



Report to Cabinet

Date:	16 February 2021
Title:	Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy
Relevant councillor(s):	Councillor Bill Chapple OBE Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change
Author and/or contact officer:	Edward Barlow edward.barlow@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	(All Wards);
Recommendations:	<p>To AGREE the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy for the purpose of further targeted engagement.</p> <p>To AGREE that the further targeted engagement is with a view to considering the best way in which the strategy can be delivered and implemented.</p> <p>To AGREE to reconsider the strategy following the above targeted engagement to determine next steps.</p>

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy has been developed following the motion at Council on 15 July 2020 regarding climate change. The strategy sets our proposed approach to addressing climate change and air quality across Buckinghamshire, including targets for emissions reduction from the council's direct operations.
- 1.2 This report recommends that further targeted engagement is undertaken regarding the delivery and implementation of the strategy. This report is accompanied by the proposed Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy and a separate Executive Summary of the strategy.

2. Content of report

2.1 The Strategic Approach

2.2 Our overall strategy for addressing climate change and air quality is based upon our ability to control or influence different sources of emissions. The degree of control or influence we have is reflected in the nature of the actions for an emission source. We have articulated this varying influence across four levels / approaches:

- a) **Direct Control:** Where we have direct control, we will take action to reduce emissions, for example by installing renewable energy systems (such as solar panels) on our buildings.
- b) **Financial / Regulatory Role:** Where we have financial or regulatory influence, we will look to use these abilities to reduce emissions, for example using our local planning powers to reduce emissions from new developments.
- c) **Enabling Change:** Where we can enable others to reduce emissions, we will support that change, for example by providing electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- d) **Inform and Influence:** In other circumstances, we shall seek to inform and influence those who do have control over emissions, for example by raising public awareness of climate change and air quality issues.

2.3 The strategy proposes 60 actions across a range of emission sources. These actions are arranged in sections aligned with the degree of control model:

- a) The Council's Emissions – covering how we will reduce our direct emissions.
- b) Suppliers and Partners – covering how we will work with Community Boards, schools, suppliers and partner organisations to reduce emissions.
- c) County-wide – covering how we'll work to reduce emissions from non-council sources of emissions across Buckinghamshire, such as a from transportation and new developments.

2.4 Carbon Emission Targets

2.5 The strategy provides milestone targets to be achieved by 2030 and 2040 on the way to reaching net zero no later than 2050 for our direct emissions. These emissions targets have been calculated using data from the carbon audit and are presented both as reductions compared to 1990, which is the year which the UK's national

reduction targets relate to, as well compared to the 2018/19 financial year used for our recent Carbon Audit.

- 2.6 Table 1 below shows our 2030 and 2040 emission reduction targets, both when compared to the 2018/19 data from the Carbon Audit and compared to our estimated emissions for 1990. As we do not hold emissions data for 1990, to allow this comparison to be made we have estimated emissions for this year based on data from 2009¹.

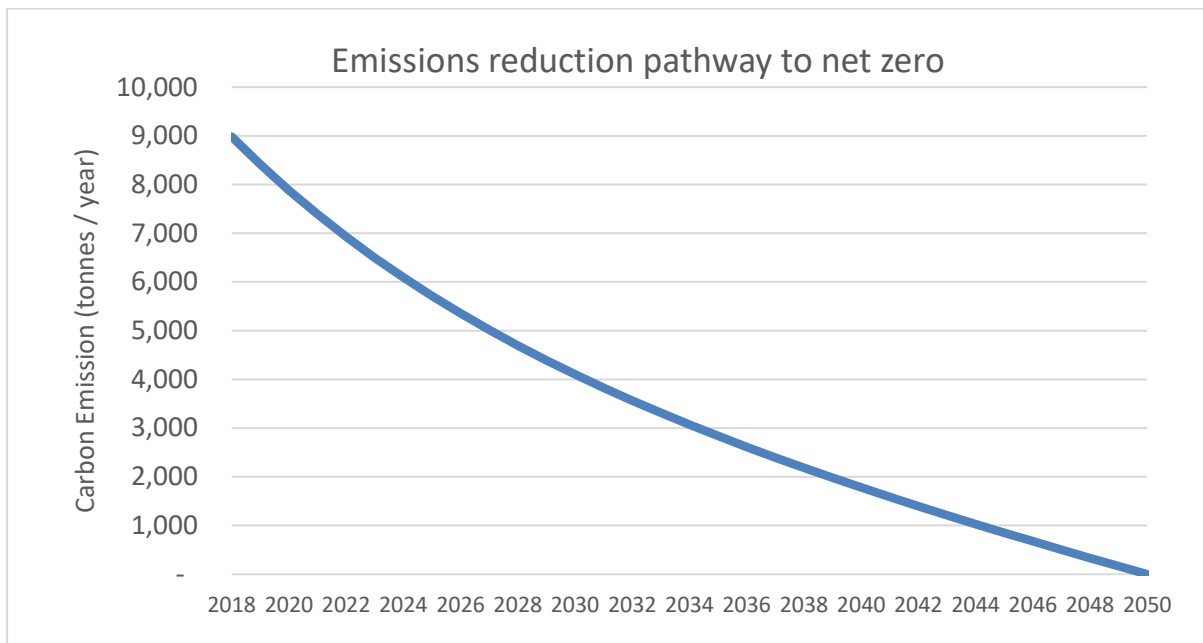
Table 1 – Buckinghamshire Council – Direct Carbon Emission Reduction Targets

