

## CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Tuesday, 4 June 2024

**Title:** Committee Objectives & Work Programme for the Municipal Year

**Contact Officer:** Town Clerk - Sharon Groth

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### Background

The purpose of this report is to update Members on this Committee's objectives/priorities. Whilst this Committee leads on Climate and Biodiversity projects, the theory crosses over into everything the Council does, provides or maintains, to try and meet its target of carbon neutrality by 2028.

### Current Situation

The Council has continued to make environmental changes where possible, some of which include:

- ✓ The continuation and renewal of using green utilities for gas and electric where possible;
- ✓ 18 months on from bringing the grounds maintenance contract in house, this has enabled the Council to procure greener vehicles and equipment, have better control over grass cutting and maintenance to better promote biodiversity on its land;
- ✓ Continues to set aside funding for electric vehicles;
- ✓ Employed a full time Green Spaces Operative to support the Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer who can focus on improving the biodiversity on Council land and in the lake;
- ✓ Continues to maintain the Tiny Forest;
- ✓ Increased the number of allotments;
- ✓ Set aside funding for making its buildings more energy efficient;
- ✓ Involved with the LCWIP – Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and 20 mph consultations.
- ✓ More efficient boiler/heating system installed at Burwell Hall with remote control over temperature settings when the building is in use.
- ✓ Designated areas for wildflower planting.
- ✓ Has a Ten-Year Lake & Country Park Management Plan to support the improvement, development and maintenance of the sites.

There are Earmarked Reserves (EMR) which have been accumulated over several years:

Earmarked Reserve 366 – Climate/Environment the balance of this EMR currently stands at £44,550 for initiatives to make the Council's buildings energy efficient. Last year the Operations Manager commissioned EPC ratings for the Town Hall, Langdale Hall and Burwell Hall. Officers are currently working with tenants to improve the rating of the Langdale Hall.

With the refurbishment of the West Witney Clubhouse, environmental aspects to reduce the carbon footprint of the building are key – such as replacing the windows, installing photovoltaic panels, and looking at alternative heat sources to replace the oil powered boiler. This should improve the efficiency of this building immensely.

Similarly, the Courtside CIC development of the facilities at the Leys Recreation are to include environmental changes to make the new buildings more energy efficient.

The water is being carefully monitored at the Splashpark for the summer season. With the planned refurbishment for 2025, Officers are looking into water recycling systems to make the facility more environmentally friendly.

Earmarked Reserve 378 – Lake & CP/Biodiversity current balance is £54,575 which is made up of £23,050 set aside for biodiversity and bank stabilisation works around the lake, £5,000 in respect of Angling Platform improvements rolled over from 22/23.

The Council has an Earmarked Reserve 370 – Electric Vehicles which currently stands at £44,200 however this is to fund electric vehicles already purchased so awaiting year-end adjustments.

**The RFO has provided a comprehensive Finance Report at a separate agenda item, and explains the two cost centres under direct control of this committee.**

#### **Other Budget Lines Under Indirect Control – for information**

##### 4066/402 – Replacement Trees:

It is Council policy that any trees which must be removed are replaced and therefore the necessary funding needs to be in place to fulfil its objective. A budget line of £8,000 has been set in 24/25.

##### 4067/402 – Tree Survey:

The Council has a rolling programme of surveying its tree stock – which is a requirement for insurance purposes. There is also budgetary provision rolled over from 23/24 for OSS-PO3 to draw up and adopt a comprehensive arboriculture plan.

#### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

**Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

When considering its priorities, the committee should be mindful of all resources – financial as well as human resources – and the competing demands from other Committees. A clear programme of works ensures that the Council is realistic in what it can achieve in the next 12 months. Failure to have a plan could result in wasted resources and undeliverable projects.

**Financial implications**

The financial implications are detailed above.

**Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report.