

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Special Full Council – 26 October 2020

Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Peter Pilkington (Climate Change)

Report Author: Graeme Thompson, Strategy Specialist

1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy (the Somerset-wide Strategy) has been produced in partnership between SWT, Sedgemoor, Mendip and South Somerset District Councils and Somerset County Council together with expert inputs from a number of external bodies. The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a strategic overview of the key issues facing Somerset and the Councils in relation to the climate emergency and our shared ambition to work towards carbon neutrality for the county of Somerset by 2030 and to provide a strategic basis for partnership working going forwards on addressing these issues together, where a shared approach would be appropriate and improve the chances of delivery. The Strategy includes three strategic goals, a number of proposed outcomes relating to nine workstreams/sectors and a high level action plan to guide the direction of travel. The Strategy mentions that each district will produce its own detailed action plan to supplement/complement the strategic one. For SWT, this is the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience (CNCR) Action Plan.
- 1.2 The Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan (the CNCR Action Plan) has been produced as this Council's own response to declaring a Climate Emergency in February 2019 and inclusion of addressing climate change as the Council's number one priority in the Corporate Strategy. The CNCR Action Plan identifies a total of 345 potential actions to progress over the next ten years based on current understandings, but focuses on a Y1 action plan with Y2+ routemaps, with an intention for the plan to remain iterative and to be reviewed on an annual basis, which will evolve as our understanding of what is necessary and possible improves. The CNCR Action Plan sits alongside the Somerset-wide Strategy as the detail for how this Council proposes to address the specific issues, meet the goals and deliver on the outcomes that the Somerset-wide Strategy identifies.
- 1.3 The Council has already committed to working towards carbon neutrality by 2030, and as such, Somerset-wide Strategy and CNCR Action Plan add detail as to what is necessary, the actions and projects to be developed and help to identify the places where we can look to focus partnership working going forwards. The CNCR Action

Plan is already informing internal resourcing and project development. The formal adoption of both the Somerset-wide Strategy and CNCR Action Plan is now being sought to improve corporate and public visibility and inform the 2021 budget setting process.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy is adopted.
- 2.2 The Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan is approved.
- 2.3 A local, multi-agency Climate Emergency Task Force is established to aid delivery and implementation of the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan.
- 2.4 A supplementary “Climate Change Fund” budget of £500,000 is approved within the General Fund 2020/21 Revenue Budget, funded from General Reserves, for the delivery of Somerset West and Taunton priority actions with delegated authority to the Director External Operations and Climate Change / Assistant Director Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management to agree those priority actions in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change. Council also be asked to approve the principle that any unspent balance of this Fund at the end of 2020/21 be carried forward to 2021/22 financial year.

3 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 ‘Climate Change Planning’ previously identified on the Council’s Corporate Risk Register as having a score of ‘9’ (Impact = ‘3’, Probability = ‘3’), with the entry identifying that there is a “perceived lack of planning and action on the climate change agenda...[impacting] the Council’s visibility on a key corporate agenda item”. Collectively, production and adoption of the CNCR Action Plan and the Somerset-wide Strategy essentially resolve this identified concern, and establishment of the Climate Service within the Council and a route for projects to feed into annual budget setting provide a way forwards for the Council to maintain and increase momentum on this issue. The production and adoption of both the Somerset-wide Strategy and CNCR Action Plan mean that the Council has a clear plan of action to mitigate this risk.
- 3.2 The Corporate Risk Register now identifies a risk associated with not achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 as having a score ‘9’ (Impact = ‘3’, Probability = ‘3’). The CNCR Action Plan and Somerset-wide Strategy clearly explain how difficult the target of working towards carbon neutrality by 2030 will be, and how meeting this target is reliant on major actions by others including Government and individuals. The CNCR in particular makes it clear that we have limited resources and finances and will have to prioritise actions accordingly, and that the identified actions are *potential* actions. The documents therefore seek to mitigate some of this risk associated with the already committed to carbon neutrality target, though risk associated with public expectations will remain.
- 3.3 There are risks associated with identifying so many potential actions and taking such a proactive and aspirational approach to action planning, in that it may raise public expectations. Taking a far more limited, and risk-averse approach on this issue would not align with our declaration of a Climate Emergency or inclusion of this as our primary objective of our Corporate Strategy. It would also fail to demonstrate our aspirations and the need for a step change in climate action, which the Council would in turn be at risk of receiving negative PR around.

3.4 Despite the production of the CNCR Action Plan and Somerset-wide Strategy, Climate Change itself remains a major risk, and likely will do even if every identified action is delivered here because the issue is a global one. For this reason the Somerset-wide Strategy contains goals aiming at decarbonisation of the Councils themselves (mitigation); decarbonisation of Somerset as a whole (mitigation); and creating a resilient Somerset ready for projected impacts (adaptation), and the CNCR Action Plan is entitled Carbon Neutrality and Climate *Resilience* and includes actions aiming to ensure the Council and district are resilient to the projected impacts climate change.

