

## Divisions Affected - ALL

### CABINET April 2024

## CLIMATE ACTION PROGRAMME UPDATE

### Report by Corporate Director for Environment and Place

#### RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to
  - a. Note the biannual update on the delivery of the workstreams in the Climate Action Programme (Annex 1).
  - b. Approve adjustments to the programme for 2024/25 (Annex 2).
  - c. Approve the draft outcome measures for monitoring progress to a net zero Oxfordshire (Annex 3).

#### Executive Summary

1. This report is an update to Cabinet on work to address the Climate Emergency, including delivery of the 2023/24 Climate Action Programme workstreams.
2. The report notes the council's success in becoming the highest ranked county council in the UK for its Climate Action in Climate Emergency UK's [Climate scorecard](#) and receiving an A- score in a shadow submission to the industry-leading [CDP \(formerly Carbon Disclosure Project\) reporting framework](#).
3. A new suite of outcome measures for tracking overall progress to net zero Oxfordshire is proposed. These indicators reflect the national policy position as well as local activity on climate action.
4. The report provides an update on delivery of the council's Carbon Management Plan for 2023/24. An emissions reduction will be achieved due to the imminent completion of the street lighting LED replacement programme. Whilst preparatory work has taken place, delivery of works planned for property, fleet, and staff business travel in 23/24 have been pushed back into 24/25. Mitigation for fleet involves potential interim lease arrangements of electric vehicles while the fleet replacement programme is mobilised. Property projects for 2023/24 will now complete alongside the 2024/25 programme.
5. 21 of 27 workstreams in the climate programme agreed in 23/24 are rated as green.
6. Grid constraints remain a challenge to delivery of infrastructure in Oxfordshire including 'net zero infrastructure' (renewables, EV charging, storage). The council is working with Future Oxfordshire Partnership on Local Area Energy Planning to help define net zero infrastructure projects and enable better dialogue with the Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) on grid needs. The council is also a continued partner in the Local

Energy Oxfordshire (LEO) consortium testing 'Smart and Fair Neighbourhoods' where energy is better balanced at a community level reducing pressure on the grid and offering financial opportunities for communities.

## Climate Action Programme Update 2023/24

7. The council's Climate Action Programme (CAP) delivery programme for 2023/24 was agreed at Cabinet on 5th July 2023. Updates on these areas can be found in Annex 1.
8. The 2024/25 delivery plan includes the council's priority actions across three pillars as set out in figure 3 below, and can be found in Annex 2:



Figure 1 - Three pillars of the Climate Action Programme

## Becoming a Climate Active Council

### Reporting and benchmarking of the Climate Action programme

9. In 2023/24 the council participated in two assessments of its Climate Action programme: a review conducted by Climate Emergency UK (CEUK) of all UK councils to produce a [Climate Scorecard](#), and disclosure by reporting through the international [CDP \(formerly Carbon Disclosure Project\) framework](#).
10. The council received the highest overall score for a county council in the UK in the Climate Scorecard, recognising the collective activities taking place across the council. The council scored particularly highly for its work on Transport, Waste Reduction and Food, Collaboration and Engagement, and Biodiversity.
11. CEUK identified opportunities for an improved score in 2024/25 through a sustainable procurement policy, and support for divestment from the councils' pension funds. A number of areas for improvement are already being implemented including incorporating risks into the council's strategic risk register and putting a workplace parking levy in place (subject to UK government approval).
12. The council received a score of A- in a shadow report through the CDP framework.

### Capacity building and decision-making

13. A climate review was carried out on all the council's service delivery plans for 2024/25, with recommendations made to all services to:
  - a. Identify 15% of staff in key roles to be included in the Carbon Literacy training programme

- b. Review risks of operations to climate change linked to the council's ongoing work on adaptation.
- c. Ensure the use of Climate Impact Assessments in decision-making.
- d. Review operational emissions.
- e. Follow sustainable guidelines in procuring and retendering of major contracts.

## **Communications**

- 14. A new communications strategy for Climate has been developed and the Climate Action Oxfordshire website is continuing to be promoted.

