

REPORT TO: Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 21 September 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Planning, Policy and Transport

PORTFOLIO: Environment & Urban Renewal

SUBJECT: Climate Change Update

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Following the report presented at the last meeting, this report provides an update on activities relating to the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 2.1 **The Board receives the update on progress towards the Corporate Climate Change Action Plan 2022-2027 to be provided at the meeting; and**
- 2.2 **The Board endorses the set of priority actions set out in Section 5.0.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Action Plan for 2022-2027 provides a clear direction for the Council. It sets a target to be carbon neutral by 2040 which includes both short term & longer-term actions. It provides an initial focus on decarbonising energy use by buildings, transport, waste and enhancing the Borough's blue/green infrastructure. It also seeks to embed climate change in council decision-making & develop partnership working as a lead into a borough-wide approach to tackling climate change.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Carbon emission reductions to date

- 4.1 The Council has already taken significant action to reduce its carbon emissions. Since it started to measure its carbon emissions in 2006/2007 overall emissions have reduced in the Council's operations from 26,338 tonnes of CO₂ to 9,327 tonnes.

- 4.2 The Council was given guidelines by the Government in 2009, that public bodies would aim to reduce their carbon emissions by 30% of their 2009 carbon emission baseline by 2020. The Council calculated its baseline carbon emissions in 2009 as 26,825 carbon tonnes. In reporting year 2020, the Council had reduced its carbon emissions to 11,354 carbon tonnes. This was a reduction of 57%.
- 4.3 In 2017 the Government reset the baseline in the expectation that public bodies would reduce their carbon emissions by 50% by 2031. The Council's 2017 baseline was 14,811 carbon tonnes. In reporting year 2021/22, the Council had managed to reduce its carbon emissions to 9,327 tonnes. This is a reduction of 37%.
- 4.4 Projects that have contributed to these reductions are referenced within the Corporate Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for 2022-2027 that was published in April, 2022.
- 4.5 The Action Plan provides a framework for change, identifying some early actions and priorities and setting out ambitions over the short, medium and long term. This the first five-year action plan published by the Council and is viewed as an evidence based, living plan that will evolve as the Council responds to climate change.

4.6 Initial activities are progressing well. Recent examples include:

4.7 Electric Vehicle Charging

- 4.8 Following on from a successful 'Phase 1' implementation of 29 charge points (Appleton Village, Routledge St, Albert Rd, Halton Rd, Wellington St) in 2020/21, a 'Phase 2' is in the advanced stages of bid preparation. This is for a further 28 on street charger at proposed locations (Ashridge St, Wharford Lane, Mersey Rd, Thomas St, Hough Green centre).
- 4.9 At council buildings, an upgrade programme to install 22kw 'pay as you go' operated units in in progress. The network of private sector deployed chargers is also increasing with additions at workplaces/retail/leisure destinations/residential, with many of these secured through the planning process.

4.10 Embedding Climate Change into decision making

- 4.11 The Council has set out to embed climate change in its decision making process in a range of ways, this includes.
- The Council Leader has appointed a Portfolio Holder for Climate Change on the Council's Executive Board.
 - The Strategic Officer lead is a Strategic Director, and a Climate Change Advisory Group of officers has been established to advise the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change.

- The Action Plan has timetabled actions to further embed climate change considerations into the decision-making processes of the Council, its procurement and reviews of policies.

4.12 The Big Halton Forrest Project

- 4.13 Addressing carbon sequestration is a long term process, so it was agreed to initiate a step increase in tree planting as earlier as possible in the Action Plan. The result was the concept of The Big Halton Forrest.
- 4.14 Over the next eight years to 2030, the aim is to plant an additional 130,000 new trees across Halton above the regular annual planting of circa 1,500 trees. This will include council owned land and other partners, including eventually the wider community.
- 4.15 The current overall tree cover in Halton stands at just over 10%. The aim to increase it to at least 15% by 2040. In many parts of the borough, it is already well above this.
- 4.16 The first planting season will be the Autumn/Winter 2022/2023. The assembly of the funding and management of the project is underway, with the first year's proposals expected to be met.
- 4.17 Some dedicated web pages were published on the Council's web site in the Spring promoting the Forrest concept, which will be added to as resources allow.

4.18 Climate Change Web Pages

- 4.19 Whilst the Climate Change Action Plan is focussed primarily on reducing carbon emissions from the Council's operational activities, it is increasingly going to include activities that have a wider impact in addressing climate change in Halton. This will include activity with partners such as other public bodies, local businesses, and others.
- 4.20 To help keep people better informed on the Council's efforts to address climate change dedicated space within the Council website is being developed. The aim to provide a single location on the council website where actions on climate change can be found and where wider engagement can be encouraged in the future.
- 4.21 The provisional pages are planned to go live online in the autumn of 2022. As with Council web policy they will be kept as simple as possible to accommodate local downloading and accessibility.