4 Background and Full details of the Report

Background

- 4.1 The Shadow Council's climate emergency declaration in February 2019 committed the Council to "*start working towards making Somerset West and Taunton carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account emissions from both production and consumption*". The declaration also referred to the development of a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience (CNCR) Plan. Similar, but subtly different declarations were made by each of the Somerset local authorities. As a result it was proposed to develop a joint county-wide strategy. This was the subject of a report to SWT's Scrutiny and Executive Committees in July 2019. With the development of a Somerset-wide Strategy, the decision was made to focus in our CNCR Plan as an action plan.
- 4.2 At the July 2019 meeting, Scrutiny endorsed the nomination of Councillor David Mansell and Councillor Loretta Whetlor to serve on a Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group (T&F Group) to oversee development of the Somerset-wide Strategy. Scrutiny also noted the governance arrangements including the role of the T&F Group to:
- *Oversee the development of the Somerset-wide Strategy;*
 - *Contribute to and review the scope of the Strategy, and provide recommendations on the content and intended outcomes;*
 - *Engage with relevant stakeholders, e.g. businesses, business groups, the Local Enterprise Partnership, environmental groups, community groups and individuals to provide expertise to contribute to the review of the strategy and provide recommendations to further corporate approaches;*
 - *Provide guidance and advice to the Strategic Management Group; and*
 - *Act as a conduit between the Strategic Management Group and relevant Scrutiny committees.*
- 4.3 A cross-party Climate Change Member Working Group was set up internally at SWT, meeting for the first time in September 2019 to aid development of the CNCR Action Plan. This group has been used as a sounding board and provided ideas and guidance as to the level of ambition and content for the CNCR Action Plan. The group signed off the draft CNCR Action Plan at their last meeting on 30th June 2020. A new group is now being set up to guide delivery and implementation.

Consultation on the Somerset Climate Emergency Framework and the SWT Framework CNCR Plan

- 4.4 In October 2019, the Council's Executive Committee approved both the Somerset Climate Emergency Framework and the SWT Framework CNCR Plan for a first round of public consultation, having been considered by Scrutiny Committee immediately prior to this. This set a level of ambition for our climate action, identified directions of travel and key early tasks, made some early commitments and identified actions we had already recently taken. The announcement of a General Election later that month

led to the postponement of the consultation until after the Election and the Christmas holiday period. Accordingly, consultation on the Somerset Climate Emergency Framework ran from 6th January to 18th March 2020, and consultation on the SWT Framework CNCR Plan ran from 20th January to 2nd March 2020.

- 4.5 Consultation on the Somerset Climate Emergency Framework consisted of a series of four Climate Drop-In Sessions (one in each Council area), two online surveys (one for adults (16+), and one for young people (11-18)), and a Business Summit. The Councils appointed Somerset Climate Action Network (SCAN) and Hope-stone Research to assist them in producing consultation materials, facilitating the Drop-In sessions, and analysing survey responses. A “Report on the public consultation on Somerset Climate and Ecological Emergency” was produced for the Councils by SCAN (see Appendix 3 within the Somerset-wide Strategy – Appendix A to this report). This summarises the assessment and its findings.
- 4.6 To support consultation on the SWT Framework CNCR Plan, the Council held a series of seven roadshow events (jointly held with the Local Plan Issues & Options consultation roadshows) and conducted its own online survey. A Consultation Report (see Appendix 2 to the CNCR Action Plan within Appendix B to this report) has been prepared, summarising the consultation that took place.
- 4.7 A second phase of consultation was proposed to begin in April 2020 for both the Somerset-wide Strategy and the CNCR Action Plan, but this was postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. During this time, a number of the Councils needed to redeploy staff to deal with the pandemic response, and as such development of the Somerset-wide Strategy was temporarily paused. Work on the Somerset-wide Strategy was picked back up in June 2020. At this point, and to avoid further delays, it was decided to continue working to develop the strategy and drop the second phase of consultation. This was due to:
- Now being a number of months behind schedule;
 - Each of the Councils being keen to maintain clarity of essential COVID-related communications over the early Summer period;
 - Consideration that general public may lack likely capacity and interest to respond due to the pandemic and impacts it was having; and
 - Consideration of the fact that the proposals set out in the Somerset Climate Emergency Framework were in the vast majority supported during the initial consultation phase, with the overwhelming message being that the public wanted the Councils to take more urgent action (provided it is “effective, communicated and, where possible, done in collaboration with local communities”).
- 4.8 Despite this, SWT managed to continue resourcing the CNCR Action Plan’s development during this time. This meant that officers had the opportunity to more fully develop the plan, begin to think through prioritisation and resourcing and as such be in a position to move into the delivery phase ahead of the Somerset-wide Strategy being complete and formally signed off / adopted.
- 4.9 During this time, it became clear that there was a major opportunity for the CNCR Action Plan to begin influencing the COVID Economic Recovery Plan. In addition to this, the overwhelming response to both the Somerset-wide and SWT public

consultations was 'stop talking about what you *could* do and asking us what we think, and tell us what you are *going* to do and get on with it'. As a result, and to avoid further delays, it was considered to be more appropriate to take the initiative, continue developing the CNCR Action Plan and ensuring it would fit with the emerging Somerset-wide Strategy than continuing to wait for it to be completed and only then finalising the action plan and beginning to think about resourcing.

