
CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2030

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report is from the working group of the Review Committee who have been looking at developing a policy for the Council to make the Council Carbon Neutral by 2030.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 On 16 July 2019 Council resolved that the Review Committee be asked to set up a cross party working group to understand the implications and recommend a policy to this Council on how it can reduce its carbon footprint and become carbon neutral by 2030 at the latest.

- To consider and understand the costs and to investigate external funding sources.
- To consider how this Council can encourage developers to design carbon neutral homes and industrial estates through the planning process.
- To recommend a policy for this Council to consider by April 2020 and to regularly update the Portfolio Holder for Environment on its work.

- 2.2 The Committee formed a working group at its September 2019 meeting, which has met with officers on a regular basis since to consider the issues; this is their final report.

3 General

- 3.1 A carbon footprint is defined as: The total amount of greenhouse gases produced to directly and indirectly support human activities, usually expressed in equivalent tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂).
- 3.2 It considers all six of the Kyoto Protocol greenhouse gases: Carbon dioxide (CO₂), Methane (CH₄), Nitrous oxide (N₂O), Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), Perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and Sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆).
- 3.3 It is measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e). The carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) allows the different greenhouse gases to be compared on a like-for-like basis relative to one unit of CO₂. CO₂e is calculated by multiplying the emissions of each of the six greenhouse gases by its 100 year global warming potential (GWP).
- 3.4 The first thing the working group looked at was the measurement of the Council's Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. Whilst the goal of Carbon Neutrality was defined, it was necessary to measure the Council's existing GHG emissions to form a base line. The Council would then be able to

measure its GHG emissions on an annual basis to be able to demonstrate how the journey to Carbon Neutrality was progressing.

- 3.5 A number of authorities had already proceeded down this route and were reporting their greenhouse gas emissions using the guidance set out by the Department of Energy and Climate Change and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- 3.6 The reporting guidance identifies the main types of emissions sources in three categories known as scopes. These are defined as follows.

Scope 1 – direct emissions

- 3.7 Activities owned or controlled by your organisation that release emissions straight into the atmosphere. Examples of scope 1 emissions include emissions from combustion in owned or controlled boilers, owned or controlled vehicles.

Scope 2 – energy indirect

- 3.8 Emissions being released into the atmosphere associated with the consumption of purchased electricity, heat, steam and cooling. These are indirect emissions that are a consequence of your organisation's activities, but which occur at sources you do not own or control. The most common type of Scope 2 emission is electricity purchased for own consumption from the National Grid or a third party.

Scope 3 – other indirect

- 3.9 Emissions are discretionary to include that are a consequence of your actions, which occur at sources which you do not own or control and which are classified as scope 2 emissions.
- Business travel not owned or controlled by your organisation – for example, use of public transport
 - Commuting
 - Use of “grey fleet” – that is, use of employees' own cars for which fuel costs are claimed back via expenses
 - Emissions from contractors
 - Supply chain procurement

- 3.10 It was interesting to note the differences between each authority on how they reported their emissions; however, the guidance from the government departments and advice the group received from other authorities was all that was necessary was that the baseline calculated should cover the maximum number of emission sources in order to capture the authority's true carbon

footprint. Future calculations would then include the same sources, which would enable you to compare year on year changes.

- 3.11 Whilst other local authorities' calculations are of interest it was agreed that there was no point in comparing them to Rochford's calculation, as the Authority's operation would be different in every case and what they had included in their Scope 3 emissions differed in each case.
- 3.12 To be able to show that the actions that the Council are taking is working to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions it is necessary to set a base line for the calculation which should then be undertaken on an annual basis. The baseline year chosen was 2018/19 and a copy of the calculation has been attached to this report at appendix A. The calculation includes the fuel usage of the existing waste vehicles as well as the electricity and gas usage for the buildings that are managed by Fusion under the leisure contract.
- 3.13 The working group considered the parts of the Council that had an effect on the GHG; these were assets, procurement (fuel for heating and vehicles) and the purchase of vehicles.

