

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

5 DECEMBER 2019

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Report Title	CARBON NEUTRAL 2030 – GENERAL UPDATE
Purpose of Report	To provide an overview on activity towards Carbon Neutral 2030.
Decision(s)	<p>The Committee RESOLVES:</p> <p>(1) To note the CN2030 general update report.</p> <p>(2) To define base lining requirements and priorities in line with a CN2030 work plan.</p> <p>(3) To agree the annual timeline for CN2030 reporting.</p> <p>And</p> <p>The Committee RECOMMENDS to Council that a round table discussion group be formed on a cross party basis with members to be nominated by each political group.</p>
Consultation and Feedback	<p>Consultative processes over the period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commissioning of energy and land use expertise to support local plan developments. - Dialogue with Transition Stroud and their Community Action Groups Forum to coordinate community action
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>There are no direct implication arising from this report.</p> <p>Adele Rudkin, Accountant Tel: 01453 754109 Email: adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk Report author to comment on the Risk Assessment:</p> <p>The key risk to acknowledge is risk to reputation by not honouring the CN2030 commitments..</p>
Legal Implications	<p>There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report</p> <p>Patrick Arran, Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754369 Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Report Author	<p>Rachel Brain, Carbon Neutral Officer Tel: 01453 754521 Email: rachel.brain@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Options	<p>Since there is no legal requirement or duty for CN2030 the council could take no action but this is not recommended given the Council's policy commitment in this regard. The committee can note the report and in line with the Council's commitment for CN2030 take forward the recommended actions.</p>

Performance Management Follow Up	<p>The Council's commitment to CN2030 will continue as an important element of our environmental auditing regime under ISO14001 which has replaced the previous approach under EMAS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Committee would receive regular updates from the performance monitoring members in addition to reports from the proposed LSP Board. • The resolution agreed by council requires an annual progress report to Council.
Background Papers/ Appendices	<p>This update report provides a note on progress to the 5 committee resolutions set out in the June 2019 'Progressing Carbon Neutral 2030 Report' and the 7 points of the agreed motion of January 2019 summarised there within.</p>

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The CN2030 post, is a district/community focused role working to complement the existing responsibilities for Environment Strategy and Environmental Management which are more council owned estates focused. The CN2030 officer has a line of direct report into Senior Leadership via Strategic Director of Resources.
- 1.2 At time of reporting it is 11 weeks into the CN2030 Officer role. The full scope of the work plan is in early development and thought is being given to the resourcing issues within the challenges of that plan. At the same time there has been energy on activity to ensure the momentum and enthusiasm in the District is maintained and to continue to build strong foundations within communities for the work that will be required.

2. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 2.1 **Work with Stroud District Local Strategic Partnership (LSP):** Much attention has been given to the challenge of ensuring the community voice is both as broadly presented as possible and, given a clear route into LSP and council processes. An effective means of delivering this has been through the rapidly emerging network of Transition Stroud's (TS) Climate Action Groups. TS has now received Council funding to ensure the growth, maintenance and effective tracking and communication of outcomes of this network and to support the development of a District wide forum. This provides a mechanism for TS to be representative of climate action communities across the District. This should feed the LSP's focus group on Carbon Neutral 2030, the formation of which is due to be formalised via the LSP meeting due in January 2020.
- 2.2 **Set up of a cross-party member officer group:** This group would be most effective with a 'round table' ethic in the pursuit of equality in collaboration amongst parties in the District and potentially in the wider county. This is to operate as a compliment to emerging structures around cross-sector and community group inputs to the CN2030 discussions and plans and, to ensure the CN2030 agenda is embedded across the council. Early focal points for this group had been identified in the June report (see Background Papers) progress highlights on these so far include:
- Commissioning of Centre for Sustainable Energy and Land Use Consultancy on potential in renewables contribution to Inform Local Plan review. The report is due to be published prior to December.

- Planning policies have been updated to exceed national government standards requiring new builds to be net zero carbon.

Recommended Action: In order to give this the necessary prominence given the importance of the issue, Council should be asked to authorise the setting up of an informal round table discussion group on a cross party basis. This group would consist of members and officers to discuss how the focal points identified in June can be progressed and CN2030 embedded.

2.3 Commissioning to Baseline District Emissions: Previous minuted discussions state it would be useful to see how effective and robustly achieved baselining had been in other council areas. Now that some other councils have completed commissioning on baselining it is evident that the route to a standardised methodology is still unclear and that the reports commissioned have varying and limited scope in direct application to action planning. There is however, a growing bank of information on what county wide emissions patterns look like and a much better understanding of the areas of high potential gain in reducing emissions alongside experience in gauging the level of challenge for achieving these, i.e. the immediate potential for actually achieving reductions may be at a greater scale in areas with less than the highest emissions due to the differing constraints around securing their achievement.

