

Somerset Council
Scrutiny Committee – Climate and Place
– Wednesday 20th March 2024



Report of the Task and Finish Group – Somerset Energy Investment Plan

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

1. Summary

- 1.1.** This report summarises the work of the Somerset Energy Investment Plan Task and Finish group, a working group commissioned by the Scrutiny Climate and Place Committee on 20th September 2024 to facilitate Scrutiny policy development and enable members to shape and influence the Somerset-wide Energy Plan, a deliverable of the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy, November 2020.

Elected members:

Cllr Dave Mansell (Chair)

Cllr Steve Ashton

Cllr Adam Boyden

Cllr Henry Hobhouse

Cllr Marcus Kravis

Cllr Alan Bradford

Somerset Council officers:

Jacob Hall Climate Change Resilience Officer

Cara Naden Environment Specialist

Jonathan Doyle Strategic Manager Climate & Flood Management

Stephanie Gold Democratic Services Officer

External partners/public sector energy experts:

Tamsyn Lonsdale-Smith Senior Energy Analyst, Regen

Hazel Williams Associate Director

Adrian Ross Pathfinder Consultant, UK100

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** The Scrutiny Committee Climate and Place is asked to consider and comment on the Task and Finish Group report (Appendix B) and the proposed recommendations within it, to the Executive/Executive member and all internal and external stakeholders involved in the delivery of the plan.

3. Background

- 3.1.** Somerset's Climate Emergency Strategy was developed jointly by the five former Somerset local authorities, sector experts and external partners following public consultations that took place in January and February 2020. It was formally adopted by all five Councils in November 2020. The aim of the strategy is to reduce carbon emissions to net zero in the county and make Somerset a county adapted resilient to the inevitable effects of climate change.
- 3.2.** The strategy provides details explaining what climate change is and what causes it, where carbon emissions arise from globally, nationally, and locally and what the impacts will be here in Somerset. The strategy sets ambitious goals to work towards making Somerset a carbon-neutral county by 2030.
- 3.3.** One of the agreed deliverables/actions of the climate emergency strategy is to 'coordinate electrification activities across the county by developing a county-wide Energy Strategy'.
- 3.4.** To deliver the strategy the previous Somerset Councils commissioned Regen, and UK100 support was awarded to Somerset Council to help with the adoption and support for the recommendations and outcome of the plan.
- 3.5.** Regen is an independent centre of energy and are strategists on the pathway to a zero-carbon energy system, focused on analysing the systemic challenges of decarbonising power, heat and transport.
- 3.6.** UK100 is a network of councils aiming to decarbonise their councils and communities before the national 2050 target with a primary purpose to support a local-led rapid transition to Net Zero and Clean Air. To accelerate action, UK100 believe in bringing together the most influential leaders across the country to learn together and agree on priorities for legislative and regulatory change while empowering them to engage with national decision-makers.
- 3.7.** During the meeting of Scrutiny committee Climate and Place held on Wednesday 20th September 2023 members agreed to the commissioning of a Task and Finish group to influence and shape the County-wide Energy Strategy.

- 3.8.** The Task and Finish group report (Appendix B) analyses the key themes, milestones, opportunities and recommendations of the Somerset Energy Investment Plan and evaluates the targets for home energy performance and local renewable energy generation, resulting in a set of key findings, next steps and recommendations.
- 3.9.** The next step will be for the Council to consider this Plan, along with the Task and Finish Report, internally and with external stakeholders and partners. It should further prioritise the actions recommended, drawing up internal action plans with allocated resources and funding for each area.
- 3.10.** It should be noted that one of the Task and Finish Group members wished it to be stated that the council should decarbonise council operations by 2030. Others noted current policies appeared to already preclude this and that council climate targets would be considered by a Climate Strategy Refresh Task and Finish Group.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1.** The Task and Finish group members met with Somerset Council Climate Change officers and External sector experts Regen and UK100 six times between October 2023 and February 2024. All of those meetings were held online by Teams.
- 4.2.** At each meeting members were shown slides to update on the progress of the Somerset Energy Investment Plan (Appendix C) so far, and given the opportunity to ask questions, make comment and give suggestions on specific sections of the county-wide energy Somerset Energy Investment Plan as it was in development.
- 4.3.** The draft Somerset Energy Investment Plan went out for consultation to stakeholders between Jan-Feb 2024 and the Task and Finish group held an additional meeting during the consultation period to agree on group feedback to the draft. (Appendix A)

4.4. Overview of meetings

Date	Meeting summary
23 rd October 2023	Overview of baselining and mapping work completed so far.
20 th November 2023	Planning policy and how the project fits into local plan development.
13 th December 2023	Future roadmap.
23 rd January 2024	Economic Impact Assessment, plan findings, key actions and ownership.

29 th January 2024	Additional meeting to agree group feedback for the consultation on the draft Somerset Energy Investment Plan. (Appendix A)
28 th February 2024	Final meeting to agree on any recommendations and draft Task and Finish report. (Appendix B)

5. Implications

5.1. None

6. Background papers

6.1. a) Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy 2020

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