

## Full Council 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Tackling Climate Change across North Northamptonshire</b>
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### List of Appendices

#### Appendix A – Climate Change Route Map

##### 1. Purpose of Report

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- 1.1. To provide Council with an update, following the first report to Council in July 2021, on the work being undertaken to improve the organisation's commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030. The work includes the development of a Climate Change Route Map (attached as Appendix 1) that builds on the previous Climate Change Framework, and was endorsed by the Climate Change, Environment and Growth Executive Advisory Panel in late 2021.
- 1.2. Further work will continue throughout 2022 including the creation of a Carbon Management Action Plan that will detail, and have costed, the actions needed to ensure the 2030 target is met.

##### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1. North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) adopted a framework and action plan (developed by the Shadow Authority in March 2021) and declared a Climate and Environment Emergency (July 2021) as first steps in its strategic journey on climate change mitigation.
- 2.2. As part of this declaration a commitment was made to develop a Climate Change Action Plan for the Council as soon as reasonably practicable, setting out the earliest date that North Northamptonshire Council, and the area as a whole, can be carbon neutral.
- 2.3. Progress has been made and reported into the Climate, Growth and Environment Executive Advisory Panel throughout 2021 and into 2022. At the

Full Council meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> February NNC also agreed to a significant and specific budget of £1million funding over the next three years to tackle climate change. It is expected that elements of this funding will be used to develop a carbon management action plan and establish a Climate Change and Environment strategy.

- 2.4. A Climate Change Route Map (attached at Appendix 1) details a range of activities that are either happening now or will be undertaken throughout 2022 including the development and agreement of NNC's own carbon baseline output and a wider carbon management action plan to reduce this down by the 2030 deadline.

### **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1. It is recommended that Council:

- a) Agree the current Climate Change Route Map (Appendix 1) and the actions contained within it.
- b) Publishes its carbon baseline figure once this is established.
- c) Request that the Carbon Management Action Plan be reported back to Executive later in 2022.

- 3.2. Reason for Recommendations –

It is important that NNC shows leadership across the wider North Northamptonshire area in its commitment to tackling climate change and improving the environment. By publishing its own carbon baseline figures and action plan to reduce this, the Council will demonstrate leadership and provide examples for reducing carbon footprints.

- 3.3. Alternative Options Considered – NNC could decide not to progress actions around Climate Change and wider environmental activity and similarly choose not to measure its carbon emissions and develop a carbon management action plan. To do this would show a lack of leadership and organisational-wide commitment. This is not a viable option as it would be abandoning the Climate and Environment Emergency commitment made in July 2021 and goes against the commitments and objectives within the wider Corporate Strategy.

### **4. Report Background**

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- 4.1. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s Special Report, published in October 2018, stated that there was just twelve years to limit global warming to 1.5°C. This can only be achieved with ambitious action from national and local government, the private sector, and local communities, and

requires that CO2 emissions fall from their 2010 levels by 45% by 2030, reaching net zero by 2045.

- 4.2. All governments (national, regional, and local) have a duty to limit the negative impacts of climate breakdown, for the benefit of the population for which they are responsible. Therefore, UK Councils need to pursue ambitious reduction targets and seek to achieve carbon neutrality as quickly as possible.
- 4.3. At a local level, whatever NNC can deliver as an organisation and landowner, as the deliverer of services and as an employer and educator, is small in proportion to what the whole community can deliver, working together or in tandem.
- 4.4. The Council adopted a framework and action plan (developed by the Shadow Authority in March 2021) and declared a Climate and Environment Emergency (July 2021) as first steps in its strategic journey on climate change mitigation. As part of this declaration, a commitment was made to develop a Climate Change Action Plan and to bring this to Council as soon as is reasonably practicable, setting out the earliest date that North Northamptonshire Council and the area as a whole can be carbon neutral, and establishing targets to meet that date.
- 4.5. In February 2022 NNC committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Council at its meeting in February also agreed to a significant and specific budget of £1million funding over the next three years to tackle climate change. It is expected that elements of this funding will be used to develop a carbon management action plan and establish a Climate Change and Environment strategy.
- 4.6. Throughout 2021 and into 2022, regular activities and work have been reported into the Climate Change, Environment and Growth Executive Advisory Panel as evidence of how climate change is being tackled in the area. Examples of the topics covered include:
  - Regular updates on the development of the Bus Strategy for North Northamptonshire
  - Opportunities to input into the Active Travel activity and specifically the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans
  - Air quality results across North Northamptonshire and plans to further improve the work in this area
  - Shaping the key commitments and priorities relating to climate change, sustainability, and the environment within the Corporate Plan
  - Activity on NNC's approach to tree planting and the wider work supporting the Queen's Green Canopy
  - the planned development and implementation of electric vehicle charging points across North Northamptonshire
  - an update on the successful Community Renewal Fund projects that have a specific focus on climate and net zero activity
  - an overview of proposed LED street lighting and alternative lighting solutions

- Progress updates on Carbon Literacy Training and future commissioned work to develop a carbon baseline figure for NNC and a wider carbon management action plan

4.7. On 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021, NNC also hosted its first Climate Change Conference.



4.8. A range of speakers and organisations were involved including the University of Northampton, Liberty Charge, Voi, Chelveston Renewable Energy Park as well as local speakers from Brightwayz, River Nene Regional Park, Bulwick Estates and NNC.

