

Report to: Scrutiny Committee



Date of Meeting 2 November 2023

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan Update

Report summary:

Carbon neutrality by 2040 is a key priority for the Council. In 2020 the Council published its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. This report gives an overview of progress in meeting the action plan targets and an update on current and future actions.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Scrutiny Committee note the progress made with the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and work carried out since the portfolio holder update in February 2023.

That Scrutiny Committee note that a comprehensive review of the Strategy and Action Plan has been brought forward from 2025 and is currently being undertaken and will be reported on in due course.

Reason for recommendation:

This is a mid-year update with significant work-in progress.

Officer: Matt Blythe, Assistant Director - Environmental Health

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; As this is a report to Scrutiny Committee it looks at work that has already occurred

Links to background information

[EDDC Carbon Descent Plan](#)

[Heat Decarbonisation Plan Guidance](#)

<https://devonclimateemergency.org.uk/view-devon-carbon-plan-full/>

<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/climate-change/climate-change/council-strategy/>

<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/climate-change/climate-change/action-plan/>

[2023 Progress Report to Parliament - Climate Change Committee \(theccc.org.uk\)](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

Introduction

At Council on 24 July 2019, it was resolved that East Devon District Council would sign up to and endorse the Devon Climate Emergency Declaration, adopting a target of 2040 for carbon neutrality at the latest. Council also resolved to embed tackling the Climate Emergency as a key strategic priority of all parts of East Devon District Council and reflect this as a priority in the new Council Plan and future updates of Services Plans and relevant corporate policies.

At Council on 8 January 2020, it was resolved to adopt the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan as part of the Council's response to Devon's declaration of a Climate Emergency. The strategy sets out the Council's vision:

"To become a carbon neutral council working within a low carbon economy and lifestyle, reflected in our travel, homes, businesses, visitor experiences and communities."

Our overall target is to reduce our carbon emissions annually, and to be carbon neutral by 2040.

The Strategy and Action Plan were to be reviewed after five years (2025).

This report updates Scrutiny Committee on Climate Action work undertaken since the Portfolio Holder's report of 8 February 2023 and gives a brief overview of progress with the 5 years Action Plan.

