

## Agenda Item 5

### For decision - Frome Town Council's Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan

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#### Summary

In December 2018 Frome Town Council (FTC) unanimously declared a climate emergency and committed to becoming a net zero carbon town by 2030. In response, a climate emergency strategy and action plan has been developed based on workshops held with the local community. The strategy and action plan which is intended to be part of an overarching Environmental Resilience Framework (see earlier report) sets out the key activities needed, focussing on projects that have wider community benefits. Frome Town Council has already shown leadership in this area and will continue to lead the way nationally. To enable us to scale up our work to meet our targets, a new climate action plan and budget is being proposed.

#### Context

FTC's Strategy for 2020-2024 states 'In the face of a climate emergency, we will strive to make Frome carbon neutral by 2030 by implementing a robust Action Plan.' The Council's Climate Emergency declaration says that '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.'

The proposed Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan focus on projects that not only reduce emissions but also maximise benefits to the local community. These benefits include reducing air pollution, improving health and wellbeing, sharing resources, saving money and making homes easier to heat.

#### Methodology

To develop the Strategy 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. Project Drawdown has identified the top one hundred actions<sup>1</sup> needed to meet our climate targets using peer reviewed scientific data from thousands of studies and we have also used this along with Ashden and Friends of the Earth's Climate Emergency guide for councils to prioritise actions<sup>2</sup>.

The Strategy and Action Plan (see [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#) respectively) focus on three key areas: energy, transport and resources. To secure impact in these areas action is needed from all sectors – the community, businesses, education and all levels of government. The Plan sets out some of the key actions suggested by the local community. The new budget outlines some

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

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ashden.org/programmes/top-31-climate-actions-for-councils>

of these key activities and projects that the Town Council could enable to scale up benefits and impact.

## Scaling up

FTC is seen nationally as a leader on climate action at town and parish level. Following the emergency declaration and the development of the strategy and action plan it is important that the Council scales up the impact of its activities in this area. A new budget for additional activities, based on the strategy and action plan is therefore being proposed.

Key projects for FTC to enable include:

1. **Reducing the council's costs and emissions:** conduct a carbon footprint and energy analysis for Frome Town Hall and other council activities. Energy saving measures could be implemented using Salix or Public Work Loans Board to finance upfront cost and pay back via energy savings over time.
2. **Retrofit programme:** to reduce energy bills and carbon of existing housing stock. This includes analysing housing stock, training trades people in appropriate energy efficiency approaches and enabling bulk discounts for a range of energy saving measures. This will focus on fuel poor homes with the ultimate aim of eliminating fuel poverty in the long term.
3. **Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan:** working with transport experts, local community and businesses to map walking and cycling patterns and needs. We will then work with Somerset County Council and developers to implement a network of safe accessible routes across the town.
4. **Cycle for health programme:** providing electric bikes for long term hire and cycle confidence classes to enable people to try integrating e-bikes into their lifestyles. The upfront cost of this will be repaid over time. Referring people to the scheme through the Medical Practice will ensure people with lifestyle related health issues benefit the most from this programme.
5. **Share more:** set up two neighbourhood sharing hubs with mini share pod and community fridge. This will save the community money, increase access to fresh produce and useful items as well as reducing waste and emissions.
6. **Repair more:** fund monthly repair and make workshops, develop a repair and recycling directory and inform people as to how they can better maintain household equipment to extend their life.

**Increased capacity:** to scale up and maximise the local benefits of these projects it is proposed that we recruit a new permanent Climate Emergency Project Officer on a four-day week basis to be line managed by the Resilience Manager. This will double the social, economic and environmental impact of the team. It will also enable additional external funding to be secured to scale up action and maximise community benefits.

## Next Steps

Achieving the changes needed requires significant investment both from the Town Council and external funders. The attached Action Plan ([Appendix 1](#)) identifies a budget and a requirement for an additional £64k to complement the £37k Resilience budget for 2020/21 already agreed. FTC has sufficient reserves to fund the £64k in year one using the receipt from the land at

Saxonvale, although other sources of internal funding are being explored and a proposal will be tabled at the next meeting of Council. Clearly, funding in years two and beyond will require an increased allocation to the annual salary budget and the Resilience budget.

As shown in [Appendix 2](#), some of this funding would be used to match fund grants from other sources. In any case, a key element of the programme is fundraising. FTC has already submitted an application for £1m to the Lottery's Climate Action Fund in partnership with Edventure. Somerset County Council have also recently announced a £1m funding pot for Town and Parish councils acting on climate change which we will apply for.

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. The projects will help to ensure that homes are easy to heat and power, saving money on energy bills, improve air quality, increase health benefits of active travel and help to create a resilient community.

#### Recommendations

1. Approve the proposed Climate Emergency Strategy & Action Plan including the appointment of a Climate Emergency Project Officer on a permanent contract
2. Approve additional expenditure of £64k to complement the agreed Resilience budget for 2020/21 of £37k, to be financed from reserves. The mechanism for this arrangement will be tabled for approval at the next meeting of Council.