

**Report To:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 04 March 2024

**Report Title:** Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan update

**Report By:** Sam Phyll, Senior Programmes Manager

**Key Decision:** Y

**Classification:** Open

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### Purpose of Report

To report to cabinet the progress against the updated Strategy and Action Plan since November 2022

To review the latest data available relating to carbon emissions (borough wide and from council operations)

To inform Councillors of the new ways of monitoring performance in the Action Plan.

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### Recommendation(s)

- 1. To acknowledge the progress made against the actions of the climate emergency action plan since the last report to Cabinet in November 2022.**
- 2. To acknowledge the new monitoring of performance.**
- 3. To acknowledge the need for Service Area and wider partners collaborative working.**

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### Reasons for Recommendations

1. To recognise the achievements to date since the update to the action plan in November 2022.
2. This report covers the period November 2022 to November 2023.

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### Introduction

1. Since declaring a climate emergency in 2019 and publishing the first climate emergency strategy and action plan in March 2020, the Council has made good progress towards the prioritised actions in the action plan and delivered the majority of the actions. Some actions have been delayed due to the impacts of COVID-19 and reduced staff resources, however progress is still being made in addressing the steps identified in the revised action plan dated November 2022.
2. Much of the climate emergency ambition has become embedded in our service provision, and we will continue to build on this to help deliver the 2030 target and beyond. However, to meet the target it is essential the whole community takes part, that every organisation, business, and resident takes action however small to reduce their carbon footprint. We have continued to integrate the climate emergency into the Councils decisions making process and will continue to support services to include climate change in their projects and plans.

## Next steps to monitoring the Action Plan

### Background

3. Within the borough boundary, the Council is directly responsible for less than 2% of local emissions, however, through our influence and own policy developments we can continue to help to shape and support local action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and engage local stakeholders and partners in taking action. As a council operating at a district level it is not within our power to directly enact all of the measures required to reach carbon neutrality, but the Council will work closely with neighbouring authorities and local businesses to have a positive impact on tackling climate change.
4. The full strategy and action plan can be found on the Hastings Borough Council website under Climate Change: <https://www.hastings.gov.uk/my-council/policies-strategies/climate-change-strategy/>
5. The Council is focusing on the Corporate Actions as a first step to be able to identify best practise and therefore be clearer and more informed when we start to enact the wider Borough Actions
6. The Council recognises that our residents, businesses and local organisations and our communities have a critical role to play in building resilience and reducing emissions in their own homes and businesses and through work and lifestyle choices, or as communities taking local action together. However, we are also very clear that without additional national grant funding and investment from the private sector it will take longer to reach our climate ambitions. Investment is needed across all aspects of our economy to accelerate the decarbonisation that is required to achieve carbon neutrality. In addition, innovative green finance mechanisms will also help to deliver the strategy in the longer term e.g. community share offers and green bonds.
7. The Council has seen a reduction in the number of officers within the Climate Change team and this has resulted in altering the approach to enable each service area to work on their own actions as detailed in the Action Plan.

### Action Plan Assignments

8. The Corporate Actions on the plan have been assigned to the relevant Service Areas, with a reporting structure in place similar to process used in Performance Monitoring and RAID Log monitoring.
9. The Corporate Actions have been Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rated for their current state, where Red is overdue, Amber is not currently working on, and Green is currently working on.
10. This accessible reporting structure will enable Service Managers, the Senior Leadership Team, and relevant councillors to be able to view the progress at any time and not have to wait for this report each year to review the Actions.
11. This reporting structure will also set the foundations for the progress to be reported on the Councils web pages in a clear and concise way.
12. Once the main Corporate Actions are in hand we will assign the wider Borough Actions in a similar fashion and be able to report on these through the same channels.

## Key progress on Action Plan

13. Theme 2 Governance and Decision Making – We are investigating two routes to provide Carbon Literacy training to our councillors, this training will aid the councillors to better understand the role Climate Change decision making has within the wider context of the Council.
14. Theme 3 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy – Hastings Borough Council is fully supportive of the new Community Energy Fund. The Community Energy Fund is a new £10 million programme that helps communities in England to develop clean energy projects to benefit their local areas. It is funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. The Community Energy Fund (CEF) follows the success of the former Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF) and expands its scope to include urban areas. The Fund can support projects under two broad headings: Community energy asset projects (such as renewable or low carbon energy, electric vehicles) or community energy efficiency or advice projects. Full details of this fund can be found on the Greater South East Net Zero Hub: <https://www.gsenetzerohub.org.uk/community/community-energy-fund/>
15. Theme 4 Reducing Energy Demand – We have continued in investigating breaches in the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (previously funded by BEIS), this role is now supported within our housing team. All complaints received by this department now include checks on their energy efficiency in accordance with legislative requirements. Education and guidance is provided to landlords to assist with achieving compliance before any formal action if required in line with our enforcement policy. Whilst at inspections, officers provide guidance to tenants on energy efficiency measures and signpost to other agencies where relevant. Between November 2022 and November 2023, the department investigated three complaints regarding breaches of MEES regulations and a separate three cases were referred to Trading Standards.
16. Theme 4 Reducing Energy Demand – We have been involved in several initiatives across the county for the improvement of households' energy efficiency through the installation of insulation and heating system upgrades. These schemes have both the aims of decarbonisation in the housing sector through retrofit as well as improving the energy efficiency of lower income households to reduce the prevalence and severity of fuel poverty.
  - a. Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD3) measures were installed from April 2022-September 2023 in East Sussex, with 17 measures being installed in Hastings at a cost of £122,376.71. LAD3's focus on properties on the gas grid is a large factor why a larger proportion of funding was provided to Hastings properties than under HUG1.
  - b. Homes Upgrade Grant (HUG1) was targeted at properties that were not on the gas grid and were installed between April 2022 and April 2023. Due to the requirement of the grant to be off gas, and the majority of Hastings being connected to the main gas grid, only one property had measures installed at a cost of £4,020.80.
  - c. Energy Company Obligation – Flexible Eligibility' (ECO4 Flex) ECO4 is a national scheme funded by medium and large energy companies under the Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation (HHCRO), with an aim to improve the ability of low-income, fuel-poor and vulnerable households to heat their homes. This is carried out through a fabric-first approach of installed measures, although a wide variety of measures are available to households depending on what is appropriate and recommended by energy assessor surveys. The scheme is live from 2022-2026. There are currently data limitations under the scheme in tracking how many households that receive a declaration of eligibility from Hastings Borough Council proceed with installations, or to find out what kinds of

measures are installed. However, at present, 309 households across East Sussex have been issued a declaration of eligibility under ECO4 Flex, with 11 households in Hastings. We will continue to work with ECO4 to improve the uptake in Hastings.

17. Theme 4 Reducing Energy Demand – We have been fully supporting the county wide Warm Home Check service to support those on low income. The service offers telephone advice for anyone struggling to afford to keep warm at home, with money-saving advice and tips on how to stay warm for less. It also provides eligible households with a holistic home energy efficiency assessment. This can include:
  - a. advice on how best to keep your home warm and reduce energy costs
  - b. advice on financial support available to help with heating costs
  - c. small home improvement measures such as pipe insulation, draught-proofing or boiler service.
  - d. Subject to funding being available, the service can also coordinate and source funding for the installation of larger heating and insulation improvements through schemes such as the government’s Energy Company Obligation (ECO). An emergency temporary heating scheme is also offered to eligible households if the heating breaks down or is insufficient.
18. Theme 5 Transport – We have replaced five of our vans that were used across multiple service areas with EV vans and chargers based at the DSO building. We will continue to monitor EV development with a review to replace our other service vehicles in the future (tractors, sweepers, mowers etc).
19. Theme 5 Transport – We have been working closely with East Sussex County Council and our neighbouring authorities to develop on street charging infrastructure. This working group has identified multiple key areas across East Sussex, nine within the Hastings area, and could result in up to 490 chargers being installed (164 in Hastings) dependant on final funding outcomes and further assessments. East Sussex County Council have recently been awarded £5 million towards improving the EV charging infrastructure within the county.
20. Theme 5 Transport – We have been working with partners to progress the Public Realm and Green Connection project as part of the Towns Fund. This project focuses on improving active travel connectivity (walking and cycling) and the enhancement of the public realm in Hastings town centre. It will encompass ideas from the Hastings Garden Town - inspired by Great Dixter’s philosophy of creative ecology, horticultural innovation and biodiversity. There has been a significant increase in the value of the project from £3m to £10m - agreed in March 23.
21. Theme 6 Biodiversity – The Council has now brought the management of the Grounds Maintenance service fully in house, this is the first step towards implementing the other Actions within Theme 6. The first few months of this service will involve a review of the service provision and ways it can be amended to work alongside our Action Plan.
22. Theme 8 Waste – We took part in a trial of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) with Wealden and Rother District Councils for the Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs). The trial was held at a Wealden facility and Wealden District Council have since implemented HVO use in their RCVs. We are monitoring their progress and we are in discussions with Rother District Council around our shared facility. We are awaiting detailed research into the sustainability of HVO as a fuel source and will take any research into account when making decisions about the RCV fleet.

23. Theme 10 Adaptation – The Council has agreed to continue the Countryside Stewardship Programme for a further 10 with a grant from Natural England. This grant is worth between £700,000 and £1,000,000 over the 10 year period to start in January 2024.
- a. Over the last 20 years of this agreement the council has:
- i. Extended conservation grazing into hard-to-reach habitats with native breed cattle and wild ponies.
  - ii. Reduced large areas of bracken dominated landscape using traditional heavy horses and rolling techniques and livestock grazing.
  - iii. Restored heathland habitats on the coastal cliffs by reducing excessive gorse cover.
  - iv. Planted new hedgerows and allowed existing hedgerows to grow out to create greater biodiversity.
  - v. Sown specialist wildflower seeds to create diverse meadows and fields.
  - vi. Used livestock to manage fields sustainably, creating more diverse grassland flora.
  - vii. Used the innovative Nofence system of virtual fencing to track and move cattle, for which the council was awarded a special award for innovative conservation management by Green Flag.
- b. The aim of the new agreement will be to manage the reserve and its priority habitats through a mixture of conservation grazing, habitat management and restoration, and biodiversity enhancement. The management principles have been fully informed by the independent Dolphin Ecology management strategy report.

### **Action Plan progress**

24. Appendix 1 shows the Corporate actions and their current RAG status. Below is a highlight of the numbers of actions in each RAG status for each theme.
25. Theme 1 – Communication – 2 Amber
26. Theme 2 – Governance – 2 Green, 4 Amber
27. Theme 3 – Renewable Energy – 3 Green
28. Theme 4 – Reducing Energy – 2 Amber
29. Theme 5 – Transport – 1 Green, 1 Amber
30. Theme 6 – Biodiversity – 1 Green, 5 Amber
31. Theme 7 – Food – 2 Amber
32. Theme 8 – Reducing emissions from waste – 2 Green, 2 Amber
33. Theme 9 – Water – 1 Amber

- 34. Theme 10 – Adaptation – 2 Amber
- 35. Flood mitigation – 1 Green, 2 Amber, 6 Red

## Annual Emissions Reporting – how can we tell how we are doing?

### Borough wide emissions

- 1. Details of the borough’s greenhouse gas emissions for 2021 (the most recent data for the town), can be found in Appendix 2. Since the action plan was published there has been a slight decrease in the town-wide emissions. The increase shown between 2020 and 2021 is due to an exception decrease in emissions due to Covid lockdowns.

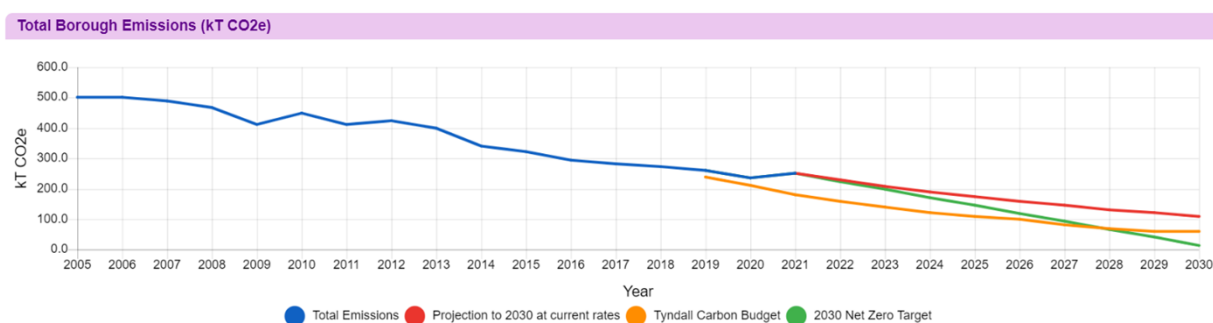


Figure 1. graph showing historic borough emissions and projections to 2030.

- 2. Emissions from housing remained the largest source of CO2 emissions for the borough accounting for 48% of total emissions. Transport emissions accounted for 24% of emissions Industry and Commercial accounted for 18% and the Public Sector accounted for 7%.

### Council Emissions

- 3. We have used the [Green House Gas Accounting Tool](#) to calculate and report on the Councils GHG emissions.
- 4. We have baselined the councils carbon emissions using data from 2018/19 and assessed against this baseline year. The majority of the Councils emissions arise from the use of energy (electricity and gas) in our buildings and assets such as lighting in car parks. The results are shown in Appendix 2 and provide a detailed description of the councils’ emissions.
- 5. In October 2020, we switched our electricity supplies to a renewable sources only supply, which will significantly reduce our electricity emissions for the lifetime of the contract. In 2019/20 the Councils emissions had decreased by 48% when compared to the 2018/19 baseline. (Scope 1 and 2 emissions only).

**Route to Net Zero**

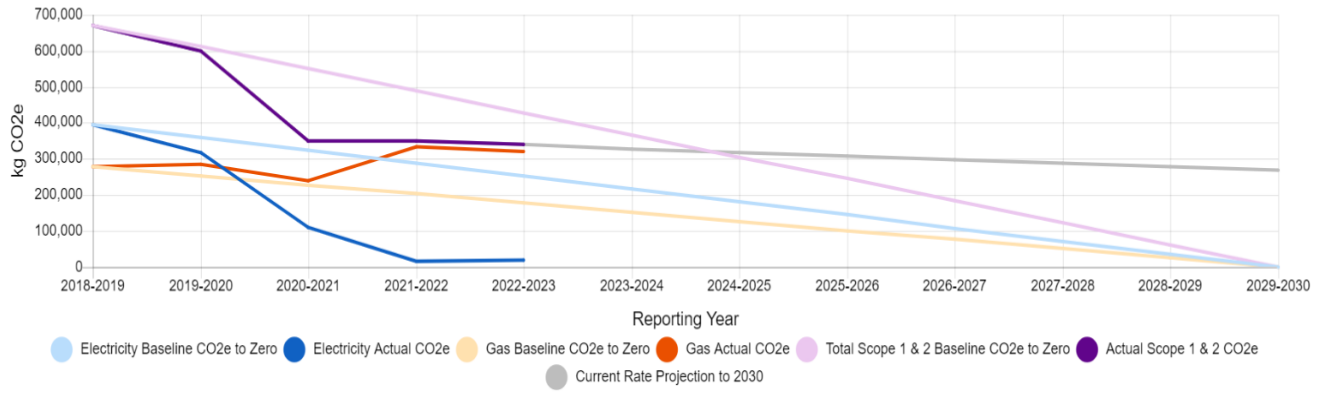


Figure 2. graph showing corporate emissions from baseline year (2018-19) with projections to 2030.

**Timetable of Next Steps**

6. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible

**Wards Affected**

(All Wards);

**Policy Implications**

**Equalities and Community Cohesiveness**

Residents on low incomes can directly benefit from energy bill savings through the fuel poverty programme and energy and water efficiency schemes. Individual schemes brought forward as part of the Climate Emergency will be subject to their own more detailed Equalities Impact Assessments as required and as and when they are brought forward,

**Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)**

There are no crime and fear of crime implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report

**Risk Management**

By tackling climate change now reduces the risks of more intense impacts in the future.

## **Environmental Issues & Climate Change**

The strategy and action plan is focused on climate change, environmental protection and enhancement. The action plan will have a range of significant environmental benefits in terms of reducing carbon emissions, and increasing green infrastructure, boosting biodiversity and nature recovery, and increasing resilience to the local impacts of a changing climate

### **Economic/Financial Implications**

Creating a more sustainable place to live and work contributes to creating a more prosperous place, attracting business and investment. Responding to the climate emergency presents economic challenges but also an opportunity to stimulate the economy and to develop green skills and jobs.

### **Human Rights Act**

The impacts of climate change are predicted to impact on all communities, with the greatest impact predicted to be impacting the most vulnerable communities locally, and internationally.

### **Organisational Consequences**

Delivering the climate emergency will require the Council to continue to embed the implications across all of its service areas, projects, programmes and policies.

### **Local People's Views**

Local communities are engaged in climate change and their views will be actively sought for the next iteration of the strategy and action plan.

### **Anti-Poverty**

Taking climate action will benefit local residents and those on low incomes providing costs savings from energy and water costs for example.

### **Legal**

There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report

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## **Additional Information**

Appendix 1 Action Plan Assignments

Appendix 2 Annual emissions monitoring

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## **Officer to Contact**

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