

**REPORT TO:** Corporate Policy and Performance Board  
**DATE:** 21 January 2025  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Assistant to the Chief Executive  
**PORTFOLIO:** Climate Change  
**SUBJECT:** Climate Change 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 reducing 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 7987 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 2023/24, the Council had managed to reduce its carbon emissions to 7987 tonnes. This is a reduction of 53.9%.

3.4 In 2022/23 emissions were 8740 tonnes of CO2. For 2023/24, the overall emissions have reduced to 7987 tonnes, a further annual reduction of 8.6%.

3.5 The above figures do need to take account of the fact that since the Council started to measure its carbon footprint in 2006/07 and

Academy Schools are no longer accounted for in the figures and Care Homes are now included in the figures and the ongoing decarbonisation of the grid has a beneficial impact on the figures.

3.6 Emission from specific Sectors CO2 (Tonnes)

Fleet Transport	1147
Business Mileage	203
Street Lighting	1044
Corporate Buildings	3495
Schools	2098

3.7 In all areas, emissions have reduced with the exception of Street Lighting and business miles which increased slightly.

4.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN**

4.1 The current Climate Change Action Plan covers the period 2022-2027 and provides a clear direction for the Council during this period. It sets a target to be net zero by 2040 and includes both short-term and longer-term actions.

4.2 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 seeks in the long term to develop partnership working as a lead into a borough-wide approach to tackling climate change.

4.3 Whilst the Council has successfully implemented a range of actions aimed at reducing its carbon footprint capacity and the financial resources to implement projects remains a key challenge.

4.4 It should be noted that while we continue to use fossil fuels for road transport the amount of CO2 reduced but a small Working Group has been set up to develop plans to transition the fleet from petrol and diesel to alternative fuels. Decarbonisation of the vehicle fleet will be extremely financially challenging firstly in terms of installing the necessary infrastructure and secondly acquisition of the appropriate vehicles/plant and machinery to ensure the road to net zero does not have a negative impact on operational efficiency. There is also a need to seek transitional funding from central government.

4.5 The Council does not have a dedicated Climate Change Team but each area in the Climate Change Plan has a Senior Officer Lead. There is currently no dedicated budget for Climate Change and the

Council seeks to secure funding from service budgets, external funding or utilising income streams that have been generated from the renewable energy schemes the Council has implemented.

- 4.6 The internal Funding Team have undertaken an analysis of various funding streams that may be available for each of the actions. In early 2025 further analysis will be undertaken to assess the scope for submitting bids to various funds.

## 5.0 **KEY ACTIVITIES**

### **Buildings**

- 5.1 The Council have undertaken 14 feasibility studies on Council Building to assess the decarbonisation process. A bid has been submitted to Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund for funding to cover refurbishments at Picow Farm Depot, Runcorn Town Hall, and Kingsway Learning Centre. The measures proposed include air source heat pumps, roof top solar, LED Lighting and roof insulation. The bid is part of a Liverpool City Region Bid and the outcome will be known around May 2025. If successful the Council will be required to make a contribution towards the work but as yet the details of this are to be determined.
- 5.2 The new Leisure Centre is due to open in February 2025. The new Centre will operate on air sources heat pumps and has LED lighting throughout the building. Both measures will contribute to the building using far less carbon than the former Leisure Centre. It is anticipated carbon savings based on the assumed consumption against the actual consumption at Kingsway is 190 tonnes per annum.
- 5.3 The Council has identified a further a further 24 sites for the suitability of Solar PV. The initial study shows estimate that some 2,259kWp of solar PV could be installed on the roofs subject to roof studies and grid connections. The total cost of the programme would be circa £2.27m excludes any supervision and clerk of works activity that the Council may undertake at each site.
- 5.4 Based upon the assumptions made in terms of the use of energy on site and exports sales, inflation, and debt repayments the programme would have a 14.3% IRR and an NPV of £3.33M after all costs. The Council is in discussion with the Liverpool City region about a procurement exercise in Spring 2025.
- 5.5 LED lighting retrofit projects have been undertaken at the following buildings:- Runcorn Town Hall (main offices and Civic building), Rutland House, The Stadium, Municipal Building (except floors 2,3 & 4), Halton Lea Library, Halton Direct Link, Widnes Market, Grangeway & Ditton Community Centre's. Further schemes will be

undertaken as funding becomes available.