Assets

- 3.14 The working group asked the Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial to speak to them about the Council's assets as it was clear from the GHG calculations that these had the biggest effect on the Council's carbon footprint.
- 3.15 The group wanted to understand what was already being planned in respect of the new Council offices and the other properties in the Council's asset portfolio before they formulated their views.
- 3.16 Assets that are planned for development and are to be retained by the Council, that is, the new council offices in Rochford and the community, council and partner facility in Rayleigh as part of the Asset Delivery Programme will be required to meet the 'BREEAM very Good standard'. **BREEAM** (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) is an international scheme that provides independent third-party certification of the assessment of the sustainability performance of buildings.
- 3.17 Assets that are planned for disposal by the Council and subsequent development by the Council's development as part of the Asset Delivery Programme will be required to meet building regulations regarding sustainability.
- 3.18 The output specification for the proposed renovation of the Freighthouse and retained facility in Rayleigh specifies that it should be energy efficient, low maintenance and meet the BREEAM very good as a minimum standard as set out above. If a bidder proposes an enhanced specification this will be reflected in the scoring process.

- 3.19 An output specification enables the Council to define the outcomes it wishes to achieve and then seek innovation from the market regarding how these outcomes could be met.
- 3.20 If the Council wishes to make amendments to the specification, post contract award, a business case would have to be made and this would need to go to the Investment Board in the first instance. It was noted that procurement regulations set out the limitations as to the level of variation that can be made to contracts once a contract has been awarded.
- 3.21 The Asset Delivery Programme will require bidders to develop proposals based on the output specification; detailed designs and planning applications would follow once the contract has been awarded.
- 3.22 The working group recognised that it could be more expensive to retro fit a building rather than at the start of the build and this situation would have to be looked at carefully.
- 3.23 In respect of Clements Hall and Rayleigh leisure centres going forward, it is anticipated that these will be the only buildings under the new leisure contract and the re procurement process is just starting. It is recognised that there is an opportunity to build requirements such as Council policy into the new contract around the Carbon Neutral agenda. It was also noted that this could have a commercial impact on the contract.
- 3.24 At the moment Fusion are cutting down on single use plastics and replacing lighting with LEDs when the opportunity presents itself. If any equipment fails prior to the end of the contract, such as one of the boilers, then the replacement would be like for like under the existing contract.
- 3.25 The age of Clements Hall Leisure Centre means that it has a lot of old technology and its insulation levels are not as high a specification of newer facilities such as the Rayleigh Leisure building.
- 3.26 In respect of the Council's pavilions the Asset Team are undertaking works on a phased, prioritised basis and this includes roof repair and replacement works.
- 3.27 The working group felt that the Council should be moving away from gas heating and looking at alternatives that either did not generate a carbon footprint or if electrify was used then it could be purchased from a green source or generated directly.
- 3.28 It was felt that, after looking at what other authorities had done, it would be useful to arrange for an energy audit to be conducted on those assets that were remaining to see what could be done to reduce their energy consumption.
- 3.29 In addition, other authorities had introduced automated meter reading (AMR) devices for their buildings and these have the benefit of:-

- Accurate billing based on actual meter readings
- Allowing better forecasting of energy use for budgeting purposes
- More tariff flexibility as energy suppliers can offer time-sensitive tariffs that maximise energy use during lower demand periods
- Better energy management
- An opportunity to maximise energy efficiency through a better understanding of energy use
- The ability to reduce carbon emissions and help environmental credentials

3.30 The working group felt that the introduction of AMR by RDC would be worthwhile.

Procurement

3.31 As part of the investigation by the working group they examined the Council's current procurement strategy. Whilst the existing strategy did include a section on sustainability it was felt that this did not go far enough. The group received input from the Council's procurement officer who suggested that the strategy should be revised to provide a more robust commitment from RDC towards sustainable procurement, and this could be achieved by:-

- Updating the contract procedure rules in line with RDC's policies and vision for climate control and sustainability; then reflect this within the procurement strategy.
- Updating the work plan in more detail, including KPI's to measure the Council's achievements and areas to improve.
- Identifying immediate short terms changes that can be included within the work plan; this could include, using more efficient printers and eliminating unnecessary printing, not directly purchasing/using single use plastics.
- Detailing the longer-term commitments, including reviewing all utility contracts and identifying renewable/green energy companies, reviewing the RDC fleet and replacing with low emission/electric vehicles where appropriate, working with the larger contract suppliers to improve their processes.
- Investigating whether it would be appropriate to carry out supply chain audits to analyse what our larger contract suppliers' commitments are to sustainability.

