



**EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT COVER SHEET**

<b>Title of Report:</b>	Climate Change Action Plan – 1 <sup>st</sup> Year Review of Progress	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
<b>Meeting of:</b>	Corporate Management Team - 18 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2022	X
	Leader and Deputy Leaders - 24 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2022	X
	Leader's / Leader of the Opposition's Advisory Group / Independent Alliance Advisory Group - 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb 2022	X
	Cabinet - 14 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2022	
	Scrutiny Audit and Value for Money Council Services Committee [DATE] / Scrutiny Community Regeneration, Environment and Health and Well Being Committee [DATE]	



Is this an Executive Decision:	YES	Is this a Key Decision:	YES
Is this in the Forward Plan:	YES	Is the Report Confidential:	NO
If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A LGA 1972:	[NA]		

**Essential Signatories:**

**ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN THE NAME OF A HEAD OF SERVICE**

Interim Monitoring Officer: **Chris Ebberley**

Date ..... Signature .....

Chief Finance Officer: **Sal Khan**

Date ..... Signature .....

**EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Report to Cabinet**

**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 2022**

**REPORT TITLE: Climate Change Action Plan – 1<sup>st</sup> Year Review of Progress**

**PORTFOLIO: Regulatory Services**

**HEAD OF SERVICE: Mark Rizk**

**CONTACT OFFICER: Mark Jeffcote Ext. No. x1134**

**WARD(S) AFFECTED: All Wards**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present progress on the Climate Change Action Plan. The cover report contains the overview of progress whilst the Appendix contains a detailed review of the 57 actions.
- 1.2. The report also recommends that the 'Climate Emergency' declaration is extended to a 'Climate & Ecological Emergency' declaration and additional actions to protect and enhance biodiversity are included in the renamed Climate Change & Ecology Action Plan.

**2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1. East Staffordshire Borough Council declared a 'Climate Emergency' in August 2020 with a pledge to make the Council's operations and activities carbon neutral by 2040 and an aspiration to make the Borough carbon neutral by 2040.
- 2.2. A Climate Change Action Plan was developed to support the pledge. The Plan contains 57 actions covering energy generation and use, transport and travel, resource use and waste and the management of green space.
- 2.3. This is the first progress report on the implementation of the Action Plan and in future the report will be produced annually at the end of each financial year.

- 2.4. The progress of each individual action in the Climate Change Action Plan has been assessed and given a RAG rating (RED, AMBER, GREEN). Actions shaded as GREY are not yet due to start. Progress can be summarised as follows:
- GREEN – 38 actions (35 on-track and 3 achieved)
  - AMBER – 0 actions
  - RED – 4 actions
  - GREY – 15 actions
- 2.5. The report also recommends the extension of the current ‘Climate Emergency’ declaration to a ‘Climate & Ecological Emergency’ declaration to acknowledge the global, national and local loss of biodiversity.
- 2.6. Declaring an Ecological Emergency will require the following from the Council:
- i. Include additional actions that protect and enhance biodiversity in the renamed Climate Change & Ecology Action Plan;
  - ii. Develop a joint Climate Change & Ecology Strategy;
  - iii. Work with partners and the public across the Borough to protect and enhance biodiversity; and
  - iv. Secure funding where necessary to deliver actions.

### 3. **Background**

- 3.1. The Climate Change Act (2008) committed the UK to an 80% reduction in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions relative to 1990 by 2050. In May 2019, a new target of net-zero greenhouse gases (GHG) by 2050 was recommended. The Climate Change Act (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 then made this target a statutory requirement. The intention of this target is to end the UK’s contribution to global emissions by 2050.
- 3.2. In May 2019, parliament approved a motion declaring a Climate Change Emergency and since that time Climate Emergency declarations have been passed by more than 200 Local Authorities<sup>1</sup>.
- 3.3. In response, East Staffordshire Borough Council declared a ‘Climate Emergency’ in August 2020. The ‘declaration’ seeks to make the Council’s activities carbon neutral by 2040 and aspires to make the Borough carbon neutral by 2040.
- 3.4. The Council is in a key position to take action on climate change through its role as a regulator, service provider, community leader and in the way it manages its own estate and assets.
- 3.5. Together with the declaration, a wide ranging Climate Change Action Plan was developed containing 57 actions covering energy generation and use,

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<sup>1</sup> [www.climateemergency.uk](http://www.climateemergency.uk)

transport and travel, resource use and waste and the management of green space.

- 3.6. Implementation of the Action Plan will be reviewed and reported annually at the end of each financial year.

#### 4. **Contribution to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1. Protecting the climate and biodiversity and adapting to the future consequences of climate change will contribute to the Council's priorities of Community Regeneration and Environment, Health & Wellbeing.

