

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **24th September, 2020**

Report Subject: **Decarbonisation Plan 2020-2030**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor David Davies, Deputy Leader / Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**

Report Submitted by: **Michelle Morris (Managing Director)**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	3-Mar	2-Mar			16-Mar		24-Sep	Low Carbon Group

1. **Purpose of the Report**

To present the Council's Decarbonisation Plan, which sets out a data driven strategic approach to addressing the carbon emissions in response to climate change.

2. **Scope and Background**

2.1 The 2015 Paris Agreement committed to keep global temperature rises well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels with the ambition to limit them to 1.5°C. This target was chosen as an approximate indicator of dangerous levels of climate change. Global average temperatures have already risen by 0.9°C, with further rises inevitable due to carbon already emitted. Therefore, achieving this target requires that emissions peak as soon as possible and then reduce rapidly.

2.2 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 set a target of 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 (against 1990 levels). In response to recent public pressure including the Extinction Rebellion protests and School Climate Strike the Welsh Government has declared a climate emergency and announced its intention to amend its targets to Net Zero in Wales by 2050.

2.3 Welsh Government published a delivery plan 'Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales' that calls for public sector leadership, including the ambition for the Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030. The plan highlights that this target will require public sector bodies to understand their carbon emissions, with Welsh Government asking Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to develop their 'Carbon Positive' project as a model for doing this.

2.4 The Council is already taking a number of actions that will reduce our carbon impact, including 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools, reducing the energy use of schools, and Re:fit programme installing energy saving measures across a range of buildings

and investing in low energy LEDs in street lighting. The Council has also reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill, the form of waste disposal which has the greatest climate impact, to just 2.25%. However, we recognised that achieving carbon neutrality will require a more strategic approach. In June 2019 the Council began developing a Decarbonisation Plan which sets out how the organisation will contribute towards this ambition for carbon neutrality by 2030.

- 2.5 Following a workshop with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in September 2019, work began on calculating the organisations carbon footprint, with data being collected from across the Council. Following NRW's 'Carbon Positive' model this baseline measurement was calculated in-line with the internationally recognised GHG (Greenhouse Gases) Protocol. This baseline footprint was calculated for the 12-month period of financial year 2018/19 (capturing seasonal variations in energy use). This footprint provides an initial assessment of the Council's climate impact in a widely used framework.
- 2.6 The Decarbonisation Plan is based on using this data to identify nine transitions. These cover: transport and travel (direct and commissioned); procurement (including goods, services and works); electricity; heat; sequestration; and waste.
- 2.7 Each of these is an area of the Council's operations where action can make a significant contribution towards our ambition of carbon neutrality and delivering a more efficient council. The Decarbonisation Plan identifies for each area, the main sources of emissions and three major challenges in achieving carbon neutrality. Moving forward, the Council will develop a transition pathway towards carbon neutrality in all nine areas and agree a prioritisation for action which delivers the required reduction within the resources available to the Council.
- 2.8 The realisation of the ambition within the Decarbonisation Plan will be delivered through other critical projects including the Strategic Property Review, Depot Review, the future of Silent Valley, the Energy Prospectus, Workplace Transformation and Fleet Review. However, work will also be needed to consider how we procure and commission goods and services and use our significant purchasing power to reduce the carbon impact of service delivery and infrastructure development.
- 2.9 There have been significant changes to our operations due to COVID-19. It is too early at this stage to calculate their full carbon impact and some of these changes may be temporary. However, one area where significant reductions in emissions have been achieved, and can be continued in the future is travel to work (see 6.1 for details). Bringing in technology to enable home working and reduce commuting is an example of how it is possible to substantially reduce emissions without cutting delivery of services to the public, by switching to alternative low carbon systems.
- 2.10 The Council's proposed Decarbonisation Plan providing further details is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

The Regeneration Scrutiny Committee recommended the Plan for approval on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

**Option 1-** That Council approves the Decarbonisation Plan 2020 to 2030.

**Option 2-** That Council does not approve the Decarbonisation Plan 2020 to 2030.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The Decarbonisation Plan will contribute to the Corporate Plan priority of an Efficient Council by identifying opportunities for cost savings from carbon reduction, including invest to save. In particular, there may be opportunities for invest to save projects installing low carbon technology. There may also be potential for income generation through renewable energy schemes. The Decarbonisation Plan will also contribute to Strong & Environmentally Smart Communities, including the development of low carbon infrastructure across the borough.

