

Portfolio Holder Climate Action – Scrutiny Committee Portfolio Holder’s update report



As this is my first scrutiny meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to explain:

- how this programme was designed
- the way it works and what it entails
- the progress that has been made
- the challenges we have identified
- the plans that will begin in the next financial year

Climate action is the most important issue that the council has to address, as it is fundamentally linked with the future of our planet and human existence. This may sound dramatic but if like me you are convinced by the science, have listened to the experts and have kept up to date with developments you will understand the challenging situation we are in.

As portfolio holder, it is my responsibility to steer, encourage, promote and facilitate our climate change actions, working with members and officers to deliver the actions which will reduce our carbon footprint. Once we have our own house in order, we can begin to look to our businesses, communities and individuals and work to support them in making the changes required. This is a big job by anyone’s estimation and made even harder when government actions are apparently not in sync with their own rhetoric.

We have established a clear policy framework and embedded climate action in the core business of the Council. This last 18 months has been a period of discovery and exploration, laying the foundations for the next phase of work.

The focus now needs to be on delivering the ambitions, requiring a determination, cross Council support, suitable expertise and adequate budgets.

What we do in the next decade will decide our future. António Guterres is the 9th Secretary General of the UN and told world leaders at the opening of the UN climate summit, COP 27 in Egypt: “We are in the fight of our lives and we are losing ... And our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible. We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator”

We have a moral imperative to look after this beautiful part of the world and we can see already how we will be severely impacted by climate change, the predictions show that we will experience flooding, rock falls, erosion to our coastline and weather related damage to our agricultural sector. Our infrastructure will be impacted and there will be threats to our food security and availability of our water supply. These are all risks we are facing and whose impacts will intensify with every fraction of a degree in temperature rise. There is no safe rise in global temperatures.

The speed with which we tackle climate change mitigation is very important also (see below), there is no time to lose. To use the bath tub analogy not only must we turn off the taps but we must also empty the bath by pulling the plug.

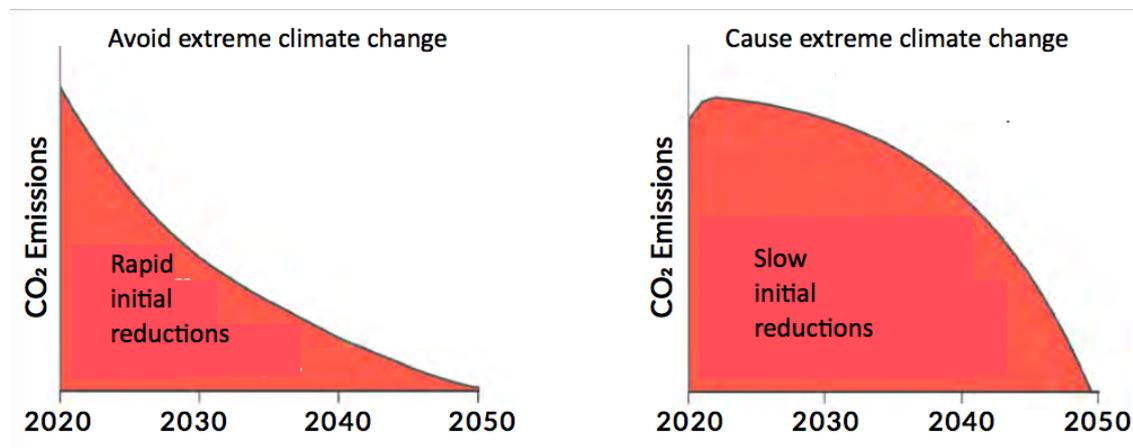


Image courtesy of [Zero Hour](#)

We must also remember this is not just a climate emergency but an ecological emergency as well. We are tasked with ensuring that we protect our natural world, we seem to have forgotten that we are part of the ecosystem and cannot thrive unless it does too. There is much work to do to repair the damage we have already done but we have some great strategies and have already started to make progress in some areas.

This is such a wide ranging scope of work that it is covered by several portfolios including Cllr Geoff Jung who will be attending scrutiny shortly and will cover a whole host of interlinked and interconnected issues.

My portfolio covers the work we as an organisation are doing to reduce our carbon emissions, that is the carbon generated by our own activities, the data we capture in scope 1, 2 and 3 of our carbon footprint.

