

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board
DATE: 24th January 2023
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
PORTFOLIO: Climate Change
SUBJECT: Energy / Carbon Reduction Update
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an update on related activities aimed at reducing the Council's impact on the environment and CO₂ emissions from Council activities.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report and the ongoing work be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Carbon Footprint

3.1 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.

3.2 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%.

3.3 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%.

3.4 In 2020/21, emissions were 9770 tonnes of CO₂. For 2021/22, the overall emissions have reduced to 9327 tonnes, a further reduction of 4.5%.

3.5	Emission from specific Sectors CO2 (Tonnes)	
	Fleet Transport	1181
	Business Mileage	170
	Street Lighting	1203
	Corporate & School Buildings	6773

4.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN**

4.1 In April 2022, the Council adopted an update Climate Change Strategy. The Action Plan covers the period 2022-2027 and provides a clear direction for the Council over the coming years. It sets a target to be carbon neutral by 2040, which includes both short-term and 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 and develop partnership working as a lead into a borough-wide approach to tackling climate change. Whilst the Council has successfully implemented a range of actions aimed at reducing its carbon footprint capacity, the financial resources to implement projects remains a key challenge.

5.0 **KEY PROJECTS COMPLETED OR COMMENCED DURING 2022**

5.1 **Buildings**

5.1.1 Work was completed at the DCBL Stadium, to replace the current gas boilers with air source heat pumps, replacing existing lighting fittings with new energy efficient LED lighting, and installing additional insulation.

5.1.2 The Council has approved plans to extend the existing Solar Farm at the former St Michael's Golf Course, 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 Depot and will allow Air Source Heat pumps to be installed at the Leisure Centre, which will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the building. The Council has approved funding and consultants have been appointed to support the development of a planning application for the extension and to undertake design work to enable bids to be invited during 2023.

5.1.3 The existing 1MW solar farm and roof top solar schemes at the DCBL Stadium, Brookvale and Rutland House continue to operate within expectations.

5.2 **Transport**

5.2.1 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.

5.2.2 This is for a further 28 on-street chargers at proposed locations (Ashridge St, Wharford Lane, Mersey Rd, Thomas St, Hough Green centre).

5.2.3 At Council buildings, an upgrade programme to install 22kw 'pay as you go' operated units is 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.

During 2022/23 analysis of how best to decarbonise the municipal fleet continued with the aim of reporting the way forward for the municipal fleet by December 2023. Given the significant costs involved and trends in the market, a considered approach was felt appropriate.

5.2.4 The LCR has its own Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) adopted in 2018, this has helped to inform how the LCR invests in cycling and walking across the region. Schemes are focussed on reducing the amount of short journeys made by car and replaced with cycle and walking journeys. The Strategy supports the transformation of local areas: change, which will tackle congestion, change which will extend opportunity to improve physical and mental health and change which will support the local economy. Halton has currently over 25km of cycle way / pedestrian surfacing. Officers are now preparing its own localised LCWIP plan to inform/advise the LCR and developers of the improvements and requirements to meet the growing needs of the borough following guidance from Active England. This plan will enable a long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks, over what will at least a 10-year period, and help to increase the number of trips made by bike or on foot.

5.3 **Climate Change Awareness**

5.3.1 The Council has set out to embed climate change in its decision making process in a range of ways, this includes:

- The appointment of a Portfolio Holder for Climate Change on the Council's Executive Board.
- The establishment of a Climate Change Advisory Group of officers has been established to advise the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change.
- From February 2023, all Board reports will include a climate change implications section.

- The Council's climate change action plan includes a number of actions in Procurement, which will address how purchasing & contracts need to adjust to help tackle climate change.

5.3.2 The Council's Training Team is in the process of developing an e-learning Climate Change course for Officers and Members. The short course is divided into short modules covering the global and local impact of climate change, what action Halton is taking, and what can staff and members do to help?

5.3.3 The training is designed to be interactive and encourage staff and members to consider small changes in behaviour to help them reduce their own carbon footprint and to better perform their duties as elected members or officers in tackling Climate Change. It is envisaged as resources permit, that further training will be developed along existing sources of information or training via the Local Government Association, professional bodies etc.

5.3.4 To help keep people better informed on the Council's efforts to address climate change, a dedicated space within the Council website was implemented towards the end of 2022. The aim is 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. The Civic Magazine "Inside Halton" and other media are also being utilised to inform the Halton community.

5.4 **Open Spaces**

5.4.1 The Big Halton Forest Project was launched during 2022. Addressing carbon sequestration is a long-term process, so it was agreed to initiate a step increase in tree planting as early as possible in the Action Plan. The result was the concept of The Big Halton Forest.

5.4.2 Up 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.

5.4.3 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. To date the Council has secured around £300k towards the projects from the following sources:

- LCR Community Environment Fund - awarded circa £30k for planting trees and bushes at Factory Lane, Widnes and the new adjacent cemetery.
- INEOS Environment Fund - secured £120k to be spent over 5

years as general support for the project.

- DEFRA Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF). The fund is to enable more trees to be planted, particularly in winter seasons 2023/24 and 2024/25. Awarded £150k to be spent across those 2 years to meet staffing costs for 1.5 FTE Officers to support the project.