4.2 The Decarbonisation Plan will be central to the Council's contribution to the Welsh Government ambition of a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. In particular, a long-term plan is required to deliver the low carbon infrastructure necessary to achieve targets for electrification of the council fleet and decarbonisation of heating.

4.3 The Decarbonisation Plan is an important element of the Council providing public leadership on climate change. The Council has also started to develop a borough-wide response to climate change through the Public Service Board (PSB). Partners at the most recent PSB meeting in January agreed to establish a climate change mitigation steering group to develop a Decarbonisation Plan for the borough as a whole. As part of the Well-being Plan objective, 'look after and protect the environment'. The long-term implications of climate change mean that is also central to the PSB's responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. In particular, that in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle the PSB must 'act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

5.1.1 The Welsh Government Low Carbon Action plan identifies that historically, public sector efforts to reduce carbon emissions have been based on delivering improvements to the efficiency of public sector buildings and developing renewables. These are the areas where invest to save projects are currently most viable. However, public sector emissions are far more wide ranging and the development of low carbon infrastructure such as electrification of our fleet and decarbonising heat are likely to require significant investment.

5.1.2 The large majority of public sector carbon emissions are not actually associated with the public sector's direct use of electricity, gas or fuel, but with the procurement of goods and services. Building consideration of carbon into

procurement, and engaging with our major suppliers, will be an important element of the decarbonisation plan that may have cost implications.

5.1.3 The cost of carbon is rising, and will continue to rise if effective climate action is taken on the national and global scale. The Council will be locked-in to these rising energy costs if our infrastructure and service delivery models remain based on fossil fuels. Changes such as developing our own renewable energy could reduce these risks.

5.1.4 Similarly, like many other public and private organisations, the Council holds investments in fossil fuel intensive companies and projects through regional pension schemes. The value of these investments is based on fossil fuel reserves that cannot be used if effective action on climate change is to be taken. Exposure to this 'carbon bubble' is a potential financial (and reputational) risk which will need to be considered as we move toward with the Decarbonisation Plan.

## 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The last 12 months have seen a significant growth in public pressure for climate action, both nationally and internationally. In addition to Welsh Government, a number of local authorities have also declared climate emergencies. There is a risk of reputational damage if the Council does not respond to this public pressure by providing public leadership, or if the Council responds in a way that is perceived as tokenistic and not supported by tangible actions. Conversely, there is an opportunity to build on this public interest and the Council's own engagement with local residents about environmental issues, to capitalise on this increased public engagement.

## 5.3 ***Legal***

The legislative context around climate change is evolving rapidly, with both UK and Welsh government announcing new, more ambitious emissions reductions targets in the last year. The Welsh Government low carbon action plan outlined a number of proposals for local authorities, in addition to the ambition of the Welsh public sector as a whole being carbon neutral by 2030, including:

- All new cars and light goods vehicles in the Public Sector fleet are ultra low emission by 2025, and where practicably possible, all heavy goods vehicles are ultra low emission by 2030.
- Public Sector buildings should be supplied with renewable electricity by 2020, or as soon as contractually able and, where practicably possible, are supplied with low carbon heat by 2030.

New legislation and targets, along with rapidly developing technology, are likely to be major drivers of the Council's climate actions.

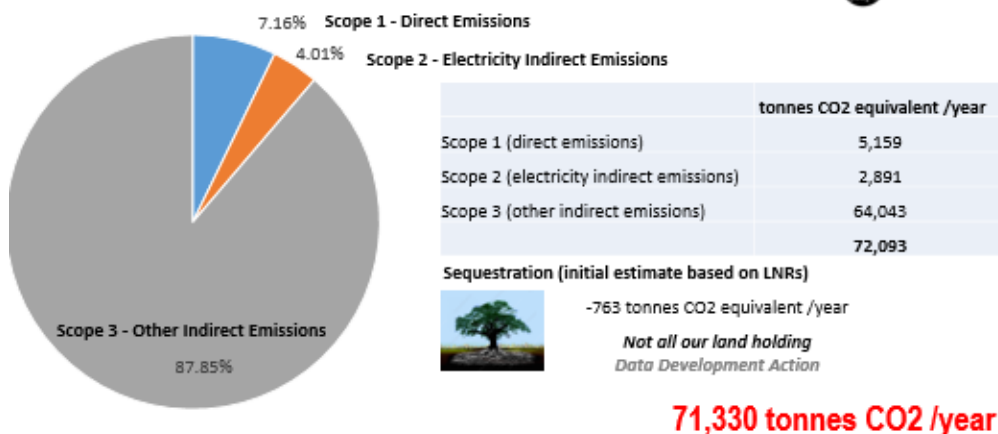
## 5.4 ***Human Resources***

In addition to the need for officers with specialist skills and knowledge to deliver specific low carbon technology projects, the Decarbonisation Plan is also likely to require widespread staff engagement across the organisation in behaviour change as part of a larger transformation of working practises. The plan outlines utilising the Individual, Social and Material (ISM) Tool that it is recommended local authorities use in their climate change planning.

