

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Report to Council

Date of meeting: 15 December 2022

Report of: Rob Charnley, Interim Director of Economy and Housing

Title: Cheshire West and Chester's Review of Progress against the Climate Emergency Response Plan and Carbon Management Plan

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 The following report sets out a review of progress against the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan and Carbon Management Plan as of 30 September 2022. This is the second report to Council on progress on the delivery of the Plan, focusing on the 64 actions and 19 measures set out in the original Plan.

2. Recommendations:

Council is asked to:

1. Note the performance overview as of 30 September 2022, relating to the 19 performance indicators within the Climate Emergency Response Plan framework and the 64 actions.
2. Note the Council's performance in reducing its organisational Carbon emissions from 17,196 tons in 2020-21 of CO₂ per year in 2020-21 to 15,621 tons in 2021-22.

3. Reasons for the recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure the Council produces climate reporting information which enables the Council and residents to be assured that priorities under the Climate Emergency Response Plan are on track for delivery and that any issues are being addressed.

4. Report details:

- 4.1 Over the last year, the Council has continued to make significant progress in addressing the climate change crisis we face. The Council recently hosted the North West Route to Net Zero regional conference in Ellesmere Port, marking the run-up to COP27. We have seen some fantastic work taking place in the region over the last year, and it is recognised that there are areas where we need to significantly accelerate progress. We continue to be one of the UK's leading industrial clusters and a centre of agriculture. Though we continue to face a raft of challenges, the Council can be proud of its achievements in the second year of the Climate Emergency

Response Plan. The following report sets out attainment against the actions and measures within the Plan.

- 4.2 As a Council, we have built on the gains we achieved last year, with a further 1574 tons of carbon reduction. Since our baseline, in 2014-15, we have reduced from 54519t CO₂ to 15621t, and set 7064t of carbon offsets in motion via woodland and biodiversity creation. The borough's emissions reduced by 7.2 per cent year-on-year, to 3502.9 ktCO₂. We have much more to do, but this is progress to be proud of. The Local Government Association recently reviewed Cheshire West and Chester Council and our approach to Climate Change was identified as a strength. We have continued to engage with Government on securing Cheshire West and Chester as one of the world-leading low carbon industrial clusters. There are now two nationally significant infrastructure projects underway locally, and an array of other vitally important projects in progress to support the decarbonisation of the borough. Our support via the Climate Emergency Fund has continued, to projects both internal and external to the Council. These range from switching Ellesmere Port Civic Hall to LED lighting, to supporting Chester Swimming Association to decarbonise. We have been successful in continuing to draw down funding from Government, with a recent award of £2.4m from the Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme. We recognise that we will require more resource, including external funding to tackle climate change at scale, and so will continue to engage with Government and wider stakeholders to secure the funding, resource and regulatory environment to tackle climate change effectively, while not forgetting the pivotal role that community groups and residents themselves can play in addressing this challenge.
- 4.3 The requirement to annually report on progress against the borough's attainment of net zero by 2045 was set out by Council. In order to align to the Council's Corporate Performance Management approach, the following key principles are adopted:
- **Proportionality:** Performance management will track and focus on the issues that make the biggest difference, being tailored to the appropriate audience, rather than being an end in itself. The focus will be on improvement supported by efficient processes and systems for reporting, analysis and data collection.
 - **Depth vs breadth:** There needs to be a balance between the range of information available and the depth of understanding it can give. Fewer indicators can enable more insight, analysis and focused improvement, as having an abundance of indicators can make it difficult to digest key information and statistics. Given the limited amount of time available to decision makers to scrutinise and review performance data, it is therefore preferable to have fewer, but data, it is therefore preferable to have fewer, but meaningful, indicators, and arrange for 'deep-dives' into areas of underperformance.
 - **Intelligent target setting:** Recognising that this plan is the start of a 25-year monitoring period, targets are set on a medium-term basis where possible, specifically, to the end of the current Council Plan period. Targets will be set by

taking account of Anthesis¹ data, benchmarking information, considering historical trends and considering resources.

- **Managed flexibility:** Measures, targets and actions are sensitive to changed circumstances and a refresh of the framework takes place on an annual basis in an open and transparent manner.

