

FULL COUNCIL



Agenda Item: Climate Action Plan

Meeting Date: Monday, 6 October 2025

Contact Officer: Compliance and Environment Officer

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Witney Town Council's Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

Background

At its meeting on 26 June 2019, Witney Town Council formally declared a Climate Emergency. In response, the Council committed to taking all necessary measures to address climate change, setting a target to achieve carbon neutrality by 2028 in pursuit of a cleaner, more sustainable future for its residents.

Current Situation

Officers are in the process of drafting the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. Member input has given direction following the Climate Action Working Party on 25 September 2025 (minutes attached) and the Climate & Biodiversity Committee meeting held on 9 September 2025. The intention is to ensure that the final version reflects the Council's priorities.

The draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan is being developed following the preliminary roadmap presented at the Climate and Biodiversity Committee meeting on 20 May 2025.

To support this work, a Council carbon footprint for 2025/26 is currently being established. This will enable a meaningful comparison with the baseline footprint recorded in 2019/20, helping to track progress and inform future actions.

Carbon audits have been requested for Burwell Hall, Corn Exchange, Town Hall, and the Administration Office. The reports will identify improvements that could be made by the Council to improve the energy performance of buildings that are owned or long-term leased. There may be challenges with the listed buildings and any proposals will need to be agreed with the Witney Town Hall Charity (leased buildings) and West Oxfordshire District Council as the local planning authority.

As an interim measure, officers have reviewed the current energy performance data for the buildings. The data highlights varying energy performance factors, which will need to be

assessed and reviewed by the Climate and Biodiversity Committee and the Climate Action Working Party once the latest carbon audits are completed.

Certain improvement actions may be accommodated within existing maintenance budgets, while others should be considered by the appropriate committees as Capital Improvement Projects during the budget planning process.

Several budget requests for consideration for 2026/27 have been identified as follows:

1. The Leys Recreation Ground – Installation of Public Water Refill Station

The proposal to install a public water refill station at The Leys Recreation Ground was originally initiated by a former Youth Council in 2019 but was not progressed at the time. In 2023, officers revisited the project and identified a suitable product for installation in a public park setting. The water refill station will require connection to services, and it is anticipated that officers will collaborate with Courtside Hubs CIC to identify a suitable location near the new community hub. An updated quotation for the refill station has been received, with estimated costs for service connections totalling approximately £4,500.

2. Burwell Hall – Energy Improvements

Burwell Hall, owned and managed by the Council, was constructed in the late 1980s. A feasibility report commissioned by Energy Solutions Oxfordshire identified several energy efficiency measures for consideration.

In 2023, a new gas boiler and upgraded heating controls were installed. Additional recommendations from the report will be implemented through existing maintenance budgets, such as replacing traditional lighting with energy-efficient LED alternatives.

Two capital energy improvements have been identified from the report:

- Solar PV Panels
Estimated cost: £13,000 – £16,000.

The hall's east and west-facing roofs offer sufficient space for the installation of solar photovoltaic panels, which will contribute to reducing electricity consumption and carbon emissions.

- Ceiling Insulation
Estimated cost: £18,000 – £22,000.

The main hall ceiling currently meets only the insulation standards of the 1980s. Enhancing insulation below the ceiling will help reduce heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer, improving comfort for users and lowering annual energy costs.

Council officers will continue to explore external funding opportunities to support these capital improvements.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Benefits are shared across all residents, promoting fairness and inclusion. Free water access supports healthier choices, especially for those on lower incomes.
- b) Biodiversity - The Council must ensure any issues are dealt with in line with legislation and its own policy.
- c) Crime & Disorder - No direct crime and disorder implications have been identified in relation to this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - The proposed actions will contribute to reducing the Council's carbon emissions, improved energy efficiency and decreased waste and support wider climate mitigation and adaptation measures across Witney contributing to the Council's environmental sustainability goals.

Risk

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

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

- a) Social benefits - Enhanced public spaces that promote community engagement and support healthier lifestyles.
- b) Health and wellbeing - Increased access to quality green spaces and climate resilience measures that support the physical and mental wellbeing of residents.

Financial implications

Implementation of retrofit measures and infrastructure projects will require capital investment but will deliver operational savings over time through reduced energy consumption.

All external funding opportunities will be explored to support climate action costs, including relevant government grants and partnership funding.

Following approval of the capital projects, officers will undertake work to finalise detailed costings to support budget preparation.

The Council hold a Climate Initiatives EMR (366) which may be used for some of the above – at this point, Members are invited to note the recommendations for further scrutiny during budget-setting.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider the capital project requests for the 2026/27 municipal year:
 - a) The Leys Recreation Ground – Installation of Public Water Refill Station
Estimated cost = £4,500.
 - b) Burwell Hall – Energy Improvements - Solar PV Panels
Estimated cost: £13,000 – £16,000.
 - c) Burwell Hall – Energy Improvements -Ceiling Insulation
Estimated cost: £18,000 – £22,000.