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Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Climate and Ecological Emergency Programme Update
Date:	7 February 2024
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Adrian England, Portfolio Holder for Climate Action and Opportunity
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	None
Background papers:	
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	CEE – Climate and Ecological Emergency SHDF – Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund EVCP - Electric Vehicle Charging Points HCC – Hertfordshire County Council EPC - Energy Performance Certificate

Report Author / Responsible Officer

Shaj Choudhury, Head of Transformation / Aidan Wilkie, Strategic Director for People and Transformation



Shaj.choudhury@dacorum.gov.uk / 07816 182243

Corporate Priorities	Climate and ecological emergency A clean, safe and enjoyable environment
Wards affected	All
Purpose of the report:	1. To provide Finance and Resource with an update on the work the Council is doing to deliver its objectives set out in the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	1. That Members note the report and identify any areas where they require additional information
Period for post policy/project review:	N/A

1. Introduction/Background:

- 1.1. This Council firmly believes in the power of individual action and choice, influenced, perhaps even led, by the example manifested by the Borough Council. Individual actions will make a huge difference, accounting for approximately 40 per cent of global carbon emissions. Unconstrained disposable convenience can be expensive and produce huge waste, whereas taking the time and care to save on consumption, leads to saving and good stewardship. Creating renewable sources requires ingenuity and investment but proves most cost-effective in the long-run. By thinking globally and leading locally we can work together to build a sustainable future for Dacorum, which will be multiplied by our neighbours and their neighbours, to generate a wider positive impact on our planet.
- 1.2. Because of these threats to our global and local environment, in 2019 we declared a climate and ecological emergency and made this one of our six corporate priorities, we have pledged to:
 - Reach net-zero emissions as an organisation by 2030
 - Reach net-zero emissions for our council housing stock, by 2050 at the latest
 - Support the borough in reducing its emissions and reaching net zero as quickly as possible, by 2050 at the latest
 - Support the borough in improving biodiversity
 - Support the borough in creating more sustainable communities
- 1.3. As an example of leadership and efficiency, Reducing the organisations emissions is a key focus of Council. However, we understand that much of the borough's emissions are outside of our direct control so we pledged to support individuals, community groups, businesses and schools to become net zero by 2050. This particular target is the responsibility of everyone and we all have an important part to play.
- 1.4. Following the change in administration and, for the first time, appointment of a dedicated portfolio holder for Climate Action and Opportunity, there has been a renewed emphasis on Climate and Ecological Emergency at the council, and choosing an alternative to this emergency. This has directed attention and focus from senior leadership to the agenda and ensured that the Council have an ambitious and effective work programme in place to achieve the targets set out in our strategy.
- 1.5. The Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) programme is a Council wide endeavour to deliver the ambitions set out in the CEE Strategy, but flexible enough to see milestones and push for stretch goals, where these are emerging, across the Council and throughout the Borough. A central CEE team sits in the Transformation team, consisting of one Programme Manager and one Project Officer. The role of the central CEE team is to help co-ordinate these council wide efforts, supporting delivery and oversight of the work programme to ensure it is on track to deliver the CEE targets.
- 1.6. The Council have implemented a number of actions which have helped cut the organisations emissions by 14.3% from the baseline year of 2018/19. Between 2022/23 and 2023/24 reporting period we are expecting to see a further 24% decrease in emissions. This is good progress, but to achieve net zero by 2030 we must cut a further 12.5% emissions on average each year, with a key focus on our fleet and our built assets which makes up the majority of our emissions. For the whole borough emissions have reduced by 39% from a baseline of 2005 (or 12% from 2018) and we see a similar story in terms of the biggest emitters with transport making up 34% of and energy in the home 33%. To reach net zero in the borough for 2050 we must reduce emissions by 3.5% each year.
- 1.7. This report sets out the work undertaken to date establish the new work programme and an update on the different projects currently being delivered across the Council that will help us deliver our carbon reduction targets.

