

# **Somerset West and Taunton**

## **Scrutiny Committee – 9<sup>th</sup> 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 Strategy and a framework for SWT's own Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan and to seek comments to shape further prior to going to District Executive on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

#### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 To review the Climate Emergency Framework and Framework Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan and intended work streams, directions of travel and key early tasks and provide feedback.
- 2.2 To note the timeline for delivery of the Strategy and Plan.
- 2.3 For members to note the intended consultation activities and to share the opportunity to contribute with residents and community groups.

#### **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.

#### **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 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. [NB. Provisional date for the SWT Summit is 16th November but is still to be confirmed].

#### Draft SWT Framework Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan

4.10 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.

4.11 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.

4.12 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. 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.

4.13 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.

- 4.14 At the point of writing this report and the Draft Framework document being published on this agenda, the Climate Change Member Working Group has, due to the timescales involved, had limited opportunities to input to the development of the Framework. However, the Framework has been shared with them and will be discussed ahead of Scrutiny Committee at a meeting of the Working Group on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> September. The comments of the Working Group will be considered alongside the comments of Scrutiny Committee in making any amendments to the Framework Document ahead of taking the consultation draft to Executive Committee later in October. Going forwards, the Working Group will play a more involved role in developing up the action plans and projects for the Draft Strategy and Plan.
- 4.15 Once the Framework has been endorsed by Executive Committee, we will embark on a period of engagement and consultation centred around the 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 arrangements for these events and wider consultation on the Framework.
- 4.16 The Draft and Final Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plans are proposed to be developed alongside and to the same timetable as the Draft and Final Somerset Climate Emergency Strategies. However, whilst Strategy produced for adoption in Summer 2020 will be badged as “final”, the SWT 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.

#### What's next?

- 4.17 The Framework documents will be taken to Executive Committee later in October, amended in response to / accompanied by the comments of the Working Group and Scrutiny Committee. The report to Executive, accompanying the Framework documents will request that authority to endorse the future Draft County-wide Strategy and SWT Plan is delegated to Cllr Peter Pilkington (as Portfolio Holder) in consultation with the Climate Change Member Working Group. However, the final Strategy and Plan will come back to Scrutiny ahead of consideration by Executive and Council. Assuming Executive endorsement of the Framework documents and this approach to delegation, we will then begin consultation and engagement as well as working on some of the identified key early tasks.
- 4.18 The intention is to have a Draft Strategy and Plan completed by February 2020, ready for consideration by the Member Working Group and Portfolio Holder to endorse for further consultation in the New Year. Following the second period of consultation, the “final” Strategy and Plan will be brought back to Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee before being taken to Council for adoption.

## **5 Links to Corporate Strategy**

- 5.1 Development of the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and SWT Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan directly complement the “Our Environment and Economy” theme of the emerging 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 that could be explored. Some of these tasks will be for the Council to take forward, some of which are part of operational plans already, some of which will be in addition. The report to Executive Committee later this month will recommend an approach to future funding in the short and longer term, to support the Council’s climate commitment.
- 6.4 Subsequent action plans and projects may lead to further financial and resource implications, however, these will be dealt with separately.

## **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
Appendix C	

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