

Division(s):

CABINET – 13 OCTOBER 2020

CLIMATE ACTION RESPONSE

**Report by Senior Responsible Officer Climate Action /
Corporate Director Planning and Growth**

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**
 - (a) **Approve the Climate Action Framework (Annex 1) to drive the council's work on Climate Action**
 - (b) **Note the work taking place to mobilise joint CDC/OCC Climate Action programme.**

Executive Summary

2. In response to the climate emergency, OCC has committed to:
 - transform our organisation to be zero-carbon by 2030
 - work within our wider sphere of influence to enable a zero-carbon Oxfordshire by 2050.
3. A Climate Action framework has been developed to guide the mobilisation of a cross-organisational Climate Action programme. The framework recognises zero carbon as integral to the council's 'Restart, Recovery, Renew' post-COVID approach, underpinning resilient and future-proofed communities, infrastructure and economy.
4. A mobilisation plan has been developed to support the delivery and ongoing reporting on the Climate Action programme. Priority workstreams for the next 12 months will focus on the teams, services and policies identified in the framework.
5. As part of the commitment to joint working to deliver against our climate action priorities, a joint climate action team has been established and a director-level working group will commence in October with Cherwell District Council. The County Council cross-party Cabinet Advisory Group on Climate Action will continue to meet to oversee the mobilisation of the programme.

Background

6. Oxfordshire County Council declared a climate emergency in April 2019, pledging to be carbon neutral by 2030 for its own operations and estate.
7. The climate emergency declaration was followed by a public commitment in November 2019 to prioritise action on climate change across the council's decision-making, services and activities.
8. This paper introduces the framework that has been developed to inform the council's approach to climate action and provides an update on the joint work being done by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and Cherwell District Council (CDC) in this area.

Climate Action Framework

9. The Climate Action Framework has been developed through engagement with a range of stakeholders – staff, managers and directors, and Climate Action Cabinet Advisory Group.
10. The framework:
 - Recognises zero carbon as integral to Council's vision of the 'Renew' element of the 'Restart, Recovery, Renew' approach, underpinning resilient and future-proofed infrastructure and economy, and linked to shaping liveable, healthy communities.
 - Sets out a mobilisation phase, identifying priority work areas and deliverables, moving to integrate Climate Action into the council's business-as-usual approach through organisational development.
 - Sets out that our own estate target will be delivered through an invest-to-save approach, coupled with an innovation strand to support the business models and technologies needed to address more challenging areas.
 - Reflects the evidence base of the Countywide Energy Strategy calling for a halving of countywide emissions by 2030 and net-zero by 2050.
 - Acknowledges the significant step change in activity and focus of investment required to achieve the targets desired, as well as the role of wider stakeholders including central government.
11. A 2-year mobilisation phase is being launched, focusing on the priority teams, services and policies identified in the framework (see list of priorities for the next 12 months in annex 2).
12. A carbon management plan for the council's own estate net-zero target is currently in development. This plan will identify a series of interim targets on route to 2030, a project pipeline and assessment of the scale of any 'technology gap' in getting to net zero and subsequent offsetting needs.
13. A review of the Oxfordshire Low Carbon Economy report will re-new the evidence base for decarbonisation trajectories and investment in the County.

Mobilisation planning

14. CDC and OCC have committed to joint working to realise efficiencies and share good practice in delivering their climate action priorities. This will take place through a joint climate action team and joint cross-organisational Director-led Climate Action working group.
15. A mobilisation plan is being developed to support the delivery and ongoing reporting on the Climate Action programme. The plan will be owned by the climate action working group, which will report to CEDR six-monthly.
16. The mobilisation plan reflects the Framework's two core themes:
 - (a) Transforming our organisation to be carbon neutral by 2030
 - (b) Working within our wider sphere of influence to enable a zero-carbon Oxfordshire by 2050.
17. The priority workstreams for the next 12 months (annex 2) will focus on the teams, services and policies identified in the framework.
18. In the wider County, work is taking place to produce a joint statement of intent for all Oxfordshire councils to collaborate to accelerate work on mitigation.