5.6 The Council has submitted a planning application 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 provide a renewal source energy for the Air Source Heat pumps to be installed at the Leisure Centre, which will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the building. A procurement exercise will commence in 2025.

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

5.8 Feasibility work is ongoing in respect of various options for rationalising our main office accommodation. A report will be presented to Council in 2025 with recommendations.

## 6.0 **ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGERS**

6.1 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) submitted a two-stage funding bid to the Energy Savings Trust (EST), who provide Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) administrative and technical support to the funding body, the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV).

6.2 Following a successful bid review process, the LCRCA was awarded the following amounts:

- £737,000 LEVI Capability funding;
- 90% of £9,647,000 LEVI Capital funding on behalf of the LCR LAs; and the remaining 10% LEVI capital funding will be awarded on approval of the draft LCR LEVI Invitation to Tender (ITT) documents and a draft LEVI contract.

6.3 LEVI Capital funding must be allocated to primarily on-street low power (22kW and below) Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) for the benefit of properties that do not have a drive or garage where a privately owned off-highway EVCI could be installed. This is likely to be terraced streets and blocks of flats.

6.4 The LEVI funding award will be used to leverage private investment which will have less restrictions and could see the delivery of more low powered EVCI as well as high powered EVCI. This will allow a variety of EVCI use cases to be met.

6.5 The LCRCA LEVI programme team is currently preparing the draft ITT and draft contract in line with the approach set out above. The

LCRCA continues to work with each LA to refine potential new locations for the EVCI. Mapping will be included within the ITT pack.

6.6 The expected LEVI programme timescales are as follows:

- November 2024 to January 2025 – Energy Saving Trust, CENEX & Office for Zero Emission Vehicles ITT & Contract Document Review & Approval period
- February 2025 – Launch ITT
- August 2025 – Award of contract
- Autumn 2025 – EVI starting to be installed

7.0 **UKSPF**

7.1 The Council has been allocated £301k of UKSPF funding to be spent over a three year period. To date £150k has been committed of the following projects.

7.2 A number of Green Grants totalling £18k have been issued to local Community Groups. Recipients included Four Estates, Wonky Garden, Clifton Road Allotment Association, Halton Village Millenium Green, Greenfingers Gardening Group, St John and St Paul's Transform Widnes, Friends of Hale Village, Preston Brook Pre-School, Grangeway Community Forum and Forget Me Not Garden.

7.3 Outcomes from the Grants included:

- Public Space improved = 17,000m<sup>2</sup>
- Green Space improved = 20,712m<sup>2</sup>
- Seed bombs Planted = 100+

7.4 A grant of £30k has been provided to Hazelhurst Studios to install Solar panels at their premises.

7.5 An improvement scheme to create a Green Corridor at Riddings Lane has bene implemented. Flood alleviation and lighting to Riddings Lane subway make it more accessible and safer for local residents. The scheme includes a mural designed by the local school. The cost of the scheme was £67k and improves an area that previously suffered from anti-social behaviour.

7.6 Site clearance have been completed to enable a Community Garden to be developed in Kingsway.

7.7 A contribution of £10k has been made to the Big Forest Project. Tree Planting for the Big Halton Forest - £10k

7.8 A contribution of £15k was made to the Eco Festival at Victoria Park held in August 2024.

## 8.0 **PROCUREMENT**

8.1 All published tenders now include Social, Environmental and Economic considerations and in terms of the locally Based Supply Chain there are Increase value thresholds in the Constitution to support local trading opportunities to SME's and VCSE's.

