

REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 10 JANUARY 2023

1 SUSTAINABILTY STRATEGY

- 1.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the draft Sustainability Strategy at a meeting on 10 January 2023.
- 1.2 A copy of the report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee is appended to this report, together with a copy of the Sustainability Strategy.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 10 January 2023 the Overview & Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations for the Executive’s consideration.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That the Sustainability Strategy, as appended, be approved and adopted.
- (2) That the Climate & Sustainability Officer post be made permanent.
- (3) That a Climate & Sustainability Committee of 11 Members be established on a pro rata basis.
- (4) That the Climate & Sustainability Committee meets on a quarterly basis.

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SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents an updated version of the draft Sustainability Strategy previously presented at the June 2022 Executive, at which it was agreed to approve the strategy for consultation, and to consider feedback and alter the strategy if required.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Climate Change Act (2008) highlights the UK's aim to become carbon neutral by 2050. Following the government's announcement, Rochford District Council declared its aim to be carbon neutral within its own activity by 2030 and district wide by 2040. This means that it will be carbon neutral if the amount of CO₂ emissions it puts into the atmosphere are the same as the amount of CO₂ emissions it removes from the atmosphere.
- 2.2 These are two very clear and different targets. One is the Council's target to reach carbon zero (2030) and the other is for the district (2040). The Council's target is considered easier to deliver as it is within the Council's own operation and therefore control. However, to deliver carbon neutrality for the district is far more difficult as it requires buy in and commitment from groups that we have no direct control and only some limited influence over. The Sustainability Strategy has been prepared to help the council tackle these issues by identifying key actions and commit to our target of becoming carbon neutral by 2040
- 2.3 The aim of the strategy is to help identify actions needed to achieve the Council's targets. Key themes of the strategy include transport, air quality, built environment, natural environment, waste, energy, and partnerships. The strategy shows what the council is doing to reduce its environmental impacts including reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from its own buildings and in delivering council services. It also sets out ways the council can facilitate and encourage individuals and organisations to reduce their own environmental impact so that everyone can help and contribute to becoming carbon neutral.
- 2.4 This will require work as a partner with local businesses, organisations, community groups and other residents to support the district's journey to achieve carbon neutrality. Therefore, it is important that the Council creates a strategy that will reach out to a wider audience and influence as much as possible so the Council can have real influence on the District's CO₂ emissions moving forward.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Three aspects of consultation were undertaken: Resident Questionnaire; Business Questionnaire, & Stakeholder Workshops. Each consultation is discussed below.

Resident Questionnaire

- 3.2 A survey questionnaire was undertaken throughout July and August seeking opinion on the general subject of climate change and specifically the draft Sustainability Strategy. In total there was 1339 responses.
- 3.3 The consultation brings together and highlights the different sustainability themes that are most environmentally influential in the district. These themes have been identified using data on the District's largest carbon emitters. These themes are: transport, air quality, the built environment, waste, energy, and behavioural changes.
- 3.4 The responses to the questionnaire indicate that the effects of climate change are an important issue for residents. 51% said that they were very concerned whilst only 2.6% said that they were not concerned. Those people who undertook the survey also knew a reasonable (medium) amount about climate change and its effects, 51%. Most obtained information on the subject through TV, radio and newspaper articles or the official government sources. In the section of the survey covering sustainable lifestyle choices, results broadly indicate that residents would consider lifestyle choices supportive of a more sustainable approach to living. For example, on the themes under home management almost a third of responders said that they definitely could act on reducing water consumption and improving insulation in their own homes etc.
- 3.5 Under the home management theme, the most supported and achievable action (using a weighted average system) was 'recycling more household waste' and the least achievable 'switching to renewable energy sources'.
- 3.6 Under the theme of travel choices most supported and achievable action was making more 'journeys by walking and cycling' and the least 'car sharing more often'
- 3.7 Under the theme of food and diet again almost a third of responders said that they definitely could achieve the actions identified with the most achievable action being 'shopping locally for food' and the least achievable 'taking part in community growing schemes'.
- 3.8 Similar results were received under the theme of shopping with the highest proportion of responders indicating the most achievable was the 'purchase of energy efficient electrical good' and the least achievable 'reducing clothes purchases'.

