

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Executive Committee – 23rd October 2019

Somerset Climate Emergency Framework and SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Cllr Peter Pilkington

Report Author: Graeme Thompson, Strategy Specialist

1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Members about the emergence of a framework for developing the county-wide Climate Emergency Strategy and a framework for SWT's own Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan, to approve these framework documents for public consultation over November 2019 – January 2020 and endorse proposed arrangements for approval of future draft documents.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the comments of Scrutiny Committee and the Climate Change Member Working Group included in the appended minutes of each meeting.
- 2.2 To note the timeline for delivery of both documents, and high level comments in relation to funding and resources going forward.
- 2.3 To endorse the Draft SWT Framework as a driver for stakeholder engagement and public consultation activities over November 2019 – January 2020..
- 2.4 To delegate authority to agree and endorse the future Draft SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan due in early Spring 2020 to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change (Cllr Peter Pilkington) in consultation with the Climate Change Member Working Group, noting that the final draft strategy will come to Executive and Full Council for approval.
- 2.5 To endorse the Draft Somerset-wide Framework as a driver for stakeholder engagement and public consultation activities subject to potential amendments to be discussed with the Joint Task and Finish Group and agreed by the Joint Cabinet / Portfolio Holders Group, in line with the agreed governance arrangements.
- 2.6 To delegate authority to agree and endorse the future Draft Somerset-wide Strategy due in early Spring 2020 to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change (Cllr Peter Pilkington) in consultation with the Joint Task and Finish Group, noting that the final strategy will come to Executive and Full Council for approval.

3 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 The climate emergency is a major existential risk for human-kind and our planet. Risks are both global and local. The Framework documents propose a direction of travel for us to take in preparing a strategy and action plan to mitigate and adapt to this and ultimately deliver against our targets of carbon neutrality and climate resilience.
- 3.2 There are risks associated with over-promising and under-delivering – in terms of timescales for Strategy and Plan production, in delivery, and in target achievability. By trying to move too quickly in terms of strategy/plan production there is a risk of missing out on important issues including secondary/unintended consequences and potential co-benefits of action. The framework tries to highlight the importance of coherent strategy/plan production in this regard, and also the importance of wider community buy-in and lobbying of Government to take relevant actions to help us achieve our targets.
- 3.3 Equally, there are risks associated with over-strategising and delaying action – the Draft SWT Framework takes account of this and now includes a section detailing immediate actions and commitments that we can be getting on with alongside strategy and action plan production.
- 3.4 Failure to resolve to note / endorse / delegate in line with the above recommendations will result in delays to the timeline for delivery of the documents. Specifically in relation to the Somerset-wide document, this may cause particular issues with partner authorities on agreeing a co-ordinated way forwards.

4 Background and Full details of the Report

Background

- 4.1 In 2019 the five Somerset Local Authorities recognised a climate emergency and agreed to collaborate in producing a joint Climate Emergency Strategy. Whilst each declaration is slightly different, all aspire to achieving carbon neutrality in their own operations and to work towards achieving this across the geography of their administrative area.
- 4.2 At the same time, SWT committed to producing a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan. The [report to Scrutiny Committee in July this year](#) explained the relationship between the county-wide and SWT-specific work and the Governance arrangements being set up.

Draft Somerset Climate Emergency Framework

- 4.3 A group of officers representing Somerset County Council, the four district authorities, Exmoor National Park Authority is guiding and shaping the development of the County-wide framework within which the detailed investigation needed will be undertaken. This group – the Strategic Management Group - will have a critical overseeing role in shaping the desired outcomes that emanate from that work. SWT's representation on that group is Graeme Thompson, Strategy Specialist.
- 4.4 Feeding into the Strategic Management Group will be the detailed work undertaken by operational experts and stakeholders within nine work streams:
 - Built Environment
 - Natural Environment

- Energy
- Farming and Food
- Industry, Business and Supply Chain
- Transport
- Waste and Resource Management
- Flood water and adaptation
- Communications and Engagement