8.2 The Council is starting to see offers in tenders around social value around Environmental measures and these will be monitored over the coming year.

## 9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS**

9.1 The Council continues to embedded climate change in its decision-making process through the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change on the Council's Executive Board, the Climate Change Advisory Group of officers has been established to advise the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and through Board reports include a climate change implications section.

9.2 The Council has launched an e-learning Climate Change course.

9.3 The 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.

9.4 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. To date over 100 members of staff have undertaken the course. Continued promotion of the course will take place in the coming months.

9.5 The Council website includes 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 Council took part in the Strategy Room Programme which involved engagement with the public to identify views and policies that they would support around net zero. The Council ran 10 sessions during the summer and autumn with up to 12 people in each session.

9.6 Feedback showed strong public support for policies energy efficiency in homes, community renewable energy schemes, locally sourced food production and improved public transport.

9.7 The Council will consider the findings from the sessions in revising climate change strategy updates.

## 10.0 PUBLIC HEALTH

10.1 Sustainability training is now integrated into the registrar training programme during public health rotations. This training promotes climate resilience by facilitating public health professionals to identify climate-related events that could influence future strategic and operational planning across healthcare systems.

10.2 Across the public health footprint there are multiple strategies which showcase the public health directorates commitment of decarbonisation and increasing sustainability. One key example is the Infant Feeding Strategy. By increasing local breastfeeding rates and offering more community tailored support:

- Resource consumption and waste is reduced
- Decrease the use of manufacturing items thus impacting large scale manufacturing and its harmful environmental impacts
- Building community climate resilience by not relying on clean water and other manufactured consumables for infant feeding.
- Supporting water conservation as breastfeeding lessens the impact on water resources.
- Promotes healthier populations resulting in less large scale manufactured goods required within healthcare systems.

10.3 Strategies and actions to reduce carbon footprint are being examined during commissioning of new contracts into 2024/25. Approaches to reducing carbon footprint will also be assessed as part of performance monitoring of existing commissioned services. The same considerations will be applied to internal programmes – specifically work carried out by the Health Improvement Team.

10.4 All commissioned services have sustainability planning embedded into service delivery plans. Sustainability assessments will form part of 25/26 delivery planning for commissioned services.

10.5 The Liverpool City Region ECO4 Flexible Eligibility Joint Statement of Intent was signed by Halton in September 2022. The agreement allows us to go beyond the standard eligibility to target those in need in areas of deprivation or who suffer from certain health conditions. In quarter 1 and 2 (24/25), 84 applications have been processed, 64 of which have been submitted to Ofgem.

10.6 The Environmental Health team continues to carry out ongoing regulation of private rented properties, taking action where standards are not being met, and signposting landlords to grants (etc) for improved insulation and heat retention of properties. The Environmental Health and Public Health teams are involved in the formulation of the Council's updated Housing Strategy.

10.7 The Council has previously approved the revocation of our two air quality management areas (declared in relation to levels of NO<sub>2</sub> which have been within standard levels for a number of years). The Council are still required to report on air quality and pollution levels across the Borough and implement an air quality strategy.

## 11.0 **ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING**

### **Big Halton Forest Update**

11.1 The Halton Big Forest supports the Council's climate change agenda in a number of important ways. It seeks to increase overall tree canopy in the borough, with the benefits that this brings, and increase awareness of the importance of trees through projects involving local people and schools. The overall ambition is to plant 130,000 trees, mostly native species, in the borough by 2030.

11.2 By spring 2025 approximately 70,000 trees will have been planted in total since the project started in 2022. The 2024/25 planting season will see the largest number planted in any one year so far, with approximately 45,000 trees being planted. Funding for this year has come via:

- Defra/Forestry Commission (Local Authorities Tree Fund). £340k.
- Highways Agency 3Million Trees Project – supply of 15'000 whips.
- Halton's INEOS/Viridor Energy From Waste fund. £20k.