The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy

- 4.10 The Somerset-wide Strategy has been uploaded to <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/waste-planning-and-land/climate-emergency/> ready for consideration through each Council's democratic processes this Autumn. It comprises of:
- The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy ('Towards a Climate Resilient Somerset');
 - A Summary Strategy, providing a short, accessible option for the public;
 - A series of 17 appendices covering the following:
 - The five Climate Emergency Declarations;
 - Key climate change terms and definitions;
 - A Consultation Report produced by Somerset Climate Action Network;
 - Information on where to access and find out more about each district's local action plans;
 - A summary of climate change legislation;
 - Sector detailed reports (energy; transport; built environment; business, industry and supply chain; natural environment; farming and food; water; waste and resources; communications);
 - A combined table of Strategy outcomes;
 - A Strategic Action Plan;
 - An analysis of carbon measurement tools produced by Somerset Climate Action Network.
- 4.11 The Somerset-wide Strategy:
- Outlines 3 ambitious goals which set out "what we want to achieve?";
 - Details outcomes and objectives needed to meet these goals "how will Somerset be different as a result of our collective actions?";
 - Explains what actions to take to achieve these outcomes "what we need to do?";
 - Identifies organisations and individuals to lead these actions "who will do what?"; and
 - Provides indicative timescales when these actions need to be delivered "by when?".
- 4.12 The Somerset-wide Strategy demonstrates Somerset's commitment and ambition, and, whilst being led by the Somerset local authorities, requires commitment from every organisation, business, community and resident of Somerset if we are to achieve our goal of a being a climate neutral county by 2030 and build our resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- 4.13 The Somerset-wide Strategy identifies and summarises the strategic context within which the strategy sits, nationally and globally, as well as baselining 2018-based locally produced emissions as published by the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in 2020 (note this is later data than that used in the SWT

CNCR Action Plan which was drafted prior to the data being released). It recognises the difference between production and consumption-based emissions and the fact that more work is required to understand the latter. It also summarises expected local impacts of climate change and potential co-benefits of acting on climate change.

- 4.14 The Somerset-wide Strategy is focused around three strategic goals:
- 1) To decarbonise the Local Authority and wider Public Sector estates and reduce our carbon footprint;
 - 2) Work towards making Somerset a Carbon Neutral county by 2030; and
 - 3) To have a Somerset which is prepared for, and resilient to, the impacts of Climate Change.
- 4.15 Beyond the three goals, the strategy is organised around nine workstreams or key thematic sectors:
- 1) The **Energy** we use, the emissions produced from its use and the types of energy we will look to harness in future;
 - 2) Our **Transport** networks, when and where we travel, and the modes of transport chosen to make these journeys;
 - 3) The **Built Environment**, where and how we live and work, the types of homes we live in, our commercial and industrial buildings and all future developments;
 - 4) Our local economy, specifically our **Industry, Business and Supply Chain**;
 - 5) Our **Natural Environment**, how we can protect it and utilise it to reduce the harmful impacts of climate change;
 - 6) Our **Farming and Food** sectors, what and how we grow, vital to the rural economy of Somerset;
 - 7) Our **Water** resources, how it is managed to minimise the impacts of flood and drought on our residents and landscapes;
 - 8) The management of our **Waste and Resources**; and
 - 9) How we **Communicate and Engage** with our residents to inform and educate the life choices we can make to reduce our impact on the environment both locally, nationally and globally.
- 4.16 Each sector/workstream has been led by a subject matter expert from either within the Somerset local authorities or key partner organisations. They have engaged a wide range of relevant sector and subject-matter experts and stakeholders in researching and prioritising issues and developing strategic responses, outcomes, outputs and actions, as well as worked together across workstreams on cross-cutting issues. The main Somerset-wide Strategy document summarises the sector/workstream findings. Full reports for each sector/workstream can be found in the appendices to the strategy within Appendix A to this report.
- 4.17 Five main challenges to achieving the Somerset-wide Strategy's goals are identified:
- 1) **The local authorities role** – the need to play a leadership role, but also for significant changes in function, policy and powers;
 - 2) **Transport** – the rural and dispersed nature of our area, levels of car use, distances that need to be travelled, and paucity of public transport, as well as the presence of major arterial roads spanning the county;
 - 3) **Low carbon energy** – the abundance of protected landscapes as a constraint to renewable energy installations, and the scale of energy efficiency and low carbon heat retrofit that is necessary to buildings;

- 4) **Funding** – the concern that national funding mechanisms aiming for net zero by 2050, may be out of step with our ambitions to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, and that local authority resources and budgets are limited and stretched already; and
- 5) **Skills, knowledge and innovation** – the lower skill levels of the Somerset population compared to national averages, together with the need to ensure that the right levels of skills and training are available in the right sectors to enable our goals to be achieved.

4.18 In addition to this, the challenge presented by the COVID pandemic and the opportunity for a green recovery are acknowledged.

4.19 A total of 63 outcomes are identified by the strategy. These outcomes are an expression of what is expected to be required within each sector/workstream in order to achieve the three strategic goals. The strategy identifies the partners likely to lead and support in meeting these outcomes, the co-benefits of associated actions, and their timescales.

4.20 The accompanying high level action plan (see appendix 16 of the Somerset-wide Strategy available through the above link) is based around what is understood to be necessary to meet these outcomes. This strategic action plan will continue to evolve and change as actions are completed, new actions are developed or as funding streams become available, policy and legislation changes or as technical drivers or innovative new solutions are implemented.

4.21 Projects within the strategic action plan have been prioritised through an assessment of:

- strategic fit with the Somerset-wide Strategy;
- activities which can be taken forward quickly;
- scale of impact;
- deliverability risk;
- timescales to completion;
- resources and capacity to deliver;
- funding required and available to initiate and enable the activity;
- costs of projects against return on investment (in terms of carbon saved and progress towards achieving our agreed goals and outcomes);
- benefit to Somerset; and
- sustainability.

