
Agenda Item:	Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
Meeting Date:	Monday 12 October 2026
Contact Officer:	Administrative Support Assistant – Communities, Environment & Planning

This report presents the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for adoption and provides an update on progress towards the Council's carbon reduction objectives.

Background

At its meeting on 26 June 2019, Witney Town Council formally declared a Climate Emergency. In response, the Council committed to taking meaningful action to address climate change and set a target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2028, supporting a cleaner, more sustainable future for the town and its residents.

Current Situation

Officers have finalised the draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for consideration by Full Council. In parallel, opportunities for external grant funding have been reviewed, low-cost carbon reduction measures at Windrush Cemetery Depot have been identified for implementation, and investigations into larger-scale carbon reduction projects have commenced.

The draft Strategy and Action Plan has been circulated to all officers for review. Feedback received from Members and officers has been considered and incorporated where appropriate.

Should the Strategy be adopted, any future initiatives requiring further approval, including significant expenditure, procurement activity, or major carbon reduction projects, will be reported separately to the appropriate Committee or Full Council for consideration and approval.

Draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (Version 5) is attached as Appendix A. It has been developed from the preliminary roadmap presented to the Climate and Biodiversity Committee on 20 May 2025 and the direction subsequently provided by the Climate Action Working Party on 25 September 2025.

The Action Plan includes defined actions, timescales and key performance indicators to enable progress to be monitored against measurable outcomes and the Council's carbon neutrality target.

On 8 September 2026, the Climate & Biodiversity Committee reviewed Version 4 and delegated authority to the Deputy Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to finalise the document for submission to Full Council on 12 October 2026.

The Action Plan will remain a live working document and will be reviewed regularly by the Climate & Biodiversity Committee to monitor delivery and progress. Significant amendments or matters requiring approval will be referred to Full Council as necessary.

Carbon Reduction Recommendation Reports and Grant Funding Update

A progress matrix on the building carbon reduction recommendations is now presented to the Climate and Biodiversity Committee for information.

An Expression of Interest has been submitted to potential delivery organisations in respect of the capital projects identified for Windrush Cemetery. These projects comprise of the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and an air-to-air heat pump. Further updates will be provided as the projects progress.

Officers were unable to meet the September application deadline for the Energy Solutions Oxfordshire Green Fund and will instead submit an application by 2 December 2026. The fund provides grants of up to £10,000 towards eligible energy efficiency and renewable energy projects identified within the Carbon Reduction Recommendation Reports.

In addition, officers will continue to identify and pursue other suitable funding opportunities to support the delivery of climate action projects.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025-2029 sets out its long-term vision and priorities in support of its mission to make Witney a great place to live, work and visit. This report supports delivery of the following strategic priority:

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 implementation of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan is expected to deliver benefits across Council services, residents and staff, with no adverse equality impacts identified.
- b) Biodiversity – The Strategy includes actions that support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, contributing to both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

- c) Crime & Disorder - No direct crime and disorder implications have been identified arising from the recommendations contained within this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The Strategy and Action Plan will support climate change mitigation and adaptation through the delivery of environmental improvements and the reduction of carbon emissions across Council operations.

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 emissions savings depends on securing sufficient funding and obtaining Council approval within the required timescales. Principal risks are missed grant deadlines, rising costs, delays in obtaining planning or listed-building advice, and limited availability of suitable low-emission operational vehicles.

Social Value

Social value is the positive impact the Council creates for the communities it serves.

The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan has the potential to generate significant social, economic and environmental benefits for Witney. Engagement with residents, community groups and local businesses will help ensure implementation supports local economic resilience, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Financial implications

Costs arising from the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will be met from approved budgets or submitted for approval through the Council's established decision making processes.

A capital budget of £50,000 has been allocated for carbon reduction projects during 2026-2027.

Officers will actively pursue external grant funding and other financial support opportunities to maximise available resources.

Officers will seek to make full use of specialist advice, guidance and support available from partner organisations and agencies.

All procurement activity will be undertaken in accordance with:

- Relevant legislation.
- The Council's Procurement Policy.
- Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Adopt the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan attached at Appendix A; and
2. Note the progress made in relation to carbon reduction projects and external funding opportunities.