- 4.5 Each of these work streams is working to a detailed brief and has a nominated lead. They will be researching and prioritising key issues, identifying possible actions to mitigate and understanding the full life cycle of decisions to implement these actions.
- 4.6 SWT has representation on all of these work streams, where we are able to support with appropriate subject-matter expertise and ensure two-way dialogue between workstream development across the county and in relation to our own Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan.
- 4.7 The work of officers is overseen by a group of portfolio holders from across the districts, which includes Cllr Peter Pilkington, and by the Leaders and CEOs, with Brendan Cleere and Michele Cusack (SCC) acting as the conduit between these groups. The work of all groups is scrutinised by a Joint Task and Finish Group; SWT’s representation on that group is through Cllrs Dave Mansell and Loretta Whetlor.
- 4.8 Members are asked to note the proposed timings for delivery of the Climate Emergency Strategy, which includes provision for consultation during November and December 2019.

Date	Stage
Sept 2019	Framework Strategy through joint T&F, Leaders & CEOs, Cabinet Members Group
Oct-Nov 2019	Framework Strategy through individual Council Scrutiny and Cabinets / Executive Committees
Nov 2019 - Jan 2020	Consult on Framework Strategy to include Climate “Summits” in December 2019
Feb 2020	Draft Strategy and action plan through joint T&F, Leaders & CEOs, Cabinet Members Group
Feb-Mar 2020	Consult on Draft Strategy and action plan
Apr 2020	Final Strategy and action plan through joint T&F, Leaders & CEOs, Cabinet Members Group
May-Jun 2020	Final Strategy and action plan through individual Council Scrutiny and Cabinets / Executive Committees
July 2020	Final Strategy and action plan to full Councils for adoption

- 4.9 Consultation activities are in the early stages of development, but are expected to include an online consultation aimed at secondary school-aged children 11-18 years, preceded by school visits to encourage participation. They will also include an online consultation aimed at all residents, communities and businesses in Somerset and a series of Summits, one per district, which will take the form of a full day, face-to-face consultation event, open to all.
- 4.10 The Draft Somerset-wide Framework was considered by SWT’s Scrutiny Committee

on 9th October 2019. A number of members identified concerns in relation to specific points within the document. These points have been raised with the Strategic Management Group and will be discussed with the Joint Task and Finish Group on 22nd October 2019 alongside points raised at other authorities. The Framework will then be amended as appropriate taking account of these discussions and then be circulated for agreement by the Joint Cabinet / Portfolio Holders Group in consultation with the Chair of the Task and Finish Group.

Draft SWT Framework Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan

- 4.11 A Draft of SWT's own Framework Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan has also been produced alongside the Draft Somerset Climate Emergency Framework. Its purpose is to spark a conversation about how we will (collectively as a community) look to develop and ultimately deliver our district's action plan. It has been prepared to have clear synergies with the county-wide framework, building on the workstreams and key themes identified within, to identify directions of travel and key early tasks.
- 4.12 At this stage the Draft Framework is quite deliberately not getting into too much detail. This means we are able to better engage with our communities on the issues at hand, and avoid making rash decisions on action without adequately thinking through the secondary and unintended consequences and potential co-benefits that might be possible. Having said this, and in response to comments raised by the Climate Change Member Working Group (minutes attached) and Scrutiny Committee (draft minutes can be circulated ahead of Executive), the Framework has been strengthened to include an up-front list of commitments to immediate action that can reasonably be taking place alongside production of the strategy and action plan. The SWT Framework and subsequent Plan will be an iterative, "live" document that will need to evolve as actions and projects develop and our understanding of issues and risks improves.
- 4.13 The Framework sets a level of ambition but does not commit the Council to deliver on any specific task or to any specific actions at present, beyond those identified near the front of the document. It does, however, give an idea of where we think things need to head and some ideas about early tasks that might be necessary to get things started. Some of these tasks will be for us as a Council to take forward, some might be for others. Importantly, the Framework makes it clear that success in delivering on our carbon neutrality and climate resilience targets is dependent on garnering wider public and partner support and ownership of the Plan and actions/projects arising. The Council cannot, should not and will not be able to be responsible for everything, but will look to deliver, support and enable a range of actions as a facilitator.
- 4.14 In order to develop the Framework, the Council's Climate Change Programme Board (consisting of Brendan Cleere as Head of Function / Senior Responsible Officer, Erica Lake as PMO, Robert Downes as Programme Manager and Graeme Thompson as Strategy Specialist) has enlisted the support of key officers with relevant expertise around the Council to act as workstream leads. These workstream leads have played a vital part in developing thoughts around each of the workstreams to feed into this Framework. These workstream leads will act as the main officer-level conduit between the county-wide workstream groups and our own workstream action plan and project development.
- 4.15 The Draft Framework document has been considered by both the Climate Change Member Working Group and Scrutiny Committee. It has subsequently been amended and the draft attached for endorsement by Executive Committee takes account of relevant and appropriate comments by the Working Group and Scrutiny. The Working

