

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 9 January 2024

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 20 February 2024

Report of: Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management

Title: City Wide Net Zero

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This report details a way forward for coordinating and facilitating city wide net zero for Exeter, utilising an existing budget, staffing resources and internal and external structures.

2. Recommendations:

That Executive recommend that Council approve that: -

2.1 The City Council takes a leading role of coordinating and facilitating city wide net zero for two years 2024/25 and 2025/26; and

2.2 A temporary post of grade M (indicative) is established for 2 years to coordinate and facilitate city wide net zero, sits within the Net Zero team and is paid from the one-off net zero earmarked reserve.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 To provide a resource to lead on strategic guidance for city wide net zero in delivering the Exeter Net Zero 2030 Plan. The City Council plays an important place leadership role in the reduction of city wide net zero.

3.2 To provide a process and structure to coordinate and facilitate City Wide Net Zero that reports into the City Council, the business community and communities (residents & volunteers) from across Exeter.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

4.1 A temporary net zero £1m earmarked reserve was established in 2021 with £200,000 allocated for city wide net zero, of which £155,513 remains. This remaining element of the reserve will be used to recruit a temporary Programme Manager for just over 2 years to lead on the city wide net zero ambitions – grade M at £64,993 (on-costs included) per

annum. If there are any surplus funds remaining, then they will be earmarked for the redundancy payment for the post.

4.2 The Service Lead for Net Zero & Business will also dedicate some of their time to support city wide net zero. The remaining net zero team will primarily focus on reducing the Council's own carbon emissions and as and when capacity allows, they will dedicate some time to city wide net zero.

4.3 The challenge remains that the net zero budget is temporary. Once the £1m is spent, the temporary roles of the Sustainability Officer, the Net Zero Data & Support Officer and the Programme Manager City Wide Net Zero will be made redundant and activity to reduce the Council's own corporate carbon emissions and city-wide carbon emissions will be scaled back significantly. Therefore, a major part of this new role will be researching external funding opportunities to speed up delivery of city wide net zero.

4.4 Members will note that achieving net zero will require initiatives from central government in terms of legislation and funding, as well as private sector initiatives. Without central government investment and private sector initiatives, it will be extremely difficult for the Council to deliver on its ambitions to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 in accordance with its Net Zero Exeter 2030 plan.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

The proposal will use up the majority of the amount left in the reserve allocated to City wide Net Zero. As the proposal is to employ someone for more than two years, an element of the reserve will be held back to address any redundancy liability arising.

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 following recommendations made by the Committee on Climate Change. This means that the government has a target of net zero for UK greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050.

6.2 Exeter City Council was one of the first local authorities to declare a climate emergency in 2019 and set a target of achieving net zero for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030. This target is not legally binding.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

The content and recommendations set out in this report are supported and raise no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

8.1 The Chief Executive brought a report to both Executive and Council in October 2023, with a summary of the work delivered by Exeter City Futures. The report included an update on its closure, as well as the barriers and challenges Local Authorities encounter to deliver place-based net zero by 2030.

8.2 Whilst on secondment to Exeter City Futures, there are a number of legacy projects that were overseen by the former Chief Executive and Growth Director and Director for Transformation.

8.3 An update on the latest position with these projects is summarised below.

Project	Aim	Update
Creating a vision for a low vehicle city centre	Engage the public and key stakeholders in the design of a blueprint for the City-Centre as a tool for use by stakeholders in their individual and collective development plans.	Work is being progressed by DCC through the Exeter Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) The City Council's Transport Working Group met November 2023, to receive a presentation on The Exeter Plan's Sustainable Transport & Communications Chapter. Terms of Reference for this group are being revised
Community Energy Project	To bring forward a business case setting put proposals to test out models that could scale up domestic retrofit using community development approaches.	An outline business case has been produced but the work has not progressed due to a lack of staff resources to undertake the work.
Co-ordination of the delivery of the Innovate UK funded Pioneering Places project	The Phase 1 bid provides funding to create a blue print for collaboration across sectors to enable more agile and flexibility joint working on major projects. Successful completion of the project (June 2023) has the potential to open the gateway for Phase 2 funding @£8 million which could be used on a real-life project e.g., delivery of a Commercial DHN.	The funding for this scheme was not drawn down due to a lack of capacity to undertake the work required.
Facilitating the collaboration necessary for the delivery of a city centre commercial District Heating Network	Develop the collaboration that resulted in public sector support for a large funding bid to BEIS in Nov 2022. Should the bid be successful (announcement due Feb 23) this work will need to continue to bring together a single business case across the key public sector partners.	Discussions are progressing with regards to the location of an energy centre and network DHN routing. Ongoing discussions with key offtaker partners from across the city.

