

Title of report: Citizens Climate Assembly Next Steps and Recommendations

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 28 April 2022

Report by: Cabinet member environment and economy;

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

The purpose of the report is to consider next steps and provide recommendations to Cabinet to allocate funding from the Climate Reserve with respect to the Citizens Climate Assembly recommendations.

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

- a) Approve the development of business cases as required for the priority projects listed in Appendix 2;**
- b) Delegate authority to Corporate Director, Economy and Environment, subject to consultation with relevant Cabinet Members and the s151 officer to:**
 - a. approve viable projects within an overall budget of £1.33million;**

- b. bring forward business cases for the lower priority projects in appendix 2 should the priority projects prove unviable;**

and;

- c) Delegate authority to Corporate Director, Economy and Environment, for all operational decisions to deliver the projects following approval of the business cases.**

Alternative options

1. None identified- the decision dated 24 February 2022 (link below) sets out delegated responsibility to Corporate Director Economy & Environment and S151 officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Environment to allocate funding from the Climate Reserve and commits to providing recommendations to Cabinet by April 2022.

<https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=8622>

Key considerations

Citizens Assembly

2. In January 2022 Herefordshire Council held a Citizens' Climate Assembly to address the question: 'How should Herefordshire meet the challenges of Climate Change?' The purpose of the Herefordshire Citizens' Climate Assembly (HCCA) was to:
 - a. Engage more residents in the democratic process and have open and honest dialogue.
 - b. Open up the discussion on the Climate Emergency and achieve buy-in and a degree of consensus for actions needed in the county.
3. It should be noted that the Climate Citizens Assembly was not a decision making body in its own right and therefore the output of the work carried out by Assembly has now been used to guide and inform future Council decision making including this report. The invaluable work carried out by the Assembly will continue to inform Council decision making as the Council progresses its goals of achieving net zero carbon for its own estate and the county.
4. Citizens' Assemblies incorporate a number of key principles: the provision of information from a range of experts, learning amongst participants, consideration of varied and diverse viewpoints, discussion, weighing up evidence, and making recommendations (followed by a voting process). Another important element of Citizens' Assemblies is that members have an equal opportunity to speak and be heard during the meetings (one of the key principles of deliberative democracy) with trained facilitators supporting this process.
5. Another important principle is the use of randomisation of sampling in recruiting members based on age, gender, ethnicity, urban/rural, socio-economic background, attitude to climate change and disability. 520 people signed up as potential Assembly members who were then asked to share information to ensure representation. In total 41 attended the Assembly meetings.
6. Based on support from an independent Advisory Group three key themes were established of buildings; transport; and food, farming and land-use with a focus on how emissions should be reduced in each of these areas. A list of advisory group members and speakers can be found on the Citizens' Climate Assembly Website: Citizens' Assembly – Herefordshire Council.

7. The Assembly met virtually for 10 sessions across two weekends and two evenings in January 2022. By the end of sessions the Assembly had developed 35 recommendations and were subsequently given 48 hours to vote on each recommendation. This allowed each Assembly member to rate each recommendation on a scale of 'Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree', with an option to abstain.
8. The list of recommendations made by the Assembly and the existing activity undertaken by the Council that is aligned with these recommendations, together with the projects they have informed can be found in Appendix 1.

Allocation of the New Homes Bonus to the Climate Reserve

9. The new homes bonus grant funding of £1.33m was allocated to the Climate Reserve by Council on 11 February 2022; <https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=59811>
10. This allocation of funding will be used to fund projects which will see the council progress towards its net zero goals for both its own operation as well as the county as a whole by 2030. Whilst the recommendations from the Assembly have been used to inform this direction it must be noted that the purpose of the Assembly was not to allocate the use of the Climate Reserve.

Next Steps

11. In March 2022 a high level review of the Citizens Climate Assembly recommendations was undertaken in consultation with teams across the Council to understand the work that is already being delivered by the council that contributes towards the aims of the Assembly. The recommendations from the Assembly informed but did not lead this piece of work. Officers provided information relevant to the proposals made by the Assembly and informed how work could be taken forward in support of the aims of the recommendations from the Assembly. In some cases this was a continuation of existing projects whilst in others, new projects will need to be fully developed and costed up.
12. All projects outlined in Appendix 2 have been developed taking into account the following:
 - a. Recommendations from the Citizens Climate Assembly (Appendix 1)
 - b. Internal consultation across Council services
 - c. National best practice including:
 - i. Sustainability West Midlands West Midlands Local Authority Sustainability Benchmark report 2021¹
 - ii. Ashden and Friends of the Earth 31 Actions a Resource, for Councils and Local Authorities²
 - d. Feedback from cabinet members
13. This report seeks approval for the development of business cases for projects to reduce carbon emissions and protect and enhance the county's natural environment and biodiversity. The projects outlined in Appendix 2 are aligned with the three main themes and recommendations made under them by the Assembly, namely 'Buildings', 'Transport' and