#### 5. **Glossary of Terms**

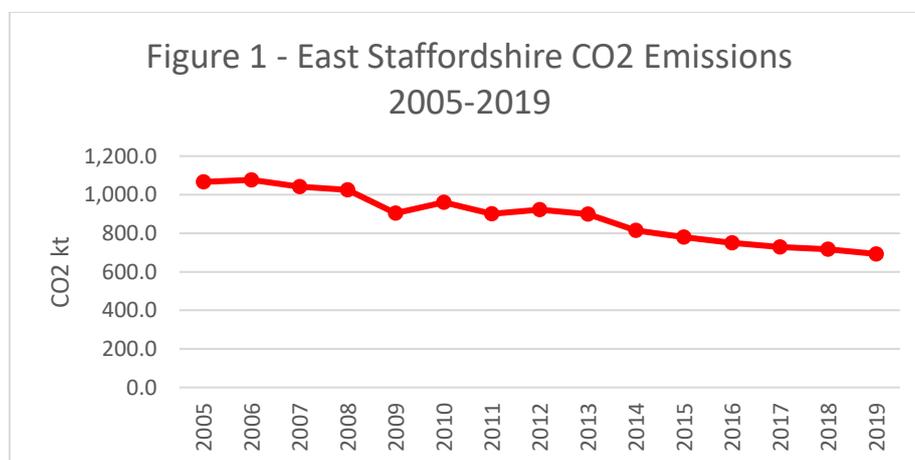
**Carbon Neutrality/Net Zero** – Carbon neutrality, or having a net zero carbon footprint, is achieved by balancing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions with CO<sub>2</sub> removal from the atmosphere resulting in net zero emissions. Some emissions may be unavoidable so need to be 'offset'.

**Carbon Offsetting**- is the process of balancing CO<sub>2</sub> **released into** the atmosphere with CO<sub>2</sub> **removed from** the atmosphere. To achieve carbon neutrality through the balancing of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, efforts must be made to create or contribute towards CO<sub>2</sub> removal schemes (eg. tree planting).

#### 6. **Climate Change Action Plan**

##### 6.1. **East Staffordshire Climate Change Action Plan**

- 6.1.1. The Plan contains 57 actions (see Appendix 1).
- 6.1.2. The actions have been divided into two sections. The first section reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the Council's own operations and activities and the second section reduces the Borough's emissions.
- 6.1.3. In 2019, the Borough total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were 692.5 kt. Reduced from 1066.4 kt in 2005 (see Figure 1).



6.1.4. The corporate energy supplier, Total Gas & Power, recently provided data on the Council's historic electricity and gas consumption. This can be used to calculate the Council's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and provide a baseline for monitoring future progress. The current financial year has been chosen as the baseline because it provides the most complete data set.

## 6.2. Climate Change Action Plan Progress

6.2.1. Before the Council established the Climate Change Action Plan some actions had already been taken. These included an accommodation move to a smaller footprint to reduce energy consumption, increased home working to reduce commuting emissions, energy efficiency improvements in Council offices and leisure centres (eg. lighting and heating), introduction of a bike to work scheme to reduce transport emissions and the incorporation of a sustainability section for Council reports.

6.2.2. The progress of each individual action in the Climate Change Action Plan has been assessed and given a RAG rating (RED, AMBER, GREEN). Actions shaded as GREY are not yet due to start. Progress is presented in Appendix 1.

6.2.3. Progress can be summarised as follows:

- GREEN – 38 actions (35 on-track and 3 achieved)
- AMBER – 0 actions
- RED – 4 actions
- GREY – 15 actions

6.2.4. Notable activities include:

### **a) Motion to phase out Single Use Plastics (action 3.1)**

Single-use plastics include items such as cutlery, plates, vending machine cups, food packaging, condiment sachets and plastic bottles, most of which are not recycled. The Council carried a motion in July to phase out all single-use plastics wherever possible in its buildings and services over the next 12 months. In addition, the Council will actively discourage the use of single-use plastics by hirers and users of Council buildings. A Single-Use Plastics audit is currently taking place and an action plan will be implemented.

### **b) Electric vehicles (action 4.2)**

The Council recently purchased a new fleet of waste vehicles, comprising a combination of Refuse Collection Vehicles, sweepers, caged tippers, and vans. Five of the vans are electric. There are two standard panel vans for mobile toilet cleaner and cemetery use, one long wheel base panel van for facilities use, and 2 crew cab variants for CCEO use. All variants are fitted with 75KW motors. The electric vans should be delivered early in 2022 and will contribute to the Climate Change Action Plan target to replace the waste collection fleet with low emission vehicles by 2030.

