

Supplementary paper for Item 5 of the agenda for Scrutiny Committee 14th

October 2020

A Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group was established in 2019 to oversee development of the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy. Each of the Somerset Councils nominated two Members to sit on this group. The group considered the final Strategy at their meeting on the 21st September. Following this, the group has produced a joint statement as detailed below:

Statement on behalf of the Cross-Authority Scrutiny Task and Finish Group for the Climate Emergency

“The Climate Emergency Scrutiny Task and Finish Group gave support, guidance and advice to the cross-Local Authority group of Officers who prepared this Climate Emergency Strategy and its associated Action Plans. The Strategy outlines Somerset’s first steps towards meeting the urgent challenges which the Climate Emergency and Climate Change present.

What is being considered today is the result of a year’s worth of research, analysis, consultation and debate, all of which has informed and enabled the writing of this evidence-based Strategy. Officers from all 5 Authorities worked in collaboration with a host of partner organisations, sector experts and local activists, drawing on their expertise, every one passionate about tackling the effects of the Climate Emergency.

The Strategy is robust and ambitious. While individual Members of the Task and Finish Group may support elements of the Strategy and Action Plan to differing degrees, we all agree that the time for Somerset to take action to minimise our environmental impact is now.

This is a Strategy for the whole of Somerset, not just our 5 Local Authorities. It will take the efforts of every community, business, adult and child in Somerset to commit to the aims of the Strategy if we are to make swift progress towards carbon neutrality, and aid Somerset’s resilience to the impacts of the Climate Emergency.

The analysis of the feedback from our comprehensive consultations over the last year has revealed overwhelming support for the actions and approach being proposed in the Strategy, coupled with a message, that came through loud and clear, that we as local authorities and community leaders must start taking action on climate change as soon as possible, provided that it is effective, communicated and, where possible, done in collaboration with local communities. The adoption of this Strategy would be an important step in the enabling of the coordinated necessary actions that we must all be taking.

As the foreword to the Strategy says, this is the start of the journey. We won’t have included everything that we need to do, or got everything right first time. Policies will change and our understanding of the challenges ahead will increase. We don’t have all the answers yet, but we are committed to taking the necessary actions.

The Task and Finish Group are proud to be associated with this Strategy and recommend to this Committee that it progresses to Full Council for adoption.”

Ends