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| <b>Report to</b>             | Cabinet  |
| <b>Date of meeting</b>       | 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2024   |
| <b>Lead Member / Officer</b> | Cllr Barry Mellor (Lead Member for Environment and Transport)/ Gary Williams (Corporate Director - Governance and Business & Climate and Ecological Change Programme Senior Responsible Owner) |
| <b>Head of Service</b>       | Helen Vaughan-Evans (Head of Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital & Assets)   |
| <b>Report author</b>         | Liz Wilcox-Jones (Interim Climate Change Programme Manager)  |
| <b>Title</b>                 | Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Nature Strategy (2021/22-2029/30) - Year 3 review and refresh  |

## **1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1. This report is about the Year 3 Review and Refresh of Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Nature Strategy (2021/22-2029/30) [previously known as DCC's Climate and Ecological Change Strategy (2021/22-2029/30)].

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

- 2.1. To present the final strategy document for Cabinet to decide on whether to recommend its adoption to Council.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

- 3.1 That Cabinet recommend adoption to Council of Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Nature Strategy (2021/22-2029/30). (Appendix 1)

3.2 That Cabinet confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment as part of its consideration. (Appendix 2)

## 4. Report details

4.1. The Council declared a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency in July 2019 which committed the Council to become Net Carbon Zero by 2030 at the latest and improve biodiversity across the County amongst other things. Subsequently the Climate and Ecological Change Strategy (2021/22-2029/30) was adopted in February 2021 which commits the Council to become a Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive Council by 2030 in addition to reducing carbon emissions from the goods and services we buy (the Council's supply chain) by 35% by 2030. The Council also changed its constitution in October 2020, so all decisions made by the Council must now 'have regard to tackling Climate and Ecological Change'.

4.2. Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Nature Strategy (2021/22-2029/30) is scheduled to be reviewed and refreshed every 3 years. The first official review and refresh of the Strategy was 2023/24 and a thorough process has been completed as part of that review and refresh (see Appendix 3).

4.3. Revised and updated areas of the strategy of particular note include:

- A change of name to: Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Nature Strategy (2021/22-2029/30) [from Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Ecological Change Strategy (2021/22 – 2029/30)].
- The addition of three new sections acknowledging the wider influence the Council can have in bringing about change in this agenda across the County of Denbighshire, the requirement to increase resilience to climate change already 'baked in' and to respond to the broadening of scope in local and national plans. This includes 'Reducing emissions and increasing absorption across Denbighshire', 'Increasing our resilience across the county' and 'Nature Recovery across Denbighshire'.
- Introduction of a technical appendix as a place to include history of completed process/policy changes and projects/activities included in previous iterations of the Strategy document and to provide additional more in-depth information about performance to date. This includes further information on areas where achieving the required target is experiencing challenge.

- The specific process/ policy changes and actions/ projects associated with the strategy delivery have been updated in the draft document. Items that have been completed are listed in the technical appendix.

- 4.4 In the strategy we have made it clear the areas of emissions that we know the targets we have set for ourselves by 2030 will be a challenge to meet, such as in buildings, land use and staff commuting, as we felt it was important to be transparent about our progress. The technical appendix explains what we expect to achieve (in terms of carbon reduction or absorption) in those areas and the reasons why our trajectory and target are not current aligned. These reasons include the availability of funding, the availability of capability and capacity within the supply chain to design and deliver carbon reduction schemes in buildings, the amount of available land within DCC ownership suitable for further tree planting, the price of electricity weakening financial case, data quality and speed of development of green technologies.
- 4.5 Whilst we acknowledge and are transparent about this challenge, importantly we are not altering our original Net Carbon Zero ambitions by 2030. To do so would cause a loss of momentum on a priority area that is too important to relax upon. We stand by our Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive Council by 2030 goals and will continue to work hard to get as close as we can to their achievement to 2030.
- 4.6 The strategies finance section has been updated to include the expected cost over the next 6 years. That cost has been estimated to be at least £48 million if we were to achieve our net carbon zero and ecologically positive goals by 2030, and that's been based on project costs so far and the carbon savings those projects have achieved. It is important to note that the funding for the schemes needing to be delivered are not expected to come from Denbighshire County Council budgets alone. Indeed, the projects completed so far under the strategy have been funded 36% from external grant funding- a percentage level which the Council seeks to increase in future years.
- 4.7 An online public consultation on the Year 3 Draft Strategy was ran for 8 weeks from March 25th until May 20th. The draft strategy was discussed at all Member Area Groups during April and May. 336 responses were received in total with 88% of respondents agreeing that the Council should adopt the revised strategy document. A number of pieces of feedback were received on how the Council could further improve the revised strategy document; as many as possible of which has been

incorporated into the final draft found in Appendix 1. The consultation feedback summary report can be found in Appendix 4 and will be uploaded onto the Council's consultation portal once translated.

- 4.8 To allow for easier consumption on what is a substantial document, an Executive Summary of the strategy will be produced along with a Youth Version.

## **5 How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

- 5.1 Ensuring the strategy remains relevant, up to date and bought into is integral to delivering upon the Council's Climate Change and Ecological Emergency declaration (2019) which committed the Council to become Net Carbon Zero by 2030 and improve biodiversity in Denbighshire. Refreshing the targets, achievement pathways and activities regularly helps to maintain the focus and ambition required to deliver on the Strategy so that the Council can achieve its 2030 goals of Net Carbon Zero, Ecologically Positive and 35% reduction in supply chain emissions. Delivering on the Strategy will directly contribute towards the Corporate Plan 2022-2027 theme of 'A Greener Denbighshire'.

## **6 What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

- 6.1 Some of changes and actions set out in the Strategy will require capital investment, others revenue funding, and some delivered at no additional cost. Many of the changes and actions will save the Council money over the long time. Section 4.6 provides further detail. All interventions will be individually appraised- financially, via capital business cases and through revenue budget plans and processes, and for wellbeing and sustainability alignment, via the established wellbeing impact assessment process.
- 6.2 Operating our Council in a low carbon and ecologically positive way requires us to design and deliver our services in a different way and will involve policy change. Continued alignment of service business plans, performance management, regulatory mechanisms and decision making to the Climate and Ecological Change ambitions will support delivery.

## **7 What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

7.1 Please see Appendix 5 for the WIA of the Year 3 revised strategy document. The strategy in its very nature of combating climate and ecological change has protecting and improving the well-being of generations now and in the future at its heart. Under the five delivery principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act the Strategy scored 3 out of 4 stars (actual score 32/36). Against the seven well-being goals of the Act, the potential impact of the Strategy is evaluated as 6 Positive and 1 Neutral.

## **8 What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

8.1 Please see detail in section 4.2, appendix 3 and section 4.7 of this report.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1 The Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Nature Strategy has involved significant financial investment over recent years and will continue to require investment going forward. However, the financial pressures that the Council is now facing may impact on the available funding in the next few years. Although the review itself can be contained within existing resources, it is important that the programme continue to work through the revenue and capital budget setting processes of the Council when additional resource requirements are identified.

## **10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

10.1 Notable risks are included in Appendix 5.

## **11 Power to make the decision**

11.1 Section 2, Local Government Act 2000 and Section 111, Local Government Act 1972. (for further detail see Appendix 6).