**c) Washlands Enhancement Project (action 6.5)**

The Washlands on the River Trent is a functional flood plain. The challenge for the project was to determine how to balance regular flooding with the requirement for public access and recreation, whilst promoting nature conservation and a more environmentally sustainable approach to green space management. The project will also contribute to the regeneration of the town by turning an underutilised open space into a regional tourism destination. The Project has been developed over a number of years with the creation of a masterplan and specification. Project partners include the Council, the Environment Agency and Black & Veatch/Binnies. The Flood Defence work has now been completed by the Environment Agency and the Washlands Enhancement project has gained planning approval. Work is progressing on the procurement and the detailed drawings, specification etc. Delivery is expected spring/summer 2022.

**d) Tree planting (action 6.7)**

The Horticultural team are in the process of planting a combination of standard and whip trees across many of the Council's Open Spaces and only native trees are being planted. This ensures that the right tree is being planted in the right place. A target has been set for approximately 2500 trees between November 2021 and March 2022. So far about 600 trees have been planted.

Some of the trees will be planted by the Grounds Maintenance contractors, IDVerde, but the majority will be planted by volunteers. Many volunteers have contacted the Council to ask if they could be involved in tree planting as they wish to help with action to protect against Climate change and make Environmental improvements.

The aim is to plant around 2000 trees each winter for the next few years.

**e) Cycling infrastructure improvements (action 7.4)**

Through the Burton Towns Fund programme, the Borough Council is working with the County Council to bring forward a number of improvements to the cycle network in Burton through the implementation of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan<sup>2</sup>. The Towns Fund investment for this project is expected to commence in 22/23 and complete by 23/24.

**f) Energy efficiency in fuel poor and vulnerable households (actions 9.2, 9.3)**

The Council have procured Beat the Cold to provide a single point-of-contact fuel poverty advice service for residents. The service will support residents by helping them understand the complex and often confusing world of advice, grants, financial assistance and working with installers. Energy conservation and affordable warmth solutions will be delivered through a combination of home upgrades and improved behaviour.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Transport/transportplanning/Walking-and-cycling.aspx](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Transport/transportplanning/Walking-and-cycling.aspx)

The Council are also a partner in the Staffordshire Warmer Homes Scheme. To date 41 first time central heating systems have been installed, 10 air source heat pumps and 80 applications are being processed for Green Homes Grant measures such as external wall, cavity wall and loft insulation.

### 6.3. **Next Steps**

6.3.1. Climate Change Action Plan progress will be reported for the second time at the end of the next financial year. The report will also attempt to:

- a) Include a Gap Analysis to assess whether or not the actions contained within the action plan will meet the carbon neutral by 2040 targets;
- b) Add or remove actions and revise delivery dates as necessary;
- c) Establish the amount of 'carbon offsetting' necessary to offset any unavoidable emissions;
- d) Place an indicative cost on some of the individual actions.

## 7. **Ecological Emergency**

### 7.1. **Justification for extending the 'Climate Emergency' declaration to a 'Climate & Ecological Emergency' declaration**

7.1.1. The natural world provides essential services such as food, clean water, clean air, medicines, sources of energy, raw materials, carbon storage and sequestration, protection from extreme weather events, recreational and health and well-being benefits.

7.1.2. The ability of the natural world to provide these services should be protected but is being compromised by poor ecological management and a loss of biodiversity.

7.1.3. The State of Nature report (2019)<sup>3</sup> stated that the UK's biodiversity had been massively depleted by centuries of habitat loss, management changes, development and persecution. Since the reports 1970 baseline the net loss of nature in the UK has continued. 15% of UK species are classified as threatened with extinction and 2% are already extinct. Climate change may accelerate this rate of decline.

7.1.4. The State of Staffordshire's Nature report (2016)<sup>4</sup> concluded that based on expert knowledge and the best available data many species in Staffordshire are declining, including water vole, hazel dormouse and a number of invertebrate species, such as the small heath butterfly and white-clawed crayfish. Just 32% of Staffordshire's geological and nature conservation SSSIs are in a Favourable condition and only 45% of Local Wildlife Sites are under appropriate conservation management. Only 5% of Staffordshire's

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<sup>3</sup> The State of Nature Partnership. (2019). The State of Nature - [State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf \(nbn.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. (2016). The State of Staffordshire's Nature (2016) - [SoS Glossy final \(6\).pdf \(staffs-wildlife.org.uk\)](#)

waterbodies are classified as being in Good Overall Status with 46% classed as either in Poor or Bad Overall Status.

## **7.2. Service implications of an 'Ecological Emergency' declaration**

7.2.1. The services/activities most affected by an Ecological Emergency declaration would be Planning, Community & Open Spaces and procurement.

7.2.2. The Planning Service already requires biodiversity to be considered as part of the planning process. These requirements have recently been strengthened in the Environment Act (2021) that now requires mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain for new developments. The Planning Service is already considering a Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Service is also working with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust on the new county-wide Nature Recovery Network and Nature Recovery Strategy, seeking ecology expertise from Staffordshire County Council and have joined Staffordshire authorities in applying for a District level license for Great Crested Newts.

7.2.3. Community & Open Spaces already provide public access to nature (eg. community tree planting), maintain sites for biodiversity and manage invasive non-native species. An Ecological Emergency declaration would require an extension of current practices that prioritise less intensive green space management, preference for native and pollinator plant species, reduced pesticide use, and habitat diversity and connectivity.

7.2.4. The Council's procurement activity also has an impact on the natural world and this is often outside the Borough. The Council's current Procurement Policy 2020-23 already contains a commitment to ethical procurement and the need to consider climate change and sustainability, and this can be further developed when the Policy is reviewed by Programmes & Transformation Team. For example, there are many products on the market such as timber, food (eg. coffee, chocolate) and other products that contain palm oil. By using certification schemes (eg. Fairtrade) it is possible to ensure that products are more likely to be from sources/forests that are legal and sustainably managed.

## **7.3. Ecological Emergency Commitments**

7.3.1. Declaring an Ecological Emergency will require the following commitments from the Council:

- v. Include additional actions that protect and enhance biodiversity in the renamed Climate Change & Ecology Action Plan;
- vi. Develop a joint Climate Change & Ecology Strategy;
- vii. Work with partners and the public across the Borough to protect and enhance biodiversity; and
- viii. Secure grant funding where necessary to deliver actions.

7.3.2. As described above (section 7.2) the Council is already doing work to protect and enhance biodiversity. Additional, emerging actions to support the Ecological Emergency declaration will be developed and included in the

revised Climate Change & Ecology Action Plan. These will be reported at the end of the next financial year.

## **8. Financial Considerations**

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit: Anya Murray*

- 8.1. There are potentially significant financial issues arising from the proposals identified within the action plan. These are likely to have financial implications in the medium to long term. No provision has currently been made within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 8.2. Going forward, each action will be costed on a case by case basis and considered as part of the annual review of the MTFS /or funded using existing budgets, in accordance with financial regulations.

## **9. Risk Assessment and Management**

- 9.1. There are numerous risks associated with actions detailed in the action plan, however these will be considered for each individual action. The main risks to this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows:
- 9.2. **Positive** (Opportunities/Benefits):
  - 9.2.1. Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions
  - 9.2.2. Possible financial benefits and energy security through energy conservation and/or self-sufficient energy generation
  - 9.2.3. Increased Biodiversity
- 9.3. **Negative** (Threats):
  - 9.3.1. Insufficient capacity and funding to deliver change
  - 9.3.2. Securing behavioural change
- 9.4. The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register. Any financial implications to mitigate against these risks are considered above.

## **10. Legal Considerations**

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team: Caroline Elwood*

- 10.1. In 2008, the government set a target for the UK to reduce its greenhouse emissions in 2050 by 80% compared with 1990 levels (the Climate Change Act 2008) and, in June 2019, government passed legislation committing it to

achieving 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019).

- 10.2. The individual actions detailed within the action plan may have their own legal implications and will therefore be considered as part of the approval process for each action.

## **11. Equalities and Health**

- 11.1. **Equality impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required at this stage but may be needed for specific policies and actions undertaken as part of the action plan.
- 11.2. **Health impacts:** The actions outlined in the Action Plan will result in improved health outcomes. Assessments will be completed on a case by case basis. An equality and health impact assessment is not required at this stage.

## **12. Human Rights**

- 12.1. There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

## **13. Sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures)**

- 13.1. Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) Yes- Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and increased biodiversity.

## **14. Recommendation(s)**

- 14.1. The report makes the following recommendations:
- a) Overall positive progress with the Climate Change Action Plan is noted.
  - b) Changes are made to target dates (see actions 1.1, 2.2, 3.1, 12.5 in Appendix 1).
  - c) The 'Climate Emergency' declaration is extended to a 'Climate & Ecological Emergency' declaration.
  - d) The progress report is produced annually at the end of each financial year.

## **15. Background Papers**

- 15.1. Climate Change Declaration and Action Plan, 17<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020

## **16. Appendices**

- 16.1. Appendix 1: The Climate Change Action Plan Progress