¹ <https://www.sustainabilitywestmidlands.org.uk/resources/west-midlands-local-authority-sustainability-benchmark-report-2021/>

² <https://ashden.org/news/31-actions-climate-actions-and-carbon-savings/>

'Land use, Food and Farming'. The programme of projects are expected to be delivered over the next two to three years within the Councils Project Management Office (PMO) framework.

14. The projects outlined in Appendix 2 include not only those identified by the Citizens Assembly, but those identified by Council officers including, the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES), Solar Farm Scoping and Climate Change Adaptation projects.
15. The proposed projects in Appendix 2 are ranked as high, medium and low priority and initially work will concentrate on developing appropriate business cases for the high priority projects. Should this work show that projects are not viable, then medium priority projects will be brought forward for business case development by the Director of Environment and Economy in consultation with appropriate cabinet members and the s151 officer.
16. The projects will help deliver on the objectives of the Citizens Climate Assembly as well as the Council's net zero and nature rich ambitions for 2030. The projects will need to be fully scoped and costed through the development of appropriate business cases, the detail of which will be dependent on the value of the project.
17. It should be noted that the council is already carrying out lots of good work in support of its climate and nature ambitions and a number of the actions outlined by the Citizens Climate Assembly are already progressing. The council will report progress back to the Assembly in September, as per the previous report;

<https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50098308/Recommendations%20from%20Citizens%20Climate%20Assembly.pdf>
18. Additionally a number of the recommendations from the Assembly are currently being implemented, at least in part in partnership or by partners of the Council. The Council will continue to support and engage with these partners through the Herefordshire Climate and Nature Partnership.

Community impact

19. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts and encourages constructive challenge and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review.
20. The Citizens' Climate Assembly is a new venture for the council to actively engage a demographically representative group of residents to support the council's decision making.
21. This proposal also delivers a specific recommendation by General Scrutiny Committee's Climate & Ecological Emergency Review and follows a Full Council resolution on 12 July 2019.
22. This proposal addresses the following key commitments within the Council Corporate Delivery Plan
 - a. EN3.1: Create a new countywide climate & ecological emergency partnership, strategy and action plan to improve biodiversity and achieve countywide carbon neutrality by 2030
 - b. EN4.2: Develop new domestic building retrofit programmes to further improve the energy efficiency of Herefordshire's housing stock, reducing carbon emissions, improving wellbeing and tackling fuel poverty
 - c. EN7.1: Develop & implement a new nature strategy to enhance and protect biodiversity across the Council's estate

23. The resulting improvements in local air quality, improved public health and efficiencies from addressing the climate emergency will positively contribute towards the delivery of the council's corporate plan objective to 'Protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live.'

Environmental Impact

24. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors the council shares a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
25. The objective of the Citizens' Climate Assembly was to positively engage local residents to support the council to meet its commitments of its declaration of a Climate & Ecological Emergency which set both organisational and countywide carbon neutrality targets by 2030. The anticipated outcomes will also support the council to deliver wider environmental policy commitments.
26. The Citizens' Climate Assembly considered key climate change themes. This will support delivery of the council's environmental policy commitments and aligns to the following success measures in the County Plan:
- Increase flood resilience and reduce levels of phosphate pollution in the county's river
 - Reduce the council's carbon emissions
 - Work in partnership with others to reduce county carbon emissions
 - Improve the air quality within Herefordshire
 - Improve residents' access to green space in Herefordshire
 - Improve energy efficiency of homes and build standards for new housing
 - Increase the number of short distance trips being done by sustainable modes of travel – walking, cycling, public transport
 - Sustainable and active travel options
27. The proposed programme of works strongly supports the key objective of the County Plan of: "Protect and Enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live" along with meeting the ambitions of:
- a) Minimise waste and increase reuse, repair and recycling (EN1)
 - b) Improve and extend active travel options throughout the county (EN2)
 - c) Build understanding and support for sustainable living (EN3)
 - d) Invest in low carbon projects (EN4)
 - e) Identify climate change action in all aspects of council operation (EN5)
 - f) Seek strong stewardship of the county's natural resources (EN6)
 - g) Protect and enhance the county's biodiversity, value nature and uphold environmental standards (EN7)