## **Decarbonising our estate and operations by 2030**

### **Carbon Management Plan (CMP) 2030 Update**

- 15. Emissions within the scope of our carbon neutral by 2030 target (corporate estate and operations) reduced by 14.8% (1,535 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e) from 10,391 in 2021/22 to 8,857 in 2022/23. This represents a 66.6% reduction against our baseline in 2010/11.
- 16. The [Carbon Management Plan 2022-30](#) is currently undergoing its annual review and update. Separate carbon budgets will be agreed for property, fleet, highways electrical assets and staff business travel to allow better monitoring of delivery in each area.
- 17. Projected emissions savings will be achieved in 2023/24 due to the completion of the LED street lighting conversion programme. Delays have been experienced in other areas of the programme. Whilst preparatory work has taken place, delivery of works planned for property, fleet, and staff business travel in 23/24 have been pushed back into 24/25. This will include ordering 124 electric vehicles under the fleet replacement programme and purchasing essential user vehicles as part of the staff business travel programme. Mitigation for fleet involves the exploration of interim lease arrangements of electric vehicles. Seven of the eight corporate sites planned for delivery in 2023/24 will now complete in 2024/25 along the 24/25 programme.
- 18. OCC has successfully secured a £2.9 million grant through Phase 3c Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) to support decarbonisation of 26 corporate sites and delivery will start in 2024/25. OCC's new Home Charging Policy has been approved and installation of strategic EV chargers at Community Support Service (CSS) sites completed in preparation for delivery of 10 new electric minibuses in c. May 2024.
- 19. As the council's target for its own estate (2030) is well ahead of the national targets for decarbonisation (2050), there are number of areas where technical solutions will not be available or financially viable by 2030. The national electricity supply, although substantially decarbonised, will also not be net zero until 2035. The council in common with many early adopting organisations will therefore have residual emissions that require offsetting.
- 20. Known projects are anticipated to reduce emissions to c. 4,300 tCO<sub>2</sub>e and it may be possible to reduce emissions further to closer to 2000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e by identifying more innovative opportunities subject to business cases. Work to develop a carbon insetting/offsetting strategy and action plan has started and will provide an options appraisal of 'insetting' (meeting our offset needs within the County) vs offsetting.

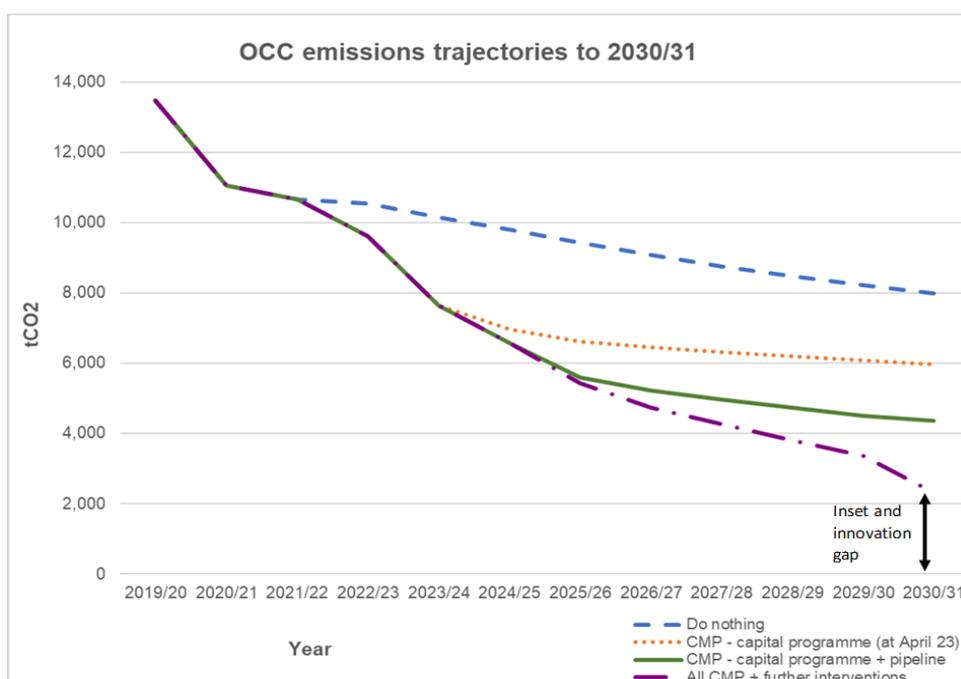


Figure 2 – OCC’s emissions trajectories to 2030/31. From the Council’s Carbon Management Plan 2022-30 approved in June 2023.

