
Agenda Item:	Carbon Reduction Action Plan & Report
Meeting Date:	Tuesday 8 September 2026
Contact Officer:	Administrative Support Assistant – Communities & Planning

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Witney Town Council's Carbon Reduction 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

Since the previous update, officers have progressed the draft Climate Change Strategy, identified the next grant funding deadline, referred low cost Windrush Cemetery Depot measures for implementation, and begun further investigation of larger carbon reduction measures. The report also updates Members on benchmarking, fuel tariff options, Eco Fair planning, the UTV replacement, and tree and hedgerow planting.

The matters set out in this report are primarily for noting and feedback at this stage. Where further approval is required, including for significant expenditure, procurement decisions, or implementation of larger carbon reduction measures, separate reports will be brought to the appropriate Committee and, where necessary, Full Council.

Draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

The fourth 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 Members provided further direction 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. The document has now been circulated to all officers for review, and any comments received will be considered as part of the ongoing assessment.

Progress can be seen the attached Matrix (**Appendix B**)

Carbon Reduction Recommendation Reports and Grant Funding Update

It is unlikely that the September application deadline for the Energy Solutions Oxfordshire Green Fund will be met. Officers therefore intend to submit a grant funding application by the next deadline of 2 December 2026. The fund can provide up to £10,000 towards eligible energy efficiency measures or renewable energy projects identified in the Carbon Reduction Recommendation Reports. Officers will also continue to explore other suitable grant funding opportunities to support delivery of the recommended measures.

Windrush Cemetery Depot

The following measures identified within the Carbon Reduction Recommendations Report have been referred to the Operations Manager for implementation by the Operations Team as soon as practicable, utilising existing maintenance budgets:

- Recommendation 3: Install loft insulation.
- Recommendation 4: Install a timer on the hot water system.
- Recommendation 6: Add draught-proofing to the main external door.
- Recommendation 8: Install appropriate signage on the accessible toilet door.

Officers are currently assessing the feasibility, costs, and potential carbon reduction benefits associated with the remaining recommendations, including the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and an air-to-air heat pump. Further updates will be provided to Members as this work progresses.

Corn Exchange

The following measures identified within the Carbon Reduction Recommendations Report have been allocated to the relevant officers for investigation and implementation where appropriate.

The Venue and Events Officer is undertaking an out-of-hours energy survey to identify opportunities to reduce energy consumption when the building is unoccupied. This includes taking meter readings and identifying equipment that can be switched off when not required to minimise unnecessary energy use.

The Operations Manager is collating information on the existing boiler and heating system and obtaining comparable quotations for its replacement. The review will also consider the report's recommendation regarding the installation of a heat pump, together with any other relevant measures identified within the Carbon Reduction Recommendations Report. A further update will be provided to this Committee in due course.

The Deputy Town Clerk has submitted a Pre-Application Planning Advice request to West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the potential installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels at the Corn Exchange. As the building is Grade II listed and located within a Conservation Area, planning constraints will need to be carefully considered. The advice received will be reported to Members once available.

Benchmarking

Officers have contacted Corsham Town Council, which has reported 2025/26 greenhouse gas emissions of 26.96 tCO₂e. This represents a small increase from 2024/25 and indicates that progress towards its net zero target has slowed, with actual emissions remaining above the planned reduction trajectory. Corsham has advised that this is partly due to the planned installation of air source heat pumps at its Town Hall being delayed until 2027/28, subject to grant funding and budget availability.

Officers will also seek to contact Cirencester, Shrewsbury and Woodley Town Councils to share learning and best practice, and to identify any approaches that may support the Council's carbon reduction ambitions.

Fuel

Officers are currently investigating the 100 Origin gas tariff offered by the Council's existing energy supplier, 100Green. Further information has been requested to enable a detailed financial and contractual comparison with the Council's current gas supply arrangement.

The 100 Origin tariff provides 100% green gas derived exclusively from natural sources. 100Green advises that it is currently the only UK supplier offering an eco-labelled energy tariff. Adoption of this tariff has the potential to reduce the Council's reported carbon emissions by an estimated 4.45 tCO₂e per annum.