9. City Wide Net Zero Proposal

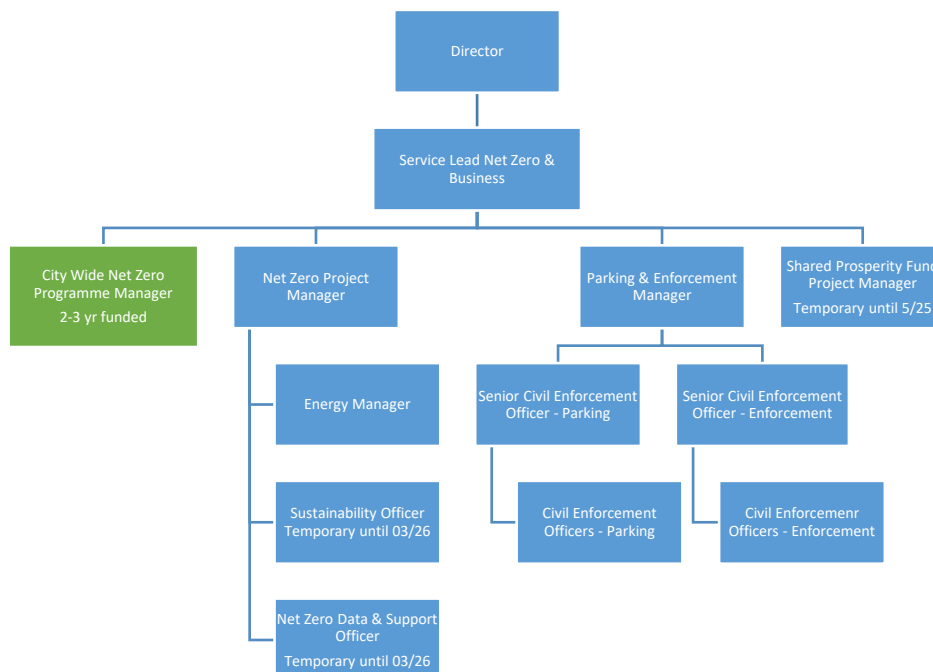
9.1 The Net Zero team has been established for just over 18 months. It was a brand-new service with the aim of reducing City Council carbon emissions to net zero by 2030.

9.2 The Net Zero team have been successful in building relationships, engaging with services from across the City Council and have quickly achieved traction using their extensive experience and skills, making an impact in such a short space of time.

9.3 The team is a role model and is respected, having established a reputation for delivery, innovation and leadership - internally, with members, with environmental groups, as well at the University of Exeter and Exeter Chamber. Exeter City Council has been nationally recognised by an independent review as being the second district council in the country for net zero by Climate Emergency UK. This was highlighted in a recent news story - <https://news.exeter.gov.uk/exeter-ranked-one-of-uk-s-best-performing-councils-on-net-zero-journey/>

9.4 The climate emergency is real and in reality, very challenging to achieve. However, the City Council have a team that can transition the City Council and Exeter to Net Zero – if this is supported by external funding.

9.5 The Net Zero team is made up of the following services, the existing services managed by the Service Lead are indicated in blue and the new temporary City-Wide Programme Manager is indicated in green.



