

## **Report of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Climate Change Standing Overview Group of 6 July 2022**

### **1. Introduction**

The Standing Overview Group of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee meets regularly as an informal information sharing and member development session where issues are presented to the councillors to raise awareness and increase knowledge. The Standing Overview Group considers key updates and pertinent issues from across different services, with the aim of developing Members' knowledge, and bringing to the forefront any areas which may benefit from further scrutiny.

Any action points arising from the sessions are reported back to the next formal Committee meeting.

This report outlines the topic(s) covered at the meeting of 6 July 2022, highlights the key points raised during discussion and details any agreed actions.

### **2. Recommendation(s)**

The Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee accepts this report as an accurate record of the meeting and makes the following recommendations to Cabinet, namely that:

(a) the draft 2030 Net-zero Carbon Supply Chain Strategy be commended;

(b) further options for carbon offsetting, including how the Council can work with local research institutions to further the development of this area and increase the variety of options available, be explored; and

(c) further clarity on how the strategy will be resourced by indicating an approximate FTE (Full Time Equivalent) value to achieve these targets.

### **3. Attendance**

Councillors: A Dewhurst (Chair), C Slade (Vice Chair), P Bullivant, Y Atkinson, M Asvachin

Apologies: M Hartnell

Cabinet Member: Andrea Davis (Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport) (not present)

Officers: Mya McKnight (Climate Emergency Procurement Carbon Officer); Doug Eltham (Environment and Sustainability Policy Officer)

Scrutiny Officer: Fred Whitehouse

## **4. Summary of Discussion**

### **2030 Net-zero Carbon Supply Chain Strategy**

#### **Background**

A first draft of Devon County Council's Net-Zero Supply Chain Strategy, which sets out the Authority's aims to achieve net-zero in its supply chain by 2030, was presented to the Environmental Performance Board in May 2022. Managing supply chain emissions is a target set out in the Council's Carbon Reduction Plan (available [here](#)). Members of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Committee were invited, via this Standing Overview Group, to ask questions about and offer comments on the strategy. The key aspects of the Report and Member discussion are covered below, with their comments incorporated into the recommendations made above.

#### **The Report**

It was highlighted that the carbon emissions from the Council's supply chain are roughly 19 times larger than the council's corporate footprint, making this a key area of focus to achieve net-zero. To do this, DCC would need to reduce significantly the emissions associated with its supply chain and offset the remainder from 2030 onwards.

Four key areas of focus had been identified:

#### **Carbon Data**

It was explained that currently existing data on carbon emissions relating to the Council's supply chain were inadequate, with figures published in 2009 forming part of the calculations. The aim is to move towards collecting raw data from suppliers (and, where available, to use data from suppliers who currently calculate their own emissions) to facilitate a more accurate and robust system of measurement. This would then allow the data from these calculations to be assigned to particular contracts, offering a clearer view of the supply chain's carbon emissions, where improvements can be made, and how much carbon is required to be offset.

#### **Procurement, Commissioning & Contract Management**

These are the main ways in which the supply chain is interacted with. Key elements under this focus area included the encouragement of a circular economy to reduce emissions and to develop carbon KPIs to measure progress. Incorporating key net-zero principles into contracts was also highlighted as a large focus, such as specifying low-energy goods (for instance, warm asphalt as opposed to the higher-energy hot-mix), mandatory carbon reduction and reporting requirements and an escalation process for suppliers who do not meet targets.

### Supporting Suppliers

Ensuring Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) receive support and encouragement to involve them in the journey towards net-zero was highlighted as key under this priority. This was in addition to supporting all suppliers in calculating their emissions, as well as offering advice and resources to help them reduce their emissions (where some suppliers may not have the expertise required).

### Supporting DCC Staff

This focus area included upskilling staff to ensure confidence across DCC in instilling a carbon reduction ethos in the Council's procurement and commissioning activity.

### **Member discussion**

Given the importance of carbon offsetting in the overall plan to reach net-zero, including for Devon's supply chain, discussion centred heavily around this, expressing the need to explore all options for carbon offsetting. This included particular focus on seagrass, which Councillors expressed should be an area of focus given that it seemed an under-utilised and very efficient form of carbon sequestration. Officers did explain that currently the verification processes that allow for carbon offsetting to be officially measured and accounted for only existed for woodland and peatland, necessitating focus on these areas for the present and immediate future. The Council had faced further challenges due to landowners not selling woodland for carbon offsetting, anticipating greater future profit. There was work ongoing, however, in other areas (such as the operation of a seaweed farm in North Devon in anticipation of said verification processes for seaweed), and that the Council is open to other forms of carbon sequestration that could help the Authority meet its net-zero targets.

Members were also directed towards a report that had been done in advance of the Devon Carbon Plan on the potential role of carbon offsetting, which would provide further context and information regarding the Council's plans and options. This is available [here](#).

Councillor concerns surrounding carbon offsetting, and considerations for future options, are reflected in recommendation (b).

Extensive discussion was also had about how this plan would be resourced. Councillors widely commended the report and its ambition but were concerned about the realism of achieving the goals given contemporaneous budget and staffing concerns across many areas of the Council. It was, however, explained to Members that much of the work outlined in the policy was already underway, that two full-time staff members were working on this alongside input from other service areas who had approached the Environment team for advice on how they could embed environmentally friendly practices into their own workstreams and assist in the Council's journey towards net-zero. Additionally, given the nature of the supply chain and many of the Council's suppliers being large

companies, much of the work – such as calculation on carbon emissions – would not need to strictly be carried out by DCC staff, but in-house by the suppliers. Councillor concern around this, and the request for further clarity around resourcing, are reflected in recommendation (c).

Members also requested that a senior member of Procurement from Devon County Council should attend the next meeting of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Committee, with a view to ensuring that this policy is implemented top-down with the commitment of leadership.

Councillor A Dewhirst  
Chair, Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee

Electoral Divisions: All

Contact for Enquiries: Fred Whitehouse, [fred.whitehouse@devon.gov.uk](mailto:fred.whitehouse@devon.gov.uk)

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Nil

The meeting began at 2.01pm and ended at 3.10pm.