

Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

10 November 2022

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

For Review and Consultation

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

Local Councillor(s): County wide

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Report Status: Public

1. Brief Summary:

1.1 Dorset Council is a leader of place. As part of its refreshed council plan priorities, the focus on the delivery of our Climate and Ecological Emergency strategy has taken on greater significance. Given the worldwide attention based on scientific consensus of the changes that we are now witnessing with global climatic systems, it is ever more important that leaders and institutions at all levels of government, civil society and business show the requisite leadership to accelerate the actions necessary to combat this emergency. Combatting both climatic change and the loss of our biodiversity is no longer a nice to do; it forms an integral part of the leadership capital of local authorities and should be considered as a core component of how councils see their role as leaders of place. This involves significant transformational change of our own operations, as well as systems leadership to help facilitate and work in partnership with others.

- 1.2 The Dorset Council Climate & Ecological Emergency strategy and action plan were adopted by full council on 15 July 2021. It was agreed that Dorset Council would produce two public facing reports per year, giving an overview of progress against the strategy and action plan which would be presented to the Place and Resources scrutiny committee.
- 1.3 These documents articulate a strong ambition to show leadership in working across the council and with other organisations in three key areas -
- i. **Reduce carbon emissions** - making Dorset Council operations carbon neutral by 2040 and helping Dorset to become Carbon Neutral by 2050
 - ii. **Combat the ecological emergency** - delivering 30% of land under positive management by 2030 and a Dorset nature recovery strategy.
 - iii. **Adapt to climate change** – strengthening our strategic approach to adaptation.
- 1.4 The scale of the challenge to achieve these goals cannot be underestimated. The below provides a snapshot (not exhaustive) of the transition that is required to reach net zero by 2050 (the scale of the challenge for environment and adaptation is also significant).

Where we are now	By 2050
5% of energy from renewables	100%
Total energy used 13,803GWh	Reduction of between 55% and 67%
Carbon emissions from energy use 3,187ktCO ₂	Net zero
Circa 34% or 103,000 properties with EPC C or better	Circa 90% or 270,000 properties with EPC C or better
491MW (additional 197 accepted for connection) installed capacity	2,600MW
Dorset – 15% good condition or known ecological interest	30% of our land and seas to be connected and protected for nature's recovery by 2030

- 1.5 Significant leadership, engagement and dialogue with government will be required to deliver on the above, as well as putting in place the requisite governance to ensure that there is a clear direction of travel amongst key institutions to accelerate action. Ensuring that Dorset Council delivers on its own operational decarbonisation journey will be critical to build up its credibility as part of this systems leadership challenge.
- 1.6 Previous progress reports highlighted the breadth of action underway across council services. This paper focuses on providing a summary of

progress towards reducing carbon emissions and highlights key next steps. Future reports will focus on ecology and adaptation.

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 Place and Resources 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. Background

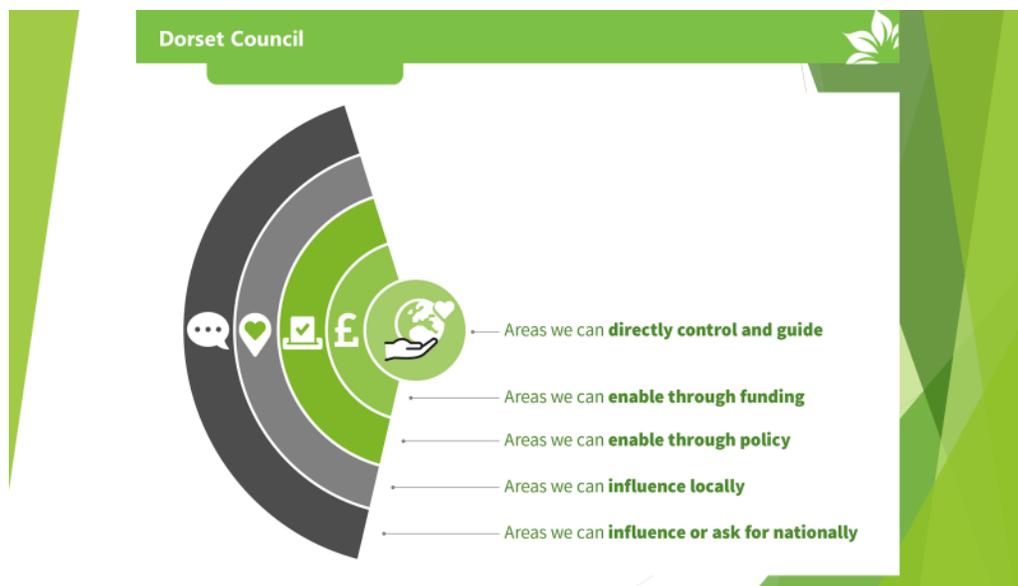
2.1 Dorset Council adopted a climate and ecological strategy in July 2021 in the recognition of the well documented scientific consensus that climate change and ecological break down are anthropogenic and accelerating in many parts of the world. The strategy addresses distinct targets:

- **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.
- **In addition, work is now being undertaken to put in place the necessary leadership for delivering nature recovery by 2030 (ecological emergency).**
- **A more strategic approach to adaptation is also emerging as a key focus.**

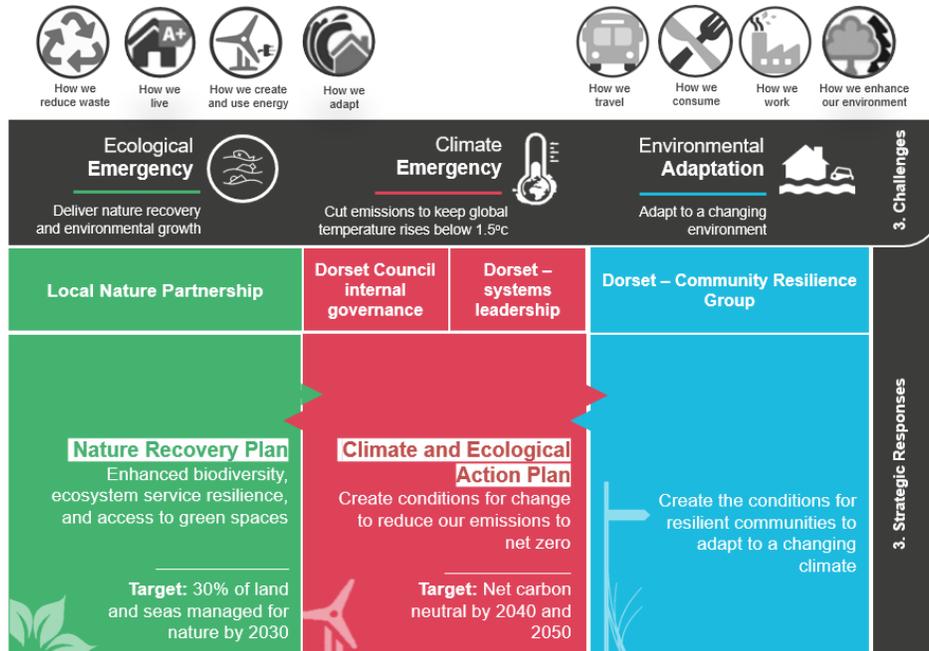
2.2 The challenges presented by climate and ecological emergencies are vast and include the decarbonisation of transport, housing, and the economy across the whole of the County, scaling up the production of renewable

energy by a factor of 10 in order to meet Dorset's energy needs and the wholesale recovery of our natural systems.

- 2.3 The work required to meet these challenges is unprecedented in scale and complexity and will require action from all sectors of society. The Council has a critical systems leadership role to work with others to meet these challenges and the diagram below highlights the spheres of influence the council can have.