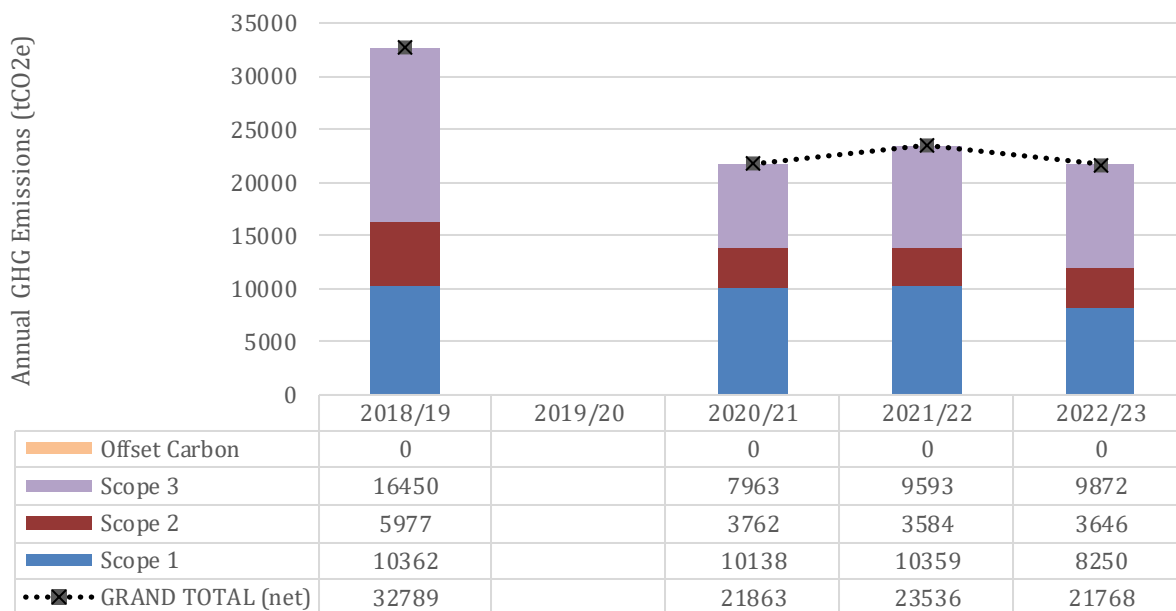
Carbon Emissions

The Council carries out an annual 'carbon footprint' calculation. This has been done since 2018/19 with the exception of 2019/20 due to COVID (see Figure 1).

It can be seen that there was a significant reduction in emissions from 2018/19 to 2020/21. This is likely to be due to changes in working patterns imposed by COVID. This also explains the slight increase in 2021/22 as we returned to business as usual. It is reassuring to see that emissions dropped again in 2022/23, particularly the drop in Scope 1 Emissions (direct emissions from buildings, vehicles etc). Scope 2 relates to how energy used is generated and Scope 3 is due to indirect sources (e.g. contractors).

Due to the changes imposed by COVID and as we have improved data capture and analysis, it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions regarding progress. However, what we now have is an excellent baseline on which to build our updated action plan.

Figure 1. EDDC Carbon Emissions



Budget

As part of the original Strategy and Action Plan a budget for Climate Action work was allocated. In year 2023/24 this is £241,400.

Between 2020/21 and 2022/23 this budget was not utilised. It is understood that the response to COVID took precedence during this time and climate action was delivered through individual service plans. As a result, a reserve of £747,000 had built up.

One of the key roles of the newly formed Green Team is to consider requests from services for funding to support Climate Action. Since April 2023 the Green Team has approved/recommended using the budget as follows:

- £333,000 to produce Heat Decarbonisation Plans for three East Devon District Council owned swimming pools.
- £20,000 for a cycling infrastructure in Exmouth.
- £25,038 for full membership of South West Energy and Environment Group.

More projects are due to come forward for consideration later this year.

Action Plan Review

A summary of progress with the action plan is given in Appendix 1. Since the publication of the Strategy and Action Plan in early 2020, the Country has been through a pandemic and there have been significant staffing changes at East Devon.

The original action plan is highly aspirational and has been hugely influential in embedding the Council's commitment to carbon reduction. The Action Plan was due to run until 2025 but it is apparent that the majority of target dates have now passed as can be seen from the review. The '8% Campaign' to halve 2020 carbon emissions by 2030 has also been introduced.

For these reasons, it has been decided to bring forward the five-year review of the strategy and action plan to ensure that it meets the new Council's priorities. This was identified early in 2023 and much of the work on Climate Action in 2023 has focussed on quantifying the Council's carbon impact and identifying priority areas. This will allow us to set clear 'SMART' targets and plan for the future.

Key Current Climate Action work streams:

- Green team. This was identified as a key internal delivery structure/body. A regular (quarterly) meeting of senior service representatives who act as champions and ensure that Climate Action is embedded in the services (complimenting and enhancing the requirements to consider climate change in Service Plans). Corporate strategy and policy are discussed and members are able to bid for funding for climate change related projects. The Green Team approved in principle the budget for the heat decarbonisation plans (prior to Cabinet) and the funds for the carbon descent plan and the Exmouth Bike project. Further projects are coming forwards for consideration.
- Full Membership of South-West Energy and Environment Group (SWEEG). This partnership between Exeter University and other public sector bodies gives members access to expert advice on reducing corporate carbon impact. Having been an associate member for a number of years, the increasing demand to achieve carbon neutrality led to the agreement that the Council would become a full member with access to 28 days of consultancy per year (see below).
- Carbon footprint. This annual review of the Council's carbon emissions is now up to date carried out by SWEEG. It provides a baseline against which to measure progress.
- Carbon descent plan. This significant piece of work is currently being finalised by SWEEG and is a critical element in producing the updated action plan. Working with key services to understand their current activity, it will give the Council the understanding of the different measures that could be taken to reduce carbon emissions and how to achieve its target of being carbon neutral by 2040. SWEEG will also work with us to create a dashboard to measure the impact of our work.
- Review of current action plan. As part of the production of the updated strategy and action plan a review of the current plan is ongoing. This will be reported as part of this process.
- Reporting into SMT+ (SLT). This is now a standing agenda item for SLT meetings.
- Green travel plan. Previous plan has been reviewed and updated.

