

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 8 NOVEMBER 2022

THE COUNCIL'S NET ZERO CARBON PLAN

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for the Environment and the Director of Economy and Infrastructure have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on developments relating to the Worcestershire County Council's (the Council's) Net Zero Plan.

Background

2. The Panel has requested a progress report on the Council's Net Zero Carbon Plan, as part of its current work programme.
3. The Council's first Net Zero Carbon Plan, approved by Cabinet in October 2020, was produced in direct response to the Notice of Motion agreed at the Council meeting on 16 May 2019. At this meeting the Council pledged to make the Council carbon neutral by 2050 and to continue to work with partners across the county and region to deliver this goal.
4. A further Notice of Motion was agreed at the Council meeting on 15 July 2021 as follows:

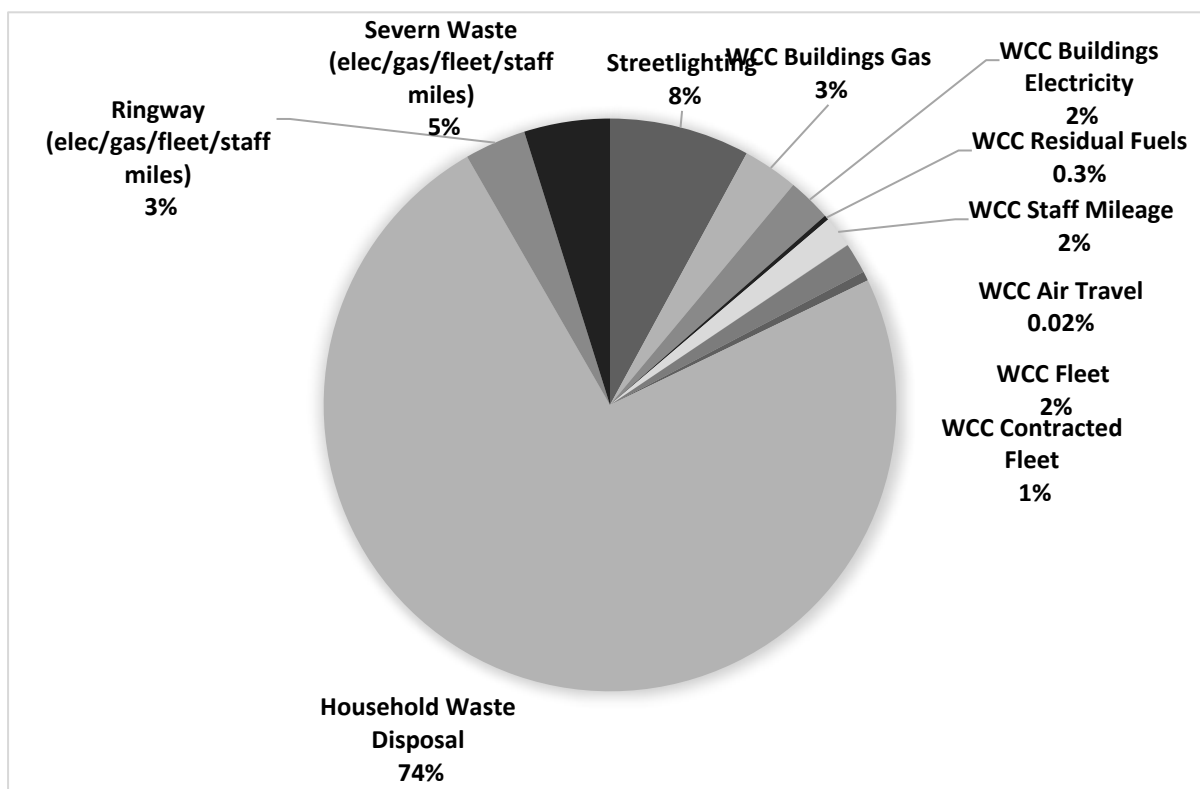
"The Council agreed to declare a climate emergency and commit to the following:

- *Endorse the Council's ambitious Net Zero Carbon Plan.*
- *Continue to work with our partner authorities to review and update all relevant strategies.*
- *Establish a Member Advisory Group to assist with the future revision of the plan and report annually on actions taken.*
- *Reaffirm the target of reaching net carbon neutral by 2050 in line with the Government's target"*

Net Zero Carbon Plan

5. The Council currently accounts for carbon emissions from its own buildings, street lighting, fleet, staff travel and some major contracts, such as highways maintenance and household waste management. Since 2009/10 there has been an overall net emissions reduction of 47%.
6. This reduction has been achieved through measures detailed in the Council's Net Zero Carbon Plan, including investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy on the Council's estate, increase in remote working, contraction of estate and fleet, reduction in the carbon intensity of UK grid electricity and the move from the landfilling of household waste to disposal through the Hartlebury Energy from Waste facility - EnviRecover.

7. The Council's accounted absolute carbon emissions (not accounting for any offsetting) were 44,928 tonnes CO₂^e in 2021/22, (a 41% reduction since 2009/10). The chart below illustrates the sources of these emissions: 74% of which were attributed to the Council's role as waste disposal authority. The next largest source was street lighting - 8%.



8. The Council is procuring green electricity for its buildings and street lighting, which enables it to offset virtually all emissions associated with electricity use, (4,286 tonnes CO₂^e), bringing net emissions for 2021/22 to 40,642 tonnes CO₂^e and a net emissions reduction of 47% since 2009/10.

	2009/10 Baseline t/CO ₂ ^e	2021/22 t/CO ₂ ^e	Net Reduction t/CO ₂ ^e	% Net Reduction
SCOPE 1	4,598	2,300	2,294	50 %
SCOPE 2	16,672	0	16,672	100 %
SCOPE 3	55,266	38,342	16,924	31 %
TOTAL	76,536	40,645	35,891	47 %

9. The Council reports emissions under 3 'Scopes'. Scopes 1 and 2 are emissions the Council has direct control over and Scope 3 are emissions over which the Council has indirect control:

- Scope 1: emissions from heating its buildings and fuelling its fleet.
- Scope 2: emissions from use of electricity in buildings and street lighting.

- Scope 3: emissions associated with the services and goods the council buys.
10. Scope 1 and 2 net emissions have reduced 89% since 2009/10 and Scope 3 emissions have reduced 31% since 2009/10.
 11. The Council reports on its emissions every year, publishing a greenhouse gas report on its website (attached at Appendix 1).
 12. The Net Zero Carbon Plan is currently being reviewed. The updated plan is due to go to Cabinet in early 2023.

Net Zero and Biodiversity Member Advisory Group (MAG)

12. As part of its Climate Emergency declaration, the Council committed to setting up a MAG on Net Zero Carbon. The mandate of this group was expanded in January 2022 to also include biodiversity, as the Council recognises there is a clear link between climate change, reducing carbon emissions and protecting biodiversity. The role of this group is to advise the Cabinet Member for the Environment on Net Zero Carbon and biodiversity issues and to assist with future revision of the Net Zero Carbon Plan.
13. The MAG which is chaired by the CMR for Environment is currently exploring a range of areas of Council work related to net zero carbon and biodiversity. It has looked at benchmarking data outlined below, it is reviewing a draft of the revised Net Zero Carbon Plan and is considering the role of the Council in tackling climate change across the county.

Benchmarking

14. There have been two recent UK and regional local authority benchmarking exercises:

UK Council Climate Plan Scorecards

15. This exercise, undertaken in Summer 2021 by trained volunteers on behalf of Climate Emergency UK, scored UK councils' published climate change plans. 409 councils were assessed on a wide range of criteria. Actual actions taken by councils to cut carbon and adapt to climate change were not assessed. Councils were given a right to reply, which this Council used.
16. Councils were ranked by council type. The Council scored the average County Council score of 40%. The highest scoring County Council was Somerset County Council (63%), the lowest score was 0%. The Council scored well on carbon reporting. Its lowest scores were for commitment and integration and for community engagement and communication.

West Midlands Local Authority Sustainability Benchmark Reports

17. This benchmarking exercise was undertaken in September 2021 by Sustainability West Midlands, supported by the Environment Agency. West Midlands councils were asked to assess themselves against a wide range of

criteria and submit evidence to back up their score. Actions as well as plans were assessed.

18. The Council was ranked 6th out of the 21 councils that responded. It was outside the top 5 by 0.1% and 3% below the 2nd ranked council. The Council was ranked top for carbon reduction, sustainable growth and natural environment. Further details are included in Appendix 2.

Wider Role of the Council

19. The Council is engaged in a wide range of work supporting reduction of carbon emissions across the county.
20. The Council plans to work with partners to develop a Worcestershire Net Zero Plan in 2023/24.

Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) Energy Strategy

21. Published in March 2019, and funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Council worked with WLEP to coordinate the development of its Energy Strategy. It aims to deliver the following targets:
 - Halve countywide emissions from 2005 levels by 2030 (aspiration for net zero carbon emissions by 2040)
 - Double the size of Worcestershire's low carbon sector by 2030
 - Triple the generation of renewable energy in the county by 2030 (to 15% of electricity demand).
22. The Council has provided support for the Energy Strategy Steering Group and monitors progress. The Council has also developed, and is managing, a range of projects supporting the Strategy. For example:
 - Development and management of EU funded business support programmes providing free advice and grants to improve energy and water efficiency, reduce waste, generate renewable energy, and innovate, develop and commercialise new low and zero carbon products (more than 700 local businesses have been assisted to date).
 - Development and management of EU funded advice and grants to improve biodiversity of publicly accessible land. More than 150 Worcestershire organisations have benefited, with 2,500ha land with biodiversity management plans and more than 150ha of biodiversity improvements funded.
 - Development of business and biodiversity support programmes post EU funding, e.g. Community Renewal Fund funded Zero Carbon Ready Worcestershire, which has helped more than 200 businesses and organisations, funded accreditation, smart meters and created an [online decarbonisation portal](#).
 - Pursuing the development of active travel (walking and cycling), interurban corridors and urban networks to enhance travel choice, as set out in the Worcestershire Local Transport Plan (www.worcestershire.gov.uk/LTP)
 - Installation of electric vehicle charge points in a number of car parks across Worcestershire, with additional units installed by district councils.

- Developing the County's rail network, as set out in the Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy (www.worcestershire.gov.uk/wris), including lobbying for service capacity and frequency enhancements and investment in station facilities, passenger capacity and access

23. Progress on the Energy Strategy's targets is as follows:

- Countywide carbon emissions fell by 42%, (46% per capita), from 2005 to 2020. As for the whole of UK, there was an unusually large decrease in 2020, which can be attributed to the impact of Covid lockdowns. Taking this into account, it appears the County is still currently on track for halving emissions by 2030.
- The value of Worcestershire's Low Carbon and Environmental Goods and Service Sector (LCEGS) increased 27% from £1.1bn GVA (gross value added) 2013/14 to £1.5bn GVA 2019/20. The Council initiated a BEIS funded study into the current [nature of the Midlands' Low Carbon and Environmental Goods & Services sector](#), (down to LEP level).
- 13% of Worcestershire's electricity demand is now generated from renewable sources (up from 5% in 2015).

District Councils

24. All six Worcestershire district councils have developed or are developing their own district wide climate change plans and are aligning them with WLEP's Energy Strategy. The Worcestershire Partnership Executive Group (PEG) is keen to ensure effective joint working on Climate Change. The Council is currently coordinating shared working sessions with public sector partners on various aspects of the challenges posed by climate change, such as carbon sequestration, climate change adaptation and community engagement, and is running an EU & CRF funded advice and grant funding programme supporting energy efficiency and renewable energy measures across Worcestershire's public sector.
25. The Council works closely with District Councils on the issue of fuel poverty. The Warmer Worcestershire Network, coordinated by the Council, brings together all six districts to tackle the issue of fuel poverty. The County Council coordinated access to the Energy Company Obligation funding and each district is delivering Sustainable Warmth Funding. Both schemes will improve the energy efficiency of fuel poor households and move away from the installation of fossil fuel heating systems in favour of low carbon heating. During the current energy crisis, the Council, District Councils and partners are working closely on the delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund grants, (funded by Department for Work and Pensions) to support low-income households with fuel debt, additional fuel voucher payments and heating repairs.
26. District Councils have been consulted as stakeholders as part of the Council's Ultra Low Emission Vehicle infrastructure Issues and Options Study, which is nearing completion.
27. District Councils are represented on the boards of the Council run low carbon business support programme and biodiversity advice and grants programme.

28. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment is establishing regular meetings with district portfolio holders to develop a joint Worcestershire approach.

Purpose of the Meeting

29. The Panel is asked to:

- consider and comment on the detailed update provided,
- agree any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Member for the Environment, and
- determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

Supporting Information:

Appendix 1 - weblink below

[Worcestershire County Council Greenhouse Gas Report](#)

Appendix 2 - West Midlands Local Authority Sustainability Benchmark 2021 (attached)

Specific Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager (Interim Monitoring Officer) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- [Worcestershire Energy Strategy 2019-2030](#)
- [\(\(Public Pack\) Minutes Document for Council, 16/05/2019 10:00 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)
- [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel, 04/08/2020 14:00 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)
- [22 October 2020 Cabinet Agenda and Minutes – WCC Net Zero Carbon Plan 2020](#)
- [Worcestershire County Council Net Zero Carbon Plan 2020](#)
- [15 July 2021 Council Agenda and Minutes \(Council's Climate Emergency Declaration\)](#)
- [County Councils' Climate Plan Scorecards | Climate Emergency UK \(councilclimatescorecards.uk\)](#)
- [West Midlands Local Authority Sustainability Benchmarking Report Sept 2021](#)
- [Worcestershire County Council Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2021/2022](#)