

Agenda Item 5

For information - Frome Town Council's Climate Emergency Plan

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Summary

In December 2018 Frome Town Council unanimously declared a climate emergency and committed to becoming a net zero carbon town by 2030. Developing a climate emergency strategy and action plan is a key part of this. In November we held climate workshops with the local community and schools. This report sets out some of the key ideas arising from these events. It is anticipated that the action plan and report will be presented for approval at council in March and will be updated annually. A working group will review progress quarterly.

Context

Frome Town Council has declared a Climate Emergency. This states that 'Frome Town Council believes that all governments - national, regional and local, have a duty to limit the negative impacts of Climate Breakdown. It is important for the residents of Frome and the UK that towns commit and take action towards achieving carbon neutrality as quickly as possible. The consequences of global temperature rising above 1.5°C are so severe that preventing this from happening must be humanity's number one priority.'

It is clear that the Town Council will not be able to achieve these targets alone. Significant support is needed from Mendip District Council, Somerset County Council, National Government, the community, local businesses and other organisations. Frome Town Council has a key role to play in helping to develop and support innovative replicable projects, engaging with the local community and organisations, and working with all levels of government to ensure the radical changes needed are enabled and supported.

The good news is taking action on climate change will not only reduce climate risk but will improve health and wellbeing. For example, reduced air pollution and more affordable energy bills. It will also benefit the local economy through re-circulating money locally, creating employment and training, and the local environment via more tree planting and better management of green spaces.

Methodology

To develop the report we held free workshops around energy, transport and resources in November 2019 attended by over 130 people; we held a climate change workshop at Frome College; worked with over 290 school children to develop ideas for a 'clean and healthy future' and incorporated ideas from Frome's youth climate strikers. Some of the key ideas are summarised below. Project Drawdown has identified the top one hundred actions¹ needed to

¹ <https://www.drawdown.org/solutions-summary-by-rank>

meet our climate targets using peer reviewed scientific data from thousands of studies. This has been used to prioritise actions in the strategy. The strategy and action plan will focus on three key areas: energy, transport and resources.

Energy

Suggested actions around energy include conducting a housing stock study to develop a comprehensive, well planned approach to insulation and retrofit. This will help to reduce energy bills, fuel poverty and climate impacts. More innovative solutions include setting up a 'Virtual Power Network' linking local renewable energy with schools and businesses. Developing a community owned microgrid (a network of solar panels and batteries that automatically trade with each other to maximise renewable energy used on site) and a zero carbon heat network at Saxonvale is another key project. This will not only help the development to be zero carbon but will provide a blueprint for other local development to follow, maximising community benefit and reduce energy costs. Linking up schools and businesses with free solar and community energy opportunities, including wind, will further reduce energy costs and carbon emissions.

Transport

Ideas around transport include a Local Walking and Infrastructure Plan that will identify key actions needed to enable safe walking and cycling throughout the town. Working with Somerset to implement recommended changes focusing on a key area such as The Butts will have a significant impact, reducing air pollution and increasing active travel. Other projects include a new bike project at Critchill School's bike workshop to enable people to share and repair bikes, as well as gain skills and confidence.

Resources

'Resources' covers an array of areas; from resource use to waste minimisation to food production, land use and trees. Key ideas from the workshops include promoting Frome as a 'sharing town', exploring creative ways to encourage and enable the community to share, re-fill, re-use and repair. Somerset Waste Partnership's new recycling services in summer 2020 will provide an important opportunity to minimise waste going to landfill. Enabling more local food growing and implementing the council's 'Wild about Trees' project will help to boost health and wellbeing and protect nature as well as cutting emissions.

As well as these ideas there may well be some other projects that we will want to consider supporting to enable us to make the step change needed in this important area of work.

Making the plan relevant to all

Ensuring that solutions are relevant to all stakeholders will be vital. Innovative community engagement programmes across the board will help to increase participation and ownership of both the emergency and the need for action. Ideas for this include street wide energy competitions, climate trained 'health connectors' and linking with 'playing out' activities and street parties. Other ideas include local school children designing 'parking tickets' for cars

parked outside their school and innovative ways to encourage people to car share, drive safely and turn their engines off instead of 'idling'.

Next Steps

Achieving the changes needed will require significant investment both from the Town Council and external funders. A key element of the programme is therefore fundraising, such as the council's recent application for £1m to the Lottery's Climate Action Fund in partnership with Edventure.

Frome Town Council has long been seen as a leader in resilience and sustainability. Enabling the projects outlined above to happen through additional resources and support, alongside exploring other funding opportunities, will ensure the council makes significant progress towards achieving these vital targets. Over the next two months Anna will work closely with councillors to finalise the climate emergency strategy and action plan and to outline and prioritise the key actions, projects, resources and funding needed to ensure a safer future for all. The proposed strategy, action plan and priority projects will be presented at council on 18 March.