5.4.4 Securing applicants for the staffing of some posts will be challenging given trends in the landscaping/woodlands sector, but efforts are also being made during 2023 to include climate change apprenticeships within this part of the Council as part of a wider application of apprenticeships within the authority and external partnership working.

5.4.5 Tree planting discussions began in 2022 with some external partners who have land and/or resources of their own to further increase tree planting and these will continue in 2023. Local housing providers and schools are obvious examples where increases in tree cover can be secured, along with other external partners and every relevant planning application will be considered for improvements as well, alongside bio-diversity nett gain. Further external funding is planned to ensure this 8-year project will be successful.

5.5 **Planning and Development**

5.5.1 It was agreed as part of the Council's climate change action plan, to review and prepare new climate change related guidance for developers to address planning applications. This will continue during 2023, with a view to having the guidance in place by summer, 2023. This will include encouraging Bio Diversity Nett Gain until the relevant government legislation is in place.

5.6 **Street Lighting**

5.6.1 The Street Lighting LED upgrade programme is continuing. There are 2500 columns remaining to upgrade, with around 90% of the Borough now completed. Orders have been raised and work is in progress for around 600 of these columns, which will be completed before the end of March 23. The remaining 1900 columns will be carried out during the 23/24 financial year.

6.0 **BOROUGH-WIDE PROJECTS BEYOND COUNCIL OPERATIONS**

6.1 There are a number of projects that the Council Working in partnership with the Liverpool City Region Combines Authority) is facilitating to help address Climate Change relating to private and social housing, these include:

6.1.1 **Green Homes Grant**

This grant had an initial value of £0.728 million, which was increased to £1.04 million (in March 2022) with a target 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. The final estimated grant spend being £0.913 million, with 103 properties improved. In terms of a delivery update, energy refit outputs include:

- 75 building fabric measures installed, including insulation to loft (52), underfloor (9), cavity walls (3) and windows and doors (11).
- 94 renewable energy technologies installed including solar panels (76) and air source heat pumps (18).

6.1.2 **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. £4.65m secured to improve 442 homes (solely homeowners and private rental sector). The Scheme launched for applications by Halton residents on 27th August 2022, with completion of all improvement measures by (current BEIS deadline) end of March 2023.

6.1.3 **Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund**

This fund is focussed on upgrading the energy performance of social rented housing stock, with delivery via Registered Providers. Though Wave 1 of the fund, £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.

In November 2022, a collaborative city-region bid was submitted to Wave 2, with 76 homes included within Halton. Separately one Registered Provider submitted a Wave 2 bid, which included approximately 140 homes in Halton. Government decision on this grant is anticipated in March 2023.

6.1.4 **Solar Together**

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 launched at the end of August.

As at December 2022, 536 Halton residents had registered for the scheme with 91 agreeing to install solar PV.

7.0 **GREEN GROWTH PROJECTS**

7.1 The Council is working with the Liverpool City Region on the Hydrogen Strategy for the Region and with the Hynet project, which includes looking at carbon capture. As part of this, the Council made representation to The UK Net Zero Hydrogen Fund consultation to promote the strengths, assets and potential of the Borough to contribute to the UK Government Ten Point Plan for a green industrial revolution.

7.2 Work began in 2022 to develop links with partners such as Halton College and housing providers to try to develop local solutions to the skills and other capacity issues Halton and the wider region face in addressing climate change, particularly in the construction & energy sectors. This work will continue during 2023.

7.3 If there is to be an accelerated programme of housing & building retrofitting and maintenance of new builds, increasing the skills capacity locally has to be improved. Addressing skill shortages and the retraining of existing workforces will include the contribution of a programme of climate change apprenticeships. An evaluation of this will be undertaken as part of both council workforce needs and wider external partnership working during 2023.

8.0 **UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF)**

8.1 Halton's Delivery Plan against the UKSPF allocation includes a Green, Safe, Resilient Communities strand. Halton has been allocated funding for this strand of £301,059 over the next three years.

8.2 The UKSPF fund will help to deliver some key actions in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan, drawing in local communities:

- Improving the Borough's green / blue infrastructure through the Big Halton Forest Initiative.
- Encourage local groups and residents to participate in and deliver grassroots, sustainable initiatives leading to the

development of a Community Climate Partnership.

- Building Healthy Homes through food security and energy advice and improvements and contributing to a Green Growth Business Alliance to secure the local economic benefits from the transition to Net Zero.
- Accelerating the uptake of sustainable modes of transport into our Town Centres.

9.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The approach and policies adopted to date are consistent with overall objective in the Corporate Plan.

10.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Investment in energy efficient measures has the potential to reduce the Council's energy costs, reduce carbon emission and generate future income streams for the Council.

11.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

11.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None identified.

11.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Encouraging investment in energy-efficiency will benefit from lower carbon emissions, job creation, supply chain development and increased competitiveness and security of energy supply.

11.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Reducing CO2 can bring about improved air quality.

11.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

11.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The transition to a low carbon economy can support the development of the local economy. Ensuring that future economic growth is decoupled from the consumption of fossil fuels and the inevitable carbon emissions.

12.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

12.1 Individual schemes would have to be assessed on an individual basis to develop risk registers for each measure.

13.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

13.1 None identified.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.