

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 17 March 2026

Report of: Strategic Director Place

Title: Exeter City Council's Carbon Reduction Plan

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

1.1 The report seeks approval of the City Council's Carbon Reduction Plan.

1.2 The Carbon Reduction Plan has been developed to include all Positive Current Trajectory (PCJ) measures, as set out in the Costed Organisational Carbon Footprint Projections Report. Where possible, it includes measures from the Mid-Term and Max scenario measures from across the main sectors of the City Council's operation.

1.3 The Carbon Reduction Plan also includes relevant actions from the previous action plan.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 Executive approve the Carbon Reduction Plan (Appendix A).

2.2 Members note work undertaken to incorporate PCJ measures as set out in the Carbon Reduction Plan, into Service Plans with Heads of Service, as well as intended outcomes from the Corporate Plan, and integrating the Corporate Performance Dashboard.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 To prioritise carbon reduction measures, setting measurable metrics to track progress against priorities and intended outcomes.

3.2 The Net Zero team continue to work in collaboration with City Council services, including housing, buildings (property owned by the City Council) and transport (fleet), to ensure Green House Gas (GHG) emission reduction measures are supported and implemented as far as practicably possible.

3.3 OMB continue to assess their priorities for carbon reduction activity, in line with the Council's Corporate Plan.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources:

4.1 The original City Council's Carbon Reduction Plan has been reviewed and updated to include all PCJ measures, as set out in the Costed Organisational Carbon Footprint Projections to Report. Funding operational and capital reduction measures is extremely challenging. Estimated capital and operational costs will inform discussions with relevant OMB representatives to support future grant funding bids.

4.2 The Carbon Reduction Plan is being incorporated into service plans, which will form part of future planning of existing service budgets.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 The report highlights the significant costs associated with delivering a reduction in carbon. It is noted that grant funding opportunities will be explored.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 Section 1 of the Climate Change Act 2008 states that it is the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that the net UK carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 100% lower than the 1990 baseline. The target was originally 80% and was increased to 100% by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 The Monitoring Officer has no additional comments.

8. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

8.1 In recommending this proposal potential impacts have been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and an Equality Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention.

8.2 In delivering carbon reduction measures, the team have considered the potential impact of actions in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

9. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

9.1 The City Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. The Costed Organisational Carbon Footprint Projections Report provides a roadmap to reduce City Council GHG emissions. For context, GHG emissions arising from the City Council's direct activities (Scope 1), indirect energy emissions (Scope 2) and from other indirect activities (Scope 3) and included within the Carbon Reduction Plan.

9.2 Strategic decisions made either have a positive or negative effect on City Council GHG emissions. Additional work needs to be undertaken prior to decisions being made to determine the impact on City Council GHG emissions.

9.3 The Net Zero Risk Register considers GHG reduction measures as well as measures needed to address the impact of extreme weather events to reduce financial risk and to

protect City Council services. This is reported to Audit & Governance Committee every six months.

10. Carbon Reduction Plan:

10.1 In 2025 a report to Executive Committee presented a summary of the City Council's "Costed Organisational Carbon Footprint Projections" Report. The report produced by the Centre for Energy and Environment at the University of Exeter, assessed the potential to achieve net zero by reducing emissions across five sectors: council-owned housing, non-domestic buildings, transport, renewable energy and land use change/afforestation.

10.2 The Report includes cost estimates, and considered three scenarios:

- **Positive Current Trajectory (PCJ):** The level of activity that is already planned for and/or committed to by the City Council. Activity will require additional funding from government, or other external sources.
- **Mid Case (Mid):** An escalation of activity beyond the PCJ scenario i.e., a 'stretch target' which would also require additional government grant funding and operational costs.
- **Net Zero (Max):** A theoretical maximum level of uptake of measures, which would have considerable impact on cost, skills, supply chain and capacity.

10.3 The PCJ measures have been incorporated into the Carbon Reduction Plan, combined with measures from the existing plan. Where possible, some measures from the Mid and Max scenario have also been included in the Carbon Reduction Plan. Actions are labelled as a/b/c, this indicates PCJ/Mid/Max options.

10.4 The Carbon Reduction Plan includes estimated costs (where known), metrics for each action, and the relevant Head of Service as lead officer. If projects have not secured funding to date, they represent future ambition.

10.5 The Carbon Reduction Plan covers seven sectors: Housing, Non-domestic buildings, Transport & Equipment, Land Use Change, Procurement, F-Gases & Waste, Overall Organisation.

10.6 The Carbon Reduction Plan is a live evolving action plan, which will be reviewed every 6 months to update on progress made, as well as any legislative, financial, technical and operational changes. The Plan will be reported to Strategic Scrutiny on 4 June 2026 and then on a six-monthly basis to ensure progress is tracked and priorities and intended outcomes are reported.

10.7 The Net Zero team and relevant representatives from OMB meet twice a year and are responsible for updating the Carbon Reduction Plan, ensuring actions are aligned and included within Service Plans.

10.8 To show progress, each action will be reviewed and the colour based on the following colours: green = near completion, orange = some progress, yellow = slight progress, red = no progress.

