

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 16 November 2022

Climate Change Action Plan and Climate Change Annual Report



Cllr Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change said,

“Staffordshire County Council has built on its successes and continued to make significant progress with climate change action, which is highlighted in the annual report.

The Council has continued in the right direction to achieve our net zero target by 2050.

We are on a mission to make Staffordshire Sustainable, and this is our second report since declaring the climate change emergency allowing us to celebrate our achievements and highlight our plans for the coming years.

We still have much to do and with the current energy and economic challenges, the road ahead will be tough. We are determined to build on our solid foundations built over the past few years to realise future success to mitigate and adapt to climate change.”

Report Summary:

Mitigating and adapting to Climate Change and becoming a net zero organisation by 2050 is a key priority for Staffordshire County Council and is a “green thread” throughout our Strategic Plan, we will tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable.

The Annual Report records the significant reduction that has been made in the Council’s carbon emissions since declaring a Climate Change Emergency in July 2019, with continued success in our second year.

Finally, the report seeks approval of the Climate Change Action Plan revision 2, November 2022 (CCAP) which contains specific actions to be undertaken by the Council prior to 2025 which will assist in our journey to become net carbon zero by 2050.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the Council's Climate Change 2022 Annual Report which records the positive progress that has been made on our target to become net carbon zero by 2050.
- b. Approve the Climate Change Action Plan revision 2, November 2022 which lists our key climate change mitigating actions over the next 3 years.
- c. Agree with Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Members' view that the reports should be circulated to key Staffordshire stakeholders including, MPs, District and Borough Councils and Parish Councils.



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Climate Change Annual Report (2022) and Climate Change Action Plan, revision 2 (November 2022)

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Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Background and Progress

1. The Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP 2) containing 33 specific actions was approved and launched at the end of October 2021 and the Climate Change Strategic Development Framework was approved by Cabinet in February 2021.
2. Strong progress is being made on the 33 specific actions contained in CCAP 2 and it should be noted that some actions have a timeframe of more than one year and are still present in this revision.
3. An internal project group, with officer representatives from all appropriate teams, has been meeting regularly since December 2020 and this group has been used to develop the initial Climate Change Action Plan revision in 2021. The CCAP is envisaged to be a plan which will be current until 2025, although it will be reviewed yearly to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.

4. It is clear that carbon sequestration will be key to the Council meeting its legal obligations. A study "Zero by Nature" has been commissioned and shall highlight areas where there is potential for carbon sequestration on the SCC property portfolio.
5. Work continues to take place with the District and Borough Councils to see how climate change efforts across the Staffordshire local authority network can be better co-ordinated for maximum impact. These discussions are tabled through the Staffordshire Sustainability Board, which was formed in January 2022.
6. The County Council recognises it has a wider leadership role to play in collaborating with public and private partners in supporting the county of Staffordshire become net zero.

Annual Climate Change Report

7. The annual climate change report is attached as **Appendix 1**.
8. The report notes a significant reduction in carbon emissions of c 5,282 tCo_{2e} from 2019/20 to 2020/21, a reduction of some 15%. This reduction is combination of the change in methods of calculating some of our emissions, the reduction in DEFRA conversion factors along with operational savings. It should be noted that this significant reduction in annual emissions is unlikely to be replicated going forward and future reporting is likely to show slower progress due to the nature of the challenge before the authority.
9. The report provides an indication of the carbon emissions by area of operation following an audit of the 2020/21 data. The format is consistent with the refresh of the 2018/19 carbon baseline carried out for Climate Change Strategic Development Framework.
10. The report also provides an overview of achievements around the five core themes contained in the Climate Change Strategic Development Framework which link to the actions in earlier versions of the CCAP.
11. The report provides details on the Climate Change Member Fund that continued into its second year, last year. As set out in the report, 216 grants were awarded and a total of £129,004 was given out in grants to community groups over the past two years.
12. The Council's second Annual Climate Change Report was reviewed by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 25 October 2022. The committee praised the annual report's structure, format, and content. The committee suggested that Staffordshire County Council should share the template with partners/businesses as a demonstration of good practice.

Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP)

13. The CCAP is a corporate action plan owned and delivered by the whole organisation. The Sustainability Team, based in the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Directorate has a role to co-ordinate and support the delivery of net zero, but it will only be achieved by the whole organisation. As both the annual review and the CCAP demonstrate, tackling Climate Change is everyone's responsibility.
14. The CCAP revision 2 was reviewed by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 25 October 2022. The final version of CCAP revision 2 is attached as **Appendix 2**.
15. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members did not suggest any changes or additions to the actions contained in the plan. The committee commented that the actions were ambitious and were in a timeframe which demonstrated urgency and a sense of pace.
16. As mentioned previously the CCAP includes actions until 2025 although it is intended that the plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains relevant and fit for purpose.
17. As mentioned previously, the rate of progress towards net zero going forward is likely to be slower than in the last few years and this is reflected in the Programme Roadmap contained within the CCAP.
18. It is intended that progress on specific actions contained in the plan will be reviewed and recorded in subsequent climate change annual reports.
19. This will ensure that progress is tracked, and Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee have asked that the Climate Change Annual Report is presented on a yearly basis along with any intended changes to specific actions contained in CCAP 2.

Timescale

20. The Council has made a commitment to become net carbon zero by 2050. The developing roadmap shows this to be possible, but it is likely to be a major challenge which will require significant carbon sequestration to avoid carbon emissions that we cannot reduce.
21. The actions contained in the CCAP will in some cases take longer than one year to fully action, but it is hoped that all will be completed by 2025.

22. It is proposed that the future Climate Change Annual Reports and any changes to the CCAP revision 2 will be presented to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.
23. The Climate Change Members Action Fund (round 3) was launched on the 11th of July 2022.

Legal Implications

24. The Council has a legal obligation to become net carbon zero by 2050.
25. The measures outlined in this report will assist the Council in reaching governments desired aims set out in May 2019.

Risks Identified

26. The task of achieving net carbon zero for the authority by 2050 is going to be challenging and is likely to require significant carbon offsetting. The road map to achieve net zero is set out in the back of the CCAP and the Zero by Nature study that is currently in progress will identify opportunities for carbon sequestration on SCC owned land.
27. The aim of achieving net carbon zero for Staffordshire is a much bigger task as the Council emits less than 1% of the c.5.8m tonnes of carbon produced in Staffordshire annually. Action on that will need to be co-ordinated at a national, regional, and local level if this is to be achieved.
28. Financial provision has been made in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which spans a period of five years. Future iterations of the MTFS will consider any long-term financial support requirements. Individual projects (such as sequestration) that require funding will have individual business cases.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

29. Budget provision has been made in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to support climate change activities.
30. The budget available in 2022/23 (£596,700) is being used to support actions in CCAP and will be used to support CCAP revision activities once approved. The annual budgets can be referenced on page 14 of the CCAP.

Climate Change Implications

31. To reach net zero everyone within the organisation will have to play their role in reducing carbon emissions that lie within the financial boundary

of the Council. Although this CCAP will continue the organisation on a positive downward trend with our emissions, some technologies are yet to be developed at scale to allow us to consider them as feasible.

32. We should also bear in mind that some technologies are prohibitively expensive at this current time, to facilitate a rapid reduction in emissions across all sectors. We must therefore consider our target date to achieve Net zero with this in mind.

Summary

33. Positive progress has been made on the Climate Change agenda since our declaration.
34. The 2022 Annual Report outlines the main achievements made and records a significant reduction in the Council's carbon emissions from 2019/20 to 2020/21.
35. The attached CCAP is a considered list of actions which will assist the Council in reaching its ambition to become net carbon zero by 2050. The plan contains activities which will be relevant until 2025 although it is proposed to review annually to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Climate Change Annual Report (2022)
Appendix 2 – Climate Change Action Plan, revision 2

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