## Schools

21. The [Action on Carbon and Energy in Schools \(ACES\)](#) programme has been extended for a third year into 2024/25. The [Pilot Schools Energy Efficiency Loan scheme](#) allocated £0.8m in the capital programme has to date received twelve applications with total amount of funding requested of £781,260. Installations will take place throughout 2024/25.
22. The Transformation Board will be integrating delivery of net zero into Transformation Programme workstreams due to interdependencies with council’s net zero 2030 target. The Agile workstream is the most critical workstream along with Organisational Development and supported transport.

## Scope 3 Supply Chain

23. Scope 3 emissions account for about 90% of OCC’s total emissions. We are prioritising working with top ten emitter suppliers which we have estimated to account for about 22% of OCC’s goods and services supply chain. Emissions from 3 top suppliers, which account for 9% of our goods and services supply chain emissions have been included in our 2022/23 GHG report.
24. In 2024 we are working towards incorporating [PAS 2080](#)<sup>1</sup> framework principles of whole life carbon management in OCC’s infrastructure delivery programme.

## Enabling Oxfordshire’s transition to net zero

<sup>1</sup> [PAS 2080](#) is the global standard for managing life cycle carbon in infrastructure and property projects. The framework looks at the whole value chain, aiming to quantify and reduce carbon emissions and costs through more intelligent design, construction and use.

## **Oxfordshire-wide Programme**

### **Outcome Measures**

25. During the last quarter, a set of outcome measures have been developed to provide monitoring of Oxfordshire' progress in relation to its Pathway to Zero Carbon (PAZCO) scenarios and the decarbonisation of its estate and operations. Most of these measures are not within OCC direct control, however we are able to influence a significant number of them, especially those related to OCC's estates and operation. These will be reported to Cabinet annually.
26. Twenty-five outcome measures have been developed which cover the following areas:
- OCC Estate/Operations Decarbonisation
  - PAZCO Overall
  - PAZCO Transport and Connectivity
  - PAZCO Buildings
  - PAZCO Energy
  - PAZCO Adaptation
  - PAZCO Other
27. These outcome measures are set out in Annex 3. A commentary for each specific measure has been provided to enable the reader to understand the reasons for the direction of travel since 2019. Due to the pandemic, 2020 and 2021 were atypical years and therefore 2019 is the most recent meaningful benchmark year. PAZCO or OCC targets and national/regional benchmarks have been included where available.
28. For the 26 outcome measures, 18a re going in the right direction compared with the 2019 benchmark (green arrow either increasing or decreasing), and four are going in the wrong direction (red arrow either increasing or decreasing). The four going in the wrong direction are (CAS 10), Passenger journeys on local bus services, which have decreased due to changing travel patterns since COVID. (CAS 14), Total homes GHG emissions for Oxfordshire which increased slightly due to increased home working after COVID. (CAS 15), Space Heating for new homes in Oxfordshire per dwelling which has increased due to increased energy costs. Finally, (CAS 17), Households facing energy poverty has increased due to energy costs outpacing household income. For two outcome measures the council currently does not have enough data to identify a direction of travel. These are (CAS 3a) OCC Supply Chain GHG emissions and (CAS 21), Tree cover in terms of canopy %. For CAS 3a we are in the preliminary stages of calculating OCCs supply chain emissions. We are currently exploring ways of obtaining an annual measure for CAS 21.
29. For most of the transport and energy indicators there has been significant variation from 2019 to 2022 due to the impacts of Covid influencing the use of transport, the type of transport, and use of energy in the home. Other factors which have influenced outcome measures include energy prices (e.g. CAS 17), electric vehicle uptake (e.g. CAS 12 & 13), a long-term trend of grid decarbonisation (e.g. CAS 6), and weather variations (e.g. CAS 19).
30. For the outcome measures which cover OCC Estate/Operations Decarbonisation, all the measures for which OCC has data are progressing in a positive direction – noting delays in programme delivery set out in Para 21. OCC has much greater control over these outcome measures than the PAZCO related outcome measures.