Scope	Definition	Emission Examples
1	Direct Greenhouse Gas emissions	Fuel burned by your boiler, furnaces, turbines. Chemical processing. Fuel burned by company-owned cars/vehicles. Emissions from refrigerants or air-conditioning.
2	Electricity in-direct emissions	Emissions from the fuel used to generate your electricity. This can be reported as location (what actually generates the electricity in your grid) or market (what have you purchased from your provider e.g. REGO)
3	Other indirect Greenhouse Gas emissions	All other emissions and fuel that is used in order for your business to operate, including: Business travel, employee commuting, purchased goods & capital items, transport for goods in and goods out, waste disposal, electricity outside of your control, leased properties or outsourced activities, the use of your end products.

Image courtesy of Jo Muncaster, CityScience

As a district council we have a relatively small impact (in 2021 our carbon footprint was 24,000 tonnes) but that of the district as a whole is around 1,000,000 tonnes. However we can have an enormous impact through our influence and we need to use these levers to the best advantage.

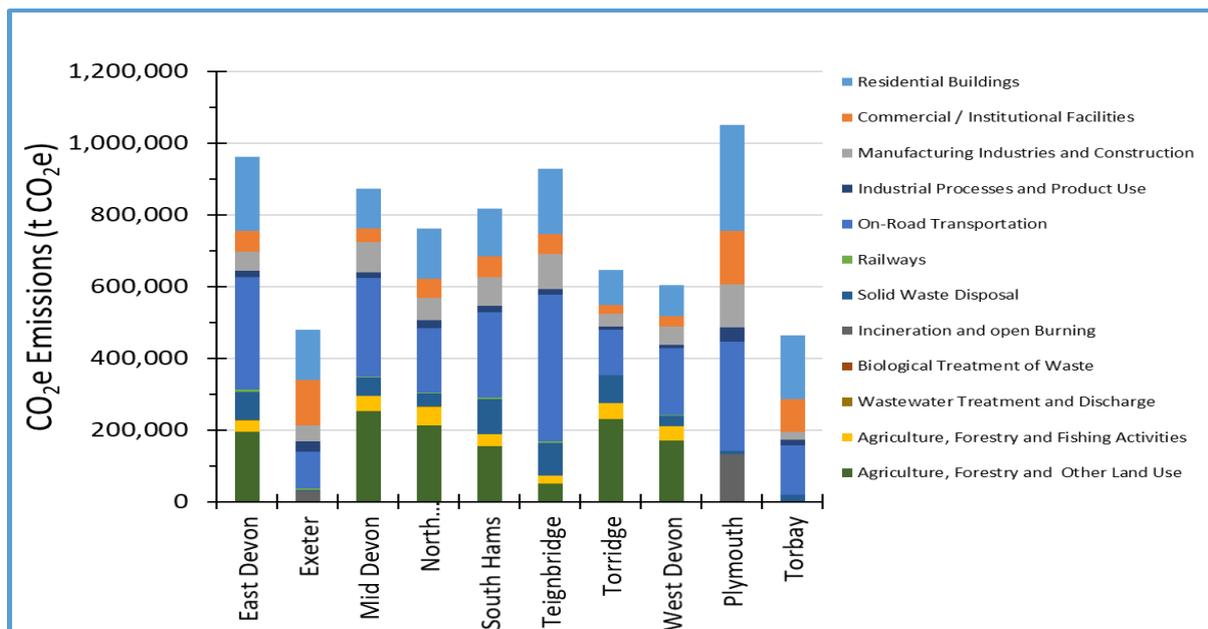
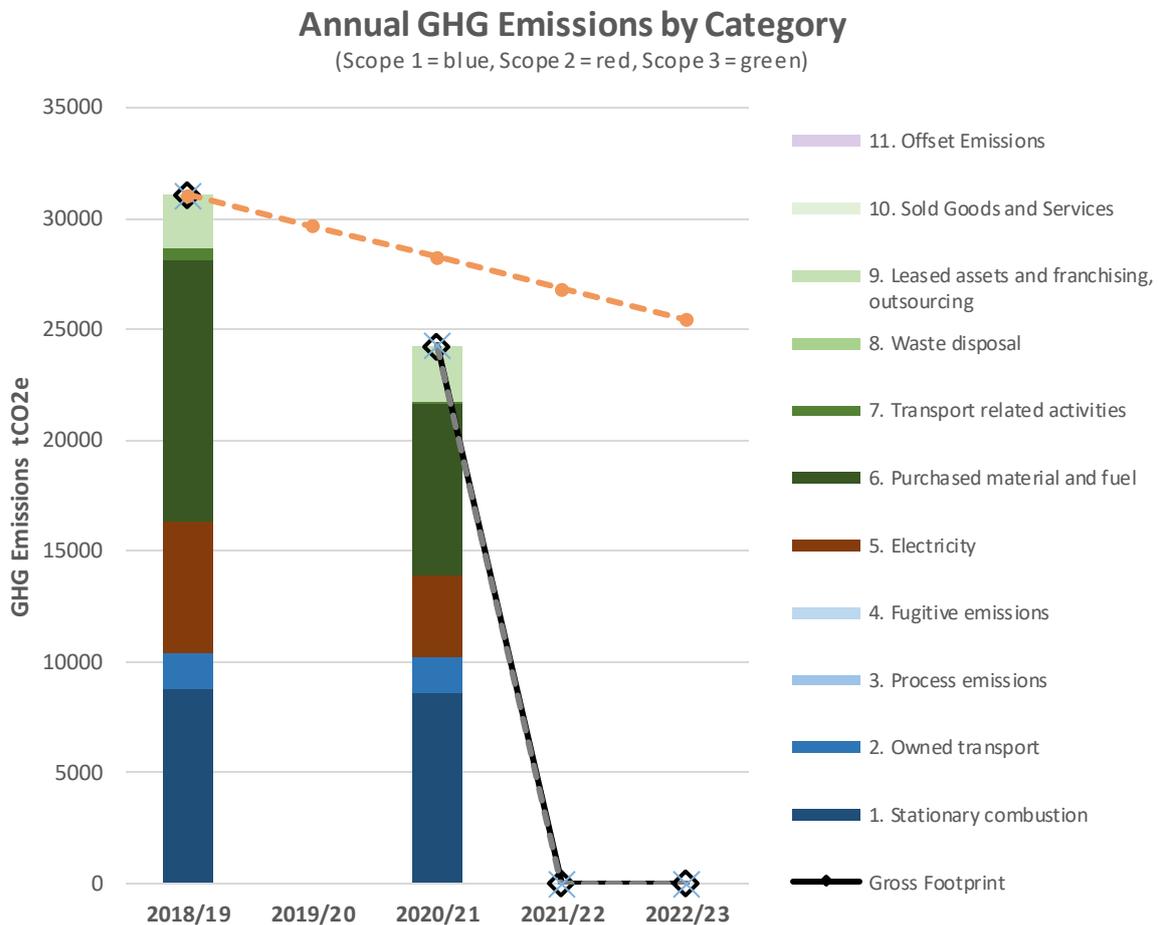