4.9. The conference was held virtually to minimise any impact on the environment and attracted over 300 views.

#### 4.10. **Carbon Literacy training**

4.11. Currently NNC is undertaking Carbon Literacy training for all 78 elected members plus an initial 50 staff members in the organisation. Speak Carbon, an organisation formally accredited by the Carbon Literacy Trust, have been commissioned to deliver this training.

4.12. Carbon Literacy training will give NNC members and staff all the latest scientific and policy positions on the Climate Emergency in the UK, an awareness of the current and future impacts across North Northamptonshire and the tools to lead significant emission reduction activities throughout Council operations and across the communities we serve.

4.13. The training will be rolled out in March and May 2022. The remainder of the workforce will also undertake this training and it will be embedded into

induction programmes for new starters to ensure NNC becomes an accredited Carbon Literacy organisation

#### 4.14. **Climate Change Route Map**

- 4.15. A Climate Change Route Map (attached at Appendix 1) has been developed and considered by the Climate Change, Environment and Growth Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) in November 2021. This built on the previous Climate Change Framework and Action Plan developed by the Shadow Authority in March 2021. This Route Map has been further updated and details a range of activities that are either happening now or will be undertaken throughout 2022 including the development and agreement of NNC's own carbon baseline output and a wider carbon management action plan to reduce this down by the 2030 deadline.
- 4.16. For NNC to progress a range of carbon reduction actions it is important it first establishes accurately what its current carbon baseline position is. This will be done after its first full year of operation, therefore post 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.
- 4.17. NNC is currently commissioning some specialist advice to enable this figure to be established as well as developing a wider Carbon Management and Action Plan. It is proposed once both pieces of work are concluded, they are reported on with the baseline figure being published on our website and the Action Plan coming back to Executive for formal agreement.
- #### 4.18. **2030 commitment to be carbon neutral**
- 4.19. On 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022 NNC announced its commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030. It was able to do this based on some broad thinking from specialist officers and in consultation with the Executive member for Climate and Green Environment by considering its approach to reducing Scope 1 emissions (gas, and other fuels consumed in buildings and fleet vehicles) and Scope 2 emissions (purchased electricity).
- 4.20. For Scope 1 emissions – the Council will endeavour to purchase green energy to heat its buildings (subject to national availability and budget approval, which can be achieved within the next few years and before the 2030 date) and the transition to electric fleet vehicles (subject to budget approval and technology/service constraints this can be achieved in 8 years). This can realistically reduce Scope 1 emissions to low, if not negligible levels. In the medium-term consideration for the phasing out of gas boilers in social housing and the wider estate will need to be considered, along with options for improving the overall energy efficiency of the public estate, such as LED lighting, insulation, solar PV etc.
- 4.21. For Scope 2 emissions – the reduction of electricity for all Council assets will ensure over the next 8 years, plus purchasing green energy can achieve practically no carbon emissions. However, this needs to be aligned with the wider Asset Strategy (work has just started on this through the Scrutiny

Commission). As with Scope 1 it is also subject to budget and contractual constraints.

- 4.22. The costs for a phased approach to electric fleet and charging infrastructure will need costing out and this will form part of the wider Action Plan.

## **5. Issues and Choices**

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- 5.1. Declaring the organisation's commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030 creates sufficient urgency to undertake a series of actions that have been highlighted in the Route Map and will be forthcoming in the wider Carbon Management Action Plan.
- 5.2. The only other alternative option is to not create a plan, and wait and see what wider national policy, funding and initiatives are forthcoming to drive this area of work forward. This is not a viable option as it would be abandoning the July 2021 declaration of a climate and environment emergency and goes against the commitments and objectives within the wider Corporate Strategy.

## **6. Next Steps**

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- 6.1. Progress will continue on working through the actions within the current Route Map, establishing the councils carbon baseline figure and the development of the Carbon Management Action Plan.
- 6.2. The importance of reducing the carbon footprint within North Northamptonshire is also being factored into all work that it undertakes, and this will be developed further into a wider Climate Change and Environment Strategy that will be developed in 2022.