- Housing stock decarbonisation plan. The stock condition survey is almost finished which will give key data to support future actions (see also descent plan). A new Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund is due to be launching soon.
- Corporate building decarbonisation. In a significant move forwards Cabinet agreed for £330,000 to be allocated from the climate action budget for the production of Heat Decarbonisation Plans for three LED swimming pools. These plans identify the actions required to decarbonise the pools which are some of the biggest carbon emitters in the asset portfolio. They are also a prerequisite to bid for future capital funds to deliver this decarbonisation work.
- Meeting with Ian Williams to discuss carbon reporting. The aim was to encourage the gathering of data to support our scope 3 (carbon emissions outside our direct control) reporting requirements. As our largest contractor this is likely to be an area to focus on in the future. The principles of Carbon Reduction are embedded within the Integrated Asset Management Contract and performance is captured against a number of KPIs.
- Green procurement. The Council has adopted Devon County Council policy. This is high level and is likely to require significant local implementation. It is thought likely that procurement is going to be a priority area going forwards.
- Website. A review of the website has been undertaken and is due to be launched imminently, once the green team has had the opportunity to review it.
- Training team. An internal training team to build corporate knowledge of the climate emergency and promote a culture of carbon reduction. Climate change is now to be included in officers' training. There will also be a mandatory induction module and training for new councillors.

In-Year Specific Service Actions (additional to Action Plan)

- There are 89 'wildlife improvement areas' and there are proposals to include another 15 (at the moment) in 2024, after feedback from grounds teams, area officers, ward members and residents.
- Streetscene also worked with primary schools in Exmouth, Sidmouth and Seaton when planting Emergency Tree Fund trees in 2023.
- Love Parks Week had events in the three Green Flag gardens, as well as green spaces that we have plans to be future green flag sites (The Glen, Honiton and Phear Park, Exmouth).
- Streetscene have also engaged the community via social media and via online surveys for different green spaces.
- Development of new carparking strategy exploring the options of how car parks are used, looking at nonstandard uses such as bike parking, EV charging and resident permits.
- Environmental Health are developing a bike infrastructure improvement project to install additional bike parking spots across Exmouth to support active travel. This will include a first of its kind residential bike parking locker at two town centre locations using dead space in our carparks. This is the first step towards using our carparks as mobility hubs. If successful we will expand to the main villages and towns across the district.
- Growth, Development and Prosperity have seen 39 applicants for the Culture Leisure and Tourism Fund. 21 were community organisations wanting decarbonisation equipment and

18 were tourism businesses. Of those 18, 16 wanted decarbonisation equipment. We had 23 successful projects, 9 community orgs and 14 businesses (12 of whom received funding for decarbonisation equipment). We did have a 24th successful project but they withdrew from the scheme. The total awarded was £181,000. The forecast carbon saved from both funds is around 70 tonnes p/a.

Conclusion

As can be seen from the action plan review there has been a huge amount of work towards the Council's target of being carbon neutral by 2040 across all services. The action plan was due to be reviewed in 2025 but the majority of target dates have now passed. For this reason, the Strategy and Action Plan review has been brought forwards. The current focus of Climate Action is to build on the work already undertaken by quantifying and prioritising future actions in a refreshed action plan. A 'whole Council' approach to achieving our strategic target, led by the Green Team with support from SWEEG, will be essential.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations in the report.

Legal implications:

As this is an update report only, there are no significant legal issues directly arising.