- 4.4 19 performance indicators are in place to track performance against this Plan. These indicators are not directly correlated to all actions within the Plan, but act as proxies for the delivery of the Plan's objectives. The Council is not able to directly influence the attainment of the target on all indicators. Measures are therefore categorised as being either "Direct Influence" or "Indirect Influence". The performance framework will enable members and residents to hold the Council to account for performance including any under achievement, enable us to celebrate success and positive achievement. Where a need to improve performance is identified, facilitated workshops will be held with the relevant service(s) to seek to understand and resolve barriers to delivering better outcomes.
- 4.5 The best available data on aggregate Climate Performance is produced by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on an annual basis via the "UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics". These are produced with a two-year time lag, therefore the latest available data is from 2020. The 2019 data set out that the borough emitted 3,775 ktCO₂. The latest available data from 2020 is 3502.9 ktCO₂. This represents a reduction in emissions of 7.2 per cent from 2019. While this direction of travel is undoubtedly positive, it is clear that there is much more to do. The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research has produced carbon pathways for Local Authorities; the 2020 ideal pathway for Cheshire West is 3360 ktCO₂². There is, therefore, a 142.9 ktCO₂ disparity between the actual and ideal pathway. Though the Tyndall pathway does not take account of specific local circumstances – linked to projected large scale industrial decarbonisation in the mid-2020s via low carbon hydrogen production, it is vital that this provides further motivation to all parties from to increase the pace of action, maintain collective focus and think innovatively to support communities to achieve net zero. This is dependent on resources at all levels – from large-scale government support, to private investment, to local support to make practical change happen. We will continue to work with relevant departments to identify the resources the borough needs, and will work with communities via a range of mechanisms – from our Climate Emergency Fund, to Spacehive crowd-funding, and through the provision of advice and support.
- 4.6 There are a number of positive trends to note, with industrial emissions at their lowest level since the dataset began in 2005, domestic emissions also at their lowest level since 2005, transport reduced dramatically, likely linked to COVID, with its lowest ever level. Commercial emissions rose slightly, as did land use, land use change and forestry. Public sector emissions dropped, but are not yet below 2018 levels.

¹ https://info.anthesisgroup.com/hubfs/CW&C_Final_Report.pdf?hsLang=en

² [Local and Regional Implications of the United Nations Paris Agreement on Climate Change \(manchester.ac.uk\)](#)

Table 1:

Year	Industry	Commercial	Public Sector	Domestic	Transport	LULUFC³	Total
2018	1,840.2	171.0	44.4	548.5	939.9	26.9	3,687.8
2019	1,894.1	197.0	74.9	529.1	929.4	26.6	3,775.0
2020	1,831.7	175.9	68.1	516.0	757.8	27.6	3,502.9

4.7 Current Status – Actions – April 2022:

4.8 Table 2 sets out action status on the 64 actions within the plan.

Table 2:

Action Status		
Status	Count of Status	per cent
Complete	12	18.8 per cent
In progress	51	79.7 per cent
Slipped	1	1.6 per cent
Total	64	100 per cent

4.9 The majority of actions, 51 (79.7 per cent) are in progress. Twelve (18.8 per cent) are complete. One (1.6 per cent) is slipped and will be re-phased for future years.

4.10 Action Updates:

4.11 The Council has:

- Consulted on and published a Land Action Plan for the Climate Emergency.
- Delivered £5.8m of Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme works, saving 1100 tons of CO2 per year.
- Published a Fuel Poverty Strategy for consultation.
- Progressed a range of work to decarbonise land use, including projects via the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission to bring stakeholders together to roll-out anaerobic digestion across Cheshire.
- Worked with the Local Enterprise Partnership on the development of its Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission final report.
- Reviewed the feasibility of the purchase of green gas, and will utilise the funding that would otherwise be spent on 'green' gas on investing to reduce gas demand.
- Continued to purchase of renewable electricity for the Council, beginning in 2020-21.

³ Land use, land use change and forestry.

- Utilised £2.5m via the Green Homes Grant programmes to retrofit some of the borough's least efficient homes, to deliver measures to 250 homes.
- Made available the Climate Emergency Fund in 2021-22.
- Completed its business needs survey including requirements around low-carbon support.
- Acted as the accountable body, programme managers, funding recipient and distributor for the Trees for Climate national programme, ensuring the effective management of this nationwide programme.

The majority of actions remain on-track. Highlights within this category include the following:

