

Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation for Net Zero Recommendations and Executive response

	Recommendations of the Corporate O&S Committee	Cabinet Member Accept/ accept in part /Do not accept	Cabinet's Response Further detail: Current position, plans and timeline Resource implication
R1	That the Cabinet be requested to consider the amount of carbon sequestration that can be achieved on SCC land to mitigate residual carbon emissions from SCC's carbon footprint that will be present in 2050	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Accept in part	The "LUC report" – confirms the amount of carbon sequestration achievable on the SCC property portfolio, excluding Highways assets is enough to mitigate the "residual" carbon emissions from SCC carbon footprint. This report also details the amount of carbon already stored within the rural portfolio, which need to be kept stable. Within the Climate change action plan an estimation on the residual emissions in 2050 from SCC activities has been made, which is reviewed annually. Wider discussions are ongoing internally to ensure all aspects have been considered.
R2	That Cabinet consider how to progress planning for tree planting, woodland creation and to shape the concept model to plant a Staffordshire Forest.	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Accept	To be able to mitigate SCC residual carbon emissions by tree planting, the woodland concerned will need to mature, to enable the new ecosystems to sequester these residual emissions. The last date permissible to facilitate this is 2030. Tree planting grants are available which will cover the majority of establishment costs for the any new woodlands. However, permission to plant and access to these grants has a lead in time of approximately 18 months.

			<p>Properly managed a degree of land use change could bring wider benefits into the rural economy through rural business diversification, tourism, green skills provision and much more.</p> <p>To progress creation of new woodlands there are resource implications on staff time and budget allocation needed to start engagement with Partners.</p> <p>The County Council has committed the following investment, which has been approved in the revised MTFS.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources to support our corporate tree management strategy and work programme to enhance our tree resource. • £1M Agreed to expand our tree planting programme.
R3	That Cabinet be requested to consider cessation of disposal of Council owned land /County farms already on the asset disposal list until it has been considered for inclusion in the concept model.	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Do not accept	The capital receipts from the sale of property assets make an important contribution to funding the Council's Capital Programme to fund school improvements, improve roads etc. Consideration therefore needs to be given to whether a moratorium on land disposals would impact the Council's future plans before approving a moratorium on asset disposals.
R4	That the Cabinet take advantage of Forestry Commission Funding identified by the working group which is available until March 2024 and apply for the planning, funding, establishing, growing and management of Woodlands at the earliest opportunity	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Accept	<p>The Woodland Creation Planning Grant (WCPG) is available from the Forestry Commission to assist with the planning of new woodland creation, with no liability to plant, but will give the preapprovals needed to proceed at pace. The WCPG closes on 31/03/2025 after a recent extension in funding.</p> <p>Woodland creation is a major policy target for national government, delivering wider benefits to our communities and not just sequestering carbon. It would be safe to assume that</p>

			in the long-term woodland creation projects will be supported and with Local Authorities being larger landowners, access to capital support should be certain.
R5	That the Cabinet undertake to develop a delivery model to plant a Staffordshire Forest, not only to mitigate our carbon emissions but also to realise the wider benefits of woodland creation and, explore the wider benefits and partnership opportunities with organisations like Forestry Commission and National Forest Company (FC/NFC).	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Accept	Work is underway to explore a delivery model initially focusing on SCC's net zero target and the woodland creation that would be required to achieve this. The work will include exploration of how the wider benefits mentioned in R2 above could be realised.
R6	That the Leader and Cabinet Members be requested to engage with the District and Borough Councils at the Leaders Board and Sustainability Board to consider the concept model for a Staffordshire Forest, to invest in woodlands as a way to tackle the dual crisis of climate change and biodiversity.	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Accept	It is suggested that the lead body for this collaboration could be the Tree and Woodland Group being established as part of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The LNRS is a requirement of the Environment Act 2021 and all district and borough councils, statutory agencies and environmental bodies will be involved in its development. The remit of the LNRS is nature recovery but also the delivery of wider environmental benefits. The LNRS structure will also link in with the Sustainability Board and Leaders Board but provides an ideal focus over the coming months to progress a wider plan for trees and woodlands across Staffordshire and Stoke. The LNRS is due for completion by April 2025.