### **Energy**

31. Grid constraints remain a challenge to delivery of infrastructure in Oxfordshire including 'net zero infrastructure' (renewables, EV charging, storage). The council is working with Future Oxfordshire Partnership on Local Area Energy Planning to help define net zero infrastructure projects and enable better dialogue with the Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) on grid needs. The council is also a continued partner in the Local Energy Oxfordshire (LEO) consortium testing 'Smart and Fair Neighbourhoods' where energy is better balanced at a community level reducing pressure on the grid and offering financial opportunities for communities.
32. There have been challenges in delivering the government's Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 scheme at the scale anticipated in year 1, delivering energy efficiency improvements to low income, off-gas households. Although now starting to scale following significant efforts to bring the project back on track, it was reprofiled in 2023/24, reflecting issues nationally with the scheme. A competitive funding opportunity for a three-year DESNZ retrofit scheme is expected to be announced to commence in April 2025. Strategically this is expected to be a good fit with the council's retrofit targets with a much wider eligibility criteria, and the service is actively looking to expand the current consortium to other authorities.
33. A major funding success from DESNZ's alternative energy market programme: £5.3M (£212K specific to Oxfordshire County Council) funding secured to launch an innovative new app, enabling testing of supplier agnostic tariffs and energy smart appliances via a subscription service.

### **Local Area Energy Planning (LAEPs)**

34. The development of Oxfordshire LAEPs was one of the five action areas prioritised by FOP in the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan. FOP agreed an initial budget for this work and a formal governance structure was established comprising the Energy Planning Work Group (EPWG) and the Executive Steering Board (ESB) which reports to the Infrastructure Advisory Group.
35. The EPWG and ESB have met at regular intervals over the last 6 months in order to agree the scope for Oxfordshire's LAEP programme. LAEPs will be important for understanding the whole-system options, for example reducing overdependence on increasing electricity grid capacity and understanding grid constraint issues which are acute in the county. LAEPs will also translate decarbonisation ambition into delivery on the ground and inform better network investment decisions by the DSOs and attract finance at the scale required.
36. In order to drive forward with a LAEP programme that will provide insights at the detail required across the county, a request for additional resources via the Housing Capacity fund will be made to FOP in June.

### **Update on adaptation**

37. The climate adaptation programme is progressing through several key projects as well as policy development.
38. A draft Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) has been developed with Oxfordshire stakeholders to inform climate resilience planning. Work has also commenced on supplementing the CVA with an Extreme Value Analysis at a high resolution across

Oxfordshire to assess the probability and consequence of extreme weather events on human health and infrastructure.

39. A draft specification for the next phase of the programme development – an Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation and Resilience Route Map and OCC Delivery Plan – has been endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership’s Environment Advisory Group and Executive Officer’s Group. A provider is now being recruited to commence the route map development process in April, with an emphasis on stakeholder engagement and capacity building.
40. Concurrently, work is also underway with Exeter University to finalise a climate adaptation skills and knowledge resource to engage and support local decision makers to develop their capability on climate adaptation and resilience. The resource will be launched in April. Work is also progressing to build an in-house capability to provide site-surveys and develop bespoke climate adaptation action plans for OCC-maintained schools, identifying a range of passive, behavioural and operational measures for schools to take to reduce flooding and overheating.
41. Through working with Public Health, a Heat Health Action Plan has been developed to support vulnerable residents during possible heatwave events over summer, including to identify near-term improvements to provision of advice and guidance to residents and increase the uptake on Community Resilience Plans with added emphasis on heatwave planning.
42. OCC's new Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership and Programme Manager post was filled in September 2023, with responsibility to accelerate and expand the climate adaptation programme. With engagement representing a vital part of many aspects of resilience planning, a Climate Outreach Officer has also been recruited to support the development of a communication and engagement plan and wider outreach efforts aligned to the delivery of the climate adaptation strategy.

