

REPORT OF THE CABINET

C. LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S REVISED ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Introduction

1. This report presents the outcome of consultation on the Council's Revised Environment Strategy 2018-2030, the Action Plan and Tranche 1 Carbon Reduction Map and seek the approval of the County Council to these documents. The Environment Strategy is included in the Council's Policy Framework

Background

2. At its meeting on 6 July 2018 the Cabinet approved the current Environment Strategy 2018-2030 and supported a 3-year High Level Action Plan. On 15th May the County Council declared a climate emergency on 15 May 2019 with unanimous cross-party support. The declaration committed the Council to achieving carbon neutrality for its own emissions by 2030 and to working with others and lobbying government to support delivery of this commitment. There was also a commitment to support the limiting of global warming to less than 1.5°C, in line with the Paris Agreement. This in effect means achieving carbon neutrality for Leicestershire by 2050 or before.
3. The declaration also requested officers to undertake a review of the aspects of the Environment Strategy 2018-2030 necessary to achieve the carbon neutrality by 2030 aspiration, together with an assessment of the cost and technology implications. This work would enable Cabinet and Council to take informed decisions on delivering the revised ambitions of the Environment Strategy recognising that this will require the reallocation of resources by the Council.
4. The County Council's Environment Strategy 2018-2030 set out how the activities of the Council impact on the environment and the rationale for acting to address this and to address wider environmental issues affecting the County and the people living within it. The Strategy contained a suite of high-level targets covering climate change, waste, water, energy, transportation and environmental performance. The climate change target was informed by the Government's target to achieve an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 2050, as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008.
5. A revision of the Council's Strategic Plan and Outcomes has also taken place to embed the commitments made in the Climate Emergency Declaration and the revised Environment Strategy reflects the changes made. The revised Strategic Plan appears elsewhere on the County Council agenda.

Current Carbon Emissions

6. Within the current Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reporting for the Council's internal emissions, the following aspects are included in line with current government reporting guidance:
 - Buildings
 - Operational Fleet
 - Business Travel
 - Street Lighting and Signals
 - Fugitive Gases (e.g. air conditioning gases)
 - Transmission and Distribution (grid emissions)
 - Renewable Energy Exports
 - Offsets

7. The Council's internal measured (Tranche 1) emissions were almost 13,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) in 2018-19. However, there are other aspects of the Council's operations which are known to produce emissions but are not included because they are currently optional for reporting purposes, the data is incomplete / non-existent or there are no agreed metrics/methodologies in place. These include:
 - Operational Waste
 - Water
 - Procurement
 - Farming / Land Use
 - Investments / Pensions

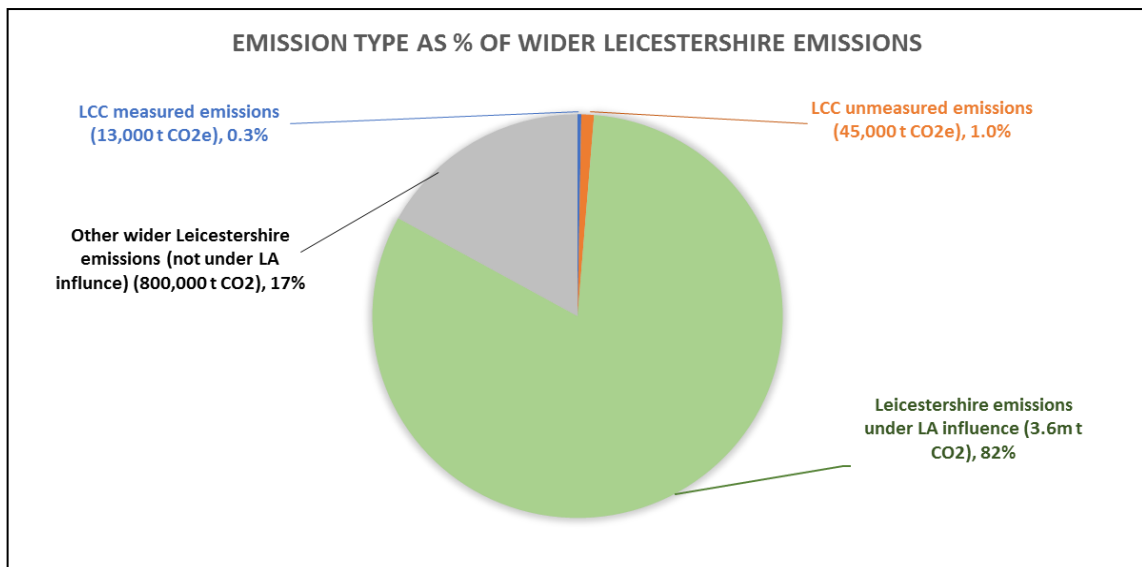
Adding the estimated emissions from the first three of these sources to the currently measured emissions gives a figure of 45,000 tonnes CO₂e.