2.3.1 In order to ensure that commissioning provides useful information for monitoring purposes it is important to ensure that the briefing considers the work plan and its rationale. To not put the work plan first risks an investment in commissioning base-lining on activity areas we are not planning to address in the short term. Since carbon data, is so easily impacted by so many variables and, because the low carbon 'scene' is so very dynamic at the moment, the likelihood of needing to re-commission on baselines to ensure robust data for evaluation purposes could be high. The drafting and agreement of the CN2030 work plan is a priority area with time being dedicated to this process over the coming months.

Recommended action: To define base lining and prioritise its requirements in line with planned delivery through a CN2030 work plan.

2.4 CN2030 General Update

2.4.1 Collaboration with Gfirst LEP: The level of collaboration with the LEP is high:

- The Gloucestershire Sustainable Energy Strategy is being implemented via 3 Action Groups (Low carbon Vehicles; Decarbonising Heat; Renewable Energy Leadership) of the LEP Business Sector Energy Group. The CN2030 Officer holds position on all of these groups.
- There are regular conversations with LEP programmes manager who oversees their funding process to ensure energy/low carbon related projects are highlighted and the outcomes of their applications known.
- The LEP manage the European Structural Investment Funds to which a partnership expression of interest with Glos. County Council was submitted at the end of September under the low carbon strand.
- The Council submitted a substantial response to Draft Local Industrial Strategy in October expressing desire to be pivotal in its 'green' / low carbon ambitions

- The LEP sent a representative to the first convening of the Glos. CN2030 Leadership Network which is a Stroud based initiative to promote effective cross district partnership and collaboration on the agenda.

2.4.2 Action Plan and Reporting: A priority action in the CN2030 work plan will be action planning (ref 2.3.1). This must be achieved in partnership with our communities; partners and strategic stakeholders to achieve the buy in that will be required for our community to move towards the CN2030 target. It needs to be a strategic and collaborative exercise that results in identified: shared vision; work areas; key actors and beneficiaries; opportunities and strengths and, areas for further development. It also needs to have clearly identified outputs, outcomes and deliverables in place for reporting.

Recommended Action: To agree the annual timeline for CN2030 reporting to committee.

2.4.3 Stroud District Council as a CN2030 leader; influencing County wide Strategies and Plans

- *District level action:* A thorough engagement with town and parish councils and community groups is being achieved through participation in and hosting of local events. This activity is building on existing partner relationships and building new ones and helping to communicate the interest and activity of the Council in CN2030 issues.
- *County level action:* Active strategic partnership working building on existing relationships for example: LEP Energy related groups (which also enables maintained dialogue with distribution operators and key commercial interests); the initiation of CN2030 Leads network (representation from all districts; LEP and NHS - Clinical Commissioning Group); relationships across a broad spectrum of third sector organisations important for their diverse community links.
- *Regional level action:* Active relationship with Dept. of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy through their SW Energy Hub (active over 7 LEP areas); member of West of England (CN/Sustainability) Officers Network (monthly teleconferences)
- *National:* Feature Article in Local Government Chronicle; follow up contacts from Surrey County Council; Warwick Council and Arrun District Council.

2.4.4 Investigating External Funds and Match potentials: Project development in partnership to ensure resource and expertise is an ongoing activity. This period the CN2030 Officer has led and/or supported:

- Securing of £100k revenue via SW Energy Hub to do research into the potentials in Council Tax and Business rates as incentives for energy efficiency (SDC lead, GCC supporting).
- First stage success in Power to Change funds for Gloucestershire Energy Cooperative to explore viability of PV and storage projects on Council Sheltered Housing. A viable project could then secure a further £100k revenue potentially for staffing and work directly with residents around installations.
- Development support to Transition Stroud Climate Action Group Network and Forum.
- Unsuccessful bid in partnership with Friends of the Earth and Ashden for co-learning tool development around climate action plans, a concept now fuelling other funding pursuits.
- European Regional Development Fund Bid – Partnership Expression of Interest for establishing low carbon energy focused school capital grants fund.

- Currently pursuing the opportunities in the national Lottery Climate Action Fund (possible to bid for £2.5m for 5 year plan) but this must have a charitable/community focused lead therefore a partnership opportunity is being sought.

2.4.5 Additional

Due to the successful bid for funds to research tax incentives there is opportunity to recruit a project worker to support the CN2030 officer. The recruitment processes are being initiated at the moment.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1** Despite a relatively short implementation period it can be seen that dedicated staffing resource to the CN2030 commitment is having positive impacts on progress.
- 3.2.** Success in: work plan development; formalisation of CN2030 structures such as the Officer/Member Roundtable and LSP functions; community coordination and, good strategic engagement will underpin the progress of the next period.
- 3.3.** In the short term striking a balance between careful planning; active delivery and new project development will be key to expanding the potential of our CN2030 budgets and resources.