Image courtesy of Devon Carbon plan

Whilst the graph below shows a reduction of 22% in annual GHG emissions, I suspect it is in part due to the effects of the pandemic and I have requested that the carbon footprint is re-run again in early 2023.



We have a responsibility to work with our partners, central government and the community to support our residents in making the changes needed to meet our climate change pledge. Climate change impacts do not work in silos and neither can we. The Government's own report from the Committee for Climate Change acknowledges that 60% of the reductions in carbon will need to come from the general population taking up low carbon solutions. This will require residents to change the way they heat their homes, how they travel and their consumption habits. This shows how we need to work with our residents to support them by installing infrastructure and putting systems in place to encourage this. The Committee for Climate Change estimates that local authorities have powers and influence over roughly 1/3rd of the emissions in their area.

The Office for National Statistics ran a survey in October 2021 and they found that 75% of adults in Great Britain were worried about the impact of climate change. These results mirror the survey undertaken by the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy

who in March 2020 they found 76% of adults in the UK were concerned to some degree about climate change.

Our staff and residents are looking to us to lead and to act.

Bold & Brave or more blah, blah, blah?

This Portfolio Holder update paper has deliberately been framed to inform and stimulate discussion, questioning how we can do more, act collectively and be a catalyst for positive change.

We adopted our climate change strategy & action plan in January and February 2020, prior to that (July 2019) we signed the Devon Climate Change Emergency Declaration.

As part of this process we committed to becoming a carbon neutral council by 2040 as a stretch target. As signatories to the Devon Climate Emergency Declaration we adopted a target to reduce our emissions by 50% based on our 2010 figures by 2030. This means we have 7 years to rapidly embed new practices to meet the pledge Cabinet agreed to in November 2022 when we formally adopted the Devon Carbon Plan. In order to achieve this I have overseen the creation of a new campaign which will guide our work until the end of the decade, this is the 8% campaign and it will be a key feature of the new Green Team. This will require us to do more, think bigger, act faster and be bold and brave.

Whilst climate change has been embraced and mainstreamed in all areas of the Council, there are services that lack sufficient capacity to deliver climate action at pace, and there are financial constraints and technological challenges. It is part of my job to address these issues and work with officers to make meaningful progress against our ambitions.

The universal challenge

Climate Change is a rapidly developing area for local authorities and part of my role is to keep on top of emerging advice and good practice, ensuring that our efforts are aligned with current advice and where we can make a positive difference. The approach I have adopted is 'Think Globally: Act Locally', in so much as we have an important part to play in what must be an international effort, with many partners coordinating their climate change agendas.

The history of the programme

In 2019 the challenge of designing the climate change programme fell to John Golding Strategic Lead. He headed up the environmental work and he did a great deal of the ground work, ensuring that as a council we had a baseline carbon assessment completed with the help of Exeter University. He then created and led on a project to embed climate action into the full council plan and created a climate change strategy and action plan. In addition to this John Golding also led training and awareness sessions for staff to bring them on board with the climate change agenda. This developed a clear policy framework and embedded climate action in the core business of the council.

Then Covid hit and the pandemic meant that a seismic shift happened in the way we operated and our priorities had to change and focus on the immediate challenges at hand. I am proud to say that the council did a tremendous job and in spite of this enforced change, we still managed to continue working on the climate emergency priorities we had set out in our action plan.

It was only 18 months ago we recruited a Climate Change Officer, a dedicated role for this work stream. Even that was not without challenges; as you can imagine joining a large and diverse organisation such as a district council in the middle of a pandemic when the majority are working from home is not an easy task.

Progressing this action plan has been hampered by many of the challenges we are well aware of. Staffing levels and staff capacity to take on additional work has been and continues to be a challenge. This is not unique to this work and is a recurring problem within our organisation.

How the project was designed

This is not a project designed for delivery. The intention was never for the Climate Change Officer to deliver the environmental projects and improvements described in the action plan. As the team is small, the work so complex and varied, this project was designed to work through departments. This mirrors the approach used in other aspects of the councils work such as Health and Wellbeing.

In evaluating national guidance and what others are doing, I am convinced that we are operating on the right lines. We have a comprehensive Climate Change Strategy and an initial five year action plan. I am confident that we have scoped our organisational requirements to achieve net zero.

We have included a section in Service Plans on climate change for the first time last year and our committee report template has a mandatory section on climate change.

We have been building our capacity, recruiting a Climate Change Support Officer to help coordinate actions, monitor performance and assist with communications and messaging. In November we were joined by Matthew Blythe, Assistant Director, whose role in part is to oversee the work of the climate emergency team. This new capacity should mean that we see an increase in progress.

In order to progress work and embed climate change awareness into the heart of our organisation I have overseen a period of training. This included Carbon Literacy training aimed at Councillors and senior management teams. A series of bespoke training and awareness sessions have also been run at the request of Assistant Directors to facilitate a discussion about how officers can support their service to decarbonise.

We are due a review of our action plan to coincide with the publication of the Devon Carbon Plan in order that we can align and take ownership of our responsibilities. This is also a good time to see what we have achieved, what we are still to do and what is no longer relevant.

To date we have progressed a good number of projects from the Climate Change Action Plan and I would like to explore some of the key areas.

Delivery to date

Our carbon footprint is the starting point for all the work undertaken to counteract the climate emergency. It is the main tool we have to measure the impact of our work and to assess our progress against our pledge to be net zero.

There has been an extensive amount of work undertaken by the various departments and some of it will be covered by other portfolios, so this is not designed to be an exhaustive list of actions to date but to give you a flavour of the work that has been started to reduce our carbon footprint.