Financial Implications

19. Both capital and revenue proposals were brought forward in 2019/20 to address immediate resourcing needs. Funding was agreed between OCC and CDC to create a joint climate action team. Revenue and capital directly associated with Climate Action is shown in Table 1.
20. Funding was agreed for the revenue resource to mobilise an invest-to-save programme in OCC Property. Recognising that opportunities for material changes in the way the council delivers services following Covid-19 will impact the Property Strategy, this will now commence in 2021/22 to optimise our effective use of this funding. Further consideration is being made to this funding for 21/22 in the current budget setting process.
21. These roles will help develop the business case for future investment requirements which will be brought through the council's usual decision-making channels.
22. Capital has been identified for EV charging infrastructure for council-owned fleet and for creation of an invest-to-save recycling fund for property retrofit following the Property Strategy, alongside the existing allocation for streetlighting investment. Capital investment in property is likely to be reprofiled into 21/22 reflecting the intention in Para 20 to optimise the use of this funding in line with new property strategy.

Table 1

	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	Total
Staffing Budget					
Joint OCC/CDC Climate Action Team staffing (hosted OCC)	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	1.56
CDC contribution Joint Climate Action team	-0.05	-0.05	-0.05	-0.05	-0.2
Property Climate Action Staffing Budget		0.24	0.06		0.3

CAPITAL FUNDING	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	Total
Allocated Capital Budget:					
SALIX Energy Programme Invest to Save Recycling Fund	0.417	0.153	0.109	0.05	0.729
EV Charging Infrastructure own estate	0.020				0.020
EV Charging Infrastructure own estate	0.100	0.300			0.400
Climate Action Invest to Save Property Recycling Fund	0.100	0.400	0.500	0.500	1.500
Streetlighting invest to save retrofit	7.800	11.400	11.400	8.182	38.782
Total in-year capital budget	8.437	12.253	12.009	8.732	41.431

23. The working group will assess how the council can capitalise on forthcoming central government funding streams particularly Green Homes Grant, Salix, Heat Network development funding and Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund.
24. A refreshed Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy will take into account climate implications and low-carbon infrastructure needs as part of its prioritisation approach to funding.

Equalities Implications

25. Climate change will disproportionately disadvantage vulnerable groups and young people. Acting on climate change is, therefore, most likely to have a disproportionately positive impact on several of the protected and disadvantaged groups considered within the Council's equality framework.
26. When developing and implementing the Climate Action Programme, the Council must take an inclusive approach, ensuring the costs and benefits of the transition to a low-carbon economy are fairly shared.

Risk Management

27. The main co-dependencies associated with the delivery of the council's own net-zero commitments are:
 - **'One Fleet'**: a single management approach to fleet is needed to deliver the existing 'electric by default' fleet policy and to support rationalisation and sharing of fleet.

- **Property Strategy:** Currently under review, the property strategy has a critical role in delivering the county's net-zero target – both in rationalising the estate and setting a strategy that allows for investment in retrofit and generation, as well as influencing emissions from staff travel.
28. The council's aim of becoming carbon neutral on its own estate by 2030 is significantly ahead of the UK government target of 2050. Decarbonising heat for buildings and large, specialist vehicles are currently recognised as challenges for investability and technology respectively. The carbon management plan in development will assess the current scale of this gap. It should be noted this will change over time as new technology and policy come forward. Mitigation will include working with iHub to ensure the council continues to engage with new technologies and assessing government funding streams such as Public Sector Decarbonisation to 'top up' funding to deliver heat decarbonisation.
 29. Work is taking place in the County to assess whether the partnership arrangements currently in place are optimum to support cross-working on climate action.

Communications

30. The Climate Action Cabinet Advisory Group (CAG) has overseen the development of the framework. The CAG has agreed to continue to meet to oversee the mobilisation of the programme and associated strategies.
31. A Climate Action internal and external communications plan has been developed.

PAUL FEEHILY

Senior Responsible Officer Climate Action / Corporate Director Planning and Growth

Annexes

Annex 1 Climate Action Framework

Annex 2: Climate Action Mobilisation Plan – Priority workstreams for the next 12 months

Contact Officer: Sarah Gilbert, Climate Action Team Leader

October 2020