4.22 The ability of the Somerset authorities to deliver on these actions is entirely dependent on our ability to:

- secure and maintain partnership buy-in and ownership of the Somerset-wide Strategy;
- engage all segments of our Community in contributing; and
- lobby for and secure Government support, national policy change, funding and resources.

4.23 Underpinning the strategic action plan, localised action plans are proposed to be drawn up by each local authority, with detailed project plans developed for each proposed activity to ensure the planned programme of work can be appropriately and efficiently

managed, resources sequenced and delivered. The SWT CNCR Action Plan is this Council's initial response to the need for local action plans to supplement and complement the Somerset-wide Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION – That the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy is adopted.

Delivery

- 4.24 The Somerset-wide Strategy identifies that it will be essential to prioritise actions and project delivery. It proposes further work to develop a Marginal Abatement Cost Curve (MACC) tool (which essentially illustrates the cost effectiveness of different actions by presenting their cost per tonne of CO₂ saved and the total amount of CO₂ that could be saved. MACC assessments are a powerful tool for understanding the best place to put funding in order to deliver carbon savings. It is likely that MACC analysis will influence future iterations of the SWT CNCR Action Plan as well as the evolving strategic action plan for the Somerset-wide Strategy. In the meantime, however, the SWT CNCR Action Plan takes the initiative as explained further on in this report.
- 4.25 The Strategy highlights a number of issues where a pan-Somerset, wider than single authority or multi-agency approach is required or would otherwise be beneficial. The strategy also notes that as local authorities we have limited reach in terms of our powers and influence. For this reason the engagement and commitment of every organisation, business, community and resident of Somerset is required. The Somerset-wide Strategy sets out that we will collectively work with communities, communicate effectively with them, and lobby Government to enable this.
- 4.26 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be developed at a programme level to monitor actions and review progress. Progress will subsequently be reviewed and reported to each local authority annually.
- 4.27 The Somerset-wide Strategy recognises the need to set up strong governance processes to ensure delivery of the actions identified. It states that a steering group, committee or task force, combining Officers and Members from across the Local Authorities, and representatives from key organisations will be needed to oversee the delivery of these actions. They will also advise on future courses of action, agree funding priorities and help communicate the successes and challenges that Somerset faces as we aim for a carbon neutral County by 2030. Discussion about the format and detail of these Governance arrangements are in progress, and a verbal update will be provided at Full Council, if possible.
- 4.28 Exmoor National Park Authority is supportive of the Strategy, and is working with relevant thematic groups and partners to identify where they can work together on actions to deliver the shared ambitions of their climate response.

Views of the Joint Scrutiny Task & Finish Group and approval process

- 4.29 As noted earlier, a Joint Scrutiny Task & Finish (T&F) Group was set up in 2019 to oversee development of the Somerset-wide Strategy. The T&F Group has met on six occasions between September 2019 and September 2020, to discuss scope; guiding principles; overall and workstream progress reports; the Somerset Climate Emergency Framework document and consultation; goals and outcomes; take part in workstream-based breakout sessions; and discuss the draft Somerset-wide Strategy; and governance timetables. At each meeting, the T&F Group have had an opportunity to

provide input, and overseen the development of the Somerset-wide Strategy. The draft Somerset-wide Strategy was first presented to the T&F group at a meeting on 13th August 2020 and subsequently revised to take account of comments made by the group and officers. At their meeting on 21st September 2020, the T&F Group considered the final Strategy. The T&F Group has produced a joint statement as detailed below:

“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 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”

- 4.30 In separate meetings on 25th September 2020 and 28th September 2020, the Leaders and Chief Executives Group and Joint Cabinet/Portfolio Holders Group respectively approved the Somerset-wide Strategy.

- 4.31 The Somerset-wide Strategy is now being taken through each of the Somerset Councils' democratic pathways along the following timescales (note dates were correct at the time of writing, but each Council's website should be checked for updates). The intention is for the Somerset-wide Strategy to have been adopted by each of the Councils by mid-November 2020.

	SWT	SDC	MDC	SSDC	SCC
Scrutiny	14 th Oct	16th Nov	19th Oct	3rd Nov	14th Oct
Executive / Cabinet	20 st Oct	25th Nov	2nd Nov	5th Nov	9th Nov
Full Council	26 th Oct	25th Nov	9 th Nov	19th Nov	18th Nov

Conclusion

- 4.32 The Somerset-wide Strategy has been produced jointly by the Somerset local authorities as a joint strategic response to each Council's Climate Emergency Declaration. It sets three strategic goals, provides the strategic context, evidence and exploration of issues associated with delivery against those goals and identifies the outcomes needed to work towards carbon neutrality as well as a strategic action plan. The strategy complements the SWT CNCR Action Plan. The Somerset-wide Strategy should be adopted by the Council as corporate strategy to guide project development and delivery and inform budget setting processes and as a means to engaging with our communities, businesses and partners on how we are working towards our carbon neutrality target.