- Secured £2.4m in Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding, matched by £0.9m in school condition allocation funding. This will support energy efficiency measures at three schools, Whitby High School, Sutton Green primary and Frodsham Manor house primary.
- Phase 2 of the Street Lighting Replacement programme is progressing well, and the project is now 95% complete.
- The Council has continued to support HyNet North West in its development of low-carbon industrial infrastructure in the region, for both blue and green hydrogen production. The recent announcement of 100MW of green hydrogen production is a positive step towards a fully zero carbon future.
- The Council has continued to engage with Cadent and British Gas throughout the development of the Government's Hydrogen Village programme, facilitating engagement with a range of stakeholders within the Whitby area including Councillors, community organisations, schools, residents and businesses.
- The Council has allocated a further £1.5m to climate capital investments in 2022-23. This includes match funding to the Mersey Forest's Trees for Climate programme, upgrades to Northgate Car Park to support the delivery of 42 EV chargers in addition to other sustainability improvements. The Council will demonstrate its commitment to a fabric first approach by upgrading building materials to low-carbon in the Winsford One Public Estate programme, and has upgraded lighting in Ellesmere Port Civic Hall to LED, among a range of other projects.
- The Council's e-scooter trial continues, with a decision to be made by May 2024.
- 85 hectares of new woodland are in scope in Cheshire West and Chester this year, with 400 hectares in assessment for future years.

A full list of all actions, with status updates is available as Appendix 1.

One action has slipped, which is as follows:

- Support businesses and partners to sign up to the Net Zero Carbon Buildings Commitment: This action is dependent on the recruitment of resource within the Climate Change Team, which will occur in Q4 2022-23.

4.12 Direction of travel for performance indicators:

4.13 This report covers the period from September 2021 to September 2022. The focus of this report is on the 'direction of travel' of indicators. Direction of travel sets out whether measures are demonstrating an improving, maintaining, or declining performance position.

Table 3:

Measure direction of travel		
Status	No.	per cent
Green	14	73.7 per cent
Amber	1	5.3 per cent
Red	1	5.3 per cent
In Measurement	3	15.8 per cent
Total	19	100 per cent

4.14 Fourteen (73.7 per cent) indicators are reporting improved performance compared to the position at the baseline, one (5.3 per cent) indicator reports a maintenance in performance, meaning these indicators are within 5 per cent of the baseline. One (5.3 per cent) indicator reports declining performance, indicating that it has declined by more than 5 per cent from the baseline. Three (15.8 per cent) indicators are currently in measurement, and assessment methods are still in the process of being developed for these indicators.

5 Indicators reporting performance:

5.1 The following section summarises the indicators that are reporting performance in this first annual review. Measures not included are those where methods of assessment are still in development therefore no data is currently available. A full list of measures is included in Appendix 2.

Green/Improving Performance:

- **M1: Industrial Sector Annual Carbon Emissions:** The baseline for this measure is 2,126.1ktCO₂, which was established in 2017 on the basis of data from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The latest available data is from 2020, at 1831.7ktCO₂, representing a 13.8 per cent decrease from the baseline, against a target of an 11 per cent decrease by 2024. This represents significant decarbonisation of a key sector for Cheshire West and Chester. It is likely that the utilisation of low carbon hydrogen in the middle of the decade will further drive down industrial emissions.

- **M2: Percentage of the LED streetlight replacement programme completed.** This measure's baseline is 73 per cent completion, as at September 2021, 94.9 per cent of the programme has been completed, representing a positive direction of travel against the target of 100 per cent completion.
- **M3: Transport Sector Annual Carbon Emissions** – Cheshire West and Chester - (BEIS). The baseline for this measure is 943.1 ktCO₂, set in 2017. In the latest available data (2020), this measure stands at 757.8 ktCO₂, a 19.6 per cent decrease against the target of a 17 per cent decrease by 2024. While this represents a positive direction of travel, we should note that Transport in 2020 was highly COVID-affected and therefore this may not represent a true picture. We will have a fuller understanding of whether these reductions are significant if they continue into future years which were less affected by lockdowns.
- **M6: Department for Transport: Modal Share by Local Authority, Weekly Walking:** The baseline for this measure was 69.1 per cent set in 2018-19. In the latest available data, 2020-21, 74 per cent of adults walked, representing an increase in performance, classified as Green. This represents a 10.2 per cent increase in walking against a target of a 25 per cent increase in walking.
- **M7: Resident Satisfaction: Public Transport Options:** Following a review of the data collection methodology via the National Highways and Transport Survey, initiated following last year's annual report, the 2020 baseline figure has been amended from 58% to 57%, the 2021 figure has been amended from 53% to 50%, and the 2022 figure now reports 54% satisfaction. This represents an improving direction of travel from last year.
- **M8: Annual Housing Emissions (BEIS LA CO₂ emissions):** The baseline for this measure is 531.2 ktCO₂, set in 2017. In the latest available data (2020), this measure stands at 516 ktCO₂, a 2.8 per cent decrease against the target of a 15 per cent decrease by 2024. The 2020 emissions level represents the lowest level of emissions from Housing within Cheshire West since records began in 2005.
- **M10: Private Sector Landlords:** Six private sector landlords were supported to retrofit their properties, including a financial contribution from the landlord for the work, via the Green Homes Grant programme.
- **M11: Retrofit Measures to Council Housing:** 123 Council and partner properties are due to be completed by the end of March 2023.
- **M12: per cent of properties achieving to Band C or above.** In this baseline, set last year, within the Housing Plan, 41.5 per cent of domestic properties were achieving to Band C or above. 42.2% of properties are now at Band C or above.
- **M13: Commercial Property median EPC rating;** This measure reports as Green on direction of travel, as improving performance has been demonstrated. The measure has a target for the average commercial property to be EPC rated C by 2024. In the baseline, 62 per cent of commercial property was rated D or lower, this reduced to 58.2 per cent in April 2022.
- **M15: Annual Tree Planting (ha):** This measure was baselined at 43 hectares being in scope for 2021-22, and 400 hectares are being investigated by the Mersey Forest. This now stands at 85 hectares in scope for 22-23 and 400 hectares remains the pipeline under investigation in Cheshire West and Chester.