8. The wider emissions for Leicestershire, which the government provides data on, includes emissions from the Housing, Transport, Agriculture and Industry sectors. This will therefore include emissions from such sources as:
 - Energy use in housing, businesses and other buildings;
 - Vehicles driving through and within the county;
 - Factory processes such as burning, heating, cooling etc.

9. The latest available figures for 2017 indicate that, what the Government defines as 'local authority influenced emissions' equate to 3.6 million tonnes of CO₂. The total wider CO₂ emissions for Leicestershire have been calculated by the government at over 4.5 million tonnes. Note these figures only related to CO₂ emissions and not to wider greenhouse gas emissions as used for the Council's own emissions figures expressed as CO₂ equivalent or CO₂e.

10. Figure 1 below shows the different types of sources as a percentage of the wider Leicestershire emissions. This shows that the Council's measured emissions are only 0.3% of the county's wider emissions and the unmeasured emissions are only 1.0%.

Figure 1: Emission type as a percentage of wider Leicestershire CO₂ emissions



Revised Environment Strategy

11. The revised Environment Strategy (Appendix A) consists of 15 aims set across the following themes: -
 - Carbon and Climate Change Impacts;
 - Resource Use and Low/Zero Carbon Energy;
 - Travel and Transport;
 - Biodiversity, Habitats and Local Environment;
 - Community and Wellbeing; and,
 - Local Economy.

12. For each aim there are a range of both internal and external objectives which provide more detail on how the aims will be delivered both within the Council and by the Council, where it has control and influence within Leicestershire.

13. In addition to embedding the commitments made in the Climate Emergency Declaration and the changes made in the revised Strategic Plan, the revised Strategy takes into account government policies, changes in legislation and information that has become available since the Strategy was last approved in July 2018. The opportunity has also been taken to consider some format improvements and to strengthen some of the objectives.

14. Some of the key changes to highlight are as follows:
 - a. The greenhouse gas reduction target has been changed to 100% by 2030 to reflect the carbon neutrality commitment made in the Climate Emergency Declaration;
 - b. The Foreword, Executive Summary and the Introduction have been updated to reflect the Climate Emergency Declaration;

- c. The Key Drivers section has been updated to reflect Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019, Clean Air Strategy 2019 and 2019 State of Nature Report;
 - d. The objectives in relation to the Health & Wellbeing and Local Economy themes have been strengthened;
 - e. The Monitoring and Managing Change and Governance sections have been merged and rationalised;
 - f. The Governance section has been updated to reflect new governance arrangements put in place following the Climate Emergency Declaration;
 - g. The Glossary has been expanded.
15. The Director of Environment and Transport will amend the Strategy in line with developing Government policy and changes in legislation during its remaining 10-year lifespan using existing delegated powers which enable chief officers to make amendments to plans previously agreed by members to ensure they remain current and fit for purpose

Revised Action Plan

16. The revised Environment Strategy Action Plan (Appendix B) has removed any actions that have been completed since the original Action Plan was developed in 2018. For example, the actions to carry out a review of fleet vehicles to identify opportunities for using lower emissions vehicles, completing the development phase of the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership bid and development of a countywide environmental volunteer scheme have all been removed. Active and planned actions have been added across the six themes of the Environment Strategy as well as those which are crosscutting or related to Performance Monitoring; Reporting; or Strategic and Governance.
17. The Action Plan follows the four-year MTFs cycle and will be subject to annual review by the Environment Strategy Delivery Board. The Action Plan is a live document which will be added to and changed as new projects and information become available.