9.6 Corporate net zero activity is reported to Strategic Scrutiny every 6 months with the next update being March 2024.

9.7 Since the closure of Exeter City Futures, no one organisation has been coordinating and facilitating the Exeter Net Zero 2030 Plan in regard to its delivery, monitoring and evaluation. It is proposed that Exeter City Council take on this role for a period of 2 years,

the timeframe temporary funding allows. This work will be overseen by the Portfolio Holder for the Climate & Ecological Crisis and the Director for Net Zero Exeter & City Management (David Bartram). As there is an existing team that focuses on net zero activity, in reducing the City Council's own corporate carbon emissions, it is proposed that the new Programme Manager sits within this team, with delivery overseen by the Service Lead for Net Zero & Business.

9.8 £155,513 remains in the earmarked reserve for City Wide Net Zero, which formed part of the £1million earmarked reserve for net zero overall. The £155,513 was initially going to be consumed within the budget to deliver net zero within the City Council, this will now remain for city wide net zero and will fund a Programme Manager (indicative grade M) post for 2 years lead on city wide net zero. The post holder will be required to research and source external funding to enable the post and city wide net zero activity to continue after the 2-year period. The Job description and person specification is within Appendix A.

9.9 There will be a proposal submitted to the business members of the Liveable Exeter Place Board to contribute to this post, to extend the period of time they will be in post. If no external funds materialise, the post will cease after 2 years.

9.10 This new temporary post will be the main point of contact for city businesses, community groups and residents in delivering net zero for Exeter, acting as a co-ordinator and facilitator for a wide range of carbon reducing projects. The chart in 9.5 highlights reporting lines.

9.11 The Service Lead for Net Zero & Business will focus some of their time on city wide net zero, whilst also overseeing car parking, shared prosperity, city centre and City Council net zero. The rest of the net zero are currently working at capacity, so opportunities to support are limited.

9.12 One live project that the wider Net Zero team support is the development of a new city-wide District Heat Network (DHN) led by a private company on a commercial basis. The proposal is that a DHN is installed in the city to which public and private organisations and companies could connect. Discussions are progressing with regards to the location of an energy centre and network DHN routing. There are ongoing discussions with key partners from across the city who could connect to such a system.

9.13 From discussions with City Council Service Leads, the following services align with reducing city wide carbon emissions:

- Monitoring Air Quality;
- Planning;
- Waste & Recycling;
- Private Sector Housing (grants for energy saving retrofit);
- Procurement.

Service Leads managing these services will play their role in reducing city wide carbon emissions and will form part of future discussions.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

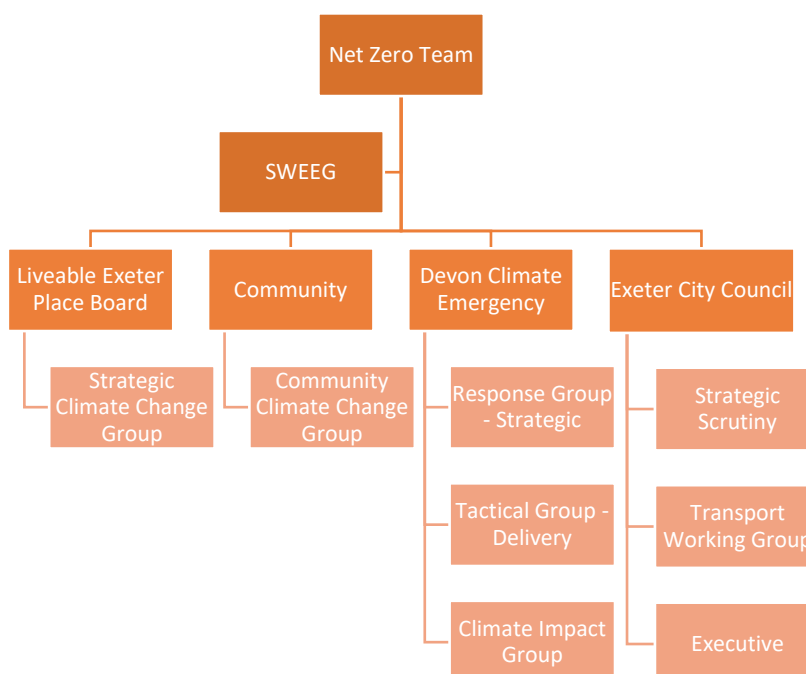
9.14 To support city wide net zero, the City Council have committed budget to a number of carbon reducing projects.

Project	Lead	Capital	Revenue	Year
EPC Advisors (either residential or commercial)	Exeter City Council – to commission	£0	£40,000	2024/25
Greening Your Business (business support)	Devon County Council	£0	£54,000 £67,182	2023/24 2024/25
Innovation Hub (high growth business support)	University of Exeter	£0	£110,000 £110,000	2023/24 2024/25
Retrofit Skills Centre	Exeter College	£140,000	£49,575	2024/25
	TOTAL	£140,000	£430,757	

9.15 Discussions have taken place with the University of Exeter, on how the new Innovation Hub, could support city wide net zero in providing advice and guidance to the business community to pivot and innovate. The University has secured additional Innovate UK funding to support city wide net zero solutions. The University are also in discussions with Barclays Eagle Lab for them to have a presence in the Innovation Hub.

Reporting Structure

9.16 The table below highlights how city wide net zero will be structured. The Net Zero team (Service Lead Net Zero & Business and Programme Manager City Wide Net Zero) will report into a number of groups and organisations, with SWEEG acting as our independent body for advice, support and technical guidance.



Liveable Exeter Place Board

9.17 A new Strategic Climate Change Group will be established, to lead on city wide net zero focusing on supporting the business community and major infrastructure projects. The group will meet every four months and report into the Liveable Exeter Place Board with minutes for the meeting being reported to Exeter City Council's Strategic Scrutiny, alongside our corporate net zero update. This group will be chaired by the PH for the Climate & Ecological Crisis, supported by Service Lead for Net Zero & Business. This group will be business focused.

9.18 An environment, climate change or low carbon representative from each organisation that sits on the Exeter Place Board, will be invited to join this new group to collaborate on reducing city wide carbon emissions. As and when required, Task & Finish or project groups will be established to lead on particular areas of activity, such as energy (DHN is a current example).

9.19 There are a number of organisations that support reducing carbon emissions that are not represented on the Liveable Exeter Place Board, they will be invited to join the Strategic Climate Change Group, so it has good coverage covering Energy, Transport and Buildings (commercial & residential).

Community

9.20 Engagement with community groups, volunteers and residents from across the city will be important for reducing city wide carbon emissions, they play an important role in reducing carbon emissions at grass roots level. Discussions are ongoing with the Portfolio Holder for Communities & Homelessness in how we can empower and bring community groups and volunteers together to continue the good work already undertaken, but to also map gaps across the city.

9.21 Representative(s) from the Community Group will sit on the Strategic Climate Change Group to ensure that work is joined up and complementary and to avoid any duplication.

9.22 Work and activity undertaken by this group will meet every four months with minutes for the meeting being reported to Exeter City Council's Strategic Scrutiny, alongside our corporate net zero update.

Devon Climate Emergency

9.23 The work of the Devon Climate Emergency is evolving, from developing the Devon Carbon Plan and the Adaptation Plan, to implementation of actions. Representatives from the City Council's Net Zero team attend meetings, with a focus on our own corporate carbon emissions updating on activity such as the roll out food waste across the city, retrofit of our social housing stock and the installation of solar across our estate. This will now include city wide carbon reducing projects.

9.24 Going forward, attendance from the City Council will continue and will include both corporate and city-wide carbon emissions.

a) Response Group: <https://devonclimateemergency.org.uk/governance/devon-climate-emergency-response-group/>

a. This group is made up of senior officers from mainly public sector organisations from across Devon and provides strategic coordination in response to the Devon Climate Emergency. The Response Group is supported by three sub-groups, as listed below. Monthly meetings are attended by the Service Lead for Net Zero & Business and the Director for Net Zero Exeter & City Management, as and when diaries allow.