2. Key Issues/proposals/main body of the report:

- 2.1. To ensure a more pragmatic approach to achieving our CEE programme and focus resources on areas which will have the greatest impact, the CEE team recently undertook a comprehensive review of all existing actions to establish a focused CEE Programme that constitutes of defined projects and delivered with a consistent project management methodology in place. Projects were reviewed and prioritised based on based on, carbon saving, net zero targets, resource availability and cost.
- 2.2. Work was also undertaken to establish a robust governance process, ensuring there is focused oversight and accountability of progress on key project. Project boards meet monthly to record and report on progress against projects and their key milestones, address risks and project delays and escalate risks to the Programme Board that cannot be resolved in this Project Board. The CEE Programme Board, chaired by Strategic Director for People and Transformation, meets quarterly to ensure that the objectives set out in the CEE Strategy are delivered, undertake programme decisions, and hold project executives to account for the projects in the CEE programme.
- 2.3. This new CEE Programme with clear project governance and defined projects has been established for four months. The governance structure is working well, all stakeholders are clearly engaged, projects are progressing and it has enabled the identification of certain projects to be accelerated or focus to be shifted onto projects that were previously not up and running.

- 2.4. The following sections provides an update on the key projects and work areas of the CEE programme

Energy

- 2.5. Dacorum have approximately 10,000 social homes, and decarbonisation of these homes is a key element of our CEE strategy. £22.4M is planned to be allocated in the HRA Business Plan to achieve Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C by 2035 in social homes, prioritising those in fuel poverty for 2030, in line with the government's milestones. The service is currently developing the plan to achieve EPC C for all properties. The council are reviewing all energy data, refreshing stock condition surveys and reviewing archetypes of the buildings so EPC C can be modelled by archetype. Early analysis of data suggests properties are better than previously reported, which puts the Council in a good position. This strategy, which seeks to widen the benefits of energy efficiency as much as practical, is due to be completed in April.
- 2.6. Dacorum invested £1.2m, along with a further £302,000 of government grant to decarbonise a cohort of homes as part of phase 1 of SHDF project. This phase is now complete and has successfully achieved an average EPC A rating in 24 council homes.
- 2.7. Dacorum have successfully levered in a further £580,000 of government grants to deliver phase 2 and have initially identified 30 further homes to work on, with work forecast to commence this month. This consists of 8 homes at Blackwell Road & 22 at Curtis Road. Work will include energy efficiency measures such as external wall insulation, loft insulation, draught proofing, heating controls, improved ventilation and solar PV installations. Government funding is being used where possible, but it often comes with constraints which limit its effect in widening the benefits.
- 2.8. The communal areas of sheltered housing form part of our targets to become net zero therefore the Council have been upgrading gas boilers to hybrid heat pumps and installing solar where possible in our sheltered housing blocks. Analysis of the impact of this work in a couple of schemes has shown a decrease in carbon emissions by 26% and 51% in each scheme. Work is planned in 12 more schemes and an additional £500K per year to 2030 is needed to complete these works in all schemes. The Council have allocated £500K for 24/25 so that the planning for the work can commence.
- 2.9. The council are also exploring opportunities to decarbonise the Council's built assets. Consultants were commissioned in 2021 to identify potential measures that can be implemented and associated benefits it would achieve, and reported in spring 2022. A number of recommendations were made which identified

the potential to make a total of £150k annual savings on energy bills through a total investment of £617k, giving a four-year payback, followed by many-fold income return. £40,000 has been invested in implementing some of these revenue budget recommendations so far, which is generating more than £34,000 of repeated annual savings in energy bills. With additional Capital investment opportunities relating to Leisure Centres, which could boost the total repeating annual benefit to £461k. Unfortunately the detailed report was not fully considered at the time due to staff movements, and only re-surfaced when the new Portfolio-Holder signified its importance and alerted the new CEE team to the potential investment and savings opportunities in it. Given two years have surpassed since the CLS report recommendations were made, costs have increased by about 30%, energy prices have also increased from about ~12p/kWh to ~30p/kWh or more, therefore the payback period would now be quicker and expected energy savings higher.