- 2.4 The Council has identified the climate and ecological emergency as one of its key priorities within the corporate plan and since the adoption of the Climate and Ecological Emergency strategy and action plan, work has been ongoing to ensure that there has been a clear strategic articulation of how the interdependencies of climate, ecological and adaptation work streams come together. As can be seen from the diagram below, this is resulting in the development of a 'three-pillar' approach, where the work required to reduce our emissions works symbiotically with our nature-recovery and adaptation work. While there remains more work to do, working across systems and partners to ensure that these links are made is of paramount importance, especially if we are to achieve our Dorset-wide goals with partners working to common goals.



2.5 As part of the adoption of the strategy and action plan the council agreed to report progress to the public twice a year against the aspirations of the strategy. The Autumn 2022 progress report (Appendix A) provides a snapshot of progress against the ‘climate emergency’ focusing on our progress towards reducing our carbon emissions. Future reports will focus on the Ecological Emergency and overtime environmental adaptation.

3. Summary of performance against carbon targets - Autumn 2022

Helping Dorset to become carbon neutral by 2050 (facilitation)

- 3.1 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. It highlighted that future carbon emissions in Dorset should not exceed 21 million tonnes of CO_{2e} if we were to have a higher probability of remaining within a 1.5⁰C temperature rise. It noted that to achieve this by 2050 would require a non-linear reduction of emissions, with faster reduction required before 2030.
- 3.2 The latest national carbon statistics indicate that **Dorset wide carbon emissions have reduced by approximately 18%** since the Council

Declared a climate emergency in 2019. This is better than our target by this time and keeps Dorset within its carbon budget. However, the national data is two years behind and figures presented for this year have shown a sharper decrease to reflect the Covid lock down period, which resulted in slowdown in economic activity and significant reduction in travel. It must therefore be remembered that this sharp downward trend is likely to correct in following years as we recover from the Pandemic and without concerted effort there is a risk of bounce back.

- 3.3 The statistics this year also include an assessment of emissions from agriculture and waste sectors, which in previous years have been reported as a very small proportion of Dorset's overall emissions figure. However, this national analysis now estimates that agriculture accounts for 30% of Dorset's entire emission, only slightly less than emissions from transport (31%) and higher than domestic emissions (24%). Waste has also increased but to only 4% of total emissions.
- 3.4 With these figures included Dorset's overall emissions are in the region of 2.272 million tCO₂e, 900 thousand tCO₂e more than previous reported. This means that to stay within Dorset's Carbon budget will require even steeper carbon reduction by 2030.

Making Dorset Council carbon neutral by 2040 (operational)

- 3.5 Carbon emissions from our own operations only account for around 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.
- 3.6 **Dorset Council carbon emissions have reduced by approximately 26% from our baseline year to 24,325 tCO₂e.** This is better than our target for this time and puts Dorset Council in an excellent position to work towards its 2025 target of 40% reduction in operational carbon emissions.
- 3.7 There has been a very slight increase on previous year figure, which reduced dramatically during the Covid Lock down period, but importantly the figures have not bounced back significantly which could have been expected as staff begin to travel more and buildings become more occupied. However, this has not been the trend to date and the rapid growth in use of digital communications as a result of the pandemic has enabled staff to remain working from home the majority of the time and avoid unnecessary travel. It will be important to sustain these behaviours to avoid a return to higher emissions. Work has started this year to try and estimate emissions

from home working using a simplified national tool, but we currently do not have sufficiently robust data on staff travel and working from home patterns. A more robust methodology will be developed over the coming year to enable a more detailed assessment of home working. A staff travel survey is currently being undertaken.

