

# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



**REPORT OF:** Executive Member for Growth and Development

**LEAD OFFICERS:** Strategic Director of Place

**DATE:** Thursday, 9 December 2021

**PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED:** Growth and Development

**WARD/S AFFECTED:** (All Wards);

**KEY DECISION:** Y

## **SUBJECT:**

Climate Emergency Progress Report

### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was published in February 2020 in support of the Council's Declaration to be carbon neutral by 2030. This is a progress report on the Action Plan's development and implementation.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Executive Board:

- i. Note and approve the updated CEAP;
- ii. Note the roles of the Executive Member and Assistant Member for Growth & Development in leading, developing and communicating this agenda;
- iii. Note the intention to seek additional CEAP capacity funding from the Council's Budget for 2022/23; and
- iv. Request a further annual update to Executive Board in December 2022.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

In July 2019 the Council declared a Climate Emergency, along with many other local authorities, and pledged to realise a carbon neutral Borough by 2030. The Declaration was supported by a Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) comprising activities ranging from quick wins to longer-term aspirations grouped under five objectives.

- 1) Make sound climate-related decisions
- 2) Create a resilient & attractive Borough
- 3) Be lean and clean with resources and energy
- 4) Travel lightly
- 5) Capture more carbon

The CEAP was approved by the Executive Board in February 2020 as the draft to steer internal activity and for discussion with residents and partner organisations.

Work has continued on developing and implementing the Action Plan with a focus primarily on the Council's activity, given the impacts and limitations generated by the COVID pandemic in progressing work with residents and partners. For example, it had been intended to hold a

Citizens' Inquiry, to submit the CEAP to our Council Forum and provide an annual progress report. All have been delayed by the pandemic.

The CEAP, as at December 2021, is appended to this report. Progress since February 2020 includes:

- Implementation of a programme of energy efficiency measures to cut carbon in a number of Council buildings using a grant awarded from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme;
- Improvement of the energy efficiency of 99 low income, fuel-poor households with c. £1m grant secured from the Green Homes Local Authority Delivery fund (in conjunction with Cosy Homes in Lancashire) to be completed by March 2022;
- Planning the expansion of active travel in the Borough and securing funding to support implementation;
- The initial planting of 3ha of trees in small copses in urban areas by the end of March using the Local Authority Treescape Fund;
- Initiating electrification of the fleet with the acquisition of two electric vehicles and
- Incorporation of Climate Emergency objectives into the Council's new and emerging Local Plan.

Elected Members have been directed to the LGA's Net Zero workbook for insight into their role in tackling the Climate Emergency and an e-learning module for staff is being prepared. This work will be shared with members in early 2022.

All of the actions within the current CEAP will contribute to emissions reduction, but only the energy efficiency measures are readily measurable. With this in mind, the expected reduction is at around 300 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, about 5% of the Council's own emissions or 0.05% of all Borough emissions.

The current level of activity, though welcome, is clearly insufficient to achieve the Council's carbon neutral ambition by 2030. As the Council recovers from the impacts of COVID, the CEAP needs a renewed focus on delivering the changes required with much greater support required from Government in resourcing and empowering local action. To be clear, the Council alone, along with many others across the country, will not achieve a carbon neutral position by 2030, as perhaps only around a third of an area's emissions are potentially influenced through direct action, place-shaping and local leadership. Carbon neutral status cannot be achieved without co-ordinated action by local and national government, other sectors and individuals taking responsibility for securing the change needed.

Moving forward, Government published in October its ambitious Net Zero Strategy. This Strategy sets out what needs to be done to put the UK on track to reduce emissions by at least 78% by 2035 (using 1990 as the baseline), and reaching net zero by 2050, thereby demonstrating the scale of the task. It anticipates that by 2035 the UK will be powered entirely by clean electricity, all new heating appliances will be low carbon, decisions will have been taken on the role of hydrogen, all new cars and vans will be zero emission at tailpipe, with carbon captured and stored naturally or through new technology.

Achieving a carbon neutral Borough in advance of this activity would, as demonstrated by recent work on carbon pathways analysis commissioned by the Council, Blackpool and Lancashire County Council, to inform the development of the emerging Greater Lancashire Plan, be exceptionally difficult and extremely costly to achieve.

Although lacking in detail, the Government's Strategy acknowledges the essential role that local government has to play in meeting national net zero ambitions. At this point, however, there is no detail on the resources and powers to be devolved to Councils and others to deliver the change needed at the local level.

