

Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

26 May 2022

Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy – Progress report spring 2022

For Review and Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bryan, Highways, Travel and Environment

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Report Status: Public

1. Brief Summary:

- 1.1 The Dorset Council Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy and action plan were adopted by Full Council on 15 July 2021. These documents articulated a strong ambition to deliver a carbon neutral council by 2040, and to show the requisite leadership working with others to achieve the same goal for Dorset by 2050. At this time, it was agreed that Dorset Council would commit to producing two public facing reports per year, giving an overview of progress against the strategy and action plan which would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 The first report (Autumn 2021) provided a snapshot of progress, particularly focusing on annual carbon emissions reductions for Dorset Council and the wider county. Appendix A – provides a brief progress update (Spring 2022) focusing on delivery of the strategy actions and the next steps. A further annual update on carbon emissions will be provided in Autumn 2022.

- 1.3 It is important to emphasise that the strategy and action plan is a long-term piece of work that will evolve over time. This progress update highlights that action is underway across all areas of the strategy and that major progress has been made in several key areas.
- 1.4 This paper provides a summary of progress to date and highlights future opportunities and next steps.

Recommendation:

To review progress made in delivering the Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and action plan.

Reason for Recommendation:

In line with the recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee on 12 May 2021 that the Committee would provide oversight against progress and delivery of the strategy and action plan via six monthly progress reports.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 A costed action plan presented to Cabinet on 6 October 2020, highlighted many initial actions could be taken forward within existing resources, but that significant additional revenue and capital would be required to deliver the strategy over its lifetime to ensure action continues with the urgency required and carbon reduction targets are achieved in a timely manner.
- 2.2 Dorset Council has made significant financial commitments in the 2022/23 Dorset Council budget, including the following:
 - £10 million capital over 5 years
 - £750k revenue
 - Funding for a New Corporate Director for Climate & Ecological Emergency, in post from 9 May 2022.
- 2.3 The scale of change required is significant, and to ensure that the ambitions contained within the strategy and action plan are fulfilled, a programme of this scale will need to access additional resources from a variety of sources. Maximising opportunities for external funding and partnership working are key and over the past year Dorset Council has been extremely successful at drawing in external funding streams contributing to reducing carbon emissions. The successful bid from the

Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme is a good example, where thanks to excellent data sets and availability of expertise to rapidly draw together a successful bid Dorset Council managed to attract £19m, in a very competitive and short time frame.

It is anticipated new funding streams will become available and to align with national legislation and policy, Dorset Council will need to ensure it is 'opportunity ready', with the right evidence and resources available to draw in funds for both the operational and county-wide areas of focus, all of which will be through competitive processes

- 2.4 This additional funding will help to strengthen and accelerate the work already underway and the capacity within Dorset Council to prioritise, coordinate and deliver the strategy and action plan. The capital commitment will enable Dorset Council to continue, and strengthen, work already underway in some key areas to include building retrofit, electrification of the fleet, and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

3. **Climate Implications**

- 3.1 The specific purpose of this report and the strategy is to present Dorset Council's overall approach to the climate and ecological emergency. This report specifically provides the second progress report detailing achievements in delivery of the strategy, ongoing considerations, and opportunities.

4. **Well-being and Health Implications**

- 4.1 There are no specific health and wellbeing implications of this report. However, from a strategic perspective, the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy highlights that the impact of climate change poses numerous health and wellbeing risks to the residents of Dorset. There will need to be significant consideration in how Dorset will start to manage the adaptation required to mitigate these impacts. The strategy also highlights that effective delivery of the action plan will have wider health and wellbeing co-benefits, such as improved air quality, healthy diets, improved access to high quality natural environment and active travel amongst others.

5. **Other implications**

- 5.1 There are no other specific implications contained in this report. As previously noted, the strategy and action plan itself has wide ranging implications, opportunities, and benefits for the way the council delivers services and works with others across the county.

6. **Risk Assessment**

- 6.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Medium

- 6.2 Due to the known high level of public interest in the climate change agenda and the previous commitment to provide the public with a bi-annual progress report, to not do should be considered a high reputational risk to Dorset Council.
- 6.3 The publication of this spring report is in line with commitments made and shows a significant level of progress in taking forward the strategy and action plan; but notes that there remains a need for increased urgency and further progress in several areas. The next report will provide an overview on carbon reduction figures, which will be key to understanding the outcomes of our activities.
- 6.4 In addition, the impacts of climate change pose a significant risk to council services and budgets and the wider Dorset area in the medium and long-term. Failure to effectively address the climate and ecological emergency and resilience will increase the risks associated with climate change.

7. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 An initial scoping exercise is currently being undertaken to highlight any specific impacts that need to be considered through the delivery of the strategy and action plan.

8. **Appendices**

- Appendix A - DRAFT Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy – Progress Report – Spring 2022

9. **Background papers**

- Dorset Council Climate Emergency Strategy and action plans - [Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy - Dorset Council](#)

10. **Background**

10.1 Dorset Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in May 2019 and following consultation the Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and action plan was adopted by Full Council on 15 July 2021. Dorset Council agreed to monitor performance against the strategy and action plan and report to the public twice a year.

10.2 The first public facing progress report was published in November 2021. This report gives an overview of progress in the intervening period, providing a concise summary of progress in the delivery of the strategy.

10.3 The report will be available to the public via the Council's climate emergency webpages and will be subject of a targeted social media campaign and press releases. This report does not cover all activity that has been undertaken, focuses on some of the key achievements that are most pertinent to the delivery of the strategy and action plan.

10.4 Many other areas of work are underway across the Council and wider Dorset which contribute to delivering the strategy's objectives and action plan. The next report will be published in Autumn 2022, focusing on our progress towards carbon reduction targets as well as focussing on the activities of partner organisations.

11. **Summary of progress spring 2022**

11.1 The Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy (CEES) is a long-term strategy which sets out 41 objectives under 9 topic headings. It sets long and short-term carbon targets and identifies key areas where the Council can both reduce its own carbon footprint and support the whole of Dorset to become carbon neutral. Over 190 detailed actions have been identified, to be delivered by services across the council. It specifically highlights this is a starting point, setting out the direction of travel required to address these emergencies in the long-term. It notes that urgent and sustained action is required to meet the challenging commitments, and the action plan needs to be dynamic and evolve over time to take account of

progress and an evolving scientific, technological and legislative landscape.

11.2 It is less than one year since the adoption of the final strategy and action plan in July 2021. While work has been ongoing since the formation of Dorset Council and the declaration of the climate emergency in May 2019, there has been a stepping up of activity during the last year. The strategy address two distinct targets:

- **Making Dorset Council carbon neutral by 2040 (operational)** – carbon emissions from our own operations only account for approximately 1.5% of Dorset’s wider footprint, but the council has direct control over these emissions, and it is critical that Dorset Council shows leadership in this area. This has therefore been a key focus of our activities to date.
- **Helping Dorset to become carbon neutral by 2050 (facilitation)** - the strategy recognises that Dorset Council has a far wider sphere of influence through the range of services it provides (statutory and non-statutory), its partnership work with a range of organisations and its influence on national policy agenda.

11.3 Overall excellent progress has been made across the strategy actions, and a broad summary is given in appendix A. In some areas progress has been slower than anticipated but this countered by greater than planned progress in some critical areas, particularly in reducing the Council’s own operational footprint and in establishing robust structures to ensure the strategy happens and is successful delivered.

11.4 It is also important to consider that transformational change on the scale required is extremely complex, challenging traditional ways of working. Significant amounts of preparatory work are being undertaken now that may take years to reach fruition, and new ways of working across systems with partners will need time to embed.

12. **Key Achievements**

12.1 **Making Dorset Council operations carbon neutral by 2040** – in autumn 2021, we reported that we had reduced the Council carbon emissions by 17%, an excellent step towards our interim target of 40% reduction by 2025. Work continues to gather pace and become more embedded in our activities helping to reduce our travel, energy use in buildings, street

lighting and the embedded carbon in our highway's construction projects. A further update on our carbon footprint will be available in Autumn 2022. Some of our key highlights to date are noted below:

- Secured £19m public sector decarbonisation fund to support retrofit programme - heating control upgrades, Solar PV installations, LED lighting upgrades, electricity infrastructure strengthening, heat pumps all for installation by end June 2022. To include -
 - o up to 90 PV arrays installed on council buildings and schools
 - o Window upgrades at County Hall
 - o Up to 100 buildings fitted with a new or upgraded Building Energy Management system (BMS)
- Increasing EV infrastructure at council sites – 2 sites upgrade to date further planned for this year
- Switching fleet vehicles from fossil fuels
 - o Developing fleet strategy
 - o Trialed electric vehicles and alternative fuel (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) for heavy vehicles
 - o Scheduled to expand fleet of electric vehicles in 2022/23 and 23/24
- Reduce carbon emissions from highways construction & maintenance
 - o Primary material use reduced by 30% in 21/22
 - o 15% scalpings recycled into new asphalt
 - o 49% asphalt laid was low energy asphalt – saving 15% embodied carbon
- Increased verge & amenity space management for biodiversity benefit by 350,000m² through expansion of cut and collect programme
- Climate & Ecological emergency prioritised within Dorset Council corporate plan and new Corporate Director of Climate and Ecological Sustainability appointed.
- Significant budget commitment in 2022/23 Dorset Council budget
 - o £10million Capital climate change budget
 - o £750k revenue priority commitment
- Strategy in place to decarbonise Dorset County Pension Fund's investment portfolio and reduce investment in all high carbon emitting companies, with at least 7% year on year reduction in weighted average carbon intensity of the portfolio.
 - o Estimated value of the pension fund's investment in companies primarily involved in the exploration, production, mining and/or

refining of fossil fuels has reduced from £128 million to £41million since 2019. This means that only 1.2% of the total investment assets are currently in fossil fuels

- Pro-active lobbying of Government for powers and funding to support strategy delivery

12.2 Helping Dorset to become Carbon Neutral by 2050 – a significant amount of work is being undertaken to support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions across Dorset, as well as strengthening the focus on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. However, further opportunities to strengthen the strategic links between the climate and ecological strands need to be explored. Recent changes in legislation and guidance such as the Environment and Agriculture Acts and the requirement to produce Local Nature Recovery Strategies will significantly influence this work over the coming year and hopefully offer further opportunities for financial support. Some of our key highlights to date are noted below:

- Supporting business, community and public organisation reduce their carbon emissions through the 'Low Carbon Dorset Programme'.
 - o 164 grants awarded and over 400 organisations benefitting from advice
 - o £5.6 million worth of low-carbon projects already supported
 - o 7,000 tonnes carbon already saved
 - o 4.4 Mega Watts for renewable energy installed
- Healthy Homes Dorset has supported over 130 homes in Dorset in the last year with energy efficiency and improvement measures and an additional 240 households in Dorset and BCP area have received Green Homes Grants in the current round of funding to install energy measures including insulation, ventilation, and Solar Panels.
- Phase of public EV charge points completed delivering 42 new EV charge sockets at 21 locations
- Created an Enhanced Partnership with local bus operators to help improve the quality & availability of public transport.
- Expanded cycle training & independent travel training programmes with over 3,600 participants
- Gigabyte broadband coverage in Dorset increased by nearly 8% last year to 19.5%

- Encouraging waste reduction and support transition to a circular economy
 - o 60% recycling achieved. Dorset Council is the eighth best performing council in England and the third best unitary council in England for recycling and composting.
 - o 155 sites Communal site improvements predicted to save £125k through increased recycling, less rubbish and less recycling contamination.
 - o 6,000 residents spoken to through door-to-door project.
- Supporting natural flood management – Over 40 natural flood management structures installed to slow the flow of flood water in two catchments
- Several projects underway with Dorset Coast forum to include
 - o Studland eco moorings and the protection of seagrass beds (carbon sequestration) - (£35K).
 - o Climate resilience project for Weymouth - BRIC building resilience in flood disadvantaged communities - (£106K).
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme managed by the Dorset AONB has distribute £212k in year 1 to 40 project. This includes, amongst other projects, supporting
 - o 0.77 ha of woodland creation
 - o 1482 ha of land being managed with regenerative farming techniques
 - o 6 projects to improve the soil quality & 9 projects helping to reduce flood risk

13. **Key observations and opportunities**

- 13.1 **Pandemic** - as noted in the autumn report, the pandemic impacted on the speed of delivery and continues to impact on supply chains, availability of goods and services and even energy prices at a global level. However, the pandemic also created a swift change in the way we work, travel and use our buildings with significant benefits for reducing our carbon emissions. We must now work hard to maintain some of these gains and ensure this is fully embedded in our organisational transformation.
- 13.2 **Evolving national policy and guidance** - We have been in an intense period of national legislative and policy change and much of this is beginning to align more strongly with our strategic ambitions to tackle the climate and ecological emergency. Most notably -

- a) The UK Net Zero Strategy (2021) sets out the Government's commitment to meet its net zero 2050 target by transitioning from fossil fuels, supporting energy efficiency and greater deployment of renewable energy (particularly wind and solar), development of new innovations such as hydrogen. Additionally, there are initiatives aimed at supporting sustainable transport and opportunities for green finance. Most recently the British Energy Security Strategy (2022) aimed to address concerns over energy price rises and the cost of living by decreasing reliance on imported fossil fuels and transitioning to secure, clean, and affordable energy for the long - term.
- b) The Environment Act 2021, which gives a legal framework for environmental governance in the UK and brings in measures to improve the environment in relation to waste, resource efficiency, air quality, water, nature and biodiversity, and conservation. Of particular importance to tackling the ecological emergency is the requirements for 10% net gain in biodiversity and development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. The government has also made it clear its priority for 30% of land to be under positive management by 2030, which could have significant positive impacts on carbon sequestration as well as biodiversity renewal.
- c) Agriculture Act 2020 sets out a framework to implement new approaches to farm payments and land management. This includes animal welfare, replacement of the basic payments scheme and a move to 'Environmental Land Management schemes' (ELMS) focusing on supporting biodiversity, improving the local environment and more sustainable farming practice.

13.3 These legislative pathways will enable Dorset Council to strengthen its role in a number of areas to achieve our net zero ambitions, support a thriving green economy, help residents to reduce costs and carbon, and to protect and enhance Dorset's natural environment.

13.4 **Available resources** - Achieving our ambitions will require significant investment by the council, organisations, and individuals. The council has made additional financial commitments in the 2022/23 budget to strengthen successful delivery (see finance below), but there will be a need for external funding. It is anticipated that future national financial commitments will follow to support the national legislative & policy frameworks outline above. To date Dorset Council has been very successful in attracting over £50m of external funds to support its climate

change ambitions. We must, therefore, ensure we have the structure, resource, expertise and have undertaken the initial background work to be 'opportunity ready' for new funding streams.

- 13.5 **Physical constraints** – A critical factor in the deployment of low carbon technologies will be the future capacity of the electricity grid to support the scale of change needed. It will be important that we take a strategic view of the future energy needs and aspirations of the county and work in partnership with the distribution network operators, government and the regulator to ensure the capacity of the network matches that ambition.

14. **Next Steps**

- 14.1 Over the past year the council has strengthened its delivery of the climate and ecological emergency and is now in an excellent position to make a strategic shift in our approach to reducing our own operational emissions and influencing wider systems to tackle Dorset's carbon emissions, resilience to the effects of climate change and protect and enhance Dorset's natural environment.
- 14.2 A programme management approach is being developed to ensure development, monitoring and delivery of actions and objectives and a robust governance structure is being established to ensure the council promotes a sense of urgency in the delivery now and into the future and to ensure successful delivery over the long-term. This will also ensure that the approach is dynamic, flexible and agile to maximise opportunities from rapidly evolving national policy & funding streams, technology and science.
- 14.3 Successful delivery against these ambitious objectives will in most cases require cross-service and cross-directorate working and as such it is considered vital that a framework is put in place to facilitate this. A whole council approach is being taken to support the work involved in adapting business as usual activities and developing new ways of working to achieve the targets in the strategy and action plan.
- 14.4 Action and objective owners have been identified from across council services and over the coming months objective level project teams will be established to refine objectives, ensuring they are targeted, outcomes are measurable, and that actions and key deliverable milestones are relevant to achieving the objective outcomes. Project teams will be responsible for the ongoing delivery of specific actions and milestones contributing to

each objective and the ongoing development of that area of work overtime.

- 14.5 Part of this work will include clarifying the programme of work required for the council to reduce its own operational footprint to net-zero by 2040 and greater clarity on the wider systems which need to be influenced to deliver the county carbon reduction ambition and opportunities for delivery partnerships.

15. **Performance monitoring and reporting**

- 15.1 Several climate and ecological key performance indicators (KPIs) have been integrated into the corporate performance management programme. These will be updated over time to ensure each objective has a corresponding performance indicator. These will be reported through the corporate performance management process to Senior management teams.
- 15.2 The ongoing progress of each workstream will be monitored and reviewed and progress reported to the Climate and Ecological Emergency steering group. This will aim to ensure work streams remain on track to deliver the action plan and meet our key deliverables and milestones.
- 15.3 In addition, data collated will inform the public Climate and Ecological Emergency progress reports, which will be structured as follows:
- Autumn Report - will largely look back at the previous year's achievements and provide an annual progress update against carbon targets, it will highlight key areas needing action in the coming year, to help inform budget discussions for the next year.
 - The Spring Report (this report), will look forward to the coming year, focussing on work planned for the coming year reflecting approved budget position and will highlight any further significant achievements since autumn to the close of the year.