- 3.9 The second section of the survey covered questions specifically on council services aimed at helping residents reduce carbon emissions and on the council's sustainability strategy. All the services identified by the council aimed at reducing carbon emission were considered by responders to be important in helping them to reduce carbon emissions. Planting trees and creating green space were considered very important. Based on a weighted average the most important service was considered to be 'planting trees and creating new green spaces' and the least 'creating more energy efficient homes'.
- 3.10 Question 10 asked those taking the survey to rank in importance the main themes identified within the environment strategy. Results showed that the majority of those taking the survey considered all the themes to be important or very important. By weighted average the natural environment was considered the most important and transport the least important.
- 3.11 The final section of the survey asked for those undertaking the questionnaire to provide any additional comment on the council's sustainability strategy and to highlight any activities that they were already undertaking. Comments were diverse but a common theme identified issues relating to transport, green space and housing. Activities included recycling and travelling less.
- 3.12 In summary, residents appear to view climate change as an important subject to address. However, the actions that are listed as achievable are not necessarily those that will have the greatest impact in reducing carbon use (for example, tree planting), but may offer an opportunity to engage with the public on the harder behavioural changes that will be required to be made by all communities in order to achieve long-term carbon reduction targets.

Rochford District Businesses

- 3.13 A survey questionnaire was undertaken throughout August and September seeking opinion on the general subject of climate change and specifically the draft Sustainability Strategy. In total there was 1405 responses.
- 3.14 The survey revealed that the majority of businesses responding, were small in size, mainly in the food or health sectors. Responses indicated that procurement of green goods and services was the most important action that could be taken, with reliance on technical innovations the least important.
- 3.15 The top priority action to encourage businesses to adopt greener practices would be the improvement of a sustainable transport infrastructure. Businesses are citing banning single-use plastics as the most common action taken to improve the environment, with the least taken action being implementing an Environmental Management System.
- 3.16 The most important theme from the sustainability strategy is addressing air quality, the least important – behavioural changes.

- 3.17 In a similar vein to the resident survey discussed above, priority actions tend to focus around those that can be easily achieved, or offer a single-themed aspect to environmental issues – such as banning single-plastic use.

Stakeholder Workshops

- 3.18 A series of workshops based around the specific themes were held with key stakeholders to discuss the sustainability strategy and any key improvements they wished to see in its content.
- 3.19 Representatives consisted of: Essex County Council departments, Place Services and Transport; Active Essex; Essex Wildlife Trust, and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. Further attendees from internal departments of Rochford District Council were also present.
- 3.20 A recurring theme of the feedback was to ensure that the strategy expanded upon, and acknowledged, the strategic drivers that provide linkage between the potential wide range of stakeholders and their respective organisational policies. Further, that where possible, actions should be listed clearly in language that reflects that of existing national and regional policy.
- 3.21 Key changes to the original document consist of including additional pages summarising the impact climate change can have at a national and local level; the replacement of 'Actions' with 'Aims' in the main body of the strategy; and the development of a clearer action plan as an appendix to the strategy. This action plan, going forward, will form the basis for any annual reporting on the progress of the strategy.
- 3.22 A finalised draft (pending finalisation of design) is appended to this report for consideration (Appendix 1).

Climate & Sustainability Officer

- 3.23 It was recognised that to ensure support for the delivery of the existing action plan and to develop a wider more ambitious plan to seek to reduce the district carbon footprint as a whole rather than limited to the Council, a dedicated resource had to be secured. At present, the Council is sharing with Brentwood Borough Council a Climate & Sustainability Officer post on a trial basis.
- 3.24 To ensure that the actions outlined within the Sustainability Strategy can be taken forward, it is proposed that the current temporary post of Climate and Sustainability Officer is made permanent.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The consultation upon the development the sustainability strategy, and proposed approval will raise expectations of commitment to addressing climate change. Therefore, it anticipated, as part of a finalised strategy that

will be presented to Council, a commitment to adequately resource the strategy will be requested.