6. **Supporting Evidence**  
 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

There was previously no central performance monitoring of Council's carbon impact. The plan sets out the first estimate of our overall impact and also looks at how this data collection can be improved and expanded in the future. There is also considerable scope for further detailed analysis of the data collected for this plan to identify priority actions.

## Our Carbon Footprint 18/19



## Breakdown of Nine Carbon Transitions

Transition	tCO <sub>2</sub> e annual	% of emissions
<b>Procurement Services</b> – Schools, Social Services, Investments	40,552	62
<b>Procurement Works</b> – Building and Highway Construction and Maintenance	6,816	10
<b>Transport Direct</b> – Our Fleet, Commuting, Staff travel for work	6,193	9
<b>Heating (and Cooling)</b> – Decarbonising our heat, e.g. district heating	4,669	7
<b>Procurement Goods</b> – Buying Clothes, Food, IT, Furniture	4,489	7
<b>Electricity</b> – Renewables, Energy Efficiency	3,112	5
<b>Transport Commissioned</b> – School Transport, Onward Waste, Subsidised Buses	484	1
<b>Sequestration</b> – Woodland, urban trees and peatland	-763	-1
<b>Waste</b> –Municipal Waste Disposal: recycling, incineration, landfill	-7,421	-11

Prior to lockdown approximately 11% of potential commuting journeys to work at the Civic Centre were avoided by staff working from home. Since lockdown

started 80% of staff have been enabled to work from home. Which would represent a potential saving of 1,540 tCO<sub>2e</sub> if continued over an entire year.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The Decarbonisation Plan will help to reduce the risks from climate change to service delivery, as well as identifying opportunities to develop a more resilient council for the public.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

There is potential to build on existing public engagement with environmental issues, including recycling, nature areas and eco councils in schools. The public will also have an important role to play in helping to reduce the carbon impact of services, through the development of behaviour change elements of the Decarbonisation Plan.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

Reducing carbon emissions will require systems transformation both internally to the Council and externally across the borough. The Council will have to be a driving force in providing leadership in borough wide developments such as electric vehicle charging networks and heat decarbonisation.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Addressing increasing revenue costs from rising energy prices and a reliance on fossil fuels. It is important that decarbonisation and whole life cycle costs (both financial and carbon) are considered in all capital spending decisions, so that the Council is not locked into new carbon intensive infrastructure with high long-term running costs.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Council will seek to provide public leadership on climate change in Blaenau Gwent through the PSB and Well-being Plan. Climate change was identified as a common well-being priority across Gwent. Work on regional projects, where public bodies in Gwent face similar challenges and can pool resources, such as EV charging and Fleet Review, are already underway. Procurement is a major element of our carbon impact and many of our suppliers also supply other local public sector organisations, so collaboration will be key to engaging them with cutting their carbon emissions. Including engaging with local partners who deliver services on our behalf such as Aneurin Leisure Trust, SRS and Community Asset Transfers through the Decarbonisation Plan, to reduce the impact of our services

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

Integrating the good work already going on across different service areas in the authority into a single Decarbonisation Plan, to provide an overall strategic direction through the Low Carbon Framework is a key element of this project.

6.8 ***EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

See attached EQIA screening document at Appendix 2 .

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Council will monitor our climate impact on an annual basis, through professional and democratic processes. As part of this reporting process we

will update our carbon footprint annually, however, it is important to note that our carbon footprint is not suitable for use as the sole measure of our progress towards carbon neutrality. Alternative data will be developed to monitor performance in those areas where footprint data is not suitable. We will also seek to integrate these carbon impact assessment methods into standard corporate reporting and performance management.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- *Appendix 1 - Decarbonisation Plan 2020-2030 with Supporting Documents*
- *Appendix 2 - EQIA Screening Document*