- 2.10. The council are working with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH) and Tallarna to develop an updated, prioritised and financed Net Zero programme to decarbonise our built assets by 2030. Some measures, such as solar and heat pumps, previously recommended by the consultants will form part of this prioritised plan, but there are a further 23 quick win measures, including thermostatic radiator valves, BMS controls, glazing and insulation, worth £22,000 (figures correct in 2022, the team are awaiting updated quotes) which we will be implementing as soon as possible. The total energy efficiency savings realised to date as well, as these quicker win measures planned, will save around £314,000 cumulatively by the end of 2026/27 financial year.
- 2.11. The council are also working with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH) to develop a prioritised and financed Net Zero programme to decarbonise our built assets by 2030. Some measures recommended by the consultants will form part of this prioritised plan, but there are some quick win measures which we will be implementing as soon as possible.

Fleet

- 2.12. The Council's fleet is responsible for 57% of DBC's total emissions it needs to decarbonise by 2030. The Council has carried out various fleet renewal strategies in recent years with the initial strategy to replace older polluting Euro V vehicles engines with newer compliant Euro VI engines and exhaust standards. Compared with the older Euro V standard vehicles Euro VI produce 67% less nitrogen oxide (NOx).
- 2.13. Work has also recently taken place on route optimisation for waste collections taking 5 vehicles off the road, saving over 8000 miles annually, which will have a further positive impact on emissions from our waste collection vehicles.
- 2.14. DBC has approximately 148 vehicles to decarbonise and currently is using one electric all-terrain vehicle and one e-bike. An electric waste vehicle was trailed in January for 10 days and has shown that some routes do have the potential to be done with an electric vehicle. Officers are currently undertaking some feasibility work to establish options for potential electrification of the wider Council fleet. This will require looking at the options of installing the associated infrastructure to support electric vehicles and exploring new and innovative technology.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP)

- 2.15. DBC were awarded approximately £415,000 by the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV), with support of the Energy Saving Trust, for additional charging points to be fitted in our public car parks. The OZEV funding and contribution from Connector Kerb will allow the installation of 98 fast-charge points across 16 car parks. We are also working with Connected Kerb's rapid-charging partner Osprey Charging Network who are funding the installation and maintenance of the rapid-charge points. Approximately £2.7 million of both public and private investment is being made in EVCPs through this project in Dacorum.
- 2.16. The Council are pleased with the high useage of the charge points. The data shows that Tring is the busiest site with 1,832 charge sessions already, followed by the High St in Hemel with 1,138 charges. The High Street is also pulling the highest average Kwh at 29. The rapid charge points are going in a

range of locations including Leverstock Green, already live, a prime location which will bring in trade to the shops and cafes, and Markyate crucial to bring rapid charge to a village and rural community. The 7.4Kwh chargers will have lower costs, charging more slowly, providing choice for EV users who don't have driveways at home. These go further to reach local residential communities including Hemel's former New Town Neighbourhood centres. The roll-out of these EVCP's pushes Dacorum forward as a leading district where private investment is stimulated, 'recharging' Dacorum.

- 2.17. The project is progressing well with five car parks now live with rapid charge points; The Forge, Hicks Road, The High St, Leverstock Green and Wood Lane End, with Langley Hill planned to go live in February. All Connected Kerb sites are planned for install in March, however the actual go-live date will be dependent on the District Network Operator. The rapid charging hub has received planning permission for Water Gardens South, with installation expected in summer 2024.
- 2.18. In addition to the above, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) have been allocated £6m of funding through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding. HCC have submitted a business case outlining how the funding would be used and we have contributed to this a draft list of locations to their business case. The LEVI fund prioritises off street locations, as such the list is comprised of locations in car parks at community centres or shopping areas, with a few of on street chargers where there was no off-street option available nearby to suit residents. The idea is that this fund will be used to distribute charge points much more closely to residents' homes, ensuring they're within a walkable distance and prioritising areas where residents do not have off street parking.

Active Travel

- 2.19. We have been using our influence through our planning policy and planning processes to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation and wider benefits, for example, using the Local Plan to reduce the need to travel and a focus on providing sustainable transport.
- 2.20. Hemel Garden Communities is a programme seeking to deliver approximately 11,00 homes and 10,00 jobs to Hemel Hempstead by 2050. The Transport Vision and Strategy document sets the ambition for a well-connected town, with a network which supports increasing journeys made through sustainable and active ways of travel (Walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport). The policy supports the vision for movement in Hemel Hempstead in 2050. This includes that 40% of all trips starting and/or ending in the existing settlement area of Hemel Hempstead should be by active and sustainable travel modes. 60% of all trips starting and/or ending in the new Garden Communities should be by active and sustainable travel modes by 2050.
- 2.21. Dacorum is currently developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) to encourage residents to cycle and walk more. Draft walking and cycling maps have been developed, with public consultation, which commenced on 29th January and open for four weeks. The consultation exercise aims to provide residents with sufficient information about the LCWIP, harness and include local knowledge on the walking and cycling network and seek feedback on the network plans to inform the next stage of the Dacorum LCWIP.
- 2.22. The Council are currently exploring the feasibility of the provision of E-bikes in the borough. Officers have met with peers at Watford and Stevenage who have recently implemented E-Bike schemes to learn from their schemes and have engaged with potential providers to understand costs, risks and liabilities etc. to help inform the feasibility of implementing a scheme in Dacorum. The project is going through various internal approvals at the moment. Both projects will enable residents to make a shift towards active travel, supporting our CEE ambitions.
- 2.23. Additionally, HCC are working on several projects to increase active travel in DBC, such as improvements at Boundary Way Roundabout and Buncefield Lane Quietway and Jarmans Park Improvements including a pedestrian surface level crossing.

Nature Recovery

- 2.24. A green screen project is underway, installing a living barrier around schools to reduce air pollution. Swing Gate and Nash Mills have been identified as schools for this project. Nash Mills is planned to be funded by Dacorum Borough Council and the council are discussing the opportunity to fund Swing Gate through the HCC Sustainable Herts Habitat Intervention Project. Swing Gate already has air quality monitors in place, so we can measure any difference the green screen has on air quality levels.
- 2.25. The council are also expanding wildflower areas - we now have 45, planting new trees - in 2030 we planted 130 trees and 2500 whips. The recent HCC giveaway totalled 5500 whips allocated to the area of Dacorum, with all to be planted in private property. Additionally, Affinity Water and the Environmental Agency are perusing chalk river restoration projects at the River Bulbourne and River Gade.

DCAN and other activities

- 2.26. The Council run the Dacorum Climate Action Network (CAN), which organises events and initiatives throughout the year for residents, schools and organisations to get involved in making changes to achieve our CEE objectives. DCAN hosted its third annual conference and networking event in November, with a focus on community climate action. More than 90 people attended the event in November. Throughout the evening, the audience heard from speakers representing Dacorum Environmental Forum, Community Action Dacorum, Grand Union Community Energy, and Sustainable Tring. These presentations provided the basis for lively and positive discussion about how we can work together across the borough to secure a better future for all.
- 2.27. Carbon literacy training has also been delivered to all senior management team members and to new Portfolio Holders. Mandatory training for all staff members on Climate and Ecological Emergency has also been implemented, to ensure all staff members are aware of the need to change behaviours at an individual level to help achieve our CEE ambitions.
- 2.28. The CEE Programme is working on many other projects, such as liaising with HCC on the Local Area Energy Plan, and across the piece looking for ways to help Council services and residents and businesses alike to be supported to record their progress milestones on a regular and organised basis, so that a positive feedback loop can become established.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. By pursuing investment in energy efficiency measures we can save the Council money, which can be reinvested further to continue to generate savings for the long term, creating a wider reach for energy efficiency significant carbon savings.
- 3.2. The objectives set out in the CEE Strategy are very challenging to achieve but is critical to ensure we minimise and mitigate the impacts of climate change on our residents and communities. As can be seen from the various actions and projects set out in this report, our renewed approach to Climate and Ecological Emergency will enable us to make significant progress against our target for reducing the Council's emissions.
- 3.3. We recognise the leadership role that DBC has, but also the power of residents and businesses to enable us as a borough to become net zero by 2050. The Dacorum Climate Action Network brings together local individuals and organisations to "think global and act local" and we will be focusing efforts in the coming years on how we can support our communities and residents more effectively to change behaviours and enable us to collectively achieve Net Zero by 2050.