b) Tactical Group - <https://devonclimateemergency.org.uk/governance/devon-climate-emergency-tactical-group/>

a. Members of the group provide advice and practical support to the Response Group in relation to carbon reduction measures for their own organisation and place based. Meetings have been held ad-hoc and will evolve now that the Devon Carbon Plan is completed to deliver actions from the Devon Carbon Plan. Monthly meetings are attended by Net Zero Project Manager, with support from the Sustainability Officer.

c) Climate Impacts Group -

<https://devonclimateemergency.org.uk/governance/climate-impacts-group/>

a. The group have been reviewing current levels of community preparedness to a warmer world and are preparing a Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Adaptation Plan. Monthly meetings are attended by the Service Lead for Net Zero & Business

d) Net Zero Task Force - <https://devonclimateemergency.org.uk/governance/net-zero-task-force/>

a. Led by experts in topics relevant to carbon reduction, the Net Zero Task Force have developed the Devon Carbon Plan, which sets Devon on the path to becoming net-zero carbon by 2050. For this, they convened a Citizens Assembly to seek the views of the public, to collectively discuss and review ideas on reaching net-zero in Devon. No representation from Exeter City Council.

Exeter City Council

9.25 The Service Lead for Net Zero & Business will report into Strategic Scrutiny every 6 months, the same time as the report on City Council carbon emissions is reported – first report to be September 2024. The report will include updates on city wide carbon reduction activity, co-ordinated by the Climate Change Strategic Group, the Community Climate Change Group, Devon Climate Emergency and the Transport Working Group. If a decision is required on a project or funding package, a report will be taken to Executive for a decision.

9.26 The Transport Working Group is chaired by the PH for the Climate & Ecological Crisis, attended by members from across the City Council. New Terms of Reference are being developed to ensure we use utilise our own levers to support a positive change across the city, including planning, City Council Green Travel Plan, influencing Devon County Council as the Transport & Highway Authority, lobby public transport providers and government and to apply for relevant funding where appropriate.

9.27 Once the Programme Manager City Wide Net Zero has been recruited, there are a number of actions that need to take place, which include commissioning SWEEG to update the City Wide Green House Gas report to enable a review of the Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan and an action plan to be developed to address areas that have high carbon emissions.

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

10.1 Introducing a Programme Manager for City Wide net zero will contribute the Council's strategic priority of a Net Zero Carbon City, in coordinating and facilitating city wide net zero.

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

11.1 Without Government and private investment, there is a significant risk that a Net Zero Exeter will not be achieved by 2030. This is compounded by the Government's national Net Zero commitment of 2050, twenty years later than the City Council target. Working in partnership towards delivery of the Net Zero Exeter 2030 plan will help to reduce this risk.

11.2 The City Council cannot achieve City Wide Net Zero alone, there will be the absolute need and requirement to engage and work collaboratively with a wide range of city partners, most notably Devon County Council. Both organisations need to have a set ambition for Exeter in reducing city wide carbon emissions.

11.3 The draft Exeter Plan is a lever the City Council has to reduce City Wide Carbon emissions; The Exeter Plan needs to be ambitious in reducing City Wide Carbon Emissions.

12. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

12.1 The report is for information only. Once City Wide Net Zero projects and funding opportunities have been identified, an EQIA will be completed for each project and funding opportunity.

13. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

13.1 The coordination and facilitation of city wide net zero activity, will assist in the delivery of the City Council's Strategic Priority of a 'Net Zero Carbon City' in reducing city wide carbon emissions.

13.2 Detailed information on activity and their impact on city wide carbon emissions will be available once the Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan and the city-wide greenhouse gas report have both been reviewed and updated.

14. Are there any other options?

14.1 Alternative options of City-Wide Nero Zero include:

- Commission an alternative organisation or company to coordinate and facilitate city wide net zero; or
- Do nothing.

14.2 It is felt the City Council leading on City Wide Net Zero is more appropriate, as the voice of place-based net zero.

Director: Net Zero Exeter & City Management, David Bartram

Author: Service Lead Net Zero & Business

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

Background papers used in compiling this report: -

Executive: Net Zero Exeter update, 3 October 2023

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 4.36
01392 265275