- 4.2 The failure to adequately provide a dedicated longer-term resource to oversee the delivery of the strategy would in all likelihood increase the risk of failure to deliver the outcomes stated in the policy document.
- 4.3 It is proposed that reporting on the progress of the action plan within the strategy document provides the basis for regular reporting to the council. A dedicated sub-committee formed specifically for ensuring the accountability and delivery of strategy should be considered as a means of formalising and embedding the policy. More importantly, a formalised committee resource would provide the structure and mechanism to track progress on the strategy and to hold the wider council to account on any slippage.
- 4.4 It is proposed that a Climate & Sustainability Committee is established with the following terms of reference:
- To agree the strategic approach to tackling climate change
 - To provide direction on emerging opportunities
 - To review, analyse and scrutinise progress against the Sustainability Action Plan
 - To report back to Executive on the outcomes and outputs from the Sustainability Strategy

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Environmental implications are outlined in the main body of the report.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Funding for the proposed Climate Change and Sustainability Officer post will be accommodated into the 2023/24 budget, if agreed.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Committee will be subject to the rules of political balance and any future legal implications arising out of the strategy will be monitored and subject to the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008.

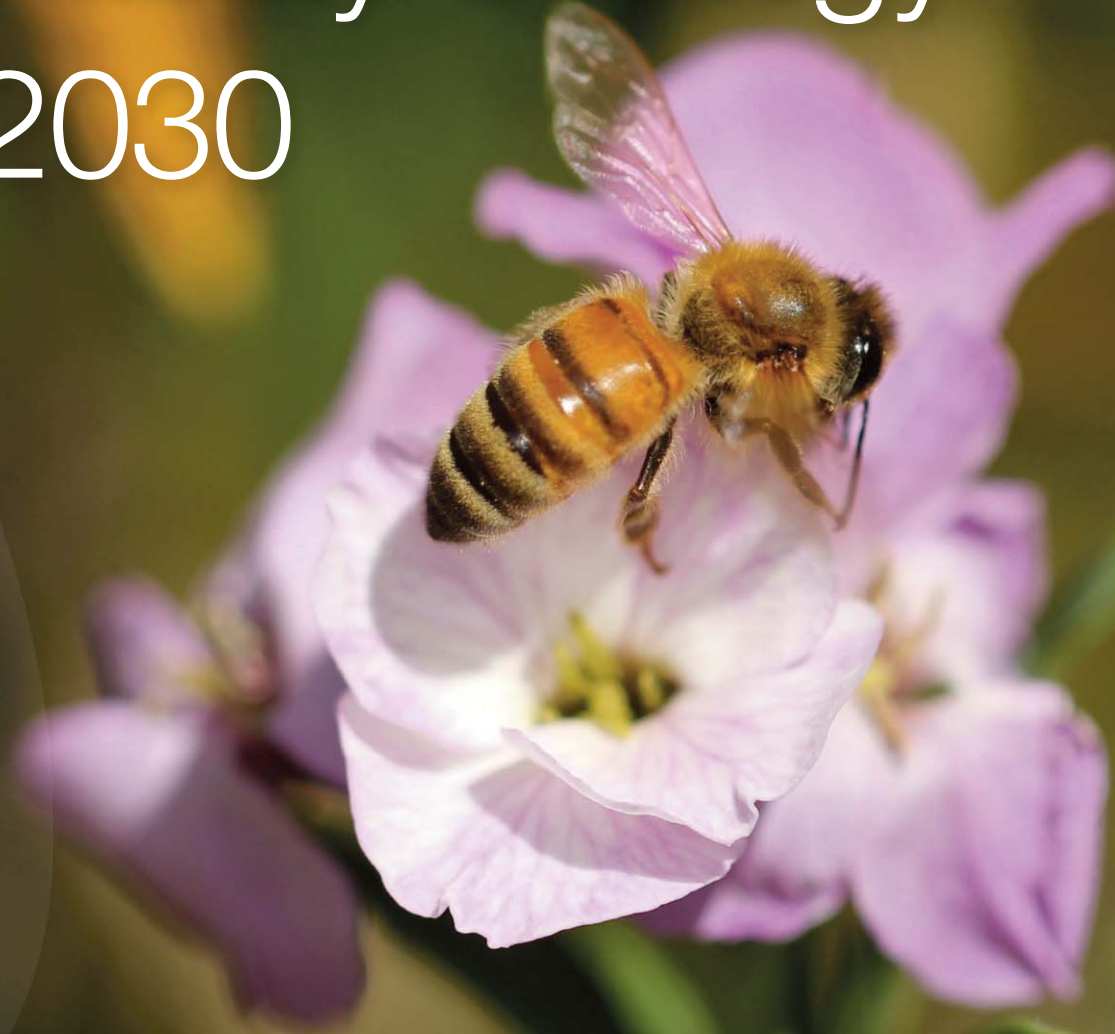
8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- To foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and found there to be no impacts (either positive or negative) on protected groups as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

