



Northumberland

County Council

CABINET

11 JUNE 2019

RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Report of: Paul Johnston, Interim Executive Director of Place

Cabinet Member: Councillor Peter Jackson, Leader

Purpose of report

To seek Cabinet approval to the Council's draft Statement of Intent in response to declaring a climate change emergency and agreement to the next steps in developing a subsequent action plan.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- **acknowledges the significant progress made to date by the Council in responding to climate change;**
- **agrees to declare a climate emergency;**
- **commits to halving the carbon footprint of the County Council by 2025, with this target being kept under annual review with the ambition of continually improving its pace and scale;**
- **pledges to work with the Government to make Northumberland carbon neutral by 2030 whilst appreciating that this will require a concerted national shift in behaviours and significant technological advancements;**
- **produces a comprehensive and costed Action Plan for the next 3 years that clearly demonstrates the initial phase of delivery by which the Council will meet its above carbon reduction management commitment and work toward the wider carbon neutrality pledge;**

- **maintains oversight of delivery through regular progress reporting and the full engagement of the cross-party Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee;**
- **agrees to expand the existing officer Climate Change Steering Group responsible for developing and delivering the Action Plan to include representation from other relevant partner organisations;**
- **maintains the Council’s leadership in responding to climate change with the suite of tangible, practical actions being complemented within the Action Plan with clear steps aimed at:**
 - **raising staff awareness as to the importance of this agenda and the changes it will bring to how we currently operate; and**
 - **defining how best to engage the wider community in its ongoing development and delivery**

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to all of the priorities included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021.

Key issues

In 2015, the UK Government signed the Paris Agreement as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It marked a major step in tackling climate change by strengthening the commitments to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

To meet this commitment, the Government set five-yearly carbon budgets which currently run until 2032. Four years on, the Government asked the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC) to reassess the targets based on the carrying out a detailed analysis as to the impact on global warming of each sector of the economy. This Committee has now recommended that the Government should enshrine in law the target of the UK reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

This report and associated Statement of Intent sets out the Council’s commitment and approach in maximising its contribution to this process of decarbonisation.

BACKGROUND

1. In 2015, the UK Government signed the Paris Agreement as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It marked a major step in tackling climate change by strengthening the commitments to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. This went further than the current UK Climate Change Act and makes a national low carbon economy an absolute necessity to comply with the Agreement.
2. To meet this commitment, the Government set five-yearly carbon budgets which currently run until 2032. These restrict the amount of greenhouse gas that the UK can legally emit in a five year period with the overall target being a reduction in emissions of 57% on 1990 levels.
3. Four years on, the Government asked the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC) to reassess the UK's long-term emissions targets based on the carrying out a detailed analysis as to the impact on global warming of each sector of the economy.
4. The subsequent *Net Zero* report recommends that the Government should legislate as soon as possible to ensure that the UK reaches net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This is considered achievable with known technologies, alongside improvements in people's lives, and within the expected economic cost that Parliament accepted when it legislated the existing 2050 target for an 80% reduction from 1990. However, it is also clear that it will only be possible if stable and well-designed policies to reduce emissions further are introduced across the economy without delay.

Council's Statement of Intent

5. Within this, the County Council fully acknowledges that it has a significant role to play in maximising its contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions - both in reducing its own carbon footprint and in promoting and facilitating wider behaviour change through its local leadership.
6. The attached Statement of Intent sets out the commitment and approach the Council will take to ensure its contribution is successfully maximised - both in terms of reducing its own carbon footprint and in acting as a community leader and place shaper.
7. To this end, it outlines:
 - the Council's commitment to accelerate and expand its programme of investment and behaviour change so that by 2025, its carbon footprint will have

been reduced by 50% from the 2010 baseline - with this target being kept under annual review with the ambition of continually improving its pace and scale; and

- the Council’s commitment to work with the Government to achieve carbon neutrality for the county of Northumberland by 2030, whilst appreciating that this will require a concerted national shift in behaviours and significant technological advancements.

Next steps

8. The Statement of Intent obviously sets out the medium and long term intent of the Council. However, it has to be underpinned by a tangible and comprehensive Action Plan that sets out a costed set of actions that the Council will deliver over the next 3 years. It is proposed that this is prepared over the next six months.
9. The development of this Action Plan will be facilitated through the officer-based Climate Change Steering Group which is already in place and operational. Given the scope of this work, it is further proposed that this Steering Group should be expanded to include representatives from other relevant partner organisations. These will initially include: Northumbria Healthcare; Environment Agency; Northumberland National Park; Northumberland Association of Local Councils; and Northumberland VCS Assembly - with others being added and/or consulted as considered appropriate. The work of the Steering Group will be reported regularly to the cross-party Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and to Cabinet.
10. Finally, in recognition that the Action Plan will require both Council staff and residents to change and adopt new ways of working, it is proposed that the Action Plan should include specific proposals aimed at raising awareness of the issues involved and securing constructive engagement in the subsequent delivery of the Action Plan.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy	Responding to climate change is central to the future of the county’s quality of life and as such is fully consistent with the Council’s Corporate Plan
Finance and value for money	The Statement of Intent outlines issues and potential actions that have financial implications. Some of these are already built into revenue/capital budgets as appropriate with the forthcoming Action Plan will provide more details of any additional spend requirements
Legal	n/a

Procurement	The approach by which we procure our goods and services has a role to play in the Council's response to climate change - the implications of changes to our current approach will be outlined in the forthcoming Action Plan.
Human Resources	n/a
Property	A significant part of the Council's carbon footprint relates to the operation of our estate, particularly in terms of decarbonising heat. Any additional measures deemed necessary to meet the Council's carbon reduction management commitment will be detailed in the forthcoming Action Plan
Equalities	(Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Risk Assessment	This report recognises that there are considerable risks associated with ongoing global warming and as such accelerated steps in responding to this need to be taken at a national and local level.
Crime & Disorder	n/a
Customer Consideration	The forthcoming Action Plan will outline proposals for how the Council will engage residents in tangibly supporting and taking responsibility for the contribution they can make to reducing carbon emissions.
Carbon reduction	The central purpose of this report is to outline the approach the Council will lead and promote an ongoing process of carbon reduction
Wards	ALL

Background papers:

None

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	initials
Monitoring Officer/Legal	LH
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	AS
Relevant Executive Director	PJ
Chief Executive	DL
Portfolio Holder(s)	PJ

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