Carbon Reduction Roadmap

18. A Carbon Reduction Roadmap is being produced in 2 tranches and will identify key actions for reducing both the Council's and the county's carbon emissions.
19. The Tranche 1 Roadmap, attached at Appendix C, focuses on the Council's internal measured emissions and sets out a suggested profile of how emissions could be reduced by 2030.
20. The Tranche 2 Roadmap will focus on the Council's wider unmeasured emissions and the approach to reducing Leicestershire's emissions. Both tranches will be combined into a single Carbon Reduction Roadmap which will be presented to County Council for approval in the summer of 2021 and thereafter will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Environment Strategy Delivery Board.

21. There is an overlap between internal and external emissions which will need to be considered in developing solutions. Some of the Council's operational emissions may be best reduced by a county-wide or regional solution. For example, reducing emissions from the Council's operational and grey fleets may more effectively be done by working with partners such as the East Midlands Energy Hub, the LLEP and Leicester City Council.
22. Furthermore, as the impacts of climate change are happening now and are expected to continue at an increased pace and intensity it will be important to also include climate change resilience and adaptation within scope when carbon reduction solutions are being assessed and developed. These in part will be addressed through the Climate Change Risk Registers and associated Business Continuity plans.
23. In developing the Tranche 1 Roadmap, an exercise was undertaken to identify possible workstreams for reducing the Council's measured emissions of approximately 13,000 tonnes CO₂e. The initial analysis identified which workstreams are already planned to take place, which are low cost and / or high return, and which offer a low return or are more complex. Analysis has also allowed for the expected reduction in carbon emissions due to national changes such as decarbonisation of the electricity grid and the increased take up of electric vehicles.
24. The Roadmap will be revised and improved as more work is undertaken on understanding the design and deliverability of the workstreams and to take account of changes in circumstances, such as impacts of the current COVID 19 situation, and advances in technology etc.
25. Table 1 shows what initial analysis suggests could be removed from the Council's measured emissions by each of the different categories of actions by 2030.

Table 1: Tonnes of CO₂e removed by 2030 by each category of proposed actions

Category	Tonnes CO₂e removed
National change	3,200
Planned improvements	3,000
High return / simple improvements	2,300
Low return / complex improvements	3,500
Offset balance	700
Total tonnes CO₂e removed	12,700

26. Further work will be carried out on each workstream to develop more accurate figures on the costs and benefits (financial, carbon and other) which will form part of business cases and feasibility studies and inform future decisions on the implementation of actions.

Comments of the Scrutiny Bodies

27. The Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the revised Strategy, Action Plan and Tranche 1 Carbon Reduction Roadmap at its meeting on 5 March. It was noted that waste disposal options would be considered as part of the development of the Tranche 2 Carbon Reduction Roadmap. Members highlighted that biodiversity within the County Council's parks, sites of special scientific interest and rights of way was an area requiring significant improvement. Air pollution from standing traffic and congestion was discussed but it was acknowledged that the County Council could not take this into account in its role as the Highway Authority.
28. The Scrutiny Commission considered the revised Strategy, Action Plan and Tranche 1 Carbon Reduction Roadmap at its meeting on 8 April 2020. Members noted the need for further work to be undertaken to understand the impact of COVID-19 and that actions and timescales may need to be adjusted as a result. Members recognised that the County Council was not responsible for monitoring air quality but noted that this was a key factor for local residents and that the Council would contribute through the design and construction of roads in Leicestershire.
29. The draft Strategy was also circulated to members of the Health and Wellbeing Board for their comment. Those who responded supported the Strategy and the Council's commitment to bring about positive change. The response included reference to the wider carbon footprint across the County, with members recognising the positive impact the travel restrictions implemented during the Coronavirus pandemic had had on the environment and suggested that lessons could be learned to maximise this positive impact once the pandemic was over.
30. In response to questions concerning the Council's approach to managing AQMA (Air Quality Management Areas) across the County it was noted that in two-tier authority areas such as Leicestershire, air quality management duties were the responsibility of district authorities. This included identification of AQMAs, monitoring/reporting on air quality, producing/delivering action plans and assessing the impact of development on air quality through the planning process. Should a district council provide evidence which attributes air pollution within an AQMA to the local road network the County Council as the Local Highway Authority, had a role to play in working with the district council to identify and seek funding sources for mitigation measures on the local road network.
31. A copy of the full minute text from the meetings of the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Commission are appended to the report as Appendix D.