- 3.8 To ensure the council remains on track to reach its operational programme a robust governance structure and programme management process has been put in place. A new CLT climate & ecology sub-group has been set up to oversee the council's response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy, ensuring the delivery of the council's ambitions within its corporate plan and enable alignment of the work across council services and key place shaping strategies. To ensure a coordinated programme management approach to the operational programme a cross service operational group has been established. They will have oversight of the overall programme and individual heads of service roles for delivery of each aspect of the operational programme.
- 3.9 With support from the transformation programme team a detailed programme is being developed to deliver the council's 2040 net zero target. This will ensure we have in place a clear programme of work, delivery milestones and a full understand of the interdependencies between the different work streams and risks to programme delivery. This will enable robust performance monitoring, accountability and ensure resource requirements are fully understood to achieve success. A monitoring processes has been put in place for each work stream and exception reporting and escalation of issues to the CLT climate and ecology group. This includes a detailed project planner on Teams.
- 3.10 Appendix B provides a programme overview of activities and progress towards our reduction targets. It sets out the different work streams which make up overall programme, progress to date and ongoing challenges. A RAG status for each work stream in terms of current performance and likely progress toward the 2025 interim target of 40% reduction in carbon emissions is indicated. It can be seen from this that overall good progress is being made towards our first interim carbon reduction target of 40% reduction by 2025.

4. Key observations & challenges

- Progress to date has been good across the majority of work streams and this is reflected in Dorset Council's overall carbon reduction. Each work

stream has seen a significant reduction in emissions that are either aligned or better than anticipated at this time. In some areas this has been driven by the impacts of the pandemic and continued behaviours which has limited unnecessary travel and maximised use of digital technology enabling home working. Locking in these behaviours will be critical to maintain the direction of travel.

- Despite good progress, achieving the targets for 2025 and beyond will still be very challenging and require a concerted effort to move away from business as usual into a more focus and coordinated approach across the council, and there are several challenges that will need to be overcome to progress at pace. For this reason, several work streams have an amber or red RAG rating for achieving a 40% reduction by 2025.
- Data collection and availability needs to be improved in several areas to provide a more robust assessment of carbon emissions. Most notably emissions for fleet fuel use, Dorset Travel and staff commuting all have limitations at the current time and systems need to be significantly improved in these areas.
- Several areas are heavily influenced by service needs across the Council outside of the control of the service responsible for the carbon reduction work stream, for example school and SEN travel significantly effects journey mileage and associated carbon, particularly for Dorset Travel.
- There are several critical dependencies that must be managed effectively to deliver at the scale required, an example is the rapid transition to electric vehicles which is dependent on charging infrastructure and buy in from fleet users across Dorset Council.
- To achieve net zero emissions will require a significant increase in renewable energy production to match Dorset Council's consumption. Some of this can be provided on our buildings but additional large scale investment opportunities need to be explored. Grid capacity in Dorset is heavily constrained and this is a risk to achieving targets in this area.
- Similarly, programmes of work focused on nature-based solutions to offset/inset residual carbon emissions need to be further developed. These could include for example utilisation of our own natural assets to maximise carbon sequestration. We are already seeing this in practice with the verge for nature project, which significantly improves biodiversity, saves money and carbon from travel and fuel helping to lock in carbon.

5. Looking forward

5.1 A number of work streams are underway or planned which will contribute to the ongoing reductions and be reflected in future years carbon emission figures. These include -

- The £19m programme of work being delivered with funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) is all but completed, and all projects will be fully commissioned before the end of 2022. This has included the installation of energy saving and renewable energy measures at over two hundred council-owned sites. Projects range from insulation in offices solar PV panels, heat pumps, LED lighting through to state-of-the-art energy management systems in schools. This will reduce the carbon footprint of 6 leisure centres, 15 libraries, 6 residential nursing homes & hostels, 109 primary schools, 25 secondary schools, 5 special schools, 8 children's centres, 4 offices, 2 country parks, 2 outdoor education centres, 1 crematorium, 5 depots and 3 community centres.
- This portfolio of projects will contribute around 6MW of renewable energy capacity and significant energy savings. Final figures on associated carbon savings will be known after final commissioning and a period of operation and monitoring. These will be reflected in 2022/23 energy figures. Further work is also underway to explore larger renewable energy opportunities across Dorset.
- A £10 million climate and ecological capital programme has been established to support the operational programme. It is anticipated that over 5 years this will enable a further 5-6% reduction in Dorset Council's emissions. This money has now been allocated to services across the council, and will support:-
 - An additional 9000 streetlights to be switched to low energy LEDs.
 - Further retrofit of Dorset Council buildings with low carbon technologies, including insulation, heat pumps and Solar PV
 - Expansion of the EV charging infrastructure on Dorset Council estate and in public locations to support expansion of EVs. This will link across directly to the £2.7m, to deliver 150 new EV chargers across Dorset, that has been secured from the LEVI fund for public EV infrastructure in Dorset.

