



# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Executive Member for Growth and Development
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Strategic Director of Growth & Development
<b>DATE:</b>	Thursday, 8 June 2023

<b>PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:</b>	Growth and Development
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	Y

**SUBJECT: EB\_Climate Emergency Action Plan**

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council's first Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was published in February 2020 in support of the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration, committing to a target of making Blackburn with Darwen carbon neutral by 2030. This is a progress report on the Action Plan's implementation in 2022/23 and the proposed CEAP for 2023/24.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- i. Notes the progress made in 2022/23;
- ii. Approves the draft CEAP for 2023/24; and,
- iii. Authorises the Strategic Director for Growth & Development, in conjunction with the Executive Member for Growth and Development and Climate Change Member Champion, to finalise the design and publication of the agreed CEAP.

## 3. BACKGROUND

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and pledged to work towards becoming 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, in the first instance, the framework to drive Council activity and to stimulate and engage with residents and partner organisations with a call to action. The intention was to move from a high-level plan focused wholly on Council activity to a more comprehensive document that sought to mobilise action across all local sectors to address the Climate Emergency.

The CEAP was updated in December 2021 with a progress report and more proposals from the Council.

The third edition, appended to this report, begins to broaden the scope of the CEAP. It is informed by the People's Jury on the Climate Change Crisis, the Climate Change workshops held at the Council's Partnership Conference in March, and conversations with individuals and organisations in the private and voluntary sectors, including the East Lancs Chamber of Commerce and Community CVS.

The CEAP is one of the four core missions of the Council's new Corporate Plan for 2023-27. Addressing the Climate Emergency underpins and, is indeed integral, to the other three core Corporate Plan missions for a more prosperous borough where no one is left behind, where every child and young person has the opportunity to fulfil their potential, and communities that are healthier, happier and safer.

The updated CEAP provides a progress report on existing actions and captures new activity for 2023/24.

In terms of progress, key achievements in 2022/23 included:

- Embedding the Climate Emergency in the Council's new Corporate Plan;
- Hosting a People's Jury on the Climate Change Crisis, which produced 15 recommendations on communication, transport and housing to inform future iterations of the CEAP for the Borough;
- Installing energy efficiency measures, including insulation, heating controls, replacement windows and renewable technology such as solar PV, in 429 low-income properties in the Borough. The works were funded from a share of the Government's Local Authority Delivery scheme - £4.2m from the £22.5m secured for the whole of Lancashire by Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL);
- Submitting the new Local Plan (2021-37) to Government in August 2022. (The Inspector's report is expected later in 2023, with adoption early in 2024.) At the strategic level, Core Policy CP5 takes a pro-active approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. It requires all developments to contribute to the transition to a low carbon future. To ensure that climate mitigation and adaptation forms a key part of the decision-making processes, the policy includes the introduction of a new 'Climate Impact Framework' against which development proposals will be assessed;
- Planting 10,000 trees over 18 urban and peri-urban sites across the Borough, adding to the 7,000 planted in 2021/22;
- Producing a Heat Decarbonisation Plan for 13 of the Council's buildings, providing the information necessary to make bids to future rounds of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme;
- Launching the Fuel Poverty Toolkit to guide where the Council should focus its limited resources and identify where additional assistance from Government is needed;
- Preparing an action plan for the roll-out of EV charging infrastructure in the borough to facilitate the UK's transition to electric vehicles;
- Procuring 11 electric vehicles to replace diesel vehicles in the Council's fleet, which are expected to arrive from October 2023;
- Securing Environment Agency funding for a Natural Flood Management (NFM) study to identify where delivery of NFM solutions will reduce flood risk in the towns, with co-benefits for biodiversity improvement and carbon capture;
- Recruiting of a Climate Change Project Officer
- Establishing a cross-departmental Working Group to oversee the Plan's development and implementation; and
- Providing training on the Climate Emergency for all staff and Carbon Literacy training for members of the CEAP Working Group;

The impact of the energy efficiency measures and renewable energy installations implemented through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme across 13 buildings in 2021/22 contributed to a 5% reduction in the Council's grid electricity demand in 2022/23, c.650,000 kWh. This is a reduction of 125 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. The reduction was achieved through the installation of LED lights, a heat pump, an uninterruptible power source (UPS) at the Data Centre and installation of solar PV arrays.

The following planned key actions have been delayed:

- The new household waste centre in Darwen, due to rising national construction costs and inflation;
- A Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) due to rising costs. LAEPs identify different ways in which energy might be supplied to an area, inform investment and contribute to carbon neutral targets. Alternative approaches to identifying opportunities for low carbon energy generation in the area are being explored; and,
- Solar Together, a bulk buying scheme to enable residents across Lancashire to purchase solar PV panels for their home. However, despite delays in deploying a pan-Lancashire approach, the Council is exploring options to run a scheme for Blackburn with Darwen residents.

Priorities for 2023/24 include:

- Working with the People's Jury and other stakeholders to implement the Jury's recommendations for communication, housing, transport, food and green spaces;
- Establishing a Climate Commission or Network through which to collaborate formally with key stakeholders from across the Borough to put plans in place to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change;
- Implementing a programme of energy efficiency measures in low income homes, funded by the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2);
- Operating 11 electric Council fleet vehicles from October 2023;
- Implementing an extensive upgrade to the active travel network in South-East Blackburn using £5m Levelling Up Fund (LUF) grant. Initial feasibility work is now underway;
- A Low Carbon Business Support and Innovation Programme. The Council has commissioned the East Lancashire Chamber to work with c.300 SMEs to reduce their carbon footprint and access finance to invest in new clean technologies. This 2-year programme will also engage the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) and Lancaster University to work with the Low Carbon sector to develop new products and services;
- Finalising a Climate Impacts Assessment toolkit to help staff and members characterise, diagnose, and project risks or effects of climate change on people, economic activity or the environment and aim to avoid, reduce or offset the negative impacts;
- Bidding to secure Government funding, including the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings and the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund to increase the number of EV charge points in the Borough;
- Developing a tree & woodland strategy for the Borough and finding sites for planting another 10,000 trees;
- Restoring peatlands at Darwen Moor and Aushaw Moss in conjunction with the Lancashire Peat Partnership;
- Trialling an electric pool car for staff at 10 Duke St, if the business case demonstrates economic viability; and,
- Reporting progress through the global platform, CDP (Corporate Disclosure Project), with an ambition of receiving no less than a 'C' grade, which demonstrates that the Borough has a holistic understanding of the main effects climate change on the area and is beginning to take action to reduce them, progressing to a 'B' grade as soon as practicable;

In progressing the Plan, it is imperative that the Council collaborates with residents and stakeholders in all other sectors in the Borough to maximise emissions reduction from Blackburn with Darwen. The Council cannot achieve a carbon neutral borough on its own; it contributes only around 2% of the

area's emissions with the ability to influence only around a third of total emissions through its direct action, place-shaping and local leadership.

There is keen interest amongst the Council's stakeholders and partners in being part of a Climate Emergency Network or Commission. The idea was discussed at the Climate Change workshops held during the Partnership Conference in March. A Commission is an independent advisory group designed to help drive local climate action; a network can be a less formal collaboration to share knowledge, best practice and explore solutions. The pros and cons will be explored in 2023/24 with a goal to set up the most appropriate forum with representatives from the public, private and third sectors this financial year.

The Council also remains committed to progressing Lancashire-wide action to secure shared zero carbon outcomes. The Lancashire Environment and Decarbonisation Group, comprising representatives from the public, private and third sectors (including Blackburn with Darwen BC), will over 2023 lead on preparing a strategy and delivery plan for the environment and climate theme of the Lancashire 2050 Framework, taking account of the seven other L2050 themes. Current joint working includes preparation of a strategy for the roll out of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the County and Blackburn with Darwen and delivery of the Home Upgrade Grant programme through CHiL (Cosy Homes in Lancashire).

The CEAP will continue evolve to take account of new proposals and implementation of its current content and recommendations. It will, as far as 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**

The Council made good progress on developing and implementing its Climate Emergency Action Plan in 2022/23, in particular embedding the Climate Emergency in the Corporate Plan and hosting a People's Jury on the Climate Change Crisis. Key tasks for 2023/24, such as the climate impacts toolkit and continuing dialogue with the People's Jury, will build on these achievements to avoid losing momentum in working towards a carbon neutral borough by 2030.

The Action Plan also has to be developed and implemented within the context of the Borough's growth ambitions. Growth is seen as an essential means to attract investment in the Borough, and improving people's lives, which includes reducing and addressing the impacts of climate change.

Targeted government funding remains competitive. In the event that grants cannot be secured because of the high level of demand, alternative sources of funding, such as loans, will be investigated. Therefore there is a risk that implementation of some proposals in the CEAP for 2023/24 will be delayed or prove to be unaffordable.

Support from Government remains essential to the UK achieving an equitable transition to net zero by 2050, through provision of targeted finance and strategy that delivers cleaner and greener homes, jobs, business and transport, space for nature, and climate resilience. The national Committee on Climate Change, however, reports that tangible progress is lagging behind the policy ambition, which will inevitably hinder progress at local level.

The costs associated with climate action have to be weighed and prioritised against other Council priorities. The level of activity that the Council can influence and afford to implement, without a more positive national framework, is unlikely to be sufficient to achieve the objective of a carbon neutral borough by 2030. Nevertheless, it is vital that the Council continues to provide leadership and drives local change with key stakeholders, given the risks of inaction.

## 5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Climate Emergency Action Plan is a core mission of the Council's Corporate Plan.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Development and implementation of the Action Plan has financial implications. A dedicated budget allocation of £300,000 has been confirmed for 2023/24.

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications following from this report.

## 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. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.**

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. *(insert EIA link here)*

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. *(insert EIA attachment)*

## 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.

**VERSION:** 1

<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Gwen Kinloch</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> May 2023
<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	None