

Report to: **Housing Review Board**

Date of Meeting: 17th September 2020

Public Document: Yes

Exemption: None

Review date for release None



Subject: **Housing Service response to the Climate Emergency**

Purpose of report: This report summarises the work to be undertaken by the Housing Service in response to the Council's commitment to carbon reduction and increased energy efficiency

Recommendation:

- 1.1 That members agree to the Climate Strategy actions detailed in this report
- 1.2 That members endorse the cultural shift required to move to a carbon neutral Housing Service within 20 years.
- 1.3 Approval is given for the need for an additional Programme Works Officer who will focus on energy efficiency measures and drive forward the programme for improvements to the housing stock. To recommend additional funding is designated from the Housing Revenue Account and this request is made to Council.

Reason for recommendation: EDDC have committed as an organisation to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040. They have endorsed the Climate Change Strategy and the associated action plan to facilitate this. There is the need to ensure sufficient resources are in place to ensure we can achieve everything set out in the plan.

Officer: John Golding Strategic Lead – Housing, Health & Environment.

Portfolio Holder: Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities

Financial implications: As presented at the previous HRB and mentioned below the investment in the councils stock required with regards to climate change is substantial and will alter the future borrowing profile of the council impacting upon the medium term financial plan. It is therefore essential that planning is made with the most up to date information possible with regards to the condition of our stock and the alterations required to ensure carbon neutrality on an asset by asset basis are assessed.

Legal implications: No specific legal implications are set out within the report. All forward planning to be undertaken with reference to existing statutory frameworks.

Equalities impact: Medium Impact

Climate change: High Impact
Our ambitious target and planned actions will set us on a path to achieving our goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040

Risk: High Risk
If radical action is not taken to address our carbon footprint, our aims to become carbon neutral by 2040 will not be met. We will have failed to maximise our contribution to the global fight against climate change

Links to background information: [Climate Change Strategy – Cabinet minutes February 2020 Item 16](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#): Choose Priorities and delete what not appropriate.
Outstanding Place and Environment
Outstanding Homes and Communities
Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
Outstanding Council and Council Services

Report in full

1. Background

- 1.1 East Devon District Council has joined with other authorities across Devon and the wider country in declaring a Climate Emergency. There is a broad scientific consensus that it is human activity that is largely driving the change in climate, and that serious and dramatic adjustments in the way that we work are needed if we are to mitigate against the effects of this change. This has led to the Council committing to becoming carbon neutral by 2040.
- 1.2 In partnership with Exeter University, the council have been working to establish our current carbon footprint, based on data from 2018/19. This has provided us with a baseline figure to benchmark our progress against. What this has revealed is the extent to which the actions of the Housing Service contribute to the overall footprint of the council. Fuel consumption from our housing stock alone represents over 38% of the total calculated figure for the council.
- 1.3 The Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2025 has **been adopted by the council** and will focus attention on this issue. This document, and the associated action plan detail the extent of changes required across the council if we are to reduce our carbon footprint. It also emphasises our role as a leader in the fight against climate change; we need to act as an educator and facilitator for all residents in our district as well as an inspiration through the actions we take to reduce our carbon footprint.
- 1.4 The action plan associated with the strategy outlines the priorities for all departments. This report focuses on those actions that relate to the Housing Service.
- 1.5 These activities reflect the multiple roles the housing service has in helping to tackle the climate emergency, not only by reducing our own carbon footprint, but also in helping our tenants and the wider residents of East Devon to consider and reduce their own impact on the environment.
- 1.6 The Climate Change Strategy demands that we are bold and brave in our actions in relation to the climate emergency. This will require a complete culture change and shift in priorities. We must consider the impact on the environment in all our actions; how we work; how we travel across the district; the types of materials and services we procure;

how our contractors operate. Full commitment will be required from Members, senior management team and staff if we are to achieve the target of carbon neutrality by 2040.

1.7 This report provides details of our planned activities to address

2. Improving our Housing Stock

2.1 We have over 4200 properties in our portfolio, and we are aware that many of our properties are not energy efficient.

