

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S
REPORT TO**

Cabinet
07 June 2022

Report Title: Climate Change – Sustainability Base Pledge

Submitted by: Executive Director of Environmental Sustainability

Portfolios: Environment & Recycling

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To set out the proposed ten base pledges as part of the Council's commitment to work collaboratively to successfully achieve net zero carbon in line with our independent Council Climate Change declaration.

Recommendation

That:

- 1. Cabinet formally adopts the ten base pledges set out in this report.**
- 2. The Council helps facilitate action on the base pledges through its membership of the Staffordshire sustainability Board (SSB)**

Reasons

Sustainability and Climate Change are serious issues facing us all, and there is a need to work as a collective across Staffordshire, to address climate change adaptation measures that are within individual organisations leverage, to influence and facilitate change with adaptation to climatic changes that are already locked in.

1. Background

- 1.1** At its meeting on 4th November 2020, Cabinet received and endorsed the Council's reviewed Medium Term Financial Strategy including a mid-term review of the Council Plan. Under Priority 3 – a Healthy, Active and Safe Borough, Cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to establish a Sustainable Environment Strategy for the Council and the Borough linked to Government targets.
- 1.2** In order to translate the Council's ambitions in respect of the environment, a Sustainable Environment Strategy was approved by Cabinet at its December 2020 meeting and is the vehicle for helping the Council achieve its aims of caring for and enhancing our natural environment and to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change.

- 1.3 Across Staffordshire, all ten local authorities have committed to similar strategies, and declarations of climate emergencies.
- 1.4 In order to provide a consistent and collaborative approach across the County of Staffordshire, The Staffordshire Leaders and Chief Executives Group has committed to work collaboratively to successfully achieve net carbon zero in line with each of our independent authority's climate change declarations.
- 1.5 A Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB) has been set up to facilitate collaborative forum, consisting of member Portfolio Holders and senior officers with responsibility for sustainability, supported by a team of advisors drawn from across the authorities. The SSB will work to influence change within its own individual organisations as well as other organisations and individuals to ensure that Staffordshire is net zero by at least 2050 or before.

2. Issues

- 2.1 It is recognised that the Staffordshire council's collective carbon footprint is less than 2% of Staffordshire's 5.8MtCO₂e annual carbon footprint however it is documented that, collectively, the councils could have an influence on a significant proportion of these emissions. This collaboration is to enable and facilitate change, where possible, throughout the geographic area of Staffordshire as a whole.
- 2.2 Work in the longer term will have to bring into the discussion and actions, climate change adaptation and sustainable environment concerns.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 It is proposed that as an initial commitment, the combined councils will within their own carbon emissions boundary initiate the following pledges, but acknowledge that the larger scope of climate change mitigation and adaptation is within the wider community of Staffordshire.
 1. **Baseline and Reporting** – All Councils will prepare and publish an annual baseline analysis of their organisation's carbon footprint. All Councils will assess and publish progress in reducing their carbon footprint in October each year.
 2. **Carbon Literacy Training & Awareness** – All Councillors and Senior Management Teams will undertake carbon literacy training to build corporate awareness of the issue and the Council's role in securing carbon reduction. All Councils will conduct a community impact assessment for key projects and proposals and include an assessment of Climate Change Implications in all key decision reports.
 3. **Ambassadors** - All Councils will encourage members to act as climate change ambassadors, to encourage reduction in organisational carbon footprints and champion this in their own division/ward areas.
 4. **Green Travel Planning** – All Councils will support and facilitate green travel by members, employees, and their communities through promotion of green travel planning. Policy implementation on green transport and ways of working

5. **Communications** – All Councils will contribute to a countywide communications group who will plan to deliver and manage a countywide Communications Plan, working together to drive our collective net zero visions forward, throughout the County.
6. **Green Energy** – All the Councils will commit to procure 100% green energy supplies for their electricity as soon as existing contract commitments allow.
7. **Energy Reduction** – By January 2023, all Councils will have established plans to reduce energy consumption across their estates.
8. **Low carbon fuelled fleet vehicles** – Moving towards an aspirational zero emission operational vehicle fleet, the Councils will by 2025, establish a plan to move to low carbon fuels within their internal fleets by 2030.
9. **Waste & Recycling** – By 2025 there will be a countywide waste strategy that all authorities will adhere to. This strategy will cover all aspects of the countywide waste operation, to reduce residual waste creation, increase recycling rates, promote composting of food waste at home and establish food waste collections throughout the County.
10. **Innovation and Technology** – Working collaboratively with research institutions, businesses and partners the Councils will encourage both innovation and technology development that will assist the delivery of our combined net zero visions.

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

- 4.1 Sustainability and Climate Change are serious issues facing us all, and there is a need to work as a collective across Staffordshire, to address climate change adaptation measures that are within individual organisations leverage, to influence and facilitate change with adaptation to climatic changes that are already locked in.

5. **Options Considered**

- 5.1 The Council could just focus on and work in isolation in achieving its own targets as set out in the Sustainable Environment Strategy was approved by Cabinet. However, there are significant advantages in working collaboratively across Staffordshire, sharing best practice and innovation. It will also help reduce duplication, therefore allowing all authorities in Staffordshire to move forward effectively, and meet individual challenges of becoming Net Zero organisations.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 has the following provisions:

Carbon targets and carbon budgeting – The Act places the government under a legal duty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050

The committee on Climate Change – The Act also establishes the Committee on Climate Change, an independent, expert body to advise government on the appropriate level for target, budgets, and on matters relating to mitigation and adaptation. The Committee will submit annual reports to parliament on progress towards the targets and government must respond to this report.

6.2 Councils Duty to reduce carbon emissions which are further legislated for as part of the Environment

6.3 All Local Authorities have a 'biodiversity duty' under the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 There are no equality issues arising from this report. However there may be Equality impact assessments required going forward, as the base pledges are undertaken and developed.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 For some of the base pledges outlined in section 3, there will be no cost implications beyond Officer Time, others however will require consideration of financial implications on a project by project basis, for example low carbon fuelled vehicles.

8.2 Financial support for this programme of a £100,000 per annum has been agreed through the Councils Borough Growth fund.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 There are growing expectations that Councils take a leading and decisive role in this respect and there are reputational risks to the Council in not acting positively.

9.2 Any risks associated with specific pledges contained within this report will be assessed and considered on a project-by-project basis, as work develops on each of the pledges.

9.3 There are overarching risks of inaction in respect of the Councils response to the environmental threats caused by rising carbon emissions, habitat loss, plastic pollution and poor use of dwindling natural resources. As a result, Councils around the UK and Governments around the world are responding to these threats and public calls for a robust and rapid reduction and mitigation measures.

10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 This report, and the base pledges contained within it support all of the UNSDG goals



11. Key Decision Information

11.1 This report is a key decision, as Climate Change has the potential to have a significant effect on communities living or working in an area.

12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 Cabinet approved the Councils Sustainable Environment Strategy at its December 2020 meeting.

13. List of Appendices

13.1 Staffordshire sustainability Board - Vision & Pledge 2022-2023. – Appendix 1

14. Background Papers

14.1 None.