- **M16: Natural Flood Management (litres):** This measure reported 50,000l captured in its baselining period (2020-21), this has since risen to 459,814l. This has been calculated using the Green Infrastructure Valuation toolkit applied to a highly conservative 5ha of woodland.
- **M18: Reduction in household waste:** This measure was baselined at 182900 tonnes representing the new norm of post-COVID waste volumes. 2021-22 data now reports 178702 tons, an improving direction of travel compared to the prior reporting period.
- **M19: Household and non-household waste is sent for reuse, recycling or composting.** This measure was baselined at 56 per cent. Data from 2020-21 reported a slight decline in recycling rates to 54.5 per cent. Positively, data from 2021-22 reports a rebound in this rate, to 57.6 per cent, exceeding the baseline.

Amber/Maintained Performance:

- **M4: Electric vehicle infrastructure: Number of publicly available electric vehicle charging devices developed by the Council:** This measure currently reports Amber on Direction of travel, meaning that the measure has stayed the same. This measure has a 2024 target of 48 EV charging devices developed by the Council. To date, 15 have been delivered. However, 15 additional charging points are due to become available by November, with a further 27 in December.

Red/Declining Performance:

- **M5: Department for Transport: Modal Share by Local Authority, Weekly Cycling:** The baseline for this measure was 8.7 per cent in 2018-19. In the latest available data, 2020-21, 9.7 per cent of adults cycled. This represents a negative direction of travel against 2019-20 data point, of 10.3%, however should be viewed in concert with M6, Walking, as these are both active modes. The opening of new cycle routes such as the Frodsham to Helsby (A56) scheme should support improvements in this measure.

5.2 Carbon Management Plan

- 5.3 In addition to the Climate Emergency Response Plan, and its associated targets to support borough-wide net zero by 2045, the Council has also set a target of achieving net zero in its own operations by 2030. The Council has made progress against this target this year, reducing its organisational Carbon emissions from 17,196 tons of CO₂ per year in 2020-21 to 15,621 tons of CO₂ in 2021-22 and setting 7064t of carbon offsets in motion via woodland and biodiversity creation. Further information on the Carbon Management Plan is included in Appendix 3.

6 Lessons learnt and changes

- 6.1 Changes to the Plan are made via the approved change control process. There is a requirement for the Plan to be a live, functional document that is responsive to its environment and circumstances. In order to ensure the Plan is effectively maintained, authority to make minor amendments to the Plan is delegated to the Director of

Economy and Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Climate Emergency. Minor amendments include but are not limited to changes to the lead officer responsible for the action, contextual elements of the plan, such as updating data as it becomes available, and updates to actions to reflect changing circumstances, such as funding awards, the addition of actions as new projects emerge, and/or changes to project timelines.

- 6.2 More significant changes to the Plan such as amendments to performance indicators or the removal of actions require Cabinet approval. This will take place in a report to Cabinet in February 2023. This change control process was approved by Cabinet in February 2021.