Group will continue to play a key role in shaping the action plans and projects for the Draft Strategy and Plan.

- 4.16 If any further non-substantive amendments arise through discussion at Executive Committee or minor textual or visual issues are identified otherwise ahead of publication for consultation, then we will work on the assumption that such minor amendments can be made by officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder. This includes fleshing out and including the consultation details in the “What’s next?” section of the document.
- 4.17 Once the Framework has been endorsed by Executive Committee, we will embark on a period of engagement and consultation centred around themes identified in Framework document. This may include business and community roadshow events across the district as well as school and college events and direct stakeholder engagement to ensure that the Draft Plan is well informed by the views and experiences of our communities and to raise awareness of the need for action and how we are working to co-ordinate this. Officers are working on detailed arrangements and materials (e.g. a short format summary leaflet) for these engagement and consultation events and will seek input from the Member Working Group as appropriate.

What’s next?

- 4.18 A Draft Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and Draft SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan will be produced following the period of consultation and engagement on the framework documents. Produced in February 2020, these documents will take account of the feedback from consultation and engagement activities referred to above and set out our first draft of the county-wide Strategy and SWT action plan themselves.
- 4.19 In order to fit with Member expectations to deliver a “final” Somerset-wide Strategy and SWT Plan by Summer 2020, it is important to streamline the process between now and the final documents being approved by the Councils. However, it is important that the final documents are adequately informed by public consultation. On this basis, it is recommended that responsibility to agree and endorse the Draft documents in February 2020 is delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change – Cllr Peter Pilkington in consultation with the Climate Change Member Working Group (for the SWT Plan) and the Joint Task and Finish Group (for the Somerset-wide Strategy). This avoids the need for the Draft documents to come back through each individual council Scrutiny and Cabinet / Executive Committees, thereby saving six to eight weeks whilst retaining member scrutiny and oversight through the agreed governance arrangements.
- 4.20 The final Strategy and Plan will be considered by the Member Working Group, Joint Task and Finish Group, Scrutiny and Executive alongside consultation responses ahead of adoption by Full Council.

5 Links to Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 Development of the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan will have links into all of the newly approved Corporate Strategy themes in one way or another. However they will directly complement the “Our Environment and Economy” theme of the newly approved Corporate Strategy, with the objective to work towards making our District carbon neutral by 2030 embedded within that theme. These Framework documents set out the

first steps on how we will work towards this target.

