

Title of report: Executive Response to the Motion Regarding the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Decision maker: Cabinet Member Environment

Director: Director for Economy and Environment

Report by: Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste Services, Sustainability & Climate Change Manager

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To approve the response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency resolution that was unanimously supported at the meeting of Full Council on 28 July 2023.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The executive's response to the resolutions relating to the climate emergency passed by Full Council on 28 July 2023 be agreed as detailed in Appendix 1.**

Alternative options

1. None proposed. It is a Constitutional requirement that all motions by Council are referred to Cabinet.

Key considerations

2. The Climate and Ecological Emergency resolution that was unanimously supported at the meeting of Full Council on 28 July 2023 states: 'Council resolves to declare its recognition of the climate and ecological emergency, and calls on the executive to:

- a. Integrate consideration of climate and nature into all council decision-making, and ensure that all decisions are compatible with the goal of a zero-carbon, nature-rich Herefordshire;
 - b. Commit to further accelerating reduction of the council's own carbon footprint towards the target of net zero by 2030, including taking every opportunity to reduce use of fossil fuels;
 - c. Commit to taking every opportunity to improve protection of nature, including on council-owned land;
 - d. Support and strengthen action with partners towards the goal of a zero-carbon, nature-rich Herefordshire, including through the Herefordshire Climate and Nature Partnership Board;
 - e. Provide the necessary resources for officers to deliver on the council's carbon reduction and nature protection commitments, and to monitor and report annually on the county position.'
3. At the meeting of full council on 8 March 2019, the council unanimously declared a Climate Emergency, the executive response to this declaration can be found here: <https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50073965/Executive%20Response%20to%20the%20Climate%20Emergency%20main%20report.pdf>.
 4. To date, 308 local authorities (75%) of first and second tier councils in the UK have now declared a Climate Emergency¹. In addition, officers have joined the LGA 'Climate Action Group' which is a network designed to support officers working in climate change related roles within local government. Members discuss emerging issues and trends affecting councils, and hear from each other and guests on new policies, programmes and practices.
 5. An executive response to each aspect of the Climate and Ecological Emergency resolution is detailed in Appendix 1.

Community impact

6. Delivering on the CEE Declaration will result in improvements that will benefit all who reside and visit the county by protecting local nature, improving air quality, public health, and reducing fuel poverty. These factors in addition to efficiencies from addressing the climate and ecological emergency will positively contribute towards the delivery of the Council's County Plan (2020-24), specifically the following success measures:
 - a. Increase flood resilience and reduce levels of phosphate pollution in the county's river.
 - b. Reduce the council's carbon emissions.
 - c. Work in partnership with others to reduce county carbon emissions.
 - d. Improve the air quality within Herefordshire.
 - e. Improve residents' access to green space in Herefordshire.
 - f. Improve energy efficiency of homes and build standards for new housing.

¹ <https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/list-of-councils/>

7. The development of the new carbon management plan and associated action plan will be developed to jointly contribute to the delivery of the council's wider strategic aims including the Health and Well-being strategy, Local Transport Plan, Air Quality Strategy, Big Economic Plan and Housing strategy.
8. Additionally local leadership on the Climate and Ecological Emergency will promote healthy lifestyles through local food choices, will support business diversification into low carbon goods and services, and will encourage active travel choices and the transition to ultra-low emission vehicles

Environmental Impact

9. Delivering on the CEE declaration directly contributes towards the delivery of the County Plan's ambitions to:
 - a. Protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live
 - b. Support an economy which builds on the county's strengths and resources

Specifically this will deliver positive impacts on the following success factors:

- i. Increase flood resilience and reduce levels of phosphate pollution in the county's river
 - ii. Reduce the council's carbon emissions
 - iii. Work in partnership with others to reduce county carbon emissions
 - iv. Improve the air quality within Herefordshire
 - v. Improve residents' access to green space in Herefordshire
 - vi. Improve energy efficiency of homes and build standards for new housing
 - vii. Increase the number of short distance trips being done by sustainable modes of travel – walking, cycling, public transport
10. Delivering on the CEE declaration also delivers on the commitments outlined in the Council's Environmental policy: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/directory-record/4848/environmental-policy>

Equality duty

11. 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.

12. 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.
13. Environmental inequalities tend to disproportionately adversely impact areas of deprivation and those with lower household income. By addressing the Climate and Ecological emergency we will also help to address this inequality.

Specifically by addressing the CEE we will:

- a. Improve access to nature and green spaces;
- b. Improve air quality for all;
- c. Reduce fuel poverty; and
- d. Improve public health.

Resource implications

14. The development of the new county plan will take into account the CEE declaration. The development of the new plan and options appraisals will be undertaken within existing resources and will help to inform future resources needs.
15. Future project proposals will continue to be developed on an individual basis and business cases and capital bids will be considered on their merits.

Legal implications

16. Paragraph 4.1.88 of the Constitution requires any motion by Council that is referred to Cabinet, to be reported to Cabinet within 6 months. This report and the outcome of the meeting will constitute Cabinet's view and response on the motion.

Risk management

Risk / opportunity

Resources (risk) – In order to achieve the target, additional activity, projects and resources are likely to be required.

Mitigation

Building on the success of the previous carbon management plans, a five year action plan will be developed to explore the resource requirements and will be brought forward in a subsequent decision report.

Herefordshire Council has a strong record of securing grant funding to deliver environmental projects and the teams will continue to apply to grant opportunities to deliver on our CEE commitment as they become available.

Reputation (both risk and opportunity) – There is a reputational risk of not adopting the proposed carbon reduction targets despite the unanimously supported motion at Full Council in March.

As a leading authority on successfully delivering a local carbon reduction, the council is well placed to build on and accelerate plans for local carbon reduction.

The recommendations are to adopt the carbon neutrality targets and to develop robust plans to ensure the successful delivery of this commitment.

17. The relevant risks will be managed at a service level and will be recorded in the relevant Environment & Waste Service Plans, escalated where necessary in accordance with the council's Risk Management Plan.

Consultees

18. None.

Appendices

19. Appendix 1 - Summary of executive responses to the Climate Emergency and Citizens Assembly motions to full council.

Background papers

20. None identified.

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published

Governance	John Coleman	Date 27/10/2023
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 20/10/2023
	Judith Tranmer	Date 23/10/2023
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 19/10/2023

Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 10/11/2023
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 25/10/2023
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 20/10/2023
Risk	Kevin Lloyd	Date 24/10/2023

Approved by	Ross Cook	Date 13/11/2023
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Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

- CEE - Climate and Ecological Emergency