2.2 We will be carrying out a stock condition survey of all our properties over the next 18 months. This will enable us to have a more concrete picture of the energy efficiency of each property, as well as identifying any other issues that need to be addressed. This survey will inform a 15-20 year plan of improvement works to reduce the carbon footprint and increase the energy efficiency of our housing stock.

2.3 Running concurrently with the Stock Condition survey, we will be looking at potential ways of improving energy efficiency and reviewing previous projects to assess their viability for other properties.

2.3.1 **102 St Andrews Road** – we are reviewing the energy performance of our retrofitted PassivHaus in Exmouth. We are in the process of installing Smart meters at the property and will be comparing the energy use of this property with that of our second HMO in Morton Road over the course of 2020/21.

2.3.2 **Rodney Close** – we are conducting a cost benefit analysis of the air source heat pump system installed in a number of properties in Rodney Close. Anecdotally, tenants have been pleased with the new system, but we are currently seeking assistance from them to quantify the savings in heating costs, and to qualify the wider benefits of having this system of heating.

2.3.3 Air Source Heat pumps are a developing market and a separate report has been produced, detailing a proposal to utilise a proportion of our boiler renewal programme budget to invest further in this emerging technology.

2.3.4 **Ground Source Heat Pumps** - We are also exploring the concept of ground source heat pump systems as a potential alternative approach to heating suitable properties. This work is seeking to understand the costs involved as well as identifying council properties that are in an appropriate area for the installation of the system, given the extensive groundworks required.

2.3.5 Energiesprong

2.3.5.1 Coming out of the Netherlands and currently being piloted in Devon, this approach brings together a number of developing innovations to create a “whole-house” net zero energy home.

2.3.5.2 A pilot scheme in Nottingham in 2017 reported a 50% drop in energy bills under this method, highlighting the benefits not only in a reduction in energy use, but also in tackling fuel poverty through lower costs to the end user.

2.3.5.3 Whilst the initial cost of implementing this approach is high, costs are coming down as more contractors get involved and the supply chain develops.

- 2.3.5.4 We are fortunate to have one of the few contractors offering this service within the south west in Mi-Space, who we have previously worked with on 102 St Andrews Road. We had been due to meet with them just prior to lockdown, this had to be cancelled but we are in the process of setting this back up.
- 2.4 Council homes represent a significant element of the Council's carbon footprint and a high level of investment will be required to reduce their carbon emissions. At the January HRB meeting, members were advised that an estimated £42 million (based on an investment of £10,000 per property) would be required to make the necessary improvements. It should be recognised that the final cost may exceed this estimate.
- 2.5 In order to ensure we can realistically achieve the improvements that will be required to our stock it is essential for us to consider how we will resource this and in order to achieve the right momentum and focus on this area, it is recommended that we employ an additional Programme Works Officer who will work on rolling out projects such as those outlined above. With growing pressures within the Property and Asset team particularly around compliance, we do not consider it realistic to be able to achieve what's required within our current staffing capacity and therefore suggest we employ an additional Officer at a grade 6 (in line with current Programme Works Officers) and at a cost to the HRA of £37,500 (with all associated costs). This role has not been budgeted for therefore it is suggested we fund this from reserves. It will be critical that we employ the right skill set in order to drive this forward, we will be looking for someone with significant experience in monitoring and overseeing these types of projects.
- 2.6 It is recognised that creating more energy efficient homes is only one half of the equation to reduce our carbon footprint. To fully realise our carbon savings, our tenants will also need to adjust their own activities. The importance of our second role as educators and influencers of change should not be underestimated.

3. Helping our tenants and residents

- 3.1 As landlord to over 4,200 properties, we are in a position to reach a large number of people in the district to offer education, information and advice on carbon reduction and energy efficiency.
- 3.2 In the same way that our stock condition survey will inform future plans for our housing stock, so we need to carry out some "fact-finding" activities to understand how our tenants feel about the declaration of a climate emergency, what they understand about climate change and what steps they are interested in taking to reduce their own carbon footprint.
- 3.3 Initially, housing staff will need to receive training on how to discuss the climate crisis, and to gain a greater understanding of the issues. This will give them the skills they need to be able to respond to any queries raised by tenants, offer advice, and signpost people to external organisations.
- 3.4 We will also develop events and workshops we can offer to tenants to inform, educate and to help them to reduce their carbon footprint. This is a great opportunity to build closer communities by uniting around a common goal. We have considered a number of workshops so far:
- A film to learn more about the climate and ecological emergency followed by a discussion
 - Workshops to develop and plan local community responses such as rewilding estates, developing community energy solutions or growing/accessing local food
 - A workshop to show how you can calculate your own Carbon Footprint.