Sustainability Strategy 2022-2030



► Foreword



Cllr. Simon Wootton - Leader

Our world is already changing around us, with increasing temperatures, extreme weather and risks to property, health, wildlife habitats, and food production. Climate change affects us all, but we also all have the power to do something about it.

This will mean making changes to the way

we all live our lives. New technology will help us to enjoy our lives without emitting carbon but this will need to be accompanied by changes in the way we do things. Research shows us that a bright future, fuelled by clean energy, is achievable and affordable. However, we need a commitment to achieving this goal and we need to put actions in place now and as individuals we need to play our part.

Rochford District Council's Sustainability Strategy is our vision to create a district which embraces innovation, creates high quality jobs and recognises it has a vital role in tackling the global challenges of climate change. The purpose of this strategy is to highlight key areas that we in Rochford District can focus on in the next eight years as well as setting out some important context on policy and emissions data.

The Council has already begun the journey towards carbon neutral by 2030. We have put forward ambitious development plans for the new Council Offices that will have a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' indicating that we are following the current best practise to address sustainability issues

“Climate change affects us all, but we also all have the power to do something about it”

Cllr. Simon Wootton
Leader, Rochford District Council

faced in constructing and operating new buildings. The Council has developed policy to promote EV and hybrid vehicle leasing scheme ;and introduced hybrid and flexible working policies to minimise travel. We have recently employed a recycling officer to engage with residents and promote the new Council's Waste Strategy to prevent and reduce waste. The 'parks for nature' scheme now underway

will see the re-wilding of 40 acres of open-space and 10,000 trees planted.

We are ambitious for the future of Rochford District and recognise that being a truly sustainable district will require us to work cooperatively with our customers, businesses and partners, while setting pioneering but achievable goals with a clear framework on how to accomplish them. The Council will strive for the district to be carbon neutral by 2030, while creating truly sustainable economies and models for growth.



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▶ Introduction

87,627 people live in the Rochford District¹. It has several major towns including Rayleigh, Rochford, and Hockley, together with smaller parishes.

It is rural district with around 14% of people living in rural town and fringe. The

District has vast areas of green space and is home to the RSPB Wallasea Island Nature Reserve, considered best practice nationally for flood management, habitat restoration and circular economy approaches.

The climate change nature crisis is the greatest threat that we face. It is a threat that impacts on all of us and on future generations. It is a threat that we need to respond to now, tomorrow and the days that follow with an unrelenting focus on preventing the emergencies. This plan explains how Rochford District Council will contribute towards Rochford District becoming carbon neutral. We want to be ambitious, but we must also be realistic about what the council can and cannot do. We need everyone to come together to play their part if we are going to meet the ambitious target of becoming Net Zero by 2030.

Please support our plan, we will only be able to tackle these emergencies if we work together. Every action that we can take, no matter how small can help. Let us all do what we can to respond to this global problem.

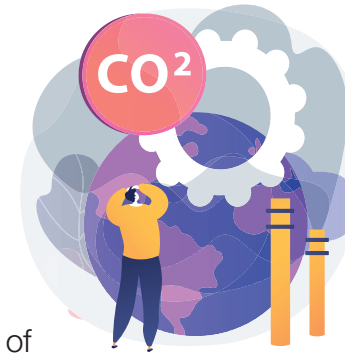


¹ Understanding the wider determinants of health | Rochford Council

► Global warming and climate change

Global warming is the rise in global mean temperature due to the rampant release of heat trapping gasses like carbon dioxide and methane. The atmosphere acts like a blanket that surrounds the earth. When we burn oil, coal, or natural gas for energy, the carbon dioxide released acts like thickening the blanket that envelops our planet. This disrupts the balance of incoming and outgoing solar radiation, and creates a warming system that cannot naturally repair itself in the span of the coming centuries.

