

**Meeting:** Cabinet **Date:** 22 March 2022

**Wards affected:** All

**Report Title:** Carbon Neutral Council Programme

**When does the decision need to be implemented?** Immediately

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## 1. Purpose of Report

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- 1.1 Council declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019. A range of actions are already being taken but there is now an immediate need to accelerate actions to work towards tackling the Climate Emergency and Torbay becoming carbon neutral by 2030.
- 1.2 The Council understands that it has a key leadership role in talking climate change. On 23 March 2021 Cabinet approved the Carbon Neutral Torbay Approach (2021-2022) and Initial Action Plan. This included the Council developing plans to reduce carbon emissions across its operations, estate, fleet, and other services.
- 1.3 This paper seeks approval for two key elements of the approved Carbon Neutral (CN) Torbay Approach (2021-2022), Torbay Council's:
  1. Environment and Carbon Neutral Corporate Policy
  2. Carbon Neutral Council Action Plan

## 2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

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- 2.1 Climate change is having a major impact on our planet, and locally in Torbay. Our planet is warming, and we are seeing a range of impacts. It has been predicted that due to the climate change we will see the sea level rise in Torbay by over one metre in the next 100 years. In the next 100 years the frequency and impact of water coming over the top of the sea walls will increase, resulting in more infrastructure and properties being affected by flooding. On top of that, more intense rainfall will increase the risk of localised flooding and erosion.
- 2.2 Proposals in this report will help the Council lead by example and accelerate action to tackle climate change locally, focussing on things the Council can directly control or influence.
- 2.3 These proposals will also create a range of economic, health, social and wider environmental benefits locally and help Torbay thrive. See Para 1.17.

## 3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

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1. That the Environment and Carbon Neutral Policy, attached as Appendix 1, be approved.
2. That the initial Carbon Neutral Council Action Plan, attached as Appendix 3, be approved and that authority be delegated to the Divisional Director Planning, Housing and Climate Emergency in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Environment and Culture, to review, amend and refresh the Action Plan as required.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Environment and Carbon Neutral Policy

Appendix 2: Summary of the Carbon Neutral Council Action Plan – Presentation

Appendix 3: Initial Carbon Neutral Council Action Plan

### **Background Documents**

[Carbon Neutral Torbay Approach 2021 – 22 and initial Action Plan.](#)

## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 There is scientific consensus<sup>1</sup> that currently observed global warming is overwhelmingly a result of human influence, being significantly over and above the warming caused by natural factors alone. Human and natural systems are already being impacted as our climate changes. We are seeing flooding, droughts, heatwaves, and crop yield reductions all being experienced more frequently.
- 1.2 Internationally most Governments continue to work towards keeping global temperature rises below 1.5C by the 2100 and avoiding the worst of the climate crisis's impacts.
- 1.3 In 2019 Torbay (area-wide) was responsible for emitting 424,000 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)<sup>2</sup>. 42 percent of Torbay's emissions come from heating and powering our homes, 31 percent from travel, 20 percent from commerce and industry and 7 percent from other sources.
- 1.4 The challenge of creating a CN Torbay by 2030 is significant. For Torbay we will need to reduce, remove or store 424,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>.
- 1.5 To achieve this will require everyone in Torbay to play a part. This is why the Council developed a [Carbon Neutral Torbay Approach 2021 – 22 and initial Action Plan](#). It has also facilitated the development of a new Torbay Climate Partnership to lead the development of a new CN Torbay-wide action plan in 2022 and will hold a series of climate conversations to codesign and develop this Plan.
- 1.6 As part of the commitments made in the Torbay Approach, Torbay Council has developed its own coordinated approach to tackling climate change across its operations and services.
- 1.7 Torbay Council's operations and services are directly, and indirectly, responsible for a range of impacts on our natural environment. A carbon footprint is in development for the Council. This requires further refinement; however, it estimates that in 2019/20 the Council was responsible for over 5400 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e<sup>3</sup>. Further refinement of this data is needed before it can be used as the Council's baseline against which the 2030 carbon neutral target will be assessed.
- 1.8 To accelerate and reduce the Council's carbon footprint the following has also been developed.

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC (2014) Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

<sup>2</sup> Source: [UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2019](#)

<sup>3</sup> Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide Equivalents and including some SWISCo and TDA data.

## **Environment and Carbon Neutral Policy**

- 1.9 The Council need to change how it works, developing future actions and ways of working to minimise the impact the Council has on the natural environment and to play a leading part in tackling the climate emergency locally.
- 1.10 To help staff understand their role in tackling the climate emergency the Council needs a new corporate policy.
- 1.11 Appendix 1 outlines the draft Environment and Carbon Neutral Policy.
- 1.12 The Policy includes a series of principles covering the following themes:
- Become a carbon neutral Council by 2030
  - Reduce energy and generate low carbon energy
  - Minimise waste and water consumption
  - Transition to a zero-emission fleet
  - Use sustainable resources
  - Protect and enhance the natural environment
  - Climate resilience
  - Measure and report our performance
- 1.13 The Policy applies to all Council employees. It also applies to the Council's wholly owned companies, the TDA and SWISCo, especially when delivering services commissioned by Torbay Council. It will be refreshed regularly.

## **Carbon Neutral Action Plan**

- 1.14 A Carbon Neutral Council Action Plan (Action Plan) has also been drafted. It outlines the actions the Council will take to reduce carbon emissions across its own operations and services. It also includes some of the Council services delivered by the Council's two wholly owned companies - SWISCo and TDA.
- 1.15 It commits the Council to a series of actions it will take from January 2022 up to 1st April 2024, including actions to start to decarbonise the estate and fleet. See Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 for summaries of the Action Plan. A detailed version also exists which contains lead officers, delivery timescales and a range of other information. This will also be used to monitor the progress of the Plan.
- 1.16 The primary focus of this Action Plan is on actions relating directly to Council operations. It also covers actions where the Council can use its influence to reduce carbon emissions across Torbay. However, a more detailed Carbon Neutral Torbay Action Plan will be developed in 2022 by the Torbay Climate Partnership covering how partners (including the Council), businesses and communities will take action and collectively play their part in tackling the climate emergency locally.
- 1.17 There are many benefits for the Council in adopting and delivering these proposals. Including:
- A working culture that is reducing environmental impacts, tackling the climate and ecological emergencies, and meeting its Community and Corporate Plan (2019-2023) vision including helping Torbay thrive.
  - More efficient and effective use of natural resources such as energy, fuel, water, and paper

- Ability to reduce the Council’s carbon footprint
- A more efficient use of Council resources<sup>4</sup>
- More teams coordinating action, sharing of best practice, cross-service working and effective management
- Improved employee physical and mental health through increased use of active travel
- Allows the council to start to adopt the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These have been designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all".
- Figure 1 summarises a range of wider benefits for Torbay including reducing environmental impacts, tackling the climate and ecological emergencies, and meeting its Community and Corporate Plan (2019-2023) vision.



## 2. Options under consideration.

### 2.1 Members can consider to:

- (i) Not approve the proposed Policy and Action Plan and adopt an ad-hoc, not fully coordinated approach to tackling the Climate Emergency and meeting the Community and Corporate Plan’s carbon neutral ambitions
- (ii) Approve the Policy and Action Plan as per para 1.7 – 1.16 and ensure real action commences across the Council resulting in significant progress towards tackling the

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<sup>4</sup> Initially, costs may be higher for what we are procuring, or delivering to meet this policy but that delivering this ambition is essential and the real/social cost of not doing so will be far greater for the council in the future.

Climate Emergency, 2030 CN Council target and meeting the Community and Corporate Plan's CN ambitions.

- 2.2 Option (i) above will result in actions developing on ad-hoc basis. Due to the uncoordinated nature of this option, there will be no overall plan with prioritised actions capable of making significant progress towards 2030 target and Community and Corporate Plan's CN ambitions. This option is therefore not recommended.
- 2.3 Option (ii) is the preferred, recommended option. It will provide the Council with the best chance of significant progress towards tackling the Climate Emergency, 2030 CN Council target and meeting the Community and Corporate Plan's CN ambitions.

### 3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

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- 3.1 There will be financial consequences of adopting the Policy and Action Plan.
- 3.2 For the Policy there will be times when additional funding may be required to support this policy. Where staff cannot identify any internal or external funding officers will need to contact their managers, finance team and the Climate Emergency Officer for advice. Some environmentally friendly, carbon saving projects/products may have an initial up-front cost that is more expensive, however, please consider the full costs over the whole lifecycle of the project/product, including any operational savings such as using less energy, fuel, or reduced maintenance costs. When seeking approval for a project, where funding cannot be found to meet the Policy, officers must identify this in their Emerging Issues papers or Cabinet report, under the Climate Change section.
- 3.3 The Council already spends a significant amount of money on improving the environment. In 2021/22 the Council with partners committed over £10 million to deliver the [Initial Carbon Neutral Torbay Initial Action Plan \(2021-22\)](#). Some of the work outlined in the proposed new Action Plan proposed can be delivered through existing budgets. We recognise that fully transitioning to carbon neutral will require significant additional capital and revenue funding but that delivering this ambition is essential and the real/social cost of not doing so would be far greater.
- 3.4 In 2021/22 the Council had three dedicated climate change funding pots, with a combined value of just under £340,000. These will help to fund a range of projects within the Action Plan. Including:
- Earth Hour public event
  - Decarbonisation Plans for approximately seven of the worst performing council buildings
  - New energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating systems
  - Green Fleet Review and electric vehicle pilot
  - Initial installation of electric vehicle charging point(s) to aid fleet transition
  - Staff travel initiatives
  - Carbon Literacy Training for staff
  - Procurement and Commissioning Staff Training

- Community climate conversations in 2022 and full public consultation
- Rewilding projects
- Match funding for forthcoming Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding bids  
(Please note these may change once the Decarbonisation Plans and Green Fleet review results and recommendations are known)

- 3.5 Additional staff are required to deliver some of the actions in the Action Plan, including the need for a new energy contract officer, energy officer, climate emergency support officer. Some of the resources needed are proposed in the Budget Proposal 2022/2023. An officer to coordinate staff travel is also required.
- 3.6 Changes, to better reflect the need for proactive energy and water management of estate and clear decarbonisation plans, in line with the 2030 carbon neutral target, need to be added to various the Service Level Agreements (SLAs).
- 3.7 It is also recommended in the Action Plan that capital funding will be required annually to transition the estate and fleet to carbon neutral by 2030, as too will funding be required to build new construction projects to higher low carbon standards pre- 2025. The Cabinet's budget recommendations for 2022/23 supports this need for capital funding with proposals to borrow £1m to support delivery of the Action Plan. The proposed £1m funding, if approved, would be spent on:
- Implementing the recommendations of the Decarbonisation Plans carried out on council-maintained schools and the worst energy performing council buildings (see para 3.4). This is likely to include funding measures to improve the building fabric and building management systems and installing solar panels and replacing gas boilers with low carbon alternatives such as heat pumps.
  - Implementing the recommendations of the Green Fleet Review including funding electric vehicle pilots and associated recharging infrastructure.
- There are also external funds that may support delivering this Action Plan. See Appendix 3.
- 3.8 The Council may need to identify further funding to support the Climate Emergency, to ensure that pressure isn't placed on existing departmental budgets to deliver the Action Plan and policy objectives. It may not be possible in all cases for those existing budgets to identify the required level of funding.
- 3.9 Some environmentally friendly, carbon saving projects/products may have an initially up-front cost that is more expensive, however, officers will be asked to consider the full costs over the whole lifecycle of the project/product, including any operational savings such as using less energy or fuel and reduced maintenance costs. This should be considered as part of the initial options appraisal for any scheme.

## 4. Legal Implications

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- 4.1 There are no legal implications at this stage.

## 5. Engagement and Consultation

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- 5.1 The Policy and Action Plan have been developed through the Council's CN Council Officers Group. This is made up of officers from across the Council, TDA and SWISCo.
- 5.2 In addition to this group the Policy went to ELT, JTCC, Overview and Scrutiny Board, SLT and TDA and SWISCo Boards for comment.

## 6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

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- 6.1 At this stage there are no procurement issues. However, appropriate procurement processes will be addressed through the delivery of individual schemes within the Action Plan.

## 7. Tackling Climate Change

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- 7.1 This paper proposes two important strategic documents that will deliver actions to tackle the Climate Emergency and work towards becoming Carbon Neutral (CN) council and CN Torbay.

## 8. Associated Risks

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- 8.1 If option ii is not approved there will be no overall plan with prioritised actions capable of making significant progress towards carbon neutrality by 2030. This would risk failure to meet the Community and Corporate Plan's priority to become a CN council and community. Having declared a climate emergency and publicly committed to achieving carbon neutrality this will put the Council at great reputational risk.
- 8.2 Option i may also risk the implementation of actions that will not deliver the best carbon and wider outcomes and could risk directing currently limited resources to less beneficial actions/actions that actively increase greenhouse gases.
- 8.3 Not implementing the approach will also delay low carbon investment and, potentially, prevent the Council from maximising additional funding opportunities in the future.

## 9. Equality Impacts - Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

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	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people	The Council Action Plan supports a range of actions that support creating energy efficient,		

	warmer, and healthier homes. It will also support reducing homes in fuel poverty. Tree planting, Sustainable, active transport projects are also included in the Council Action Plan and will help improve air quality and health of older and young people.		
People with caring Responsibilities			No direct impacts at the stage
People with a disability		Some active travel options within the Policy and Action Plan could exclude people with disability. For all projects will work with staff and the community to ensure new plans do not have any negative impacts on this specific group.	
Women or men			No direct impacts at the stage
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)			No direct impacts at the stage
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			No direct impacts at the stage
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			No direct impacts at the stage
People who are transgendered			No direct impacts at the stage
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			No direct impacts at the stage
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			No direct impacts at the stage
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on	The Council Action Plan supports a range of actions that support		

child poverty issues and deprivation)	creating energy efficient, cheaper to run homes. It will also support reducing homes in fuel poverty. Active transport projects will improve accessibility across Torbay and Tree planting and rewilding projects will help enhance local areas.		
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	Council Action Plan supports a range of actions that support creating energy efficient, warmer, and healthier homes. It will also support reducing homes in fuel poverty. Tree planting, Sustainable, active transport projects are also included in the Council Action Plan and will help improve air quality and health of the population of Torbay.		

## 10. Cumulative Council Impact

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- 10.1 It is possible that other services could adversely affect the ability of the Council to meet its CN 2030 target by continuing to do things that give rise to carbon emissions or developing projects/policies that increase the Council's carbon emissions. This is why the proposed Policy and Action Plans are so important as a tool to help staff consider and make more sustainable, low carbon decisions. Carbon Literacy training and regular staff communication will also be important.

## 11. Cumulative Community Impact

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- 11.1 It is likely that Torbay's communities, businesses, and organisations all will adversely affect the ability of Torbay to meet its CN 2030 target if they continue to do things that give rise to carbon emissions and by developing new projects/practices that increase carbon emissions. This is why the newly established Torbay Climate Partnership is so important in helping all of Torbay make more sustainable, low carbon decisions. Their communication and engagement plans will be vital in helping change behaviour.