The CNCR Action Plan

- 4.33 The CNCR Action Plan has been uploaded to <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/climate-emergency/> ready for consideration through the Council's democratic processes this Autumn. It comprises of:
- The Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan main document;
 - An Indicative Action Plan to 2030 (Appendix 1);
 - A Consultation Report (Appendix 2);
 - An Assessment of Corporate Emissions and Environmental Impact (the Council's carbon footprint) (Appendix 3); and
 - The Tyndall Centre report for Somerset West and Taunton (Appendix 4).
- 4.34 The CNCR Action Plan broadly aligns with the direction of travel that the Somerset-wide Strategy is taking, including the strategic goals and consideration of the workstream/sector outcomes and high level strategic action plans. It then deliberately focuses in on specific proposed actions and the role the Council needs to play in delivering these (deliver, enable, support, lobby), and leaves the strategic context and overall justification for this to the Somerset-wide Strategy.
- 4.35 The CNCR Action Plan is proposed to be a "live", iterative document, subject to annual review, which will evolve as our understanding of what is necessary and possible improves. We do not have all of the answers yet as to what action and activity will be required to take us to Carbon Neutrality and a Climate Resilient future, neither have we fully formed and costed plans. The plan is presented as a Year 1 Action Plan, with Year 2+ routemaps.

RECOMMENDATION – That the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan is approved.

Baseline and emissions reduction pathways

- 4.36 Data published by the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in 2019, shows that in 2017, Somerset West and Taunton district produced a gross total of 813.4 ktCO₂. This gross total has reduced by 31% since 2005. It should be noted that 2018-based data was recently published by BEIS, but this was after the CNCR Action Plan had been drafted, and other data (including that from SCATTER below) has not been updated to the same basis. Therefore a view was taken that it is a point in time and better to show consistent data for comparison. Future reviews and iterations will monitor and update this data.
- 4.37 However, this annually reported figure only covers carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and does not include all Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. It also only focuses on emissions produced within the district and our “share” of nationally produced emissions (e.g. from grid electricity consumption). The goods and services which we consume here are often produced elsewhere, and vice versa. Emissions relating to these supply and value chains are particularly important to recognise as our behaviours drive these emissions even if we don’t produce them directly ourselves. The SCATTER tool estimates that total GHG emissions arising from activities within Somerset West and Taunton in 2017 amounted to 1,232.9 ktCO₂e (all GHGs measured in CO₂ equivalent). Further work will be required to fully understand the extent of consumption-based emissions.
- 4.38 Locally, our CO₂ emissions produced in the district come primarily from transport (50.9%), followed by domestic (26.1%) and then industry and commercial (23.1%). This reflects the fact that the district is primarily rural in nature (requiring greater travel and personal car usage); contains the M5 motorway (contributing 139 ktCO₂ or 17.2% of the area’s CO₂ emissions on its own); and has relatively little heavy industry. The district’s Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) emissions (-48.8kt CO₂) show that the district captures more CO₂ than it emits in this sector.
- 4.39 An Assessment of Corporate Emissions and Environmental Impacts (carbon footprinting report) has been conducted by the Centre for Energy and the Environment at the University of Exeter (see Appendix 3 to the CNCR Action Plan within Appendix B to this report). This shows that the Council’s own GHG emissions amount to 36.3 ktCO₂e (which equates to around 2.9% of district-wide GHG emissions).
- 4.40 The CNCR Action Plan includes a series of indicative potential emissions reduction pathways modelled on different levels of ambition, including:
- Aligned to the area’s “fair contribution” towards achieving the UK’s commitments under the Paris Agreement;
 - Aligned to the Committee on Climate Change (CCC)’s Net Zero scenario (2050);
 - Pulling the CCC’s Net Zero scenario forward to 2030; and
 - Two pathways created by using maximum and minimum levels of ambition available in the SCATTER pathways tool (see <https://scattercities.com/>).
- 4.41 The Council has already committed to working towards carbon neutrality for the Council and the district as a whole by 2030. How we get there and when carbon neutrality can actually be achieved by depends on the scale and pace of radical action.

Members should be under no illusions that meeting the target of carbon neutrality by 2030 will be extremely difficult and we have to be honest that it relies heavily on action beyond our own control, but it is important that we do everything we can within our power to work towards achieving it.

- 4.42 We must be clear, that the 2030 target we committed to working towards through our Climate Emergency Declaration is *not* informed by detailed evidence of what can be achieved locally. The indicative pathways modelling shows how big a task we have to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Without significant changes in wider society and national Government regulation, policy, funding and action, (things beyond our immediate control) achieving this target will be near impossible. In all of the cases, there are residual emissions remaining in 2030, which, in order to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, we would need to offset. Offsetting requires significant sums of money to be spent contributing towards emissions reduction elsewhere to make up for the fact that we cannot achieve it here. Our progress will be tracked annually and decisions about how this remainder is dealt with will need to be made further down the line. However, it is likely that it would make far more sense to put this money into further emissions reduction projects locally, and accept that carbon neutrality may be beyond 2030 (though working towards making it as close to 2030 as possible), than paying out simply to achieve the target by an arbitrarily set date.
- 4.43 At this stage, the carbon impact of delivering the actions contained within the CNCR Action Plan have not been fully quantified. This is a conscious decision to focus on implementation of the plan and delivery of the actions within it. This means that we cannot yet identify the specific pathway that all of the actions contained within the plan would result in. Despite this, we know that the actions being proposed are based on assessment of the issues, opportunities and what the Committee on Climate Change and others deem to be necessary to reach carbon neutrality, and we are frontloading delivery of these actions wherever possible so that we can do everything within our sphere of influence to push us towards the Paris-aligned trajectory and compliance with our cumulative CO₂ budgets.

