

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

MEMBERS UPDATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIONS

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES

PART A – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To update members on progress made on the council’s work to mitigate the effects of climate change during 2022-23 and provide a brief update on actions and work that will take place during 2023-24.

2. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
	Yes/No	‘Vibrant communities’ – provide a quality environment that we can all be proud of ‘Caring for the environment’ – responding to the climate change emergency declared by the council Support of the climate change strategy
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (Equal) been completed?	
	No	
	Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been completed?	
	No	
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE	No	The Constitution and associated protocol provides that front line Councillors, the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer will have five clear working days following dispatch of a notification of a proposed decision in which to call in for scrutiny, decisions proposed by the Cabinet or its members. In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and associated protocol, any two or more members wishing to request that this proposed decision should be called in for scrutiny should do so by giving notice to the Director Legal & Governance either by e-mail or in writing before

		the end of the fifth day specifying the reason or reasons therefore. The Director Legal & Governance will then call in the proposed decision and arrange for it to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee/relevant Scrutiny Panel. A copy of such notice must also be sent to me either by email or in writing by the end of the fifth day. This proposed decision will be confirmed and implemented or, where appropriate, referred to the Council for consideration at its next meeting, on or after the date to be notified upon circulation of the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet, unless called in for scrutiny by that date.
KEY DECISION	No	
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	March 2023	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	Yes - Climate change activities and certain actions including carbon literacy training can be met through existing budgets. Further work such as EV installation may require additional business cases which will be brought to members as they develop.	
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	Any procurement of external consultancy, support etc. will be subject to the council procurement guidelines and procedures.
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES including climate impacts and health impacts if applicable	Yes	Further engagement and promotion in line with the climate change strategy and action plan
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	N/A	

PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

3. INFORMATION

- 3.1 During 2020 and following the declaration of a climate emergency, South Staffordshire Council published a climate change strategy setting out how it will take

action within the district, through our own operations, and also in partnership with others.

- 3.2 Following publication of the strategy, a climate change action plan was produced to detail how the council will achieve the proposals within the strategy through targeted and operational work.
- 3.3 The action plan was approved by members in 2021 and has been developed and updated by the climate change officers group which meets regularly. This plan is reported back to the officers group on a quarterly basis and to Members on an annual basis to ensure good progress against the objectives.
- 3.4 2022-23 has seen a significant amount of activity relating to climate change at South Staffordshire Council and these can be broadly summarised below as per the four headings of the climate change action plan: -

Council operations

- Continued to reduce the carbon footprint of the council operations (37% decrease since reporting began in 2010)
- Moved to green energy tariff at the Community Hub and enterprise estates.
- Installed solar powered EV charging on the top car park for council staff and tenants to use – in addition to the 9 public EV charging points already on site.
- Continuing to work with landowners and the Forest of Mercia to facilitate tree planting (estimating 1,000+ trees planted in the district during winter 2022-23)
- Roll out of carbon awareness training to members and corporate leadership team.

Strategic planning responsibilities

- Network recovery mapping across the district has been completed in partnership with the Wildlife Trust
- Appointment of a senior ecologist to help detail how biodiversity net gain may benefit green spaces across the district.
- Continue to build carbon friendly development measures within the emerging local plan.
- **Leading on the climate matters planning policy preparation at a county level.**

Raising awareness

- Delivery of the South Staffordshire Climate Festival 2022 to promote awareness of this issue.
- Hosted two climate youth committees with 6 schools across the district. Engaging with 30+ children to discuss what concerns them about climate change and what we can all do to help.
- Further engagement with schools – outreach and presentation of the council's climate work at 2 secondary schools
- Partnership with Beat the Cold to deliver energy saving advice to households across the district.
- Distribution of £4k+ funding to 21 'climate prize' projects across the 5 localities – each delivering carbon saving projects at a community level.