	Compared to 1990 Estimate	Compared to 2018/19 Carbon Audit
2030	At least 75%	At least 50%
2040	At least 90%	At least 80%
2050	100% (net zero)	100% (net zero)

- 2.7 The 2030 and 2040 targets are part of our overall pathway to net zero carbon emissions as shown in Figure 1 below. This pathway requires a faster rate of emission reductions in earlier years and a declining rate towards 2050. With the implementation of the measures identified in the strategy and highlighted below, we are confident that we can achieve these ambitious emission reduction levels.

¹ We have assumed that energy usage (i.e. in kilowatt hours) was the same in 1990 as 2009, updating electricity emission with the correct emissions factor for 1990.

Figure 1 - Carbon emissions reduction pathway to net zero



2.8 In addition to setting interim targets for 2030 and 2040 we will monitor our emissions in line with the approach taken by the UK government, by adopting multi-year Carbon Budgets. The first Carbon Budget period covers 2020 to 2027, with subsequent periods of 5 years – this will bring us into line the UK’s national carbon budget, for which the next period runs 2023 to 2027. Each multi-year budget period provides a target emissions level to be met over that period.

2.9 Range of Actions

2.10 The strategy contains 60 actions which will support emission reductions which are arranged as per the degree of control we have (i.e. The Council’s Emissions, Suppliers and Partners and County Wide Emissions). Other actions also cover monitoring and reporting of progress against these targets and the approach to reviewing and updating the strategy as necessary.

2.11 Actions which address the council’s emissions include:

- a) Energy efficiency improvements for our buildings and more renewable generation. This is will include improving the efficiency of lighting by upgrading to LED systems, improving the efficiency of heating systems and installing further solar photovoltaic (PV) systems on suitable buildings
- b) Continuation of the street lighting upgrades to highly efficiency LED equivalents, which can reduce energy consumption by over 70%

- c) Reducing emissions from our fleet including by moving toward electric vehicle equivalents
 - d) Installing solar car ports at suitable car park locations, to produce renewable energy
 - e) Undertaking a programme of large-scale tree planting, which will absorb carbon and help us to achieve net-zero carbon emissions whilst also providing other environmental benefits such as supporting biodiversity and reducing flood risk.
- 2.12 Actions in the strategy for non-council emissions include improving infrastructure for active transport and electric vehicles, encouraging environmentally sustainable behaviour and working with communities (including Community Boards), partners and suppliers to reduce emission across Buckinghamshire.
- 2.13 This is a sample of the actions contained in the strategy, the full version of which accompanies this report.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 We have considered a range of options for reducing emissions in arriving at the proposed actions. This has considered the source of the emission (e.g. street lighting or buildings) and the technologies and approaches available to reduce emissions from this source.
- 3.2 Other options considered for reducing our emissions include the use of carbon offsets credits and the purchasing of renewable (green) energy. Both these options would allow the council to report lower net carbon emissions, however both are also associated with some uncertainty regarding their effectiveness in reducing carbon emissions.
- 3.3 The strategy proposes to review these options to determine the additional carbon benefits which may be achieved through their use, so that a view on their future role in reaching our reduction targets can be taken.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 There is no legal requirement for the council to have a strategy addressing climate change and air quality, or to set itself emissions reduction targets. The strategy has been developed with in recognition of the importance of addressing climate change and air quality, and the role the council can have in leading local action on these issues.
- 4.2 **Investment in carbon emission reductions**

