
Agenda Item:	Climate Action Plan
Meeting Date:	Tuesday 19 May 2026
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

While progress on climate-related initiatives has been slower than originally anticipated over the past few months, this reflects a period of necessary focus on key operational priorities.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Corporate Strategy 2025-2029 has been reviewed to ensure the draft Climate Change Strategy aligns with the document. Woven through all six pillars that guide the Council's decision-making and resource allocation is the commitment to substantiality and resilience which also forms the foundation of the seventh, overarching objective:

7. A Green and Resilient Town - Rooted in the Council's 2019 Climate Emergency declaration. We are committed to embedding environmental responsibility into everything we do. We aim to achieve carbon neutrality for the Council by 2028, while supporting wider efforts to create a thriving, low-carbon future for Witney.

Key actions, committee delivery plans, and priorities set out in the Corporate Strategy have been incorporated into the draft Climate Change Strategy.

Draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

The third draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (Appendix A) has been prepared following the preliminary roadmap presented to the Climate and Biodiversity Committee on 20 May 2025 and the Climate Action Working Party on 25 September 2025 where further direction from Members was given to officers. A detailed Action Plan, including key performance indicators (KPIs) and timelines, will now be further developed to accompany the

Climate Change Strategy. This will allow the Council to track progress and link strategic objectives directly to measurable outcomes.

Implementation Roadmap & Estimated Reductions

Following the completion of the 2024–25 baseline emissions assessment, clear carbon reduction priorities have now been established, highlighting the most significant opportunities for impactful change. The next phase will focus on calculating the estimated tCO₂e savings for each measure to finalise this component of the plan, with Scope 1 delivering the greatest impact. Scope 1 refers to the direct emissions from Council owned operations, excluding any buildings leased to third parties. e.g. Liquid fuel for vehicles (petrol and diesel). A breakdown of Scope 1 emissions sources details heating emissions at 26.91 tCO₂e and the Council's fleet use at 24.48 tCO₂e.

The Operations Manager is now in post and will review the Council's fleet, plant and machinery, making recommendations on where electric alternatives are suitable. However, due to the specialist nature of certain operations, it will not be possible to replace all vehicles, plant and machinery with electric alternatives.

Council Carbon Emissions Assessment 2025-2026

With the establishment of the 2024-2025 Council carbon emissions, officers will undertake a detailed review of its carbon emissions for the period April 2025 - March 2026, using the local authority industry recognised GHG Accounting Tool. The accounting tool has been developed by The Local Government Association and is widely used by local authorities to establish their baseline greenhouse gas emissions over a single reporting year. This assessment will enable the Council to determine progress on the established total Council emissions for 2024-2025 of 65.08 tCO₂e.

Carbon Reduction Recommendations Reports and Grant Funding

Energy Solutions Oxfordshire have undertaken the Carbon Reduction Recommendations Reports for Burwell Hall, Windrush Cemetery Depot and the Corn Exchange. Energy Solutions Oxfordshire have a Green Fund which can match funding up to £10,000 for energy efficiency measures or renewable energy projects that have been recommended within their reports. The Green Fund application deadlines for 2026 are:

- June Board – application deadline 10 June 2026
- September Board – application deadline 9 September 2026
- December Board – application deadline 2 December 2026

Windrush Cemetery Depot: The building is located within the Eynsham and Cassington Ward, where Low Carbon Hub is currently delivering the CAP Zero project. An energy assessment was undertaken in December 2025 and is included as Appendix B.

Several of the recommendations identified can be delivered through the existing general building maintenance budget. Further investigation, including detailed project costing, could be undertaken in relation to the installation of solar PV panels and the potential use of an air-to-air heat pump system.

The building is fully electric, with electricity used for both heating and lighting. The annual electricity cost for the period 2024–2025 was £2,357.

A summary extract of the recommended energy-saving measures, along with their associated carbon impact, is set out below for consideration.

Energy savings recommendations - summary				
Opportunity	Payback (years)	Savings current & future energy prices (£ / yr)	Estimated costs (£)	Carbon impact (tCO₂e / yr)
1) Take and submit meter readings	-	0	0	0.00
2) Add heating controls	0.9	129	120 to 310	0.11
3) Add loft insulation	5.4	103	560	0.08
4) Add timer to hot water	4.3	42	180	0.03
5) Upgrade lighting to LEDs	7.6	230	1,750 to 2,100	0.19
6) Add draught proofing to external door	-	0	20 to 40	0.00
7) Investigate fridge use	-	See details	See details	0.00
8) Provide signage for disabled toilet door	0.1	18	1 to 2	0.02
9) Add solar PV panels	9.5	442	4,186 to 4,508	0.26
10) Consider an air to air heat pump system	11.6	519	6,000 to 8,000	0.42
TOTAL		£1,483 per year	£12,817 to 15,700	1.11 tCO₂e per year

Corn Exchange:

An energy assessment was undertaken in April 2026 and is included as Appendix C. No information on existing insulation measures was available for review by the assessor, and additional investigation may be necessary by officers.

The Corn Exchange represents the Council's largest source of water, gas and electricity consumption. The annual electricity and gas cost for the period 2024–2025 was £17,349. Water consumption was 1859m³.

A summary extract of the recommended energy-saving measures, along with their associated carbon impact, is set out below for consideration.

Energy savings recommendations - summary				
Opportunity	Payback (years)	Savings current & future energy prices (£ / yr)	Estimated costs (£)	Carbon impact (tCO ₂ e / yr)
1) Manage heating	1.1	271	300	0.63
2) Conduct an out of hours survey	-	See details	0	0
3) Upgrade lighting to LEDs	9.9	844	8,400 to 9,800	0.69
4) Add draught proofing to external doors	-	See details	50 to 70	0
5) Investigate glazing solutions	44.6	271	12,100 to 16,500	0.63
6) Manage summer heat	-	See details	1,500 to 2,000	0
7) Add solar PV panels	8.7	3,573	31,096 to 35,880	2.34
8) Consider an air to water heat pump system	-	See details	35,000 to 45,000	8.02
TOTAL		£4,959 per year	£88,446 to 109,550	12.30 tCO ₂ e per year

Burwell Hall

The energy assessment was undertaken in 2022 and is included as Appendix D. Since the report the gas boiler system has been upgraded.

The report concludes that Burwell Hall has clear opportunities to reduce both running costs and carbon emissions through a combination of heating system replacement (completed 2023), fabric improvements, improved controls, and renewable energy. Savings are achievable in the short term through low-cost measures, with larger long-term benefits from heating and renewable upgrades.

Several of the recommendations identified can be delivered through the existing general building maintenance budget. Further investigation, including detailed project costing, could be undertaken in relation to the installation of solar PV panels and the installation of ceiling insulation below the main hall to retain heat in the building.

Benchmarking

Following confirmation from the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) Environmental & Sustainability Advisor that no published benchmarking data is currently held for town councils, officers have undertaken a limited benchmarking exercise.

Further research to assess the Council's performance against comparable town councils identified that four councils have published emissions data online via Carbon Data Intelligence (www.carbondi.com). The reported emissions have been independently verified by Carbon Footprint Ltd, which was commissioned by the respective councils to undertake carbon reporting.

Town Council	Report Period	Emissions tCO2e
Corsham	2024-2025	25.89
	2022-2023	63.33
Cirencester	2024-2025	62.18
Shrewsbury	2023-2024	484.03
Woodley	2023-2024	151.70
Witney	2024-2025	64.08

The comparative data shows that Witney’s performance is broadly aligned with Cirencester during the same reporting period, while also illustrating the more significant reductions achieved by Corsham from 2022-2023 to 2024-2025. There would be value in sharing learning and best practice with both of these councils to support the Council’s carbon reduction ambitions and officers will progress this further.

Eco Fair 2026

The first Council Eco Fair took place on Thursday 9 October 2025, supported by local organisations and officers from West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council. At the Climate Action Working Party meeting on 22 July 2025, it was proposed that a future Eco Fair be held on a weekend to enable residents who are unable to attend weekday events to participate. This proposal was approved and resolved by the Climate & Biodiversity Committee (Minute CB508).

Members are now invited to consider the format and focus of this year’s Eco Fair to inform further officer investigations. The event may be hosted by the Council in collaboration with partner organisations who are responsible for the main organisation and delivery.

Corporate Strategy

The Council’s Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council’s long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to ‘make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.’ This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

7. **A Green and Resilient Town** – Rooted in the Council’s 2019 Climate Emergency declaration, with a commitment to embedding environmental responsibility into all Council activities and achieving carbon neutrality by 2028.

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 – The impacts of implementing a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for Witney will have equal impact on all services, customers, and staff as there is shared benefit.
- b) Biodiversity – Climate change action plans can include measures to protect and restore biodiversity, which in turn can help with climate adaptation and mitigation as detailed in the report.

- c) Crime & Disorder - No direct crime and disorder impact with regards to the content of this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The information and suggested targets within the report will have a direct, positive impact on the Council’s plan for the wider positive benefits towards climate change mitigation and adaptation across the town.

Risk

In decision making Members should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability. Any recommendations will be reported to the appropriate Committee and Full Council for approval.

Delivery of the estimated emission savings is ambitious and dependent on securing sufficient financial resources and Council approval within the required timeframe.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will have multi-dimensional impact across various areas including social, economic, and environmental benefits. Stakeholder engagement will be crucial including the public, communities, and local businesses. Consideration of the effects on local communities, including economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability will form the draft documents.

Financial implications

- Any costs associated with the Climate Emergency Action Plan incorporating the reduction of the carbon footprint for Witney will follow Council process and be reported to appropriate committees for approval or from existing budget allocations.
- The 2026–2027 budget allocated for capital projects for carbon reduction is £50,000.
- All external funding opportunities will be explored to support climate action costs.
- Officers will maximise the use of support by the various organisations and agencies available.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. That a Climate Working Party meeting is arranged to further discuss the projects identified within the Carbon Reduction Reports to enable officers to proceed with obtaining quotes.
2. Members are invited to consider the format and focus of this year’s Eco Fair to inform further officer investigations. The event may be hosted by the Council in collaboration with partner organisations who are responsible for the main organisation and delivery
3. Share feedback and recommendations to help shape the final version of the strategy.