A further report will be presented to Members once the information has been received and assessed, setting out the financial, contractual, and environmental implications for consideration.

Eco Fair 2026

The second Eco Fair has been booked and will be held in the Main Hall, Corn Exchange on Thursday 24th September 2026 and open to the public 14:00 – 18:00 hrs.

Invitations to organisations are being sent out and publicity will begin once main partner organisations have confirmed attendance.

National Emergency Briefing

The Corn Exchange screened the National Emergency Briefing on 27 July 2026, with 61 people attending. Members who attended the screening and facilitated the discussion afterwards are requested to provide a verbal update at this meeting.

Vehicle Replacement

The Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer has provided information for noting by the Committee regarding the replacement of the Council's Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV). The existing UTV has reached the end of its effective operational life and is increasingly unreliable for the range of duties required.

The UTV is an essential operational vehicle used across a variety of Council services, including:

- Grounds maintenance operations
- Parks and open spaces management
- Event support and logistics
- Transportation of equipment and materials
- Inspection and maintenance activities within the Lake and Country Park
- Tree maintenance works, including winching operations
- Recovery of vehicles and equipment where access conditions are difficult
- Supporting partner organisations undertaking environmental and ecological surveys by transporting personnel and equipment across sites

In assessing replacement options, officers considered both operational requirements and environmental impacts, including:

- Low-emission engine alternatives
- Electric UTV options
- Fuel efficiency
- Whole-life environmental costs and benefits

Following a review of the available market, officers concluded that there is currently no suitable electric UTV capable of meeting the Council's operational requirements, particularly in relation to towing capacity, winching capability, site access, and operational range. Consequently, a conventional replacement vehicle has been identified as the most appropriate option at this time. Officers will continue to monitor the market for suitable low-emission or electric alternatives for future replacement cycles.

The replacement UTV is expected to be delivered in September 2026.

Tree and hedgerow planting

The Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer has provided information relating to tree and hedgerow planting for 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27. The 2026/27 planting numbers may change due to the exceptional hot summer and the assessment of any replacement planting that is needed. Based on indicative UK carbon sequestration data, the planting over these three years is estimated to sequester approximately 0.41 tonnes of CO₂e per year once established. This is an indicative estimate rather than a verified carbon offset and the amount of carbon sequestered will increase as the trees and hedgerows mature in addition to supporting biodiversity, habitat creation and local food production.

Year	Planting	Number	Estimated annual sequestration*
2024/25	Native orchard trees	24	0.12 tCO₂e
2025/26	Native orchard trees	32	
	Acer trees	2	
	2025/26 total	34 trees	0.19 tCO₂e

Year	Planting	Number	Estimated annual sequestration*
2026/27	Whitebeam	2	0.04–0.05 tCO ₂ e
	Native wild cherry	2	0.04–0.05 tCO ₂ e
	Native hazel hedging	697	Indicative; see note below
	2026/27 total	4 trees + 697 hedging plants	~0.1 tCO₂e

* Indicative annual carbon sequestration once established. These figures are estimates and should not be treated as verified carbon offsets or deducted directly from the Council's operational carbon footprint.

For the Council's Carbon Reduction Plan, it is recommended recording the carbon sequestration separately from the 2024-2025 65.08 tCO₂e operational emissions. The Woodland Carbon Code makes the distinction between carbon sequestration and verified carbon units, and formal carbon credits require a much more rigorous methodology.

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. Key risks include missing grant funding deadlines, cost escalation, delays linked to planning or listed building advice, and limited availability of suitable low-emission operational vehicles.

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 a multi-dimensional impact across social, economic, and environmental areas. Stakeholder engagement with the public, community groups, and local businesses will be crucial. Consideration of the effects on local communities, including economic development, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability, will inform 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.
- All procurement activities will comply with:
 - Relevant legislation.
 - Council Procurement Policy.
 - Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Provide feedback on the draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and support the continued development of the detailed Action Plan, including key performance indicators, timelines, and further reports where Member approval is required.