6.3 Communications and Engagement Update:

- 6.4 The Council has maintained a programme of proactive communications and engagement on the Climate Emergency throughout the last year. The Climate Emergency Taskforce has continued to meet during this time, reviewing performance information relating to the themes of the Climate Emergency Response Plan, with meetings focused on topics including Waste, Energy, and Transport. The Council recently hosted the North West Route to Net Zero regional Climate summit in October 2022. The Council has continued to deliver internal and external communication campaigns focusing on Council and service delivery and using the opportunities presented through national/international programmes and initiatives to tie in the work of the Council, providing local examples of impact for residents. We continue to publish a monthly Climate Emergency newsletter, which goes out to around 3000 subscribers to share a range of good news stories from the Council and the community.
- 6.5 We regularly promote the Inspire Cheshire West Climate Hub, which provides a central space to share ideas, stories and tips about how we can collectively tackle the climate emergency, and residents and community organisations are encouraged to upload their own stories.
- 6.6 We have consulted on the Land Action Plan for the Climate and Nature Emergencies, which was adopted in February 2022. This Plan provides greater depth and detail on how the Council can positively influence change in the Land use sector, which is one of the most reputationally and economically important sectors within the borough. A range of actions are underway to decarbonise agriculture, including at the sub-regional level via the Local Enterprise Partnership's Sustainable and Inclusive Growth. One specific example of this is a project to roll-out farm scale anaerobic digestion across Cheshire. A full list of Land Action Plan actions and updates is available in Appendix 4.

7 How does the decision contribute to the Council's Plan?

- 7.1 Reviewing the Climate Emergency Response Plan is a core requirement of the commitment to tackling the Climate Emergency, which is in-line with the Council Plan priority.

- 7.2 There are also significant links between the Climate Emergency Response and the Council's priorities on fuel poverty, poverty more broadly, inequality and improving mental health. A clear example of the way in which these priorities are linked is the fuel poverty challenge that many of our residents will face this winter. The Council has recently launched a consultation on this, alongside a range of practical actions, and the Housing, Climate, Finance and Poverty teams are working closely together to jointly design solutions to ensure people can access the support they need at this time, via mechanisms such as the Household Support Fund.

8. What will it cost?

- 8.1 The delivery of significant elements of the Climate Emergency Response Plan can be achieved within existing resources. There is a £0.4m annual revenue budget allocated to this priority, alongside an indicative allocation of £2.5m in the indicative capital programme for 2023-24. The Council has also drawn down funding from Government including £2.4m in public sector decarbonisation funding. There are a range of actions within the plan, such as retrofitting existing housing, that will require additional Government investment.
- 8.2 The Council will continue to actively engage with Government via opportunities such as consultations and other mechanisms to ensure that we advocate for the required changes to policy and funding to make these actions deliverable. It continues to be important to emphasise that delivering on this priority is not solely about new expenditure. It is about using our existing capital programme and revenue spending to create the outcomes we want via intelligent and carbon-informed procurement.

9 What are the legal aspects?

- 9.1 The UK's main legislation relating to climate change is the Climate Change Act 2008 which sets a legally binding target to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by at least 80 per cent of 1990 levels by 2050 and required the setting of statutory five-year carbon budgets towards the 2050 target. The UK government on 27 June 2019 amended the 2008 Act to set a net-zero target for 2050.
- 9.2 Internationally, the Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015 and signed in 2016, was entered into by a number of states and the European Union. The Paris Agreement sets out a global action plan on climate change with a target of limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.
- 9.3 The Council has continued to ensure that it reviews the impact of emerging new legislation, to ensure these are fully understood, and that legal impacts and risks are accounted for when considering the response and actions of the Council in relation to the climate change priorities.
- 9.4 In addition to legislative updates, legal advice will be sought on all applications for grant funding, and any partnership and contractual implications of projects arising to

ensure compliance with the Council's Finance and Contract procedure rules.
Governance advice continues to be sought on collaborative working arrangements.

10 What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

- 10.1 Due to the volume of information and number of plan owners and data leads involved, there are risks that data and indicators are not collected consistently across the outcome plans and vary in quality and accuracy. The Climate Change Team engages with data owners to verify the accuracy of these data returns and work with data leads to enhance the reliability and rigour of data collection, and continue to explore additional systems to improve the data collection process, reduce duplication and improve data quality.

11 What is the impact of the decision on health inequalities and equality and diversity issues?

- 11.1 There are no detrimental equality and diversity issues directly associated with reporting on the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan. The Plan is intended to enhance the environmental wellbeing, preparedness and prosperity of everyone who lives and works within the Borough. Action linked to reducing carbon emissions will have co-benefits such as creating better air quality, increases in walking and cycling, warmer homes, better access to green spaces which are proven to support mental wellbeing, and healthier diets. This will in turn combat health inequalities and reduce the demand on the NHS and Social Care.

12 What is the impact of this decision on Climate Change?

- 12.1 The ongoing monitoring of Climate Emergency Response Plan is a critical element in supporting the Council's programme of action over 2022-2024 which will reduce carbon emissions and enhance our preparedness for the detrimental effects of climate change.

For further information:

Cabinet Member: Councillor Matt Bryan (Climate Emergency, Housing and Planning)
Officer: Will Pearson
Job Title: Climate Change Strategy Manager
Email: will.pearson@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk