

REPORTS OF CABINET CHAMPIONS 2022/23 (1)

CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET CHAMPION 2022/23

This Annual Report of the Cabinet Champion for Climate Change, Cllr Steve Masterson, provides an overview of the year which summarises the role and priorities, key activity achieved in 2022/23 and recommendations for 2023/24.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 16 June 2022 considered the priorities for the Climate Change Cabinet Champion in 2022/23. These are attached at Annex A.
- 1.2 At this meeting, I spoke of the need to be realistic and not to over-promise and under-deliver and the focus of my year as Cabinet Champion for Climate Change has been to set the foundations so that the Council has achievable aims and goals in place for the future so that the target of being carbon neutral by 2030 can be achieved.
- 1.3 This report sets out the work of the Climate Change Cabinet Champion over 2022/23 in taking forward the activities and priorities listed at Annex A. It also provides updates on a range of other activities that have taken place over the last 12 months to progress actions in line with the Council's Climate Change Action Plan and strategy.
- 1.4 All activity outlined in this report has been delivered in close partnership with the Shadow Champion for Climate Change, Cllr Jules Crossley and I would like to thank her for her support over the last year.

2. Key activities

Climate Change Working Group

- 2.1 A key role for the Climate Change Cabinet Champion has been to Chair the Climate Change Working Group and work with Officers to establish a work programme for the group. The Working Group has met three times in 2022/23 with meetings in August, October and December and with a further meeting planned for April 2023. The Working Group has been fortunate enough to hear from a number of external speakers including Rushmoor Voluntary Services, Vivid Housing and Hampshire County Council are due to present on their Hampshire 2050 strategy at the April 2023 Working Group meeting. These external presentations have allowed for the Council to align its plans with those of key stakeholders who have a significant role to play in reducing emissions across Rushmoor.

Measuring progress against targets

- 2.2 In addition to receiving presentations from external stakeholders, the Working Group has also played a role in overseeing work associated with measuring the Council's carbon footprint, building upon the work that was undertaken to measure the Council's 2019/20 carbon footprint. This work will conclude shortly and will be reported to the next Climate Change Working Group. Working with the Shadow Champion, I have received briefings from officers about how the footprint is calculated and I am pleased to report that the approach taken will give the Council a baseline from which to measure future progress in the year's to come. The detail of the 2020/21 carbon footprint will be presented to Cabinet in June 2023 alongside a refreshed Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

- 2.3 The development of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan was listed as a key role for the Cabinet Champion. Over the course of this year, detailed work has been undertaken to review progress against each of the actions listed in the Climate Change Action Plan which was agreed by Cabinet in November 2020. Strong progress has been made against a number of these actions with notable successes including the roll out of the food waste collection, the launch of the Repair Café and working with local schools on climate change projects, . On the latter, I am pleased to report that the schools project will continue in 2023, with four local schools participating in this project (up from two schools in 2022).
- 2.4 The Strategy and Action Plan is now being refreshed, taking account of the new carbon footprint information. Having reflected on my year as Cabinet Champion, engaged with officers and reviewed how other Council's and organisations approach their Climate Change Action Plan, I am of the view that a new Action Plan should be more focussed, with a smaller number of key projects to be delivered. It is therefore intended that a refreshed Strategy and Action Plan will contain approximately five key areas in which the Council will focus, each with measurable targets linked to the carbon footprint and which can be measured on an annual basis. This new strategy and Action Plan will be presented to Cabinet in June 2023.

Communications and Engagement

- 2.5 Another key area of focus over the last 12 months has been to improve communications and the profile of the Council's climate change activity. The presence of external speakers at Climate Change Working Groups has helped to achieve this and I am delighted that Sarah Wood has joined the Working Group representing Blackwater Valley Friends of the Earth. I would like to thank Sarah for the contributions to the working group that she has made in the last year.
- 2.6 December's edition of Arena magazine included a page entitled 'positive steps to tackle climate change'. This included updates for residents on the schools project (as mentioned in 2.3), detail on the sustainable approach to building that

has been taken at Southwood Country Park and Field Centre, and the positive impact that the roll out of the food waste service is having in terms of increasing recycling rates. This article in Arena also included details of the changes that the Council is making to its planting and mowing regimes to increase biodiversity and reduce water usage.

- 2.7 I have also worked with Officers to increase the frequency that Members receive updates on climate change work through the use of the Chief Executive's weekly bulletin email, recognising that climate change is an area of interest that extends beyond the Climate Change Working Group. In addition to this, the webpages relating to Climate Change on the Council's website have been extensively refreshed, providing residents with detail on what is being achieved as well as advice on how they can reduce their own carbon footprint.
- 2.8 Finally, I have been working with the Shadow Champion to plan events for the year ahead. Big Green Week in 2023 will run from 10 – 18 June 2023 and will coincide with Victoria Day and I have asked the officer team to consider opportunities associated with both these events. Opportunities are also being investigated to hold an 'Eco Fair' in September 2023 at Southwood Country Park. This will be an opportunity for partners to take stalls and 'showcase' projects and for local residents to find out more.

3. Recommendations and next steps

- 3.1 Much of my work over the last year has been focused on building on the strengths of the previous Action Plan and developing the foundations for a refreshed plan, linked closely to the outcomes from the latest carbon footprint. This has meant that some of the activities in the priority areas have not been progressed in recent months but will be addressed in the context of the new Action Plan. On Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points, there has been a change in staffing at Hampshire County Council which has led to some delays in the planned project and my recommendation is that this is an area of focus in the year ahead.
- 3.2 I have also benefitted from others sharing information with me on climate change and from attending a LGA webinar and would encourage all Members to take advantage of these wherever possible. It has been clear during my time as Climate Change Champion that change can only be delivered through broad engagement and action and through engagement with other partners.

Appendix A – Climate Change Champion Roles and Responsibilities 2022/23

Purpose: Support the Council's work to drive forward action to meet the aim to ensure the Council is carbon neutral by 2030 and the Borough is more sustainable.

Champion Roles:

- (1) Chair the Climate Change Working Group
- (2) Support the development of the Climate Change Action Plan and actively monitor the Council's carbon footprint to ensure progress towards the Council's target
- (3) Work with Members and local communities to understand the impacts of climate change and to exploit opportunities
- (4) Support events held by the Council and other organisations to address climate action in the Borough
- (5) Report back regularly to the Council, and especially the Cabinet, on plans, projects and activities -

Champion Priority areas for 2022/23:

- (1) Support the development of the EV infrastructure in the Borough and promote the use of electric vehicles
- (2) Work with the Council and other organisations to raise awareness of ways to reduce carbon emissions
- (3) Support schemes within the Council to reduce car use and to promote fuel efficient driving
- (4) In conjunction with the Working Group, support the development of a range of targets and performance indicators for the reduction of carbon emissions in the Borough
- (5) Work to develop the re-provision of Rushmoor in Bloom to focus on planting which is more resilient to a changing climate and on gardening for wildlife