- 4.3 We have modelled the impact of a range of carbons reduction measures on our current emissions to identify how we can reduce our emissions to net-zero by 2050. This work has also projected the scale of investment required to achieve these along with the proposed funding sources. It is important to note that these figures are estimated at this time and that detailed business cases will be developed to determine the final costs and benefits of each measure ahead of individual projects proceeding.
- 4.4 In total, an estimated capital programme of £8.89m is outlined with a further £0.79m required to meet the revenue costs associated with the tree planting programme, for example maintenance during establishment. The total estimated investment required is £9.68m, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Financial summary of measures to reduce the council’s net carbon emissions

	Salix Funding (Loan)	Climate Change Fund (£5m)	Grants	Total Value
Building Measures	£0.70m	£0.35m	-	£1.05m
Solar Car Ports	£0.60m	£0.34m	-	£0.94m
Street Lighting	£1.80m	-	-	£1.80m
Fleet	-	£0.60m	£0.20m	£0.80m
Tree Planting	-	£2.50m	£1.80m	£4.30m
Total	£3.10m	£3.79m	£2.00m	£8.89m
Tree planting – revenue costs		£0.79m		£0.79m
Climate change fund – proposed allocation		£4.58m		£9.68m

- 4.5 Salix Funding relates to the use of interest free loans provided by Salix Finance Ltd which are available to public sector organisations investing in energy efficiency measures. The council has a £1.76m ‘recycling fund’ which will continue to be reinvested in further measures and it is anticipated that further Salix finance will be required via separate Salix loans. The Salix recycling fund is replenished with the financial savings of eligible energy efficiency projects, allowing for the fund to be reinvested multiple times.
- 4.6 The Climate Change Fund has been created to support investment in carbon reduction measures and has a total value of £5m. We have not allocated all the funds at this time to allow for variations in costs to be met and to allow for new schemes to be identified and added to the programme.
- 4.7 The grants available are related to those available to support the cost of a new electric vehicles and to support the delivery of tree planting.

4.8 It should be noted that the above spending proposals only represent a part of the council's spending on climate change. Many departments address climate change and air quality through their existing work though these budgets are not registered as climate change spend.

5. Corporate implications

5.1 Addressing climate change is a key area for action in our Corporate Plan, supporting the priority for improving our environment.

5.2 Key corporate implications are related to the investment areas identified for emissions reduction. These include our properties, both buildings where energy efficiency improvements would be made and land holdings for the tree planting programme. Our vehicle fleet, street lighting and car parks (in relation to solar car port potential) are also areas where measures are proposed but where we will need to ensure the operational requirements of these assets is sustained or improved.

5.3 The departments who manage these assets have been involved in the development of this strategy and will be key as we move the outlined programme of measures into specific projects for delivery. This will ensure that reducing our carbon emissions is achieved in a way which compliments the delivery of other council services.

6. Communication, engagement & further work

6.1 The strategy highlights that the council has direct control over a small volume of emissions within Buckinghamshire and as such how we work with others to reduce emissions is important.

6.2 The process of targeted engagement will help us to refine our approach to implementing this strategy and delivering on our emission reduction ambitions.

6.3 The targeted engagement is proposed to involve Community Boards, the Transport, Environment and Climate Change (TECC) Select Committee and schools.

6.4 After this targeted engagement process has been undertaken an updated strategy will return to Cabinet to consider next steps. Due to the notable uncertainty regarding whether the May 2021 local elections will go ahead as planned, it is not clear at this time which future Cabinet meeting this will return to. However, it is anticipated that this will be after the May elections, assuming they are held as currently planned.

7. Next steps and review

- 7.1 We will now start the targeted engagement activity as described above, ahead of the anticipated start of the pre-election period (purdah), ahead of the planned May 2021 elections.
- 7.2 When the targeted engagement activity has been completed, this strategy will return to Cabinet for further consideration on next steps.
- 7.3 Actions which are already in progress will continue to be implemented during this engagement period as well as during purdah.

8. Background papers

- 8.1 Carbon Baseline Audit
- 8.2 Draft Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy
- 8.3 Draft Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy – Executive Summary

9. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 9.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