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformational**

- 7.1.1. In February 2022, NNC agreed to funding of £1m over the next three years to help drive forward its approach and commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030. The 2022/23 budget includes £500k and £250k in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. This funding will be used to finance the actions that are in the Route map and will emanate from the Carbon Management Action Plan.
- 7.1.2. Alongside side this, a dedicated Sustainability team will be developed and will be part of the Growth and Regeneration team within the wider Place and Economy directorate. This team will ensure all parts of the council come together to work on the wider carbon neutral agenda as its incumbent on all areas to drive this work forward, however it will be led and coordinated by specialists in the Sustainability team.

7.1.3. The work that will be undertaken is likely to be transformational in a number of areas as it will fundamentally change what is done and how. A recent example of this is the Future Ways of Working activity which will shape new ways of working, reduce travel, increase productivity and impact positively on or commitment to reduce carbon emissions.

## 7.2. **Legal and Governance**

7.2.1. The work across this area is regularly reported into the Climate Change, Environment and Growth EAP and this will continue. A series of key performance indicators will also be developed and reported on as part of the wider Corporate Performance Plan.

## 7.3. **Relevant Policies and Plans**

7.3.1. The work being undertaken to date, and the future activities, contribute to a number of NNC's key commitments and priorities within the Corporate Plan:

### **Safe and thriving places**

- Help town centres and villages respond to changing trends
- Attract tourism, visitors, and inward investment
- Working with local businesses and partners to support the creation of high-quality, better-skilled jobs
- Improve the standard of new and existing homes and ensure housing supply meets demand
- Enable people to travel across North Northamptonshire and beyond

### **Green, sustainable environment**

- Demonstrate clear leadership on tackling environmental sustainability
- Work with communities and businesses to tackle climate change and improve air quality
- Promote sustainable, active travel
- Embed low carbon technology, sustained and improved green infrastructure, and sustainable forms of transport fit for the future
- Educate, encourage re-use, harmonise our approaches and enforce to keep our environment free from litter
- Protect the countryside and open spaces, and enhance the natural environment and ecology

7.3.2. The wider climate change and sustainability agenda is also identified in the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Part 2 of the Local plans for Corby, Wellingborough, and Kettering.

7.3.3. The Environment Act 2021 was enacted during the UK's hosting of COP26. Its purpose is to protect and enhance the environment for future generations and will deliver:

- Long-term targets to improve air quality, biodiversity, water, and waste reduction and resource efficiency
- A target on ambient PM2.5 concentrations, the most harmful pollutant to human health
- A target to halt the decline of nature by 2030
- Environmental Improvement Plans, including interim targets
- A cycle of environmental monitoring and reporting
- Environmental Principles embedded in domestic policy making
- Office for Environmental Protection to uphold environmental law

#### **7.4. Risk**

- 7.4.1. There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report. The outcomes of the wider Carbon Management Action Plan will need to be considered and risk assessed accordingly.
- 7.4.2. The risks regarding the delivery of wider projects that will help deliver against the Route Map and wider Carbon Management Action Plan will be considered as each task is worked through.

#### **7.5. Consultation**

- 7.5.1. There has been no specific consultation undertaken as part of this report however for a number of projects this has been carried out, for example the development of the Bus Strategy, or will be undertaken for future activity, such as the wider asset rationalisation strategy.
- 7.5.2. Engagement will continue through the Climate Change, Environment and Growth EAP and for specific projects such as the development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for Kettering and Corby.

#### **7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel**

- 7.6.1. The Route Map has already been through the Climate Change, Environment and Growth EAP and future activity will continue to be reported into this Panel.

#### **7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny**

- 7.7.1. The Scrutiny Commission committee has identified as part of its annual work plan, the work being undertaken on climate change and a future report will be presented when requested by members of that committee.

#### **7.8. Equality Implications**

- 7.8.1. There are no specific equality implications relating to this report, however equality implications are considered for each of the activities referenced in the Route Map and will continue to be the case for future activity.



## **7.9. Climate Impact**

7.9.1 The work undertaken to date has and continues to benefit the wider climate change and environment across North Northamptonshire. The publication of NNC's carbon baseline figure and its Action Plan to bring this down to a carbon neutral position by 2030 will be a positive part of improving the planet and local communities for future generations to come.

## **7.10. Community Impact**

7.10.1. NNC cannot deliver improvements to the climate and the wider environment on its own. That said it is crucial it shows leadership through its own commitments and actions, to drive this agenda forward. Through the work undertaken to date and the actions that will happen over the coming months and years, it will ensure communities and businesses can see the benefits of those actions and play a part in their own way, to support this important agenda.

## **7.11. Crime and Disorder Impact**

7.11.1. There are no specific crime and disorder implications relating to this report although improvements to the environment in certain areas can help reduce the fear of crime, e.g., improved LED streetlighting.

## **8. Background Papers**

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1. Tackling Climate Change in North Northamptonshire - Council 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<https://northnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g175/Public%20reports%20pack%2028th-Jul-2021%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=10>