

Somerset Council  
Scrutiny Committee  
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## **Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency: A vision for Somerset**

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Executive Lead Member: Cllr Dixie Darch, Lead member for Climate Change and Environment

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1.** The purpose of this report and presentation is to: Update the Committee on recent progress on work on developing the 'Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency: A Vision for Somerset' document

### **2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations**

- 2.1.** To note and make comments on the proposed draft Climate & Ecological Emergency Vision Document.
- 2.2.** To note and make comments on the Drafted list of actions that will form the new Councils Commitment and Action Plan documents for Somerset Council to tackle the Ecological Emergency and to deliver on its journey to Net Zero.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1.** Somerset County Council (along with the former District Councils) declared a Climate & Ecological Emergency in February 2019. This was carried forward into the new Council for Somerset and continues to this day.
- 3.2.** Somerset Council has a Climate Emergency Strategy (published in November 2020). The Strategy is strong academic document rationalising why there is a need to take action and the key focus areas that needs addressing. However, the document is mainly directed towards a Carbon reduction and decarbonisation strategy which it tries to address for both Somerset and Somerset Council response. Since the Strategy was written the world has changed somewhat and there are now gaps these needs updating and addressing within any future refresh including the ecological emergency.
- 3.3.** With regard to addressing the Ecological Emergency, Somerset Council works in collaboration with the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) to deliver priorities for Somerset. This partnership and its work are a great example of multiple

organisations coming together tackle the challenge of the Climate and Ecological Emergency.

- 3.4. Separating the work streams:** Part of the challenge under Somerset Council is how we can lead by example, showing true leadership on this agenda but still effectively deliver programmes and projects that will make an effective difference both for Somerset Council and for the wider Somerset community. To do this we believe we need to separate the workstreams creating commitments, action plans and targets for Somerset Council and then establish programme of works for the broader Somerset agenda through a collaborative strategic climate partnership.
- 3.5. Call to action:** The Vision document is not only an ambitious utopian vision for Somerset but a ‘call to action’ to Somerset. Radical collaboration and partnership working is needed if we are to truly deliver changes needed to tackle the Climate and Ecological Emergency. A Climate Strategic Partnership is needed to deliver shared programmes of work, deliver mitigation and measure impact across the County pooling resources and working together on strategic climate and ecological outcomes.
- 3.6. Setting a clear ambition:** A Vision for Somerset will provide the clear ambition, the goal that we want to get to for Somerset. We have the live Climate Strategy; it is still relevant (although it needs updating in places) but what is now needed to ‘action at pace’ to deliver effective mitigations and change.
- 3.7. Council commitment and leadership role:** The Council is ambitious, even in these challenging times and desires to lead by example, show its commitment to the Climate and Ecological agenda and show an example to others of meeting net zero ambitions. With limited resources currently the Council will focus its efforts on tackling the ecological emergency in partnership with the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and delivering on its journey to net zero whilst creating and approaching strategic organisations and agencies to join a more strategic Somerset Climate Partnership.
- 3.8.** The Council will provide commitments and delivery action plans (draft example list of actions attached as appendices to the report – this will form the structure & contents of a newly designed plan/ document) along with installing performance monitoring dashboards and Key Performance Indicators to help provide transparency and deliver intelligence to decision makers around where work streams should be targeted for impact and how progression is being measured. The plan will align with other Council strategic documents and plans ensuring that collaboration is at the forefront and stopping duplication.
- 3.9.** The aim is that through pro-active Council work streams, alignment of council service plans and strategies, data analytics, case studies, best practise and

examples of collaborative working by the Council can be showcased as examples of how we can collectively work together as public, private and third section organisations to deliver on our climate and ecological ambitions.

#### **4. Consultations undertaken**

- 4.1.** The intentions of the Climate Service were to create a Task & Finish Scrutiny Group to discuss, shape and create the structure and content of the 'Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency: A vision for Somerset' document. Unfortunately, due to high demands for Councillor time and a lack of availability there was only two members who were able to attend. The session became more of a Scrutiny consultee or membership workshop with the showing of ideas and rationalising the approach from officers and some great challenges, thoughts and ideas generated from the members. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Mansell and Cllr Ashton for their time, enthusiasm and input into the workshop.
- 4.2.** On Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May, Officers provided an introduction of the Climate Vision document to Informal Executive, highlighting its role and purpose in being used as a call to action as well as providing that clear climate and ecological vision for Somerset. Discussions included the creation of the climate partnership and the need to work more collaboratively to address this ambition for Somerset.
- 4.3.** Portfolio Holder Cllr Darch presented a broad overview of the Council's Climate and Ecological ambition for Somerset on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May at the Somerset Climate Action Network conference. Although no detail of the vision document was shared, some of the strategic themes and pages were shared with the individuals within the audience. Feedback was positive and supportive of this approach.
- 4.4.** The document has also been shared with lead officers and services across the Council for comments and feedback.

#### **5. Implications**

- 5.1.** The Climate Vision document aims to influence a wider collaborative approach and capacity to deliver action. By guiding and inspiring individuals, communities, and organisations, the Climate and Ecological Vision for Somerset intends to foster a collective effort toward the Climate and Ecological Emergency. This influential aspect will stem from its ability to shape perspectives, drive policy discussions, pool resources and motivate positive actions for climate and nature.
- 5.2.** Radical collaboration is an essential element to both the development and delivery of vision and subsequent programme and action plans for Somerset,

and the relationships we build during the development of the future climate partnership will be vital in helping to deliver the vision once adopted.

## **6. Background papers**

### **6.1. Climate Emergency Strategy PDF**

**Note** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.