Air temperatures on Earth have been rising since the Industrial Revolution. While natural variability plays some part, the evidence indicates that human activities - particularly emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases - are mostly responsible for making our planet warmer.



According to ongoing temperature analysis led by scientists at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS), the average global temperature on Earth has increased by at least 1.1° Celsius (1.9° Fahrenheit) since 1880*. The majority of the warming has occurred since 1975, at a rate of roughly 0.15 to 0.20°C per decade.

Climate Change

Climate change is a more general term that refers to changes in many climatic factors (such as temperature and precipitation) from the global to the local scale. These changes are happening at different rates and in different ways in response to global warming. As a large scale example, the United States has overall become wetter over the 20th century, while the Sahel region of central Africa has become drier. Locally, the timing and amount of rainfall is changing, which is generally resulting in less frequent but more severe storms. As a result the climate is becoming more extreme in response to global warming.



*[https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/world-of-change/global-temperatures#:~:text=According%20to%20an%20ongoing%20temperature,1.9%C2%B0Fahrenheit\)%20since%201880.](https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/world-of-change/global-temperatures#:~:text=According%20to%20an%20ongoing%20temperature,1.9%C2%B0Fahrenheit)%20since%201880.)

▶ Global impacts of climate change

What are the impacts of Climate Change?



***Rising sea levels -** Rising temperatures cause glaciers and ice sheets to melt, increasing runoff resulting in global sea level rise. Seas and oceans absorb

90% of the extra heat from global warming: warmer water expands taking up more space.

***Flooding of coastal regions -** Coastal towns and cities are at greater risk from flooding as sea levels continue to rise.

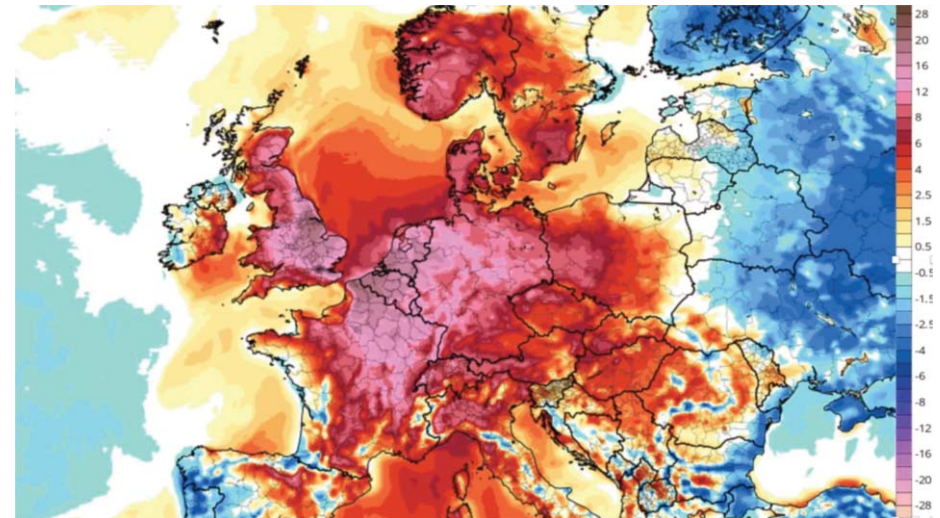
***Extreme weather events -** Climate changes causes extreme weather events to become more intense and frequent, such as heatwaves, droughts and floods

***Food insecurity -** High temperatures, extreme weather events, flooding and droughts damage soils and reduce biodiversity affecting crop yields year on year

***Damage to marine ecosystems -** Rising ocean temperatures, ocean acidification and ocean anoxia (lack of oxygen) are damaging to marine life such as fish and coral reefs.

***Ocean acidification -** occurs when the ocean absorbs carbon dioxide and becomes more acidic, a damaging side effect from more carbon in the atmosphere.