- A commitment to changing tender documentation to include evaluation criteria dedicated to sustainability and use appropriate weightings.
 - Utilising a sustainable risk assessment tool.
- 3.32 The working group agreed with these suggestions and have made a recommendation about a revised procurement strategy at the end of this report.

Council's vehicle fleet

- 3.33 Whilst the Council does not have a large vehicle fleet compared to some authorities, the fuel these vehicles use does contribute to the Council's carbon footprint (scope 1 – direct emissions). The group heard that there are equivalent electric vehicles for some of the fleet that can be purchased as and when the vehicles need replacing; the Council already has one electric vehicle on order.
- 3.34 Some of the more specialist vehicles do not have an electric equivalent; in these cases it is proposed that they be replaced at the appropriate time with a hydrogen powered vehicle, although to be carbon neutral the hydrogen needs to be generated via electrolysis powered from a renewable energy source.
- 3.35 It is hoped that over the next 10 years additional types of electric vehicles will be introduced; the Council would then be able to purchase them as the current vehicles reach the end of their useful life.
- 3.36 The group noted that other councils had installed solar panels on their buildings, which were used to charge batteries during the day and then the charge in the batteries was used to charge their electric vehicles overnight. It was hoped that in time this could be investigated when the Council had sufficient electric vehicles to make it viable.

Waste & Recycling contract

- 3.37 This is being considered by another Review Committee working group ; however, the carbon footprint of the vehicles the new contract will use will be taken into account during the formulation of its recommendations.

Single use plastics

- 3.38 As part of the review the working party considered the Council's use of single use plastic. Whilst it is not included in the GHG emissions report it was seen as being intrinsically linked to the Carbon Neutral agenda. Whilst the Council on the face of it did not have a large issue with disposable plastic within the offices due to its introduction of water dispensers a number of years ago and staff using their own cups and water bottles, there were still areas that could be improved, such as during Council-run events, etc.

- 3.39 The working group examined other authorities' policies around these areas and formulated the attached draft policy and action plan for adoption by the Council.

Open Spaces

- 3.40 Whilst the intention of the Council should be to find a carbon neutral solution to the areas where at the current time it produces CO₂ from its actions, it has to be recognised that in some cases it will not be possible. The heating of the swimming pool is a case where alternatives can only go so far. In these cases, it will be necessary for the Council to try and offset its production of CO₂.
- 3.41 This can be done by the planting of trees and other shrubs that will have the added benefit of providing shade and improve the Council's parks and open spaces.

Planning

- 3.42 The new Local Plan will contain policies on future development. A Council policy that requires homes to be carbon neutral was unlikely to be successful because, although existing national policies require a standard of low carbon homes in new developments, these fall short of being carbon neutral. To require carbon neutrality could be seen to put a greater burden on developers than required by national policies.
- 3.43 The Government's Environment Bill will put the environment at the centre of policy making – the Council's new local plan should reflect this.
- 3.44 In the next couple of years national policy is likely to change its direction of travel, and expectations of developers will increase; in the meantime, the Council will have to work with national policy as it currently exists. The Council's focus is to achieve the best standards of development and progress a plan that is going to be successful.
- 3.45 The Local Plan is not a living document; it is set at a specific point in time. However, it will be reviewed and updated every five years. Although, as new national policies are enacted, the Council's policy may be a little out of synch, planning application decisions can have regard to the national policy.
- 3.46 Until a policy is enacted in national policy legislation or guidance it would be difficult to make changes locally; at the point of the new Plan being examined, consideration will be given to the national policy requirements at the time. It wouldn't be appropriate to include potential future policies in the new Local Plan. Requirements by a local authority that are seen as onerous could elicit challenges from developers. The new Local Plan must be able to justify the extent to which it meets national policy requirements and to what extent developers are taken to task. Local policies should be in accordance with national policies and a national policy will take precedence.