10.9 A full list of completed projects to reduce corporate carbon emissions can be found at the end of the Carbon Reduction Plan, indicating year completed. Actions recently completed or in progress include:

- Construction of new homes to Passivhaus standard.
- Loft and cavity Insulation within City Council social homes.
- Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Installations on City Council social homes.
- Riverside Leisure Centre Decarbonisation Project.
- Solar PV installations at Exeter Arena, Wonford Sports Centre and St Sidwell's Point, Senate Court and Guildhall Car Park.
- Council corporate energy contract is from a renewable tariff.
- Migration of Council data from Council based data centres to cloud based.
- Trial of Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel within fleet vehicles.
- Expansion of electric fleet and portable equipment.
- Incentives to increase uptake of public transport for staff and cycle storage for active travel.
- Devon & Torbay Local Electricity Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) project currently underway with several City Council car parks due to have EV charging infrastructure installed.
- 799 trees planted in 2025. An assessment completed in 2023 by Treeconomics, assessing the canopy cover of the whole city of Exeter, found the estimated canopy cover to be 20.2%, higher than the UK national average (17%) for towns and cities.
- Procurement sends a Carbon Data Request form to all suppliers awarded with contracts over £100k providing for better measurement of scope 3 emissions.

10.10 Carbon reduction discussions have been integrated into OMB meetings, with a separate review held every 6 months with representatives from relevant services.

10.10 Delivery of the Carbon Reduction Plan includes extensive additional benefits of GHG emission reduction, which includes:

- reduced use of fossil fuel lowers pollution levels;
- healthier more comfortable homes and buildings;
- energy efficient, cheaper to run social housing and corporate buildings;
- biodiversity enhancement;
- improved health for our workers and residents;
- reduced operational costs supporting sustainable City Council services;
- improved budget security from a self-supply of renewable energy generation;
- local leadership and dissemination for replication of decarbonisation measures;
- decarbonisation works provide for 'green' jobs and skills training; and
- collaboration and innovation benefit the city and region.

11. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

11.1 This report and the work of the Net Zero team links directly to the Corporate Plan 2025-28. Activity to reduce our GHG emissions links to key priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and in collaboration with City Council services, including using specific and measurable metrics to track progress against priorities and intended outcomes.

Local Economy	Work with Building Greater Exeter and Exeter College to support green skills, training and local employment opportunity, as part of new development and retrofit. Collaboration with other Public Sector organisations, such as the University of Exeter, the Met Office and Exeter Science Park to drive forward carbon reduction initiatives.
Sustainable Environment	Net Zero team focuses on reducing City Council GHG emissions. Decarbonisation reduces energy consumption and costs, reducing service delivery costs and supporting sustainable council services.
Homes	Through housing retrofit programme delivers warmer homes reduced energy consumption, reduced carbon emissions, energy bills and improved health outcomes and wellbeing for tenants. Together with Liveable Exeter, working collaboratively with developers in developing sustainable and accessible neighbourhoods and new homes, using sustainable construction methods. A recent example is Whipton Gardens.
People	Working in partnership with Live & Move in developing sustainable travel options for residents. Supporting leisure services through better energy management and efficiencies to maintain provision of affordable facilities. Tree planting provides for reduced surface water runoff, improved air quality, improved biodiversity and habitat, and cooling to address warmer summers.

12. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

12.1 The City Council's GHG inventory, the Net Zero Risk Register and now the Carbon Reduction Plan inform the work programme of the Net Zero team and that of other services.

12.2 The City Council's Service Plan template has been amended and now includes a section for each Head of Service to complete on carbon reduction activity, which links back to the Carbon Reduction Report. It also includes measurements and metrics to highlight progress for each service in reducing GHG emissions. The Net Zero team have supported Heads of Service to incorporate carbon reduction measures in their service plans.

12.3 Ownership and understanding of the measures needed to reduce GHG emissions is constantly reviewed by the Net Zero Team. The team aim to increase understanding within the organisation and facilitate cultural change, with initiatives undertaken such as Climate and Nature Champions and Carbon Literacy Training.

12.4 The financial cost to reduce carbon emissions is significant, the Costed Carbon Footprint Projection Report for corporate GHG emissions was the first of its kind. If the City Council is not successful in obtaining significant funding, the measures required to reduce GHG emissions will not be delivered, and reductions in GHG emissions will take longer to achieve.

For enquiries please contact: democratic.services@exeter.gov.uk

12.5 Legislative changes have and offer the City Council a risk in delivering proposed PCJ measures. For instance, actions within the Housing section of the Carbon Reduction Plan reflect changes to the Housing fabric first work programme to address Awaabs Law.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 There is the option of not continuing existing or committing additional financial and non-financial resources in reducing carbon emissions within the City Council. This would result in a lack of co-ordination, strategic direction and delivery in reducing our GHG emissions.

13.2 On a regular basis, the Net Zero team are sourcing external funding to support the delivery of the City Council's Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan, working with services to identify capacity and match funding within the City Council. However, without aligning the report to Service Plans and accelerating measures where possible, the reports forecasted emission reductions will not be achieved.

Strategic Director Place, Ian Collinson

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None

List of Appendices:

- Appendix A – Carbon Reduction Plan