- h) Develop environmentally sound infrastructure that attracts investment (EC1)
- i) Protect & promote our heritage, culture & natural beauty to enhance quality of life & support tourism (EC5)

Equality duty

28. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
29. The Citizens' Climate Assembly brought together a representative group of people from across Herefordshire who were independently selected based on gender, age, ethnicity, disability, climate concern, urban/ rural mix; and from defined areas of multiple deprivation. Therefore the Assembly supported a range of voices from different walks of life to be heard, to contribute to decision making and in turn contribute to democracy. Assembly members were independently selected based on representation of Herefordshire reflective of age, gender, ethnicity, urban/rural, socio-economic background, attitude to climate change and disability.
30. Provision was made for representatives who needed IT support (including if they have never used on-line communication), welfare support and any other form of reasonable adjustment.
31. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.

Resource implications

32. Council agreed on 11 February 2022 to allocate the £1.33m of New Homes Bonus for 2022/23 to the Climate Reserve. All costs of the projects outlined within the programme as well as the resource required to deliver them will be borne by the Climate Reserve, costs will not exceed the available £1.33m.
33. Initial high-level estimates of the resource requirements for each project are outlined in Appendix 2. A Project Manager within the Council's PMO will be appointed to lead the development of the full business cases. Each business case will take into account value for money with specific regard given to the environmental and ecological benefits of the projects. The outputs from the projects will be considered against the project cost and deliverability in consultation with the relevant service areas, portfolio holders and Senior Responsible Officer (SRO). This detailed assessment means that the priorities of projects indicated in Appendix 2 may change and some higher priority projects may not move forward whilst some that are currently indicated as a lower priority are taken forward as a result of the work to be carried out.

34. An element of the allocation of funding is recommended to be used to provide additional resource for the Council to deliver this work internally as well as enable the Council to procure expert external support and services where required to deliver the programme of works proposed. The revenue implications of the projects will be assessed during the development of their business cases and will be contained within the overall £1.33m budget.

Legal implications

35. The Citizens' Climate Assembly has no decision making powers but has an advisory role which allows them to make recommendations to Cabinet on proposals to develop and deliver projects in support of the council's commitments following the declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency on 8 March 2019.
36. £1.33 million of the New Homes Bonus was allocated to the managing climate change reserve and this report now seeks authorisation to spend that allocation.
37. There are no legal implications arising from the development of business cases for the prioritised projects and the implementation of the projects will be in accordance with the council's contract procedure rules and financial procedure rules. Risk management.

Risk management

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
That the recommendations presented by the Citizens Climate Assembly are not achievable and resources not available.	<p>A review was carried out of all of the proposed actions. Relevant council officers consulted and outline proposals worked up.</p> <p>Funding allocations are indicated in the resource implications section of the report to ensure all works are properly resourced.</p> <p>All resources required are to be funded from the dedicated Climate Reserve.</p>
That all the recommendations fall to Herefordshire Council.	Guidance was given to the assembly that recommendations can fall to partners, and there are good partnerships already established in the areas of climate change.
Ensuring proper project management support	The programme of works will be supported by the Programme Management Office and a risk register will be maintained as projects are further developed and implemented. Significant risks will be escalated to relevant risk registers as per the risk management framework.

38. Working on the assumption that the recommendations will be approved, the relevant risks will be managed at a service level in the risk register for Environment and Waste.

Consultees

39. The Citizens Climate Assembly itself is based on meaningful and engaging consultation.
40. All members briefing session 9 December 2021.
41. Cabinet members engaged through a briefing on 7 April 2022.
42. Two responses were received through the Political Group Consultation:
- Cllr for the Central Ward showed support.
 - Cllr for the Tupsley Ward was not supportive.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Summary of Climate Citizens’ Assembly recommendations and the projects they have informed
- Appendix 2 – Proposed Action Plan

Background papers

- None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 11/04/2022
Finance	Louise Devlin	Date 05/04/2022
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 11/04/2022
Finance	Joanne Moore	Date 14/04/2022
Legal	Alice McAlpine	Date 11/04/2022
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 25/03/2022
Equality Duty	Carol Trachonitis	Date 24/03/2022
Procurement	Mark Cage	Date 29/03/2022
Risk	Kevin Lloyd	Date 29/03/2022

Approved by Ross Cook Date 14/04/2022

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms

- Herefordshire Citizens' Climate Assembly (HCCA)
- Project Management Office (PMO)
- Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)