The Housing service

One of our 3 priority areas identified in our carbon footprint is the stationary carbon emissions from our 4300 tenanted properties, mainly related to the heating systems in use. This work stream is about so much more than just making our properties more energy efficient. These properties and their performance have a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of our tenants plus this work is related to our poverty strategy. Well insulated properties have a lower carbon footprint, use energy more efficiently and are more comfortable places to live. To date we have retrofitted over 200 houses using a variety of grant funds. Our strategy is to tackle the worst first and use a fabric first approach with

renewable energy options such as Air Source Heat Pumps and Solar panels considered once the fabric of the building has been upgraded to ensure the heat generated stays where it is needed. This is not without its challenges. The Green Homes Fund and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund are competitive funds that are released in waves. It requires a considerable match for our finances and building capacity to undertake this new project.

It's a credit to our housing team who have been so successful at winning this funding that they have seen so many properties improved.

The Housing team also have another huge project they are undertaking in the stock condition survey. Initially there was a challenge recruiting the staff required but work is underway and progressing at speed; 300 houses have already being surveyed. This will help the decarbonisation work to be targeted, enabling properties with the worse environmental profile to be prioritised for improvement. It is important to understand the scale of the challenge so that work can be planned accordingly.

Growth Development and Prosperity

The work done on the district heating system falls into our scope 1 and is a priority area as it tackles stationary combustion. This work has seen some enormous carbon savings whilst being truly visionary and a credit to the skills and dedication of our Growth, Development and Prosperity team.

Delivering large scale zero carbon development in the West End is a key objective in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan. The Devon Carbon Plan also makes it clear that in 2019 burning of fossil fuels for heat accounted for 19% of Devon's greenhouse gas emissions. It states that 'we must consider district heating for new developments where the distribution pipes and energy centre can be designed in from the outset, particularly in locations where waste heat is available from industrial processes.

In their Net Zero modelling, the Committee on Climate Change showed that 18% of the UK's heat supply will need to come from heat networks by 2050 to reach net zero commitments, an increase from the current figure of 3%.

One of the unusual features of the West End of the District is the presence of two district heating networks. These are designed to meet all the heat and hot water needs of the buildings to which they connect. The decision to roll out district heating was part of a deliberate strategy to underpin the large scale delivery of low and zero carbon development. This avoided the need for gas boilers to be installed in individual homes. This was a farsighted decision, predating the national Heat and Building Strategy by over 10

years. This Strategy emphasises that ultimately, net zero will mean gradually, but completely, moving away from burning fossil fuels for heating.

The Council is currently undertaking a procurement exercise to secure the delivery of the interconnector project. This will enable the use of recoverable heat from industrial processes at the Hill Barton Business Park by transporting hot water from this location and connecting it to the networks serving both Cranbrook/SkyPark and Tithebarn/West Clyst. This will ensure a bulk supply of low carbon heat that is ultimately expected to save up to 17,200 tonnes of carbon savings per year. This is significant both locally and nationally. A final investment decision in relation to the project is due to be taken this summer.

It's easy to just think of this work as purely environmental in nature and concerned only with reducing our carbon footprint but we must remember the co benefits at every stage when the Growth Development and Prosperity team deployed the £2.1m Innovation and Resilience Fund (IRF) to help local businesses recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. They included a specific focus on supporting a green recovery with investments including helping local businesses to develop a new innovative low carbon heating system, new carbon capture technology and electric vehicle charging infrastructure. £1m of this IRF fund was committed from the Council's own internal funds, highlighting our commitment to supporting clean growth innovation. This scheme unlocked a further £2.1m in volunteered match-funding, bringing total investment up to £4.2m. This scheme will create 103 new jobs and 11 new apprenticeships, with 36 businesses committing to launching a new product or service. Local procurement was also promoted and with a quarter of all grant funds awarded to be spent on goods and services within district.