- Purchase of electric vehicles and the roll out of EV's for small vehicles as well as an electric road sweeper to support the active travel infrastructure in East Dorset. In 2022/23 orders will be placed to replace the existing fossil fuelled fleet of pool cars and parking service vehicles (approx. 24 vehicles)
- In addition, £100k has been allocated from the capital fund to support the delivery of Healthy Homes Dorset project which will be critical to support residents with energy advice and grants. This forms part of a wider programme approach to the energy and housing elements of the current cost-of-living crisis that is being co-ordinated across multiple council services and stakeholders/organisations.
- Work is now underway to develop a new decision-making tool for climate and ecology, which will also be expanded to include other impact assessments required as part of the committee process. This will be of fundamental importance to ensure that the council is fully cognisant of the impact of decisions that it is taking from a climate and ecological perspective.
- Dorset Council working with partners has convened a public sector climate and ecology group to promote joint working across several key focus areas such as commuting, assets, procurement and a range of other areas.
- When resources allow, a comprehensive engagement approach will be developed to ensure that communities, individuals, and businesses are engaged and provided with signposting and the tools required to start to affect change.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 A costed action plan presented to cabinet on 6 October 2020, highlighted that significant additional revenue and capital would be required to deliver the council's ambitions and strategy over its lifetime to ensure action continues with urgency and at the scale required.
- 6.2 Dorset Council allocated £10 million capital over 5 years in the 2022/23 Dorset Council budget. This additional funding will help to strengthen work already underway to reduce our operation carbon footprint in some key areas to include building retrofit, electrification of the fleet, and electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Potentially enabling a further 5-6% reduction in emissions over the next 5 years.

- 6.3 There will undoubtedly be a requirement to re-align existing operations and resources to accelerate the actions required to deliver against the ambitions of the strategy and action plan.
- 6.4 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. Dorset Council will need to ensure it is 'opportunity ready', All of this work will require the right evidence and resources to draw in funds for both the operational and county-wide areas of focus, all of which will be through competitive processes. Additionally, there will be a requirement to re-align existing operations and resources to accelerate the actions required to deliver against the ambitions of the strategy.

7. Environmental Implications

- 7.1 The specific purpose of this report is to provide a bi-annual update on progress towards delivering Dorset Council's climate and ecological emergency strategy and action plan. Particularly focusing on progress towards reducing Dorset Councils operation carbon emissions.

8. Well-being and Health Implications

- 8.1 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.

9. **Other implications**

- 9.1 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 co-benefits for the way the council delivers services and works with others across the county.

10. **Risk Assessment**

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

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Medium

- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 The publication of this Autumn report is in line with commitments made and shows a significant level of progress taking forward the strategy and action plan; but notes that there remains a need for increased urgency and further progress in several areas.
- 10.4 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.
- 10.5 The significant work required to transition the operational programme will require services to re-focus some of their priorities. This will be a significant challenge when there are already significant pressures to deliver against a wide range of priorities and against a backdrop of limited resources.
- 10.6 If climate and ecological considerations are not built into decision-making across the council, there is a risk that unintended outcomes could be delivered that increase the carbon footprint of the council.

11. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 11.1 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.

12. **Appendices**

- Appendix A – CEES Progress Report – Autumn 2022
- Appendix B – Road map for delivery - climate operational

13. **Background papers**

- Dorset Council Climate Emergency Strategy and action plans - [Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy - Dorset Council](#)
- Cabinet 21 June 2022, Dorset Council priorities: update report on climate and ecology priority [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 21st June, 2022, 10.00 am - Dorset Council](#)