These workshops would be held in a number of locations across the district

- 3.5 We plan to call a random selection of tenants to explain that EDDC have declared climate emergency and that part of our response is to support communities to design and implement locally appropriate responses. The aim is to gauge how tenants feel about the climate crisis; what concerns them, what help would they like, would they be interested in events or workshops on how best to respond to the crisis.
- 3.6 Our Private Sector Housing team will continue to work with private sector landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their properties. Backed with increasingly stringent legislation, enforcement of standards is an option to take, although it is hoped that a collaborative approach will be sufficient in most cases.
- 3.7 The team are already working with the Cosy Devon Partnership, the Local Energy Advice partnership and other organisations to promote energy efficiency solutions. They are currently piloting a Landlord rating scheme that will incentivise good performance in this area.

4. Day-to-day activities

- 4.1 One of the best ways of ensuring that our staff are able to help residents to reduce their own carbon footprint, is for them to work to those principles themselves.
- 4.2 The EDDC Transformation Strategy already seeks to find better, more efficient ways of working. With the declaration of a Climate Emergency, this work has taken on a new urgency, and the Housing Service are not alone in considering how their day-to-day activities impact on our environment.
- 4.3 All of our housing teams have been asked to consider the environmental impact of their activities such as:
 - Paper use – only printing when necessary.
 - Meetings – can you use skype meeting facilities rather than physically meeting
 - Green travel options – cycle to work schemes, car sharing, meeting co-ordination
- 4.4 Staff will be encouraged to embrace the circular economy in which we keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from them whilst in use, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each service life.
- 4.5 We are reviewing the use of our community centres and district offices to ascertain if they can be used more effectively, perhaps as drop in spaces for mobile working for local workers.

5. Working with contractors and external organisations

- 5.1 We work with a number of outside companies and will continue to develop relationships with current and new providers across housing. We will develop measures to reflect our commitment to carbon reduction that all contractors will be required to meet if they wish to work with us. This may create challenges, but we must adhere to the principles of sustainable and low carbon producing activities to meet our goals.
- 5.2 Our Repairs and Maintenance contractor, Ian Williams Ltd., are measuring their carbon footprint of any activities related to their work with EDDC and this will be included in our plans to become a carbon neutral council. We have received three months fuel and mileage data, as well as a list of materials used, and our partners at Exeter University will

use this data as a starting point for our work in this area as they seek to reduce their footprint over time.

- 5.3 Any new procurement will include climate change measures such as fuel/energy efficient vehicles and materials.
- 5.4 As already mentioned, we will continue to support the Cosy Devon Partnership, the Local Energy Advice Partnership and similar organisations to enable collaboration and testing of new solutions to energy use and generation.
- 5.5 We will be looking to seize opportunities for grant funding and offers from the market place to invest in domestic energy retrofit measures and community energy installations, such as Ground and Air heat pumps and the Energiesprong approach detailed in section 3 of this report.

6. Next steps

- 6.1 As a council, we have committed to an ambitious target of achieving carbon neutrality within 20 years. The scale of the challenge in front of us cannot be understated, and it will not be achieved through making small steps.
- 6.2 The activities detailed above signify the start of a journey. Over the next 6 -12 months we have the opportunity to lay the strong foundations of a significant culture change in how we operate as a Housing Service, actively reducing our carbon emissions, minimising waste, enhancing our environment, and developing energy efficient homes for our tenants.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 That members agree to the Climate Strategy actions detailed in this report
- 7.2 That members endorse the cultural shift required to move to a carbon neutral Housing Service within 20 years.