The action plan

- 4.44 The CNCR Action Plan main document focuses on actions that will be carried out either in whole or at least are considered possible to commence within the next 12 months from adoption. In adopting the CNCR Action Plan, the Council will commit to building business cases as necessary and working towards delivery of the actions identified within the Year 1 Action Plan. It also identifies routemaps for key issues. A detailed indicative action plan to 2030 (see Appendix 1 to the CNCR Action Plan within Appendix B to this report) identifies a long-list of *potential* actions in the pipeline over the next ten years. However, the details of these and other actions beyond Year 1 are less well developed and less certain. These potential actions are defined as being
- “Immediate” (actions that could be carried out either in whole or may commence within the next 12 months and as such form part of the Year 1 Action Plan);
 - “Short term” (2-3 years);
 - “Medium term” (4-6 years); and
 - “Long term” (7-10 years).

- 4.45 Some of the actions will continue over multiple years. There will be actions required beyond 2030, but these are considered to be out of scope. The routemaps give an indication of the direction of travel beyond 2030 for some issues.
- 4.46 The actions identified within the CNCR Action Plan have been developed and informed by a number of different sources including the CCC's Net Zero report, consultation responses, work taking place within the Somerset-wide Strategy workstreams, the Council's carbon footprinting report, and other toolkits etc.
- 4.47 After initially identifying potential actions and aligning them roughly to the four timescales above, they were then prioritised based on a high level assumption of the impacts that might arise from delivery of the action; what further actions might an action lead to; anticipated co-benefits; whether there could likely be deliverable outputs within 12 months; general ability to resource delivery; and the ability to carry out an action in the light of the current COVID-19 crisis.
- 4.48 Actions identified as being "Immediate" were then further prioritised by scoring against a matrix of the broad anticipated impact, relevance to development of and delivery against the COVID Economic Recovery Plan and likely public visibility.
- 4.49 The Council's work will be guided by the "Immediate" actions identified within the Year 1 Action Plan. However, we have to be realistic and understand that with staff and financial resources stretched, we have to prioritise. This may mean that some things identified as being "Immediate" (and therefore considered possible to be begun within 12 months), could well slip beyond that timeframe. The prioritisation should help ensure that the actions that we do carry out are of the most importance. Beyond this, upon further investigation, some actions may be considered to be unnecessary or not possible.

Focus on...sections

- 4.50 The CNCR Action Plan is presented as a series of "Focus on..." sections. This is deliberate to make the plan more accessible and digestible by the public, and to pull out some of the key actions, together with a short justification. Some of these sections contain an indicative routemap for beyond Year 1, summarising relevant potential actions for the future and giving an indication of the direction of travel for key issues.
- 4.51 The CNCR Action Plan includes "Focus on..." sections for the following topics:
- District-wide retrofit;
 - New build and retrofit of existing Council housing;
 - Renewable energy;
 - Electric Vehicles;
 - Taunton P&R and town centre parking;
 - Active travel;
 - Wellington Station;
 - Digital Connectivity;
 - Growing a carbon neutral local economy;
 - Green and Blue Infrastructure;
 - Tree planting;
 - Wildflower meadows and open space management;
 - Coastal change management;

- Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvement Scheme;
- Local Plan Review.

Implementation

- 4.52 The CNCR Action Plan has been developed by officers from the strategy, programme management and latterly climate change teams in conjunction with the Climate Change Member Working Group. It has built delivery and implementation as well as monitoring and annual review into its preparation.
- 4.53 Through the recent internal restructuring, the Council has made climate change more visible and created greater senior leadership accountability through the appointment of a Director for External Operations and Climate Change, and an Assistant Director for Climate Change and Assets. The CNCR Action Plan has now passed to the Climate Change service for implementation and officers are progressing with a number of actions already. This should enable the Council to step into delivery mode relatively easily.
- 4.54 However, the CNCR Action Plan's development has needed to rely on assumptions that may need to be revisited as the full scale of projects and actions becomes clearer. In addition, delivery is also premised on an assumption that certain key additional officer roles (identified within the Plan) can be filled with appropriate candidates. The Action Plan also assumes that COVID-19 lockdown and social distancing constraints continue to be lifted and relaxed and that there are no major relapses.
- 4.55 Delivery of the CNCR Action Plan relies on securing buy-in from our communities, businesses, public and private sector partners, and successful lobbying of Government and its agencies. Locally, a key step here will be to set up a multi-agency Climate Emergency Task Force consisting of key organisational and community-based partners. This will become a forum for open dialogue focused on knowledge and resource sharing, opportunity identification, fund raising, engagement, devolution and delegation of tasks/actions and ultimately ensuring collective district-wide action is coherent and making an impact. The details of this group are still being worked up, and links across with any Somerset-wide governance arrangements better understood. A verbal update will be given at Full Council, if possible.
- RECOMMENDATION – That a local, multi-agency Climate Emergency Task Force is established to aid delivery and implementation of the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan.*
- 4.56 Financing the delivery of actions will be a major hurdle to be overcome. Not everything identified within the Year 1 actions is funded yet, and beyond Year 1, very little is funded at present. Over the coming year, the Council will work to explore different funding mechanisms, opportunities and investments to help support delivery of this Action Plan and future iterations.
- 4.57 Annual progress review reports will be made to Full Council as part of the Council's Performance reporting framework in Q2 in order to align with budget setting processes for the following year.

