



COTSWOLD

District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET - 10 JULY 2025
Subject	ACHIEVING CORPORATE NET ZERO: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES
Wards affected	None
Accountable member	Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability Email: mike.mckeown@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	David Stanley, Chief Financial Officer Email: david.stanley@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Olivia McGregor, Climate change and carbon reduction lead Email: olivia.mcgregor@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	Recommend the creation of a Corporate Climate Change Board and note the actions to address the emissions performance gap
Annexes	Annex A – Corporate Net Zero Target Report July 2025
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the position as set out in the report (Annex A) and the actions to close the emissions performance gap2. Agree the creation of a Corporate Climate Change Board to provide accountability for an emission reduction programme
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responding to the Climate Emergency• Delivering Good Services• Supporting Communities• Supporting the Economy
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/	Consultation has been carried out by the Climate Change Lead with



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Consultation	<p>the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and the Chief Executive as well as key officers and colleagues within Cotswold District Council including the Council leader, all other nominated climate change board members and service area leads. District stakeholders including officers from neighbouring councils in Gloucestershire have also been engaged and are issuing similar reports to their authorities.</p>
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and since then has been working across a huge number of areas both to decarbonise its own operations as well as take a leadership role in enabling the district to decarbonise too¹. This is in recognition that local authorities are directly responsible for only 2-5 per cent of local emissions, but through their policies and partnerships have strong influence over more than a third of emissions in their area. At the time the emergency was declared, the Council committed to make the Council's corporate estate net zero as soon as possible, aiming for an 80% reduction against a 1990 baseline by 2030, and a 100% reduction by 2045. The Council has been working hard to build the evidence base to be able to assess progress against this target and has now been able to complete the exercise up to FY22-23. This paper introduces the report (Annex A) which provides this assessment and will be referred to as 'the report' from now on.
- 1.2** The report reveals that to date carbon emissions have reduced 41% against the 1990 baseline year, from 4,700,000 kg CO₂e in 1990 to 2,763,803 kg CO₂e in FY22-23, the most recent dataset available. Action to date can be seen to have led to tangible results.
- 1.3** The report reveals that to meet the 80% reduction by 2030 target, emissions are required to reduce 66% against FY22-23 levels and reach 940,000 kgCO₂e by 2030. That requires an average of 11% reduction annually.
- 1.4** The report reveals the council is operating with a performance gap, and needs to move from the current average rate of 1.28% reduction annually to achieve an average rate of 11% reduction annually if it is to meet the 2030 target.
- 1.5** Meeting the 2030 target will be challenging, however the report recommends a number of actions which will give the Council the best chance. As mentioned previously a lot of climate work the Council has undertaken falls outside of the scope of the 2030 target. The report recommends the Council sets up a Climate Board therefore to provide accountability over an emission reduction programme. This will enable the co-benefits from taking climate action (e.g. health improvements, economic improvements) to be maximised and ensure climate action can be

¹ Information on the full range of climate initiatives Cotswold District Council is involved in can be found here <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/climate-initiatives-future-plans-faqs/>



assessed and considered within the full context the Council operates in. It will mean that affordability and deliverability can be factored into the process.

- 1.6** The report sets out that subject to considering wider issues such as Affordability, Deliverability etc. as outlined in Section 5 of the report, the following actions will have the most impact on meeting the 2030 target:
- Decarbonising the waste fleet (which makes up 43% of emissions)
 - Decarbonising council owned buildings (which makes up 36% of emissions)
 - Reducing non-waste-fleet vehicle emissions (which makes up 8% of emissions)
 - Improving data quality and emission reporting capabilities
 - Avoiding emission increases
- 1.7** The report also recommends the Council ensures climate action is taken in the context of broader changes in local government (e.g. local government reorganisation). It makes clear the scale and urgency of the climate crisis requires everyone, including the Council, to undergo a paradigm shift in thinking about taking decisions and investing to achieve a liveable future. The report shows the value of taking action now, despite local government reorganisation (LGR), to ensure the Council's legacy is a positive one.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The climate crisis, and the related ecology crisis, present an existential threat to all Cotswold district residents, but particularly our young people, and future generations beyond them. There is an urgent imperative to act. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), have repeatedly outlined the catastrophic impacts that people and nature will face should the world warm by 2 degrees Celsius. They plead to limit global temperature rise through urgent, unprecedented, systemic change to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest.
- 2.2** Cotswold District Council's climate strategy, produced in response to net zero target setting has a 2020-2030 timeframe, reflecting the importance of this crucial 'Decade to Make a Difference'.
- 2.3** The strength of our action on climate change has been assessed by Climate Emergency UK (CE UK) via the Council Climate Plan Scorecards. The most recent 2025



