

Title: Development of 2041 Net Zero Strategy

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Scrutiny Panel: Climate Change and Communities

Recommendation(s) for action

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Note status update requested by the Panel Chair.
2. Endorse ongoing actions and way forward together with providing any additional recommendations as appropriate.

Questions for Scrutiny Panel to consider

1. With the local knowledge and city-wide community awareness held, are there any specific groups, organisations, and/or individuals, it is suggested be approached for inclusion in forthcoming wider stakeholder consultation process?

Purpose

Following the progress update of The Council Net Zero 2028 Action plan, the Chair of the Climate Change and Communities Scrutiny panel requested a progress update of the Net Zero 2041 Strategy for the City.

Background

City of Wolverhampton Council (The Council) declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. In September 2020 following a successful Citizens Assembly and public consultation, the Council approved the Future Generations: Our Commitment Strategy which formalised the climate emergency declaration into policy and committed The Council to two Net Zero targets.

- 1) Achieving Net Zero across Corporate Activities by 2028: requiring The Council to reduce its direct carbon emissions as much as possible and offsetting any residual emissions.
- 2) Working with Partners across the city to achieve a Net Zero City by 2041 in line with the Regional target.

It is widely recognised and accepted collective city-wide action and support is paramount to deliver Net Zero 2041 for Wolverhampton. This approach underpins the ongoing Strategy development and commitment to residents, businesses, and visitors in maintaining the 'climate lens perspective' which remains core to moving forward.

As requested by the Chair, this report focuses on the progress against the city-wide Strategy for Net Zero by 2041.

Context of Net Zero - Challenge

In 2015 governments around the world, including the UK, signed the Paris Climate Agreement to keep their own national emissions within their agreed Carbon Budgets to limit global warming to 1.5°C and minimise the impacts of climate change.

A carbon budget is the maximum amount of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions allowed over a period to limit global warming to a certain level.

How does the City of Wolverhampton make a reasonable contribution to agreed decarbonisation targets agreed by the UK government in line with the Paris Climate Agreement?

Reframing the Motivation for Net Zero

Net Zero is not just about carbon.

Reducing carbon emissions is fundamental for all of us to avoid the worst effects of climate change over the longer term and the significant impacts this will have on Wulfrunians and the City's economy. Impacts that are already having devastating effects across the globe and within many UK Cities.

However, the recent energy crisis alone justifies a shift to a low carbon energy economy, as reliance on international fossil fuel supplies has proven costly for many vulnerable people across the country and in the city.

Therefore, it is critical to refocus attention on the short-term co-benefits that the Net Zero transition can bring including but not limited to:

- Fuel Poverty reduction & energy security
- Public health benefits from cleaner air
- Skilled Green Sector Jobs
- Warm and low-cost-energy homes
- Business resilience
- A Greener City and climate adaptation
- Circular Economy opportunities
- Technological and digital innovation

The significant economic growth all of this will bring will enable communities to thrive in line with our City: Our Plan and the Good Growth Strategy, to ensure that Wulfrunians will live longer, healthier lives, in a cleaner greener and more equitable city.

Developing a Net Zero Strategy for the City

The Council commissioned City Science Corporation to support development of an evidenced based Strategy and Action Plan. This connects climate action to the core outcomes of Our City:

Our Plan, and to inform council decision making over policy and investment towards achieving Net Zero. The following key principles underpin the strategy:

1) Fair & Equal	2) Resilience	3) Collaboration	4) Engagement & Awareness	5) Distributed Leadership
• Supporting our most vulnerable	• Planning for the future	• Working in partnership	• Supporting behaviour change	• Empowerment through accountability

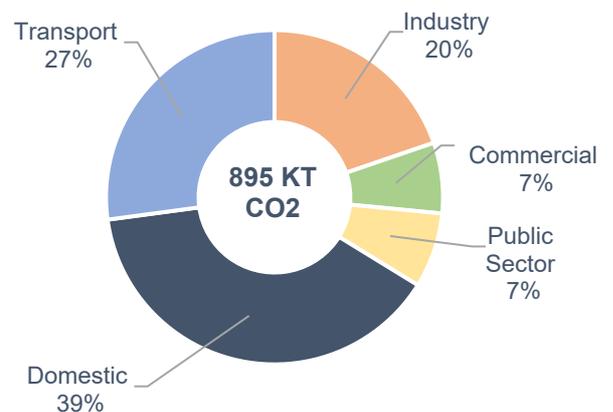
- 1) We have a duty to support those who can least afford the impacts of climate change. Those in lower socio-economic levels who are least financially able often have the smallest carbon footprints.
- 2) Climate Change is happening, and we must prepare for it with emerging digital and other technologies in order to safeguard assets and livelihoods.
- 3) Bringing people along on the journey is critical to ensuring it is a success.
- 4) With better awareness comes better-informed and conscientious decisions.
- 5) The Council cannot do this alone; everyone inside and outside of the council will have a responsibility for driving decarbonisation.

Appendix 1 provides a summary infographic of the Strategy.

Wolverhampton Carbon Footprint

As of 2021, energy only emissions from the City of Wolverhampton were circa 900,000 tonnes (900KT) of carbon dioxide (CO2). This is broken down by:

1. Domestic (39%)
2. Transport (27%)
3. Industry (20%)
4. Public Sector (7%)
5. Commercial (7%)



Note: The Councils corporate carbon footprint of 11,600 tonnes of CO2e is 1.2% of the City's emissions profile. Achieving our net zero target of 2028 will help to contribute to the city's Net Zero ambitions.