Conclusion

- 4.58 The CNCR Action Plan has been produced in response to the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration and identification of climate change as the primary objective of the Council's Corporate Strategy. It provides the detailed actions required to work towards carbon neutrality and to meet the goals and deliver the outcomes set out in the Somerset-wide Strategy. It focuses on year one, prioritises these actions and sets a routemap for future years. The Plan should be adopted by the Council as corporate strategy to guide project development and delivery and inform budget setting processes and as a means to engaging with our communities, businesses and partners on how we are working towards our carbon neutrality target.
- 4.59 A local, multi-agency Climate Emergency Task Force is proposed to be established to aid delivery and implementation.
- 4.60 This report recommends that the Council create a one off budget of £500k to support the delivery of priority actions. These will be items in the 'low' to 'medium' costs brackets in order to maximise delivery opportunities and continue our journey to 'act now'. The Council's CNCR plan is designed to be iterative and flexible to changing circumstances and improving knowledge and understanding of what is necessary and possible. Therefore, whilst these items will be guided by the CNCR actions, they might include other emerging opportunities that have a carbon benefit or climate resilience theme. The actions that will be progressed will be agreed by the Director External Operations and Climate Change / Assistant Director Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change.

RECOMMENDATION - A supplementary "Climate Change Fund" budget of £500,000 is approved within the General Fund 2020/21 Revenue Budget, funded from General Reserves, for the delivery of Somerset West and Taunton priority actions with delegated authority to the Director External Operations and Climate Change / Assistant Director Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management to agree those priority actions in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change. Council also be asked to approve the principle that any unspent balance of this Fund at the end of 2020/21 be carried forward to 2021/22 financial year.

5 Links to Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 Addressing climate change is identified as the Council's primary objective in the Corporate Strategy. The Annual Plan for 2020/21 refers to the approval of a CNCR Action Plan as being key to this. The Somerset-wide Strategy provides the strategic context for the CNCR Action Plan. The Somerset-wide Strategy and the CNCR Action Plan both pick up on and will influence delivery against many of the other objectives across all four strategic themes of the Corporate Strategy. The establishment of a local Climate Emergency Task Force fits appropriately with the strategic outcome to be "a Council which informs and engages openly with our stakeholders".

6 Finance / Resource Implications

- 6.1 High level assumptions of potential financial costs has been factored into preparation of the CNCR Action Plan, which identifies actions as Low (£0-£20k), Medium (£20k-£1M), High (£1M+). However more detailed work is required to understand specific

costs of individual actions, and detailed costs are not yet known for every action that has been identified. Broad cost assumptions have also been made in the strategic action plan to the Somerset-wide Strategy where possible. Whilst the delivery of every identified action would clearly have significant financial implications, the commitment to working towards carbon neutrality has already been made through the Climate Emergency Declaration and the Corporate Strategy. A range of actions have been identified that will require funding to progress and each is to be considered on its own merit and with an appropriate business case.

- 6.2 Priority actions will be considered by the service planning and, where appropriate, the budget setting process over the coming months. Annual reviews of the CNCR Action Plan are intended to be aligned to budget setting processes.
- 6.3 Whilst it will be imperative to think differently and seek additional external funding beyond what the Council is able to provide in order to deliver on its targets, an initial budget of £500k is requested to support the delivery of a range of priority actions. This will be driven by, but not limited to, items included in the Action Plan. It is proposed to fund this initial budget as a one-off allocation in 2020/21 through an allocation from General Reserves. If the budget is approved, but not fully spent by the end of the financial year it is recommended that the residual balance is carried forward to 2021/22 financial year to enable continuity of plans and actions. The budget would be allocated within the External Operations Revenue Budget, and could provide funding for revenue expenditure, and revenue contributions to capital schemes where agreed actions result in the creation of capital assets.
- 6.4 A review of wider financing options is an important identified action within the CNCR Action Plan.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct detailed legal implications associated with the report, the Somerset-wide Strategy or the CNCR Action Plan. Individual actions may have legal implications associated with their delivery, though at this stage it is not possible to identify exactly what these might be. Accordingly these will need to be considered in more detail as projects are developed. The strategy and plan are not produced in pursuit of formal statutory requirements, and therefore there are no mandatory regulatory or legislative legal requirements which apply to their production, scope or publication to comply with. An SEA/HRA Screening Report and Equalities Impact Assessment have been produced as part of a process to support the CNCR Action Plan (see Appendices C and D respectively) in exploring the relationship of the Plan with certain pieces of legislation.

8 Climate and Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 The Somerset-wide Strategy and CNCR Action Plan are intended to directly lead to carbon reductions and improved resilience of our Council and communities to the projected impacts of climate change. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report has been produced to accompany the CNCR Action Plan (see Appendix C). The Consultation Bodies have been consulted in the production of this Screening Assessment, which identifies that full SEA and HRA are not required.

9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

9.1 No safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications are envisaged.

10 Equality and Diversity Implications

10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced to accompany the CNCR Action Plan (see Appendix D). Officers within the Council with an overview of the Equalities function, who have experience of identifying impacts on those with protected characteristics have been consulted for this initial identification of potential impacts. The assessment identifies at a high level where there is potential for negative, neutral and positive outcomes as a result of the actions identified depending on the detail of actions as projects develop, but at this stage it is difficult to understand specific impacts and no significant negative impacts are identified. Generally, actions were expected to have broadly positive outcomes, but would require further assessment and wider external consultation in relation to delivery plans of some of the actions within the CNCR Action Plan where an individual or group would see or experience a direct physical change as a result of an action.