Resource Implications

32. Utilising an evidence-based approach, the Council will continue to identify opportunities where both financial savings and improvements to the environment can be achieved. To date over £21million has been invested in

significant projects which directly and indirectly have environmental benefits including the street lighting LED project, the installation of solar panels and the biomass boiler projects.

33. The Cabinet approved an initial budget of £450,000 to facilitate the review of the Environment Strategy and the development of the Roadmap and to take immediate action to implement measures to reduce carbon emissions. Further funding requirements will be identified through the development of the Carbon Reduction Roadmap and included in future Medium Term Financial Strategies (MTFS) as required.
34. The 2020-24 MTFS includes proposals valued at £16 million for investing in addressing climate change such as the development of the Quorn Solar Farm and carbon neutral industrial units.
35. In the future, there may be the potential to utilise private investment and external grant funding to support the implementation of some of the actions in the Environment Strategy Action Plan and these will be explored as opportunities arise.
36. With the incorporation of Carbon Reduction into the County Council's Strategic Change Portfolio from 2020/21, businesses cases will be developed for potential actions to assess the carbon, financial and other benefits of the proposals to ensure it positively contributes to the Council's objectives.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

37. An outline Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment indicated that overall the Strategy is likely to have a positive impact. However, individual projects will be assessed for equal opportunities implications as they are developed as part of the Strategy implementation process.

Consideration by the Cabinet

38. At its meeting on 28th April the Cabinet considered the Council's revised Environment Strategy and Action Plan along with comments from the Environment Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Commission along with comments submitted by Mr M. Hunt CC (attached as Appendix E).
39. The Cabinet was advised that the revised documents sought to enable the Council to meet its commitment for carbon neutrality with regard to its own operations by 2030. The Strategy also recognised the target of reaching carbon neutrality across the County by 2050, and the development of the Tranche 2 roadmap over the next year would establish how this would be achieved. This stage would be far more wide-ranging, including work with partners and agencies and taking account of opportunities to accelerate the carbon reduction as the County started to recover from the Coronavirus pandemic. The Council would be fully engaging with the development of the Department for Transport (DfT) Transport Decarbonising Plan

Motion to be moved

- a) That the revised Environment Strategy 2018-2030, the associated revised Environment Strategy Action Plan and Tranche 1 of the Carbon Reduction Roadmap, be approved;
- b) That it be noted that a further report presenting the complete Carbon Reduction Roadmap (incorporating the newly developed Tranche 2) will be submitted to the County Council in the summer of 2021.

Background Papers

Environment Strategy 2018-2030 approved by Cabinet on 6 July 2018 - [Environment Strategy 2018-30](#)

Climate Emergency Declaration motion made at County Council on 15 May 2019 – [Climate Emergency Declaration](#)

Appendices

Appendix A – Revised Environment Strategy 2018-2030

Appendix B – Revised Action Plan

Appendix C – Tranche 1 Carbon Reduction Roadmap

Appendix D – Minutes of the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Commission.

Appendix E – Comments submitted by Mr Hunt CC