Climate & Environment Policy

Introduction

This document outlines the strategy we need to take to achieve a carbon neutral status in as short a time frame as possible. It is a high-level view and does not drill down into detail, but rather gives an overview of the main areas we need to pursue to enable us to reach that point.

Aim of the Strategy

To support the delivery of a carbon neutral Town Council by 2030 and support a carbon neutral Wiltshire by 2030, taking a leadership role within the town to mitigate the impacts of climate change and improve the ecology and town environment.

Background

Adapting to climate change means changing the way we do things – in all areas of our lives – to respond to the changing circumstances. It means not only protecting against negative impacts, but also making us better able to take advantage of any opportunities. Local Councils have a clear role to play. See Appendix 1 for description of Climate Change.

This strategy will deliver the two Council resolutions

1. Trowbridge Town Council Declares A Climate Emergency. (17 September 2019)
2. Trowbridge Town Council recognises and declares that there is an ecological emergency and will develop and implement a clear Ecology Strategy as part of its Strategy review (2021-2025) and that the council will commit to protecting, enhancing, establishing and managing new wildlife habitats where achievable as well as manage land under its control in as sustainable a way as is feasible and encourage Wiltshire Council and other key partners to do likewise. (21 July 2020)

General Commitment

Trowbridge Town Council will;

- Take a lead role in pursuing the goal of a carbon neutral town and support the achievement of a carbon neutral Wiltshire.
- The council also recognises that it has a responsibility to inform and educate local residents about the issues the planet faces and the actions it is taking and each of us can take to create a healthy and sustainable environment for ourselves and future generations.
- Provide adequate resources to ensure that Trowbridge Town Council ("the Council") is able to perform all of its duties as required by Climate and Environmental legislation and the Council motions.
- Designate an officer as its lead Environmental & Climate Officer.
- Provide effective control of the environmental risks and climate mitigations arising from our activities.
- Provide timely information, instruction and supervision for employees and residents on environmental and climate matters.
- Encourage environmental and climate mitigation improvement initiatives.
- Contribute to a local Environment Day initiative.
- Prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health, through maintaining good environmental risk assessment and control.
- Seek to minimise dust, noise and vibration and to maintain healthy working conditions for our staff and contractors.
- Include details of the implementation of this Policy in the Trowbridge Town Council Strategy 2021-2025.

- Regularly view progress against actions.
- Review and revise this policy as necessary at regular intervals .
- Establish a Trowbridge Eco liaison group with any interested partners in the town to communicate and develop good practise.
- Give future consideration to the establishment of an Environmental Officer post if external funding can be found.

Waste

- Ensure safe and legal handling and disposal of all waste.
- Provide adequate equipment, containment and cleaning materials to manage waste where identified as necessary.
- Maintain systems of information control in relation to the Council's waste, such that the public can be made aware of what and how much waste the Council manages.
- Evaluate the potential to recover or recycle our waste materials.

Carbon Reduction Actions for 2021/22

1. Staff training (achievable within budget, possible Staff training day session).
2. Ensure the website & social media reflect the Council's commitment to climate emergency & use community news to promote carbon reduction ideas (achievable within budget)
3. Community tree planting initiative working with other groups (achievable see below)
4. Procurement: renewable only electricity tariffs (complete), solar panels, replacement machinery and vehicles (longer term aim, impact on budget but will be considered when appropriate).
5. Planting and grass cutting for sustainability and biodiversity (medium term with new contract)
6. Working in partnership with others (achievable within budget)
7. An audit of the Council's current carbon footprint. N.B. this should not be expensive if we train and empower staff members to be responsible for the regularly auditing the Council's carbon footprint to monitor progress/regress and to report back to the appropriate Council committee.
8. Environmental Impact Assessments for major decisions (unknown, may be expensive)

Legal Duties

The Council also accepts its part in the responsibility for the local environment and conservation of resources and will endeavour to improve progressively its environmental and climate mitigation performance and will comply with legislation.

All employees including volunteers have a responsibility to co-operate with supervisors and managers to make environmental improvement, minimising waste and maximising recycling.

Overall and final responsibility for the environmental controls of the Council is delegated by the Council to:

Lance Allan – Town Clerk & Proper Officer

Signed ……. Dated …….…….

This policy was approved on 15th September 2020 It will be kept up to date as the size and nature of the Council changes or new legislation is introduced. Otherwise date of next review is four yearly - Sept 2024.

Appendix 1

What is climate change?

The earth's climate is changing, predominately because of an increase in greenhouse gases, in particular methane and carbon dioxide (CO_2), caused by human activity. The greenhouse effect is a natural occurrence, trapping heat that originates from the sun and then radiating it back to the earth. Human activity is upsetting this balance causing an 'enhanced' greenhouse effect. It is predicted that we must stabilise concentrations of atmospheric CO_2 at 450 parts per million (ppm). Failure to do so will tip the planet over into catastrophic climate change events. Atmospheric concentrations in 2009 were at 387 ppm (compared with 315 ppm 50 years earlier) and rising at 2 ppm each year. As a result of cumulative emissions, the climate is predicted to change, although the degree to which it will is uncertain. Consequently, we must make adaptations to counter some of the possible effects outlined below.

Adaptation/Mitigation

It is now widely accepted that a certain amount of climate change is inevitable even under the most optimistic carbon reduction scenarios. Climate change strategy must therefore incorporate two types of response:

Mitigation: reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Adaptation: those responses that seek to better prepare us for the challenges likely to arise from climate change.

1.4 What will be the effects of climate change?

The direct effects of climate change will vary depending on geographic location; nonetheless, Wiltshire's emissions will contribute to the effects both locally, nationally and internationally. The impacts of climate change are already being felt in some areas and they are set to become more significant within 20 years, with very significant changes by the middle of the century.

Research from the Hadley Centre suggests the following impacts **nationally.** Higher temperatures all year: more heat waves in summer; possible disappearance of snow and freezing weather from all but the highest mountains.

- More extreme weather events including hurricanes, flash floods, droughts and heat waves.
- Less rain overall, especially in the south and east of the UK in summer (i.e. where water shortages are already the biggest potential problem), although there may be more in the west and in winter (i.e. where excess rain is already a problem).
- More coastal and river flooding. Flood plains and other low-lying areas are at increased risk.
- More frequent disruption to transport and other infrastructure.
- Increased risk of infrastructure operating beyond the conditions it was designed for, potentially causing it to fail (e.g. roads melting, rails buckling in extreme high temperatures; drains overwhelmed by rate of rainfall).
- Fewer winter deaths and illnesses as a result of cold, but more heat-related summer deaths and stresses.
- Invasion of pests and diseases currently prevented by cold weather.
- Loss of wildlife, especially species near the southern edges of their ranges.
- Dense urban areas likely to suffer worse extremes of summer heat because unshaded buildings, roads and paved areas absorb and retain solar heat.
- Agriculture will change as we are unlikely to be able to sustain traditional English crops, habitats and landscapes. More irrigation will be required.