Influencing partners

- Working with Staffordshire County Council and the Sustainability Board to ensure a county wide approach to climate change issues.
- Hosting climate / business networking events both through SBEN and through partnership with the Bradford Estates.
- Developed a green energy solutions package for business through the UKSPF which businesses can tap into
- Improving the carbon efficiency on our own estate through solar panels and energy efficient light bulb which in turn will reduce costs for our business tenants.
- Engagement with the Kingswood Trust to host climate events and demonstrate their own environmental projects.
- Continued discussion with parish councils, community and friends groups to raise awareness.

3.5 During 2023, our climate change work was the subject of a Staffordshire County Council audit which has recommended we update the terms of reference of our climate officers group to ensure that any future action plan is checked and challenged. The proposed terms of reference are as follows: -

Role of group

- Check and challenge progress on action plan and projects
- To act if plan is deviating from agreed actions / timescales
- To escalate issues where appropriate
- To provide reporting to CLT on direction and priorities

Membership

- Street Scene Performance and Climate Change Manager
- AD community services
- AD assets and estates
- TM / senior officer - estates, waste, planning, corporate procurement, operational services, facilities

Meeting once per month - with papers circulated in advance and actions / notes agreed.

3.6 As the climate change strategy is into it's the third year and following the elections in May 2023 and introduction of Cllr Kath Perry MBE as cabinet member for community services, it is proposed to take the opportunity to refresh the council climate change strategy during 2023/24 to ensure it is fit for purpose and reflects the views and aspirations of members **This will be undertaken through the Member Panel on climate change, due to begin in October 2023.**

3.7 During 2023-24 we will be continuing to offer carbon literacy training for new members, officers across the council and visitors to the parish summit in Autumn 2023. At the very least, this will ensure that attendees understand the science of climate change, how it will affect us globally and locally, and enable better decision making and contributions to the climate change agenda through the work of the council.

- 3.8 Members will be aware that this council has been reporting on the carbon footprint of its operations since 2010, and during that time have reduced our emissions from the baseline figure by 37%.
- 3.9 It is recognised that the council is making good progress with reducing the carbon effects of our operational impact, and our wider ambition to be carbon zero by 2050. However, members should acknowledge that whilst we have come a long way, reducing our impact further will become increasingly challenging in the future.
- 3.10 During 2022/23, the council has engaged an external consultant to audit our Action Plan carbon reporting methods to better inform our future strategy for carbon reduction and long-term options on how we will achieve net zero. It is recommended that we carry out a review of our scope 3 emission reporting (not 'owned' or 'controlled' by us), and better understand the impact of our wider operations. For example, how we report on the carbon footprint of 'visitors' to our sites such as Baggeridge, industrial estates, cemeteries etc. as well as our purchased goods / services. Members will note that this may create an initial extra burden on our carbon footprint but will understand that it is important to be clear with our measures before making further plans to reduce and offset. Officers will carry out further work in the coming year to understand the financial costs that may be related to our carbon ambitions.
- 3.11 The council is working to help to encourage our residents and visitors to make the switch to EV vehicles and support the national change that is required to reduce the carbon footprint of our travel network. We are working with Staffordshire County Council on a wider central government bid to fund public EV charging for residents at sites across the county. Officers at South Staffordshire Council are also working with a private provider to detail how we can offer EV charging for visitors to our asset sites including enterprise centres, Baggeridge Country Park etc.
- 3.12 The council is proposing to support opportunities for green / active travel within the district via physical improvements to two council owned local nature reserves – the Railway Walk and the Wyrley Essington Canal. An officer working group has been set up with a view to bidding into the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and potential partners include Wolverhampton CC, Dudley MBC, Walsall MBC, Canal and Rivers Trust, Sustrans and the West Midlands Combined Authority. Members will be updated on this project as work progresses.
- 3.13 Council officers are continuing to work with the County Sustainability Board and officer working group to ensure partnership working, networking and sharing of best practice in how we deliver our work around the climate change agenda.

4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 4.1 N/A

5. PREVIOUS MINUTES

5.1 N/A

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 N/A

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Members note the reported progress and achievements made during 2022-23, and the proposals for 2023-24

Report prepared by:
Ryan Taylor – Performance and Climate Change Manager