Carbon Emission Comparisons

The City's per person emissions remains the joint second smallest across the Region. But is 5th in terms of the per capita emissions reductions between 2005 and 2021.

However, since 2005 Wolverhampton has seen a 44% reduction in absolute emissions, compared to 36% across the region, and 39% across the UK.

Per capita Emissions (tCO2 per Person)	Year		
	2005	2021	difference
Local Authority Area			
Coventry	7.3	3.5	-3.8
Sandwell	7.6	3.8	-3.8
Birmingham	6.7	3.4	-3.3
Walsall	6.8	3.5	-3.3
Wolverhampton	6.6	3.4	-3.2
Solihull	8.2	5.3	-2.9
Dudley	6.1	3.3	-2.8

How to Achieve Net Zero by 2041

The strategy has outlined a pathway to Net Zero for the City which will require significant intervention, to achieve the required carbon reductions by the end of each 5-year carbon budget period.

	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
Domestic	348 (ktCO2)	282	219	108	11
Transport	228	192	127	47	2
Industrial	172	99	79	19	16
Commercial & Public)	126	76	46	18	3
Reduction vs 2021	0	26%	46%	78%	96%

The interdependencies with government policy means that the city can only reduce carbon as quickly as government policy allows e.g. national strategic energy planning, whereby national carbon budget targets are likely to fall short.

This requires more aggressive intervention at city level in order bridge the policy gap from central government.

Action Plan

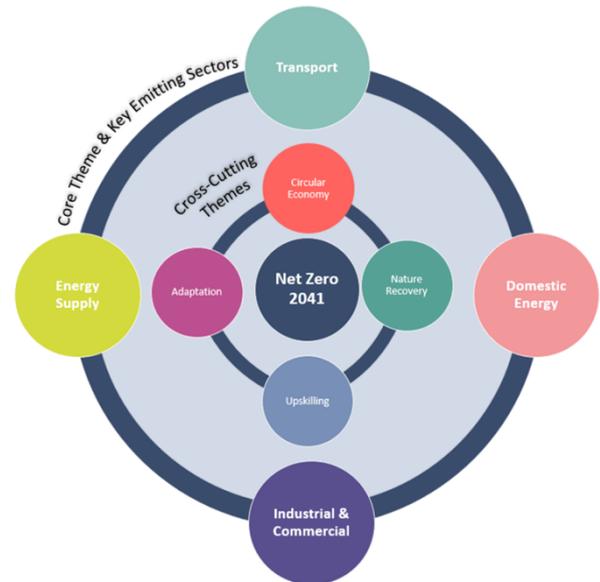
To achieve the necessary carbon reductions 20 priority actions have been **drafted**/ developed in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders.

The actions cut across four core themes:

1. Transport
2. Domestic Energy
3. Industrial & Commercial
4. Energy Supply

And four cross cutting themes:

1. Circular Economy
2. Adaptation
3. Nature Recovery
4. Upskilling



Importantly, the Action Plan builds on some existing projects and programmes to ensure there is alignment across the different strategies but are still in **draft** phase whilst the details of the financial implementation are considered and evaluated.

Monitoring, Reporting and Governance

Once approved, ongoing monitoring and reporting through established and proposed governance channels will be required to track progress against agreed KPI's.

The Creation of a separate partner board had been proposed, however in light of the recent Good Growth Strategy and evolution of partnership and matrix groups across the City, taking advantage of existing governance channels such as the anchor network could present more efficient opportunity for broader stakeholder inclusion.

External governance is paramount for endorsement of the plan and ongoing partner accountability.

As part of ongoing internal alteration for greater transparency and accountability, a Climate Action Assessment Tool (CAAT) developed by the Green Cities and Circular Economy Service Area is being implemented. The CAAT provides an indicative outcome on the relative impact of Projects across key themes which enables early visibility where Climate Action measures and mitigations are or are not being incorporated.

Key Policy Outcomes

The Strategy sets the precedent for stipulating terms for planning and regeneration which will ensure that new capital projects are aligned to the objectives of the Net Zero Strategy, as well as the core strategic and economic ambitions.

1) The Local Plan

Once approved the strategy will inform elements of the local plan to ensure that there is a stronger focus on decarbonisation particularly regarding new build properties and the roll out of renewable energy and other strategic energy infrastructure in the City.

2) City Plan

Mapping the Net Zero strategy to Our City: Our Plan will ensure that we can deliver on the core outcomes and ambitions whilst ensuring that Net Zero is properly embedded into the decision-making process. This will be enhanced by the recent roll out of the Climate Action Assessment Tool into all decision-making processes.

3) Good Growth Strategy

Key Elements of the good growth strategy reference a just and equitable economy that leverages green innovation and net zero to achieve good growth, and to strengthen the City's.

Forthcoming Major Regeneration and Developments

Maximising strategic opportunities from; Green Innovation Corridor, St Georges, Canalside and other regeneration schemes, in addition to social housing projects and developments with Anchor Partners, all form the catalyst to accelerate and demonstrate the City's commitment to Net Zero 2041. These opportunities and those yet to come, provide the ideal platform for the Council to grasp and demonstrate the 'Green Revolution', incorporating the following at every stage from concept to delivery:

- Embracing sustainability
- Maximising renewable energy generation and storage
- Promoting circular economy principles (including surplus construction materials)
- Embedding resilience and adaptation

Strategy Delivery Timeline



Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary infographic of the City Net Zero Strategy & Objectives