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- 3.47 As part of a planning application there is a solution impact survey of the overall position of the development and the carbon levels that will be produced. The Council will have regard to technical evidence on energy demand and re-use, water, waste disposal, etc, in conversations with ECC. Building Regulations deal with the technical aspects of the planning process, including the building materials to be used.
- 3.48 The Council has discretion as to the planning policies it sets and the new Local Plan policy could contain requirements for electric charging points in new builds, as long as this is regarded as reasonable.
- 3.49 Although developers of new large-scale developments are not specifically encouraged to put in electric charging points, this can be looked at in future. Although the Council cannot oblige developers to be carbon neutral, the pre-application process could include the Council's objective of working toward carbon neutrality. Once adopted by the Council, a carbon neutral policy could be used as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. It was requested that the overarching rules in respect of electric charging points in developments, in particular in block of flats where there is not a parking space for each car or where cars have to park on the road, be included in the Local Plan.
- 3.50 A Member asked how the Local Plan would address the impact of the increase in the number of cars and carbon emissions on the already congested roads, as a result of building new developments. Evidence gathered to inform the new Local Plan would need to comply with legislation, including the evidence from Essex Highways on the capacity of the road network. The Local Plan will have to be supported by transportation infrastructure modelling, which includes cycling, walking and public transport.
- 3.51 The Local Plan will have an air quality and sustainability appraisal for new build developments that will include a process for baselining. It was recognised that there is a tension between a national policy that requires the Council to meet certain housing targets and a policy that requires a reduction in its carbon footprint. However, the Council's commitment to reduce its carbon footprint would not outweigh the national policy requirement to meet growth needs of housing and jobs. National policy may change in time.
- 3.52 The new Local Plan would provide for a significant reduction in carbon compared with the current situation, although, as mentioned previously, there cannot be a requirement for developments to be carbon neutral. Baseline data for the levels of air quality for proposed large developments would be required in the new Local Plan. Any assessment of the impact of the road network on air quality would include assessment at peak times and would be carried out by an independent consultant.
- 3.53 The monitoring of air quality and action plan is the responsibility of the Council's Environmental Health team.

- 3.54 An appraisal will be produced for each new development that will address how the carbon footprint of the development and the resultant increase in road traffic can be mitigated. However, the Local Plan will have to align with national policy, so will not be able to insist on carbon neutrality if national policy does not go that far.
- 3.55 The working group considered three examples of policies adopted by local authorities across the country. The group felt that the Manchester example could be useful in writing the RDC policy.
- 3.56 In respect of planning applications made before the new Local Plan takes effect, weight would be given to the emerging plan that is getting ready to be examined 6-9 months before adoption. Presently the Council is at the issues and options stage and the plan is likely to be adopted within the next 18 months; it cannot be relied on totally until this time.
- 3.57 The local plan evidence will include a comprehensive transport assessment and sustainability appraisal. Thought could be given to including air quality and the South Essex energy study in this. All evidence will be presented to the Planning Policy Sub-Committee for recommendation into Full Council. There is an on-going conversation on what is possible and what should be done and linking this to what the local needs are; include in Action Plan.
- 3.58 A Member raised the possibility of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributing towards tree planting in the District. However, the CIL is available for only infrastructure including, for example, requiring developers to contribute towards a bus service. There could be conversations with ECC, as the transportation authority, about any plans to invest in electric buses and planned bus routes.
- 3.59 A minimum expectation of the Council is that it has a permissive policy towards renewable energy. The group felt that barriers should be reduced where possible to encourage developers to use renewable energy, including solar panels and wind farms across the District. It was recognised that there are areas in the District that are protected for birds etc. and there are restrictions around Southend airport and Foulness Island.

Council Decisions

- 3.60 It is clear that, going forward, the Council will need to consider the effect each decision it makes will have on its Carbon Footprint. To that end the working group felt that a compulsory section should be included in each report, similar to that for Equality & Diversity, outlining what effect the decision will have on the Council's Carbon Footprint.

Ongoing monitoring

- 3.61 Whilst the initial carbon footprint calculation has been undertaken as part of the work of the working group it is clear that the ongoing calculation will need

to be undertaken on an annual basis and the monitoring of the policy and action plan will also need to carry on.