The CEAP recognises the critical importance of effective national action, but also the need to do more to accelerate emissions reduction within the Council itself and to engage and energise local partners and residents. The involvement of local government, communities and stakeholders is also noted as vital in the Glasgow Climate Pact, the outcome of COP 26, though it falls short of the commitment needed to keep the world on track to stay below 2°C of global warming.

Moving forward, the Executive Member for Growth & Development will lead on this agenda with support from Cllr Zainab Rawat, who will act as the Council's champion on CEAP / zero carbon issues.

The Strategic Director for Place will lead and co-ordinate this work, supported by a corporate task and finish group, co-chaired by the Directors of Place and Finance and with cross-departmental membership, and reporting regularly to the Corporate Leadership Team. Priority areas to be developed are:

- Driving delivery of CEAP actions across the Council and addressing key gaps/blockages;
- Training to mainstream climate change thinking/awareness across the Council's workforce;
- Project development work in readiness to take advantage of new funding opportunities; and
- Analysis of the Council's procurement to drive change through purchasing decisions.

Outline costs have been identified for specific actions relating to the above priorities:

- Carbon literacy - staff and member training (£10k)
- Climate Emergency Citizens' Inquiry (£35k)
- Communications plan (£20k)
- Renewable energy feasibility studies (£20k)
- Heat networks techno-economic feasibility study (£30k)
- Council heat de-carbonisation plan (£50k)
- Local Energy Plan (£50k)

The CEAP is a statement of the Council's intent with respect to mitigating and adapting to climate change. To make faster progress, locally, three key actions are key to developing momentum and change:

1. Ensuring Climate Emergency thinking and action is mainstreamed by embedding priorities, actions and outcomes in the Council's new Corporate Strategy, service and resource planning and procurement activities. A Climate Change Projects Officer is being recruited to support this work stream with a corporate budget request (c. £300k per year from 2022) to accelerate capacity and thinking, and business case and project development work.
2. Demonstrating and communicating strong civic and political leadership to facilitate and encourage emissions reduction across all sectors beyond the direct control of the Council. Leading by example, embedding climate change in Council business and taking advantage of the benefits that can arise from CEAP actions, such as new skills and job opportunities and better air quality.
3. Leading and working with local authorities and key partners from across Lancashire to engage with Government, through initiatives such as County Deals and Levelling Up Plans to bring forward, scale-up and co-fund localised solutions to deliver zero carbon outcomes.

The CEAP will continue evolve to take account of new proposals and implementation of its current content and recommendations. It will, wherever possible, reflect the ambitions of other sectors and endeavour to measure and record the impact of activity. A progress report will be presented to Executive Board 12 months from the publication of the revised Action Plan.

#### 4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

Work continued on the CEAP, in spite of COVID, and some progress on cutting emissions has been made. It is, however, insufficient to the scale of the global challenge. CEAP actions need to be embedded in mainstream Council business and activity expanded and resourced if the Council is to accelerate its contribution to achieving a carbon neutral Borough. There will be costs and expenditure will need to be prioritised and considered alongside other Council priorities; however, the cost of inaction will be greater than acting now and there will be co-benefits, such as resource efficiencies, improved public health outcomes, and new jobs and new business growth opportunities that will contribute to the Council's long term vision for the Borough.

#### 5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Action Plan needs to be acknowledged as a key part of the Council's policy framework, informing and being informed by the Corporate Plan and its principal strategies.

#### 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Development and implementation of the Action Plan has financial implications. A dedicated corporate budget of £300,000 p.a. from 2022/23 is to be requested through the budget setting process.

#### 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

While there are no new legal implications, it is reiterated that as a policy document this forms an overlay for consideration on decisions made by the Council.

#### 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Development and implementation of the Action Plan will require time and skills from a number of officers from across the Council.

#### 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

**Please select one of the options below.**

Option 1 ☒ Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

Option 3 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

#### 10. CONSULTATIONS

None

#### 11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

#### 12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Gwen Kinloch, <a href="mailto:gwen.kinloch@blackburn.gov.uk">gwen.kinloch@blackburn.gov.uk</a>
<b>DATE:</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	Climate Emergency Action Plan at December 2021 Carbon Reduction Pathways, part of the Environment Commissions prepared for the Greater Lancashire Plan by Lancashire County with Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool Councils, to be published early 2022.