4.22 Climate Change Training

- 4.23 Included within the Action Plan is a commitment to training for elected members and council officers. This is being progressed in a way to

minimise cost and will initially include a consultation with elected members and key council staff in late autumn, 2022.

4.24 Borough-Wide Projects Beyond Council Operations

4.25 There are a number of projects that the Council is facilitating to help address Climate Change. Those relating to private & social housing are an example and are reported below.

4.26 Home Energy Retrofit Schemes

4.27 Green Homes Grant

This grant has a value of £1.04 Million and has been secured to improve 129 homes (mainly homeowners and private rental sector). Delivery commenced in October 2021, closed to new applications 31 March 2022, with completion of all improvement measures by end of September 2022. In terms of a delivery update, as at week ending 19 August 2022:

- 95 homes works completed;
- 24 homes ongoing;
- Currently tracking that Halton spend at programme close will be £919,000.00, but this is not final.

Full analysis of delivery is due in October 2022. The current saving of around £121K against the allocation. This is due to resident cancellations and lower cost of measures installed in Halton compared to other parts of City-Region.

4.28 Sustainable Warmth Fund

This will pay for work on improving the energy efficiency of around 570 homes in Halton to make them warmer, help cut carbon emissions and reduce energy costs. £4.65 Million secured to improve 442 homes (solely homeowners and private rental sector). The Scheme launched for applications by Halton residents on 27 August 2022, with completion of all improvement measures by (current BEIS deadline) end of March 2023. Promotion of scheme is still being finalised, HBC press release issued 26 August 2022. Current planned activity includes attendance at the two Healthy & Active Ageing Week events:

- Thursday 22 September, Runcorn Shopping City;
- Monday 26 September, Widnes Market.

4.29 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (RP Led)

This fund is focussed on upgrading the energy performance of social rented housing stock , with delivery via Registered Providers. £1.47 Million has been secured to improve 147 homes. Delivery has commenced, with completion by March 2023. Examples include:

- Grangeway, Halton Housing £0.180m grant for showcase scheme of 18 homes in three flatted blocks;

- Murdishaw, Onward Homes £1.29m grant for eco-makeover of 129 bungalows as part of wider estate renewal strategy.

4.30 Solar Together

4.31 This is a 'group purchase' arrangement to reduce the costs of buying photovoltaics, battery storage and EV charging points for householders, SMEs and community groups. The scheme launches at the end of August and registration is free and open now at <https://solartogether.co.uk/lcr/landing>

4.32 Green Growth Projects in the Business & Public Sector

4.33 The Council has worked with local businesses over many years to help increase Jobs & investment in the borough and to facilitate regeneration schemes. Many of these schemes have helped address climate change.

4.34 The Council has also invested in its own solar energy and will continue to do so as part of its carbon reduction programme and is actively working with the private sector and Riverside College to develop a Green Growth Business Alliance.

4.35 The Council is also with the Liverpool City Region on the Hydrogen strategy for the region and with the Hynet project, which includes looking at carbon capture.

4.36 The next stage of wider partnership working will include closer working with other public bodies in Halton, who are also focussed on tackling climate change in their operations.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 It is vital that the Council sets out a direction and a commitment to reducing its carbon footprint. This has been done through the Climate Change Action Plan. However, at this stage there are many aspects of the plan which are either difficult to cost, or are indeed costly in themselves. A careful balance will always have to be struck between the Council's "carbon" ambitions and the requirements it has placed on it in delivering its statutory responsibilities. It is clear that significant resources will be required to help the Council reach its 2040 objective, much of which it does not have presently at its disposal. For these reasons, actions need to be prioritised in terms of resourcing, deliverability and cost. It is important to recognise that capacity issues within the Council are being examined to try to ensure priorities can be realised.

5.2 With the above in mind, the priority actions for the current period are considered to be:

- *Advancing housing retrofit schemes & associated skills and funding gaps*
- *Shaping planning policy to encourage developer 'green' builds*
- *Utilising biodiversity net gain to enhance local blue/green infrastructure*
- *Providing active travel options to encourage modal shift*
- *Advancing energy solutions in the public, business & residential sectors*

5.3 The purpose of defining priority actions is to focus resources and finance against the most deliverable interventions. The Action Plan is designed to be an organic document, and priorities will be revisited, as appropriate, where capacity, funding and technology allow for alternative outcomes to be delivered more readily.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 There is a risk that if the Council does not have a plan in place that it will miss opportunities to access the funding necessary to achieve its objectives.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 There are no equality and diversity issues associated with this report.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.