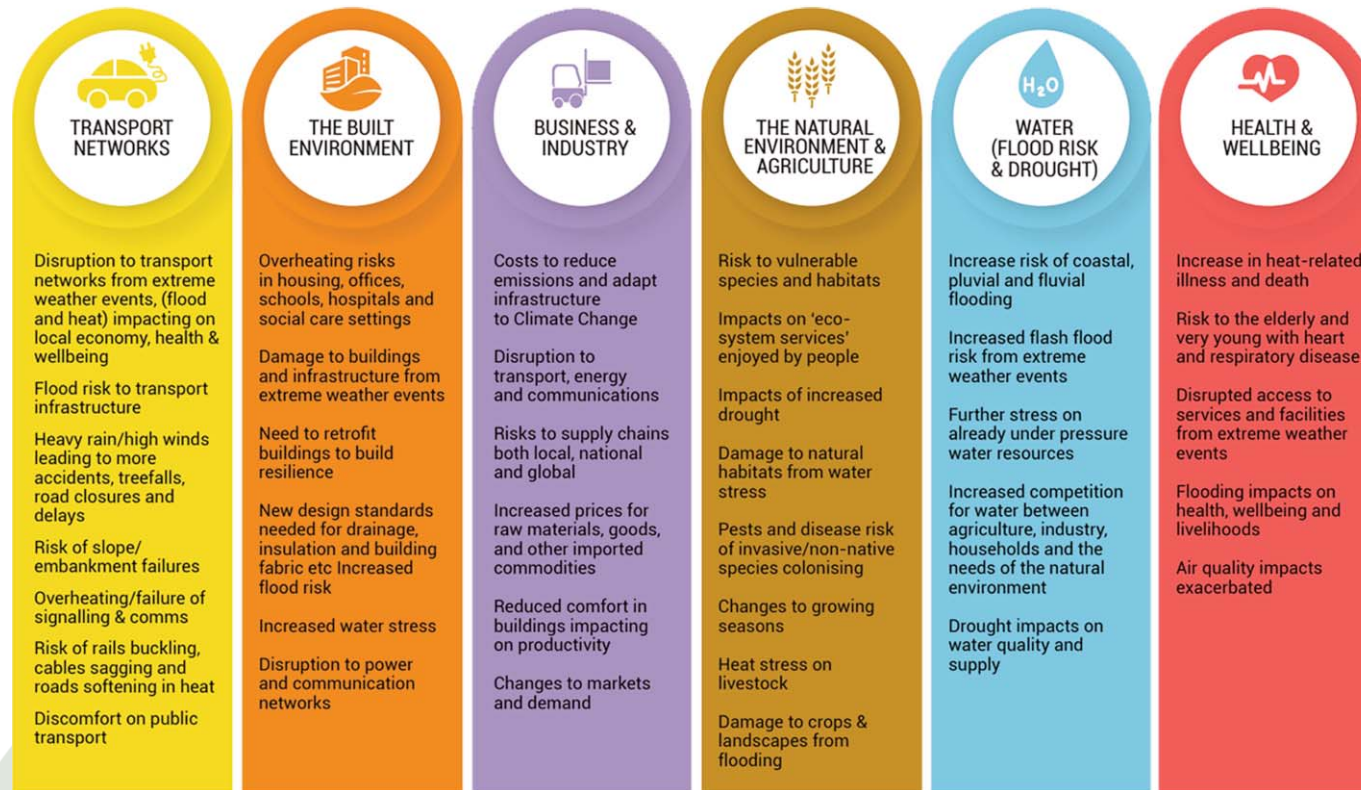
***Conflict and climate migrants -** Climate Change is a stress multiplier - it can take existing problems, such as lack of food or shelter and make them worse. This can cause people to compete or fight over scarce resources (food, water, and shelter), or to migrate.



Tue, July 19, 2022 (noon GMT) temperatures were transcending average values for the time of day and season by 12 to 24 degrees Celsius

► Local impacts of climate change

Local impacts of climate change in the District can be broken down by sector transport networks, the built environment, business & industry, the natural environment & agriculture, water (flood risk & drought) and health and wellbeing.



The South Essex Surface Water Management Plan spans the administrative areas of Basildon, Castle Point and Rochford District Councils. The study area is ranked highest within the county in terms of properties at risk of surface water flooding and is also recognised nationally as a Flood Risk Area