Streetscene

The Government has set a date of 2030 to ban the sale of new diesel and petrol cars and vans in the UK. Streetscene are a very visible and public facing part of our work and they have been working on a project to decarbonise their fleet. So far they have managed to transition 22 of their vehicles to EVs; this equals 33% of their fleet. They have also been switching over their equipment and machinery to electric with 26% converted already. As might be expected they have been hit with delays caused by global supply chain issues with the procurement of components and the sourcing of vehicles which has seen delays of up to 1 year. Thanks to some additional recruitment there is now a dedicated Fleet Manager and this extra resource will support ongoing work in this area. Supply will catch up with demand leading to further progress expected in 2023.

Human Resources

The Worksmart hybrid working arrangements project has had a big impact on our scope 3 carbon emissions that are generated from fuel used by staff commuting to work. This change to a hybrid work arrangement is widely supported by staff and has considerable carbon benefits. A calculator tool was used to get a snap shot of what the pre Covid average working week looked like in terms of commuting. Then this data was compared to the new way of working as defined by the departments in their hybrid working discussions. This calculator collated responses from 157 members of staff it found that, on average the emissions generated by staff commuting had dropped by 66%. The average commuting had a carbon figure of 1.7 tonnes and an average distance of 13 miles. The longest commute recorded was 40 miles each way and the largest carbon emissions were 7.6 tonnes.

The next step: Phase 2

Much of the groundwork was implemented in phase one and now is time to build upon our strong foundations.

To assist with this I supported a Cabinet and SMT+ workshop session during the year.

At this workshop session we agreed a number of ways to take our climate change ambitions forward. These are summarised in annex 1 below.

We recognised that it would be timely to review and refresh our Climate Change Strategy and align with the Devon Carbon Plan now published in final form. [Devon Carbon Plan – Quick Reads – Devon Climate Emergency](#)



I have suggested that the refreshed Climate Change Strategy sits over a series of thematic plans that expands on Service Plan headlines, and targets the areas where we can have greatest impact.

Our purpose is simple – to reduce our carbon footprint and achieve net zero by 2040.

Suggested thematic plans

Plan name
Housing Stock Decarbonisation Plan
Energy efficient new social/affordable housing
Corporate building decarbonisation (including leisure centres and depots)
New development and growth
Vehicle fleet decarbonisation plan
Green Travel Plan
Partners & Contractors Decarbonisation Plan (LED, Strata, Suez, Ian Williams etc.)
Procurement & Doughnut Economics Plan
Nature Recovery/Re-Wilding/Trees Plan
Communications/Website/Social Media Plan

I have proposed that this next stage of work will be overseen and monitored by a virtual Green Team which will be established in early 2023. To drive forward this work a new campaign focusing on an 8% year on year reduction, will lead to the creation of thematic plans to show how each department will decarbonise. The target is that each department plays their role in ensuring that as an organisation we can show a 50% carbon reduction by 2030.

The thematic plans can start simple and build as we better understand the challenges and options for reducing our carbon footprint. Developing some of the plans may require specialist advice and input. This process will evolve and expand as the project advances, bringing in other areas of work.

We will create a governance structure that provides greater oversight of commitments and actions, this function will be carried out by SMT and will report quarterly. We will need a set of KPIs and a dashboard for monitoring progress against commitments. We know that we need to improve our data collection systems and create something that is appropriate for the requirements of this work.

Through the Green Team, decarbonisation projects will be supported to prepare applications for external funding. This team will utilise cross departmental support as required to do more and create more comprehensive projects. A secondary aim will be to invite smaller scale projects to be evaluated for support from our climate change budget.

In conclusion

In phase one we undertook the groundwork and explored the issues. I am convinced that with our new programme we are heading in the right direction to see significant progress in 2023. Thanks to additional recruitment, the team has expanded and now that there is extra capacity with the support officer role. Matthew Blythe, the new Assistant Director, has climate emergency work as a key part of his job description and I look forward to working closely with him.

A new plan of work as described by our phase 2 work stream has already begun and I will be monitoring the impact of the new 8% campaign. We can now accelerate our pace and focus on the actions in our Climate Change Action Plan and Devon Carbon Plan. These set out the overarching ambition with specific Service related thematic plans providing the detail and delivery mechanisms.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the departments and officers who have been involved in the climate emergency work, there are many more projects than listed in this report and they have all played their part in delivering this important programme. The pandemic and staffing issues have made this new approach even more challenging but I have been impressed with their dedication and willingness to get involved.