10.2 An EqIA has also been produced to support the Somerset-wide Strategy (see Appendix E). Officers within Somerset County Council with an overview of the Equalities function, who have experience of identifying impacts on those with protected characteristics have been consulted for this initial identification of potential impacts. As with the assessment for the CNCR, the assessment identifies at a high level where there is potential for negative, neutral and positive outcomes as a result of the actions identified depending on the detail of actions as projects develop, but at this stage it is difficult to understand specific impacts. Actions have been identified where potentially negative impacts are considered possible.

11 Social Value Implications

11.1 The Somerset-wide Strategy and CNCR Action Plan should act at a high level so as to influence any consideration of social value within future procurements and decisions, though it does not explicitly state how the plan, its directions of travel, or any specific projects arising from it should be considered in relation to social value. Both the strategy and the plan refer to co-benefits of action (secondary or ancillary benefits of an action that are also a relevant reason for that action in their own right. Many actions to mitigate and adapt to the climate emergency will have co-benefits such as improving health and wellbeing, improving air quality and building biodiversity), and these have influenced the development of the CNCR Action Plan and prioritisation of actions within particularly. Therefore consideration of social value underpins the Somerset-wide Strategy and CNCR Action Plan.

12 Partnership Implications

12.1 The Somerset-wide Strategy is the direct result of partnership working both between the Somerset local authorities and with external bodies with specific expertise. The CNCR Action Plan draws on this partnership working. Delivery of a number of actions identified will require close partnership working between the Somerset local authorities and other public and private sector groups including through the Local Nature Partnership, Local Enterprise Partnership and Somerset Rivers Authority amongst others. A local multi-agency Climate Emergency Task Force is proposed to be established to help improve partnership working towards delivery and implementation.

13 Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 13.1 Health and Wellbeing is a key co-benefit of many actions identified within both the Somerset-wide Strategy and the CNCR Action Plan including those aimed at increasing levels of active travel, delivering green and blue infrastructure, and proliferating electric vehicles. Public Health is a common thread linking through the Somerset-wide Strategy. Detailed implications will be considered on a case-by-case basis as business cases projects are developed and implemented.

14 Asset Management Implications

- 14.1 The Somerset-wide Strategy includes a number of references to optimising and utilising Council owned/managed assets in general including owned buildings retained social housing stock and land holdings in particular. The CNCR Action Plan includes a number of actions relating to Council owned/managed assets in general including retained social housing stock, offices, leisure centres, land holdings and investments, as well as some actions relating to specific assets. The Corporate Strategy includes an objective to “ensure our land and property assets support the achievement of the council’s objectives”, and both the strategy and the plan actively promote this approach in relation to renewable energy, electric vehicles, energy efficiency, tree planting and wildflower meadows amongst others.

15 Data Protection Implications

- 15.1 Consultations on both the Somerset Climate Emergency Framework and the SWT Framework CNCR Plan were carried out in compliance with and with due regard to the GDPR. The Somerset-wide Strategy, CNCR Action Plan and particularly the “Report on the public consultation on Somerset Climate and Ecological Emergency” (see appendix 3 to the Somerset-wide Strategy within Appendix A to this report) and the SWT Consultation Report (see Appendix 2 to the CNCR Action Plan within Appendix B to this report) include only aggregated and un-attributed responses and no personal data.

16 Consultation Implications

- 16.1 A “Report on the public consultation on Somerset Climate and Ecological Emergency” details consultation that took place on the Somerset Climate Emergency Framework (see appendix 3 to the Somerset-wide Strategy within Appendix A to this report) and the SWT Consultation Report (see Appendix 2 to the CNCR Action Plan within Appendix B to this report) details consultation that took place on the SWT Framework CNCR Plan. Additional consultation may be required or felt appropriate with regards to specific actions in due course as business cases and projects are developed.

17 Scrutiny Comments / Recommendations

- 17.1 Scrutiny Committee recommend to the Executive that:

- 1) The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy progresses to Council for adoption.
- 2) The Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan is approved.
- 3) A local, multi-agency Climate Emergency Task Force is established to aid delivery and implementation of the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan.
- 4) A recommendation is made to Full Council that a supplementary “Climate Change Fund” budget of £500,000 is approved within the General Fund 2020/21 Revenue Budget, funded from General Reserves, for the delivery of Somerset West and

Taunton priority actions with delegated authority to the Director External Operations and Climate Change / Assistant Director Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management to agree those priority actions in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change. Council also be asked to approve the principle that any unspent balance of this Fund at the end of 2020/21 be carried forward to 2021/22 financial year.

- 5) The Committee request that the report to full council gives more details for proposals on the groups to take forward the strategy and action plan, including on member involvement, or that these details are brought back to a future Scrutiny meeting before they are finalised.
- 6) £50k of £500k Climate Change fund (referred to in 2.4) allocated for tree planting.

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny – Yes**
- **Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – Yes**

Reporting Frequency: **Annually**

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy. Main document appended, all documents (including Summary Strategy and associated appendices 1-17), available at https://www.somerset.gov.uk/waste-planning-and-land/climate-emergency/
Appendix B	SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan. Main document appended, all documents (including associated appendices 1-4), available at https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/climate-emergency/
Appendix C	SEA/HRA Screening Report of the CNCR Action Plan
Appendix D	Equality Impact Assessment of the CNCR Action Plan
Appendix E	Equality Impact Assessment of the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy

Contact Officers

Name	Graeme Thompson
Direct Dial	07768034787
Email	G.Thompson@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk
Name	Chris Hall
Direct Dial	01823 217578
Email	C.Hall@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk
Name	Sue Tomlinson
Direct Dial	01823 218762
Email	S.Tomlinson@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk