

Pre-Scrutiny Questions and Answers – Overview & Scrutiny Agenda 31 October 2023

Report Title: Carbon Emissions Data and Climate Change Measures

Report Author(s): Dave Barber – Programme Director for Climate Change

Councillor Armstrong:

1. Can the scope 2 emissions reduction be separated into the effect of changing conversion factors vs reduced WDC demand? I.e., How much of this change is due to the national energy mix and how much is 'us'?
2. I see that Council housing electricity and gas consumption is not included in the current measures. Is adding it as a separate measure viable?

Response:

1. Can the scope 2 emissions reduction be separated into the effect of changing conversion factors vs reduced WDC demand? I.e. How much of this change is due to the national energy mix and how much is 'us'?
It is difficult to do this accurately, because the data is impacted by both and to date we haven't had a reliable set of measures to show how what we're doing ourselves is impacting on the headline figures. However, approaching this from the other end, Fig 1 within appendix 1 shows that "Purchased electricity" conversion factor has reduced from 0.283 in 2018/19 to 0.205 in 2022/23 – a 28% reduction as a result of the national grid energy mix. If we consider within the data in Fig 2 of appendix 1, the actual scope 2 reduction is 31% - which suggests only a small improvement as a result of our actions. However, it does depend a little on the date range that is applied, because the figures for 2019/20 to 2022/23 are 20% reduction as a result of a cleaner national grid and 32% overall – suggesting a much bigger reduction as a result of our activities. In future update reports, I am happy to provide further data on this.
2. I see that Council housing electricity and gas consumption is not included in the current measures. Is adding it as a separate measure viable?
This has been left out of our organisational carbon emissions right from the start of our work on the climate emergency, primarily because we simply don't have any reliable data. This is because our tenants are responsible for both energy use and paying the energy bills, so we don't have access to how much is being used. I think the best we can do is to introduce a measure of predicted savings as a result of our interventions in the Council housing stock as suggested at 6.2 in Appendix 2. However, that is only limited data as work we do for other reasons through the Housing Investment programme (such as door or window replacements) will also reduce carbon – but the data for that would be very hard to capture. So, in answer to your question, I don't think that is possible.

Councillor Milton:

Just a couple of questions on the proposed measures in Appendix 2.

Firstly - can you give me a view about the availability of these measures. I'm assuming that it's information that we have to hand?

My second point related to the note about biodiversity measures. We had a good discussion at last month's scrutiny about No Mow May (hence cc'ing Will) and my thought was that this should be a fertile area for inclusion. It's a good way for us as a council to show the positive consequences of those actions.

I was keen to make sure that these things are joined up.

Response:

1. All the information is available. However, the processes for collating the data varies. For some, we already collect the data, and it is just a case of reporting it. For some, the data exists but it isn't collated or reported routinely. I have been meeting with all the Heads of Service over the last week or so, to ensure processes can be put in place for each of these. I do still have three further Heads of Service to meet this week, but I don't expect this to lead to any issues about being able to use the measures. The main issue may be that for a couple of measures, there is a question as to whether the quarterly reporting will be possible. This is particularly the case where measures relate to contracts, and we are therefore relying on contractors to provide the data.
2. The learning from No Mow May will certainly be incorporated into the BAP. Becky Davies who is leading our work on the BAP is linked in with Zoe Court and her team around No Mow May for exactly that reason. I will make sure relevant measures are included in the BAP and in updates to O&S on the BAP.

Councillor D Harrison:

I have the following brief comments:

Main Report

Couple of typos:

Section 1.1 , 4th line, replace "of" with "to" , and 7th line delete "of progress".

Response: Noted, thank you

Table 1 – the Waste Contract Services Buildings , shows a marked increase for 2022/23 from recent decline . Although recognising this is less of a contributor than the transport element, is there a reason for this?

Response:

The first thing to point out is that the new waste contract started during the year, and this operates out of a different depot. However, it is difficult to say for sure that that is the reason for the increase. This is because there are issues with the Biffa data as noted in Appendix 1 which includes a section on “limitations on the data”. The first bullet point there explains there have been issues in accessing accurate data from Biffa and we have had to make some assumptions. We are addressing this for future reports, but whilst the figures are not wholly wrong, the precise figures this time round need to be treated with some caution.

Table 1 , Scope 2 – this progresses electricity consumption over recent years. I would be interested to see what percentage of this elec consumption is renewably sourced (depending on contract with our supplier)

Response:

We have a 100% Green Energy tariff which means that it is all from the renewable energy part of the electricity grid. However, we still apply the national conversion factors to our electricity consumption as this recognises the overall energy mix within the electricity grid. None of our electricity is directly sourced from rooftop solar or local renewable energy generation.

Section 1.4 bullet point 7 , replace “cautions” with “caution”.

Response: Noted, thank you

Appendix 2

2.4 Any reason why it specifies “Local” – is renewable from any source not sufficient (subj. to cost)?

Response:

Theoretically, any renewable energy would be fine, but the view we have taken to date is that we can only genuinely claim we use renewable electricity if it is supplied by direct wire or through a local power purchase agreement with a renewable energy provider. We could take a different view on this, but it has always been the view of members that we should approach this in a way that genuinely enable additional renewable energy capacity.

6. an additional measure could be “% heating / domestic energy from council owned domestic property that is from low-carbon source “

Response:

If I understand your suggestion correctly, I think this would be hard to do. Our tenants are responsible for establishing energy deals and paying bills, so it isn't possible to collate all the data from across all or tenants.

Other

I'm aware it is slightly outside the scope of this paper, but where it touches on the need for off-setting to hit our 2030 targets, off-setting from within our region would be far more palatable than off-setting from wider global off-setting projects (e.g tree planting in South America) which is often double/triple counted.

Response:

Your point is understood, and certainly our position on offsetting when the Climate Emergency Programme was established in 2020 was that it must be delivered locally. We will be bringing forward proposals for consideration about offsetting in due course.