



| Report of: | Meeting | Date |
|--|---------|-------------|
| Councillor David Henderson, Leader of the Council | Council | 8 July 2021 |

Updating net-zero emissions targets

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek council approval to update the council's net-zero emissions targets, in line with new government commitments.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 Wyre will align with the government's new climate change commitments, bringing the net-zero emissions targets for council operations and the wider borough forward, from 100% by 2050 to 78% by 2035.
- 2.2 The actions to address climate change in Wyre will be accelerated in response to this growing threat, to ensure a cleaner, greener Wyre for the future.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That approval is given to update the net-zero emissions targets for council operations, from 100% by 2050 to 78% by 2035, based on 2018/19 levels.
- 3.2 That the target to support the borough to achieve net-zero emissions is also updated to the same timescale.

4. Background

- 4.1 A net-zero target refers to achieving a balance of greenhouse gas emissions; by reducing the amount of emissions released from an activity as much as possible, alongside meaningful measures to offset any remaining emissions.

- 4.2** On 11 July 2019, at a full Council meeting, members approved a motion to declare a Climate Emergency¹. This included a commitment to make the council's activities net-zero by 2050, as well as supporting the relevant agencies towards achieving net-zero emissions across Wyre within the same timescale. These targets went above existing government targets at the time, which were to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050.
- 4.3** Recently, on 20 April 2021, the government announced that the sixth Carbon Budget will commit the UK to cut emissions by 78% by 2035, based on 1990 levels. This will be enshrined in law by the end of June 2021, bringing forward the current target date by 15 years. This accepts advice from the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC), recognising that the costs of action on climate change are outweighed by the significant benefits: reducing polluting emissions, as well as bringing fuel savings, improvements to air quality and enhancing biodiversity. As the world's most ambitious climate target, it highlights that urgent action is needed now and that the UK is taking the climate emergency seriously.

5. Key issues and proposals

- 5.1** The Baseline Carbon Footprint Report² identified that the main sources of emissions within the council were generated from gas heating, the authority's fleet and electricity use. Within the borough, domestic gas use, industry and commercial gas and electricity use and minor road transport were the highest emitters. As such, work to rapidly reduce emissions must target these key sources across Wyre.
- 5.2** Three options were considered for updating the council's emissions targets: achieving 100% net-zero emissions by 2035; a 78% reduction by 2035 as pledged by the government; or keeping the previous target to achieve 100% net-zero emissions by 2050.
- 5.3** It was considered that keeping the previous target of 100% net-zero emissions by 2050 was no longer viable. As stated in the council's climate emergency declaration, the council notes that the impacts of climate breakdown are already causing serious damage around the world. The Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees centigrade, published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in October 2018, describes the enormous harm a 2°C average rise in global temperatures is likely to cause, as opposed to limiting this to 1.5°C with ambitious action across all sectors. Emissions released now will remain in our atmosphere for 300 to 1,000 years³. It is therefore vital that efforts

¹ Climate Emergency Declaration, available online: https://www.wyre.gov.uk/info/200489/climate_change/1363/climate_emergency_declaration

² Baseline Carbon Footprint Report, available online: https://www.wyre.gov.uk/info/200489/climate_change/1364/where_we_are_now

³ Buis, A 2019, NASA, accessed 24 May 2021, <<https://climate.nasa.gov/news/2915/the-atmosphere-getting-a-handle-on-carbon-dioxide/>>

should be made to reduce all emissions as rapidly as possible, and bringing forward the target date from 2050 to 2035 would instil this necessary action to successfully tackle the emergency.

- 5.4** Furthermore, the baseline carbon footprint report identified that the council's emissions amount to approximately 0.5% of emissions across the borough. With the aid of government support, as proposed in the upcoming Carbon Budget, reducing emissions by 2035 in line with government targets should be more attainable. This would enable the council to take advantage of changes in national policy, technological developments and market conditions that will be driven forward at a national level, which may enable the more difficult areas of emissions to be reduced.
- 5.5** Committing to bringing forward the net-zero target will set an example for other organisations in the borough by demonstrating leadership on the climate change agenda in Wyre. This will encourage other organisations and businesses to follow suit, helping to generate green jobs for the local economy, alongside co-benefits such as improved health and wellbeing for residents, all listed in the Council's Business Plan vision for Wyre.
- 5.6** It was considered that a target of 78% emissions reduction by 2035 was more achievable than 100% by this date but still ambitious. At the current time, it is unlikely that emissions will be fully reduced in all areas of the council by then. For example, in waste collection it is not yet viable or environmentally sustainable to switch to electric wagons, although technology is rapidly developing in this area. However, as a net-zero target, these difficult to reach emissions would be balanced with meaningful investment into offsetting projects. The council will continue to keep the objectives under review with the help of the Climate Change Policy Group and should it be possible to improve on the updated target this will be welcomed.
- 5.7** The financial impact of bringing forward the net-zero target data would be addressed separately, as agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 13 January 2021, which stated that key actions within the Climate Change Action Plan that require further investment would be the subject of separate reports for approval. However, in order to meet any of these net-zero targets and rapidly reduce emissions, it is important to note that significant investment in infrastructure, building upgrades and offsetting projects are required as a matter of urgency. External funding will be sourced wherever possible to support these initiatives.

| Financial and legal implications | |
|---|--|
| Finance | There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. |

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| Legal | There is a legally binding international treaty on climate change in place which was adopted by 196 parties including the UK in 2015. (The Paris Agreement). The government's proposed carbon budget and the Council's commitments outlined in this report help to deliver the goals set out in the Treaty. |
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Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

| risks/implications | ✓ / x |
|------------------------|-------|
| community safety | x |
| equality and diversity | x |
| sustainability | ✓ |
| health and safety | x |

| risks/implications | ✓ / x |
|--------------------|-------|
| asset management | ✓ |
| climate change | ✓ |
| ICT | x |
| data protection | x |

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a 'privacy impact assessment (PIA)' is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

| report author | telephone no. | email | date |
|--|---------------|------------------------|------------|
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| List of background papers: | | |
|----------------------------|------|--------------------------------|
| name of document | date | where available for inspection |
| None | | |

List of appendices

None

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