6 Finance / Resource Implications

- 6.1 In February, SWT committed £25k of budget for 2019/20 to support development of a climate strategy/action plan and early project delivery. Of this, £10k has been committed to support the development of the county-wide strategy; largely to permit the Strategic Management Group to access appropriate external expertise, including execution of the consultation plan.
- 6.2 All authorities have already committed considerable resource to development of the county-wide framework to date and, as a result of our activity so far, it is becoming apparent that future development would be better served by securing county-wide project management expertise. This is likely to incur an additional cost but will be supported by a detailed costing plan and brought forward for approval through appropriate channels.
- 6.3 The SWT Framework identifies a number of key early tasks and commitments. Some of these will be for the Council to take forward, some of which are part of operational plans already, some of which will be in addition.
- 6.4 Precise budgets for specific tasks and projects are not possible to establish in detail at this stage. However, the principle of earmarking an initial sum in the 2020/21 budget to support delivery of the Council's climate change commitment has been identified and will be subject to further discussion as part of the budget setting process. Budget setting for specific projects and commitments will be refined alongside approval and implementation of the final strategy, from July 2020 onwards.
- 6.5 To date, work developing the Framework documents, initial workstream briefs, and setting up programme management and governance arrangements has been carried out by approximately 2.6 FTE, spread across 11 different officers. The next phase of developing up the action plans and projects for inclusion in the Draft and Final documents will require inputs from a wider range of officers. Some of this will be part of business as usual, some things will be additional tasks. On this basis it is important to recognise the importance of the fact that the SWT Plan will be a "live" and iterative document that evolves over time, and it will not be possible to identify every single action and project that will be required in the time allowed. However, this model will ensure that climate action begins to permeate business as usual across all functions of the Council, rather than being the preserve of a single specialist officer.
- 6.6 As we move towards finalising and ultimately delivering action plans and projects, this will inevitably in some cases lead to further financial and resource implications, however, these will be dealt with separately nearer the time.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no specific legal implications to consider at this stage. This will be reviewed as we move from the current Framework documents to a more detailed strategy and action plan in 2020.

8 Climate and Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 Development of the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy, together with SWT's own Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan are integral to setting out how we

respond to the climate emergency and how we can achieve our target of carbon neutrality.

8.2 There may be emissions associated with communities travelling to consultation events including the proposed Summits – officers will seek to embed the need to reduce the need to travel and facilitate sustainable travel into the planning of these events and their location.

8.3 There are also potential emissions and impacts associated with production of consultation materials – as such, the majority of materials will be delivered online, with paper copies of the Framework itself limited to communal copies in libraries and made available purely on request or where necessary due to specific needs.

9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

9.1 There may be a need for SWT officers to visit schools and otherwise engage with young people through consultation events, specific details of which are still being worked out. Any proposals and any subsequent staff interaction with young people will follow safe working practices.

10 Equality and Diversity Implications

10.1 There are no specific implications at this stage. However, as the strategy, action plans and projects are developed and implemented, there will be a need to fully consider the equality and diversity implications in relation to them. The Framework refers to the need to achieve a ‘just transition’, and this will form an important part of the strategy, action plan and project development.

11 Social Value Implications

11.1 Developing our response to the climate emergency will link heavily with social value. The Framework explains the concept of ‘co-benefits’ and their importance within developing the strategy, action plan and projects.

12 Partnership Implications

12.1 This Framework has, and the subsequent Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy will be developed in partnership with the four other Somerset local authorities as well as other key stakeholders. There are obvious challenges associated with partnership working, however, project oversight by the Strategic Management Group, Joint Task and Finish Group, Joint Cabinet / Portfolio Holders Group and Leaders and Chief Executives seeks to minimise and mitigate issues as they may arise.

12.2 There will be a need for much more and stronger partnership working with other bodies, businesses and our communities in order to develop and deliver on the strategy.

13 Health and Wellbeing Implications

13.1 Developing our response to the climate emergency will link heavily with health and wellbeing. The Framework explains the concept of ‘co-benefits’ and their importance within developing the strategy, action plan and projects. It also specifically singles out public health as a priority focus for all workstreams.

14 Asset Management Implications

14.1 The Framework implies that the strategy will need to consider ways to improve and build on opportunities presented by land and assets within our ownership. For instance, the energy workstream identifies potentially exploring use of council owned land for renewable energy generation. Further specific implications may arise as the strategy, action plans and projects are developed.

15 Data Protection Implications

15.1 All consultation and engagement on the Framework will pay due regard to the GDPR and ensure that a Data Protection Impact Assessment is completed where necessary.

16 Consultation Implications

16.1 Consultation and engagement on the Framework will directly feed into production of a Draft Strategy.

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny Committee – Yes**
- **Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – No**

Reporting Frequency: **Once only**

List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)

Appendix A	Draft Somerset Climate Emergency Framework
Appendix B	Draft SWT Framework Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan – v.2
Appendix C	Minutes of the Climate Change Member Working Group – 30/09/2019

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