- 3.62 To this end it is proposed that a designated officer is tasked with producing the calculation on an annual basis and monitoring the action plan.

Partnership Working

- 3.63 During its investigation the working group heard from two representatives from the Energy and Sustainability team at Southend Borough Council. The team at Southend have introduced a number of initiatives to reduce the Council's Carbon footprint, all of which have been cost neutral.
- 3.64 It was hoped that RDC would be able to use their experience and could possibly work in partnership with Southend Borough Council or another of the Essex Authorities in the future.

Policy

- 3.65 The draft policy, attached as appendix 2, endeavours to identify all the areas where the Council generates CO2 by its actions and states what it will do in general terms to reduce/eliminate them.

Action Plan

- 3.66 The draft action plan takes the areas that are stated in the policy and translates them into actions. These actions will not all be completed straight away and so have time scales attached to them to allow for monitoring them on the journey to carbon neutrality. The move to new premises will allow the Council to reduce its Carbon Footprint but once in the new premises there will be an ongoing need to monitor the performance of the new buildings. Likewise, there is expected to be a country wide move to greener sources of energy generation over the next 10 years plus the expansion of new greener technology to power vehicles, etc. and so the action plan will need to be monitored on an annual basis.

Possible Costs related to Carbon Neutrality

- 3.67 Several of the initiatives included in the action plan could come from existing agreed budgets as items would be replaced over time, such as the Council's vehicle fleet, rather than all at once. The pavilions are being refurbished via a programme of works and this will continue from existing budgets.
- 3.68 The purchase of green energy is something that will need to be procured as the Council's existing agreements come to an end.
- 3.69 The Leisure Contract is currently being prepared to be retendered and changes made to the buildings, and possibly the installation of any renewable energy sources, should be taken into account during this process and a business case made for the changes.

- 3.70 The asset project means that the Council's assets will shrink over time and so the majority of the current buildings contributing to the Council's Carbon Footprint will no longer be Council assets and the new building at the Freight House will be more energy efficient. Once the plans for the building have been submitted there will be the opportunity to assess whether additional requirements will be needed to ensure that the goal of carbon neutrality can be attained.
- 3.71 On talking to other authorities the working group heard from representatives from Southend Borough Council who have introduced a number of initiatives for the Council in its drive to reduce its carbon footprint, all of which have either been cost neutral or have paid for themselves via savings that have been made. The group hoped that RDC could follow their example and have made the initial actions on the plan cost neutral.
- 3.72 The Government have recently announced their Environment Bill 2020 which they say will bolster the role of local leaders on tackling environmental issues by providing additional powers and flexibilities to deliver action. It is expected that this will also mean that additional funding will come from Government as it brings forward other parts of its Environmental agenda.
- 3.73 It is clear that in order for the Council to meet the target of being Carbon Neutral by 2030 it will need a dedicated officer to oversee the actions from the plan and to coordinate the Council's efforts. Most of the Councils that are already ahead of RDC have taken this step. Indeed, Southend BC have a team of 10 staff working on this, although they are expected to generate sufficient savings to pay for themselves.
- 3.74 The working group have suggested that a budget of £50,000 be made available to cover the costs of this post which could be for a trial period of a year.

4 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RECOMMENDS** to Council that:
- (1) The draft Carbon Neutral policy and action plan be approved.
 - (2) The draft Disposable Plastic Policy and action plan be approved.
 - (3) An Annual report of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions be prepared to show what the Council's carbon footprint is.
 - (4) All Council reports include a section on the effect the decision will have on the GHG emissions of the Council.
 - (5) A revised procurement strategy be prepared taking into account the issues mentioned in this report.

- (6) That the limitations around the current planning regulations be noted.
- (7) That the revised local plan takes into account the Government's Environment Bill.
- (8) That the opportunities of working in partnership with Southend Borough Council and the other Essex Authorities to reduce Rochford District Council's Carbon Footprint be explored.
- (9) That a Carbon reduction officer is recruited, on a one-year contract initially, and a budget of £50,000 be made available to cover this and pay for some of the initiatives in the action plan.

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