those planned and their respective contributions to carbon reduction
- Identify areas in which action needs to be taken
- Link existing relevant plans and strategies, to raise profile of the topic
- Ensure the engagement of all parts of the organisation and that the carbon impacts of current and future activities are fully considered in the decision-making process.

3.8 The Climate Change Portfolio Holder is leading this work across the Council and attends the internal advisory group that has been set up to progress the Council's objectives in this area to support the development and delivery of that Action Plan. Following the development of its own plans it will be important for the Council to engage with its partners and the Halton community to produce a Borough-wide carbon reduction plan. However, it is felt in the first instance it should focus on its own actions and contribution.

In order to support that work there are some principles and guidance sought from the Board in developing that work.

The first relates to the Council's own target to achieve Carbon neutrality. Many organisations have now set targets for when they hope to be carbon neutral. Of course such a target is not set in stone so the intention would be that as part of the Action Plan that target should be kept under review and opportunity be taken to bring it further forward if progress is good. It is therefore suggested to the Board that the Council set an initial target of 2040 to become carbon neutral. It is clear that this agenda will move quickly and technology around carbon reduction initiatives will be continually adapting. In addition it is likely that there will be external funds available to support these initiatives. It can be seen from the above paragraphs that the Council has already been successful in gaining access to such funding. It will need to have a clear Action Plan and worked up schemes in order to continue with that successful approach.

The second issue relates to the setting of initial priorities for the Council within that emerging plan. Data shows that from the Council's perspective the two areas that contribute the most carbon emissions are its buildings and its transport activities. If it is going to make further progress in reducing its carbon emissions then these are the two areas where action needs to be focussed. This does not mean other initiatives will not continue to be pursued but rather if capacity and resource is to be applied then it needs to be done where the greatest need is. Executive Board is asked to endorse those initial priority areas. It is also proposed that the third priority should be the continued investment in the Council's green infrastructure. As well as forming a major part of the Council's response to climate change the importance of the Council's green infrastructure has been further highlighted during the pandemic as a key contributor to the wider health and well-being of the Borough's community.

The Council started to measure its baseline for carbon emissions in 2006/07. In 2006/07, emissions stood at 26338 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. In 2019/20 emissions were 11354 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. For 2020/21, the overall emissions have reduced to 9770 tonnes, a further reduction of 13.9%. Meaning that since reduction efforts began in 2008, to date the Council has reduced its carbon footprint by a total of 43%. It would seem sensible to use the 2006/07 baseline as the point from which the Council measures its continued process. They may, of course, have to change if the Government determine a national methodology.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The contents of this report, the Council's Climate Change Emergency Motion and the development of the Strategy and Action Plan are part of the process of developing the Council's policy approach to this important agenda.

4.2 It is important that the Council sets a clear example within the Borough as part of its wider role of influencing others. This will be supported by a clear Strategy and Action Plan.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are clear resources implications in pursuing this objective which needs to be considered in the light of the considerable financial pressures the Council is under. That is not to say that much cannot be achieved with the resources the Council already has, as can be seen from the successful schemes outlined earlier. Indeed, in many ways the key to success here is to develop a "carbon challenge" to everything the Council does and to ensure that happens around all of its budget and investment decisions in a way that has not happened to date. There will undoubtedly be difficult

trade-offs that will have to take place as part of those considerations as the Council still has its statutory duties to perform and it will be that both available technology and cost may constrain some of the Council's ambitions. However, that will be no different to many other organisations who are pursuing that same carbon neutral goal.

- 5.2 The Council will also need to strike the right balance of producing strategies, actions, performance measurement initiatives etc. and making things happen. Any Strategy and Action Plan needs to be clear, short and understood by everyone in the organisation. It is worth stressing that whilst that work is in development it does not mean slowing down any of the existing projects described elsewhere in this report.

## 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

The Climate Change agenda has implications for all of the Council's priorities and it will be important for all Portfolio Holders to work closely with the Climate Change Portfolio Holder in developing initiatives and project to reduce Carbon emissions in their portfolios.

## 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

There are no specific risks associated with this report.

## 8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 There are no equality issues associated with this report.

## 9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

- 9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.