### **Food Waste Collections**

11.3 Research has identified that the food waste element of the household waste stream is second only to textiles in terms of carbon intensity. This makes it a high priority waste stream to help maximise recycling and reduce carbon. Recycling of food also has the potential to add up to a 5% increase in the Council's recycling rate.

11.4 The Environment Act 2021 introduces a requirement for all local authorities in England to provide a separate weekly collection of food waste to all households. As per the 'simpler recycling' consultation response from the UK Government issued in October 2023, this collection service needs to be in place by the 31st March 2026.

11.5 Halton is working collaboratively with Liverpool City Region Local Authority Partners to prepare for the introduction of food waste collections from April 2026. This includes the joint procurement of food waste collection vehicles and household 'caddies'; the capital costs of which will be funding by monies provided by the



Government. The Council is also working with LCR Partners on a joint regional communications campaign to support the introduction of the new collection service in 2026. As well as encouraging participation with the new collection service, messages to encourage food waste prevention will form a key element of communications to Halton's residents.

- 11.6 As outlined in The Environment Act, the preferred method of treating food waste is by way of anaerobic digestion (AD). Firstly, the use of the AD process in place of current residual waste treatment processes reduces carbon emissions. Additionally, the production of biogas or biomethane can be used as a low carbon fuel for power, heating or vehicle fuel. The latter option provides the future opportunity to fuel collection vehicles, as well as the return of primary nutrients to agriculture. Officers are currently exploring options for securing contractual arrangement for the future treatment of collected food waste.

### **Recycling**

- 11.7 The Council's current recycling rate is 36% and has plateaued at this level for a number of years. There are a range of significant drivers for transforming how we manage waste and resources to help improve recycling performance, including;
- the ongoing financial pressure on the Council's budgets – recycling of waste is less costly than disposing of it so increasing recycling tonnages and decreasing the amount of residual waste sent for treatment can help reduce the Council's costs associated with dealing with waste;
  - the Council's legal requirement to deliver the Government's Simpler Recycling policy; including the collection of an extended range of materials for recycling; and
  - the Council's, and LCR Partners', long-term aspiration to become a zero-waste region; preventing all avoidable waste, keeping resource in circulation for as long as possible and contributing to a 'net zero' carbon goal.

Achieving our aims may require changes to how we collect and treat waste. Work is underway, jointly with LCR Partners, to assess and consider future collection and treatment options, in collaboration with expert waste management consultants.

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

- 11.8 Consultation on the draft Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document took place in the summer and closed at the end of September, comments from statutory and public consultees are being reviewed and a mitigation where appropriate will be suggested and shared with internal stakeholders for comment. Due to staffing

levels it is anticipated the documents will be finalised in spring 25 and taken to Executive Board for adoption.

12.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 The approach and policies adopted to date are consistent with overall objective in the Corporate Plan. All Directorates will be required to include KPI's in their business plans from 2025 linked to the climate change action plan.

The identification of sites for biodiversity net gain commenced in 2024 and will be included in the online climate change action plan as soon as it's completed in 2025.

13.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 Investment in energy efficient measures has the potential to reduce the Council's energy costs, reduce carbon emission and generate future income streams or the Council. In developing key themes included in directorate plans, the principles of Best Value will be factored into the prioritisation of interventions as contained in key corporate strategies, for example, the Council's Climate Change Action Plan

13.2 A funding matrix has now been applied to the climate change action plan which includes a traffic light system and the principle of 'funding fed not funding led' being applied. This will help focus on priorities and takes into context the council's current financial situation.

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

14.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

Reducing CO2 can bring about improved air quality.

14.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

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

14.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

None identified.

14.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

None identified.

14.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

The actions within this report support the Council's response to the environment and climate emergency by promoting energy efficiency; limiting/eliminating fossil fuel use for heat, power and transport; limiting/eliminating waste and encouraging re-use of resources and encouraging procurement of local suppliers.

14.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

None identified.

15.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

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

16.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

16.1 None identified.

17.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

17.1 See section 14.5.

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

18.1 None under the meaning of the Act.