assessment scored us in third place of all Gloucestershire councils with a score of 45%. The proposed actions can help build on the Council's scoring and reputation.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1** The scope of the report relates to the Council's corporate estate which pertains to emissions arising from its own activities and operations. The council also works to leverage its influence on tackling climate change across the district (by for example encouraging the uptake of solar on buildings and setting net zero standards for new development), however this is outside the scope of this report.
- 3.2** The report proposes a Corporate Climate Change Board to provide accountability for a corporate emission reduction programme. It proposes the Board ensures investment required to deliver the actions set out in the report are subject to Council's usual decision-making processes, and require business cases to be produced for formal consideration. It proposes the Board also ensures the impact of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is factored into decision making around climate action. The proposed terms of reference for this Board are set out in Appendix 1 of the report (Annex A) and specify the Board's role and purpose, membership, meeting etiquette and meeting frequency.
- 3.3** The report reveals that to date significant decarbonisation milestones have been reached and emissions have reduced 41% against the 1990 baseline year, from 4,700,000 kg CO₂e in 1990 to 2,763,803 kg CO₂e in FY22-23. It demonstrates action to date has led to tangible results.
- 3.4** The report provides an assessment of emissions performance since the climate strategy was published and the Council put resources in place to progress net zero ambitions. It demonstrates emissions have decreased by 6% in that time (2% a year), as a result of decreases in natural gas consumption, electricity consumption, water consumption and business travel outweighing emission increases seen elsewhere.
- 3.5** It reveals the Council's emission sources using the most recent emissions data available (FY22-23). It demonstrates 1. waste fleet fuel consumption is by far the largest source of emissions making up 43% of CDC's total. 2. the second largest source of emissions comes from Council operated buildings and buildings managed by an external contractor (leisure centres and museum) which collectively make up



36% of CDC's total emissions and 3. remaining emissions arise from fuel consumption in vehicles used to carry out other CDC services (8% of total), well to tank (WTT) emissions² (13% of total), emissions from business travel (1% of total) and water (<1% of total).

- 3.6** The report highlights emissions are required to reduce a further 66% by 2030 against FY22-23 levels to meet the Council's emission reduction target. It highlights the council is therefore operating with a performance gap and needs to move from the current average rate of 1.28% reduction annually to achieve an average rate of 11% reduction annually if it is to meet the 2030 target.
- 3.7** The report provides the rationale for the proposed actions (as summarised in the Exec summary) required to work towards the 2030 target and close the emissions performance gap.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1** The alternative would be to carry on with the strategy employed to date which has resulted in a 1.28% average annual reduction rate which is insufficient to meet the 2030 target.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** The proposed emission reduction actions will focus staff and resources to give the Council the best chance of meeting the 2030 target.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The Council, through its annual budget setting process and medium-term financial planning, ensures adequate budget is provided for the Council's energy needs. This ranges from utilities to heat and light corporate buildings such as Trinity Road, to ensuring adequate budget is provided to third parties such as Ubico (Fuel costs associated with the fleet of Waste and Recycling vehicles) and Freedom Leisure (heating and lighting of Leisure Centre and the Corinium Museum).
- 6.2** As part of the response to the global energy price shocks in 2022/23, the Council has mitigated some of the price risks through forward purchase of energy through a

² Well to tank emissions refer to the greenhouse gas emissions arising from the extraction, processing, transportation and distribution of the fuel to the point of use.



consortium with Cheltenham Borough Council, Forest of Dean District Council, and West Oxfordshire District Council. Further mitigation measures are in place with regard to Leisure and Culture facilities.

- 6.3** The Council, through its contract with Ubico, assesses the fuel price risk and budgets accordingly each year.
- 6.4** Whilst this report does not give rise to any financial implications directly, it is clear that further actions are required for the Council to achieve a net zero objective. The establishment of the Climate Change Board will provide the Council with a forum to ensure actions are considered in terms of the environmental benefit and the financial impact. This will support the Council with its objective of achieving net zero, promote greater accountability, and help guide future expenditure decisions.
- 6.5** With limited resources, the Council will need to ensure actions and proposals are supported by detailed business cases that set out both the environmental and financial impact(s) and are assessed 'in the round'.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** There are no legal implications.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** If the recommended course of action is not taken, the risk of failing to meet net zero is almost certain to come about. This would result in significant reputational damage as well as significantly comprise the Council's ability to deliver all four of its corporate priorities.
- 8.2** The Government's Devolution Whitepaper published December 2024, which announced a programme of local government reorganisation (LGR), poses a risk to delivery which will need to be carefully managed. District councils will cease to exist in their current form and all new authorities will be in place by the end of this government term (2029). The business case for action delivery will need to both incorporate and mitigate as far as possible the impact of LGR. The actions on waste fleet decarbonisation for example are already incorporating and mitigating the LGR risk. Gloucestershire Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs) are already working together via their Resources and Waste Partnership to explore the option to produce a waste fleet EV transition plan at a countywide scale.



- 8.3** Responding to the climate emergency requires the Council to take, and learn to manage, a level of economic and political risk in taking actions and help others to take actions which are commensurate with the scale of the emergency. Strong leadership and effective partnership working will help adequately control those risks.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** There is a shared benefit to all groups identified (by race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, pregnancy/maternity, religion and belief) in delivering the climate programme set out in the accompanying report, as climate change poses the most significant threat to human rights. The equalities impact of implementing specific climate actions will be considered as and when individual business cases are put forward to Council/Cabinet for consideration.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** To avoid repetition, please see the Exec Summary and Main Points sections of this Cabinet Report for detail.
- 10.2** The report also identifies ecological implications, principally that climate emergency and the ecological emergency are intrinsically linked. Many of the measures the report highlights to address climate change issues will therefore help to address ecological emergency issues.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1** None.

(END)