Marianne Rixson Portfolio Holder for Climate Action

Annex 1

Cabinet/SMT+ climate change priorities exercise 28/09/2022

- Simply Green Website
- Quick wins / tough challenge
- Planning: New Homes - net zero? [Local Plan](#)
- Lead by example – actual projects by carbon reduction vs arbitrary education / community projects
- Carbon budget decision making and dash board. Clear website showing benefits
- Decarb of fleet and operation
- Prioritise making our own assets & housing stock energy efficient – lead by example
- Procurement and decision making carbon focused
- The Green answer to poverty
- Cycle Incentive
- District heating pipe – No 1 priority: Impact: Role modelling
- Retrofit of housing stock: Triple bottom line: Prioritisation / identification of correct stock / dedicated resource needed
- Investment in General Fund portfolio: Currently ‘tinkering’ / Finance & resource needed
- Buying in technical resource – land & building (HRA & GF) to ‘enable’ the right interventions
- Electrification of Suez fleet
- Potential for carbon savings to be both internally and externally facing
- New housing development to be zero carbon
- Show by example in relation to our own developments and buildings
- Triple bottom line – carbon, social and economic benefits
- Council housing retrofit – meets all three council plan priorities. No 1 priority.
- Staff travel – minimise the need to travel first, then consider EVs, work hubs and other measures
- Need to understand which interventions deliver the greatest carbon savings (including costings)
- Adapting and coping as well as improving going forward e.g. Seaton Wetlands, SUDs
- Lobbying MPs to change Government policy
- Have evidence / data and speak ‘carbon language’ and have resource in place to develop that capability amongst our staff and members
- Future waste and recycling approach – clear timeframe for reviewing contract as learn more about climate change impacts
- East Devon Energy Company?
- Focus on big ticket items e.g. housing stock, big planning applications
- Ability to say no if doesn’t fit with climate agenda

- Promoting and incentivising food practice
- Take action as a council to demonstrate we are an exemplar e.g. council housing
- Influence / encourage 'green' planning applications
- Net zero audit of Local Plan

The carbon footprint exercise is carried out by the University of Exeter and it categories emissions into 3 main scopes.

Scope 1

This includes four emission categories.

1. Stationary Combustion: Emissions associated with combustion of fuels in stationary equipment (typically boilers in buildings). This will include metered gas supply in buildings, emissions from social housing and consumption of energy by our leisure centres.
2. Owned Transport: Emissions associated with mobile equipment, typically transport and vehicles. This will include emissions from vehicles, waste collection fleet operated by Suez and housing vans.
3. Process Emissions: There are no process emissions that are applicable to us.
4. Fugitive Emissions: Emissions due to leakage of refrigerant from air conditioning systems.

Scope 2

This includes one emission category. The assumptions made were as follows:

5. Electricity: Emissions associated with purchased electricity. This includes all owned buildings including leased buildings as these are on an Operating Lease.

Scope 3

This includes five emission categories. The assumptions made for each of these were as follows:

6. Purchased material and fuel: Embedded emissions of all purchased materials and fuels. Materials emissions were taken to be emissions associated with the purchase of goods. These were established by assigning each spend item in the council's procurement records to a sector (within goods or services). Emissions were calculated using a conversion factor
7. Transport related activities: Emissions from grey fleet, business travel and commuting

8. Waste disposal: Emissions associated with disposal of the Council's own waste e.g. from its offices (as opposed to waste produced by constituents). No data was available, though from past projects it is expected that this would be a very small number in the context of the overall footprint.

9. Leased assets and franchising, outsourcing: This covers all emissions from outsourced services. Emissions from procured services were calculated in the same manner as for goods in category 6. The spend on Suez, Strata, LED Leisure, and Staff Travel claims were manually removed to avoid double counting as these were calculated separately in other sections.

10. Sold goods and services: The council state that no additional sold goods or services have been identified.

Links for further reading:

Full Devon carbon plan: [Devon Carbon Plan – Devon Climate Emergency](#)

Current climate change strategy: [Council Strategy - East Devon](#)

Current climate change action plan: [Action Plan - East Devon](#)

2020/2021 carbon footprint report: [Carbon Footprint - East Devon](#)

Committee for climate change, 2022 report to Government: [2022 Progress Report to Parliament - Climate Change Committee \(theccc.org.uk\)](#)