## Partnership

43. The council is working with Oxford City Council to seek to expand the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership to cover the whole county. District councils are considering the proposals. Key aims of the partnership would be to engage more partners in delivering the council’s net zero and climate adaptation objectives.
44. The council continues to work jointly in a number of other formal and informal forums on activity to tackle the climate emergency, including through the [Greater South East Net Zero Hub](#), [Local Nature Partnership](#), [Future Oxfordshire Partnership](#) and [LEO Partnership](#) with Oxfordshire businesses has continued through the Oxfordshire Greentech network, with a Climate Solutions Conference taking place in March 24.
45. The council is an active member of the following key national networks through which it shares best practice with other local authorities and lobbies government on national climate policy: [UK100](#), Association of Directors of Environment, Planning and Transport Climate Change and Environment Boards ([ADEPT](#)), Local Government Association [Sustainability Action Network](#), Association of Public Service Excellence Energy ([APSE](#)) network.

## Corporate Policies and Priorities

46. The Climate Action Programme supports the council’s commitments to tackle the climate emergency and create a climate resilient county, as identified in the Climate

Action Framework, and is the first of the nine council priorities as expressed in the Strategic Plan 2022-25.

## Financial Implications

### Green financing

47. The [100 Together](#) conference held on 11 January 2024 looked at how we can unlock the investment needed to deliver environmental activity at scale in Oxfordshire and, from that, create a route map others can build on. All materials from the conference are available [online](#).

48. A follow up conference will be held in Spring 2025. Meanwhile the focus will be on producing a net zero investment prospectus.

### General financial aspects

49. Investment within the medium term financial plan in 2024/25 is detailed below.

Investment Programme	Budget to 2024/25 £'m
Climate Change	1.044
Highway Street Lighting	40.000
Green Homes	4.900
Active Travel	11.500
School Energy Efficiency Loan	0.800
Tree Planting Programme	2.700
One Fleet - Transform Vehicle Fleet	18.000
One Fleet Charging Point	0.374
Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure	0.700
Partial phase 1 property decarbonisation works	1.809
<b>Total</b>	<b>86.527</b>

50. Further business cases will be brought forward for other measures developed for projects and further interventions identified in our CMP.

Comments checked by: [Prem.Salhan@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Prem.Salhan@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## Legal Implications

51. This report does not raise legal implications. In May 2019 the Government committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, recognising much of this reduction must happen before 2030. Local councils play a vital role in making sure the UK is prepared for the impacts of climate change at a local level and are able to decide how best to address these challenges. The taking of such action is lawful under the general power of competence in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

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## **Staff Implications**

52. Staff involvement in current programme delivery is funded by agreed resource allocation and grant funding.

## **Equality & Inclusion Implications**

53. This report does not raise any specific equalities implications. The council's Climate Action Framework aims to ensure a fair sharing of costs and benefits and avoiding energy inequality.

54. The council's Director of Public Health Annual Report: 'Climate Action for Health in Oxfordshire' has been produced in collaboration with the Climate Action service, highlighting the intersection between health and climate and resulting impacts on vulnerable populations in Oxfordshire.

## **Sustainability Implications**

55. The Climate Action Programme is at the centre of the council's commitment to tackle the climate challenge.

## **Risk Management**

56. A strategic risk is in the process of being added to the council's strategic risk register, noting the increasing vulnerability to climate impacts leading to failure of key infrastructure and services with a direct impact on health, safety, environment and businesses. A number of control measures have been identified.

## **Key Dates**

23 April - Cabinet

Annex: 1 – Climate Action Programme delivery plan 2023/24 update

Annex 2 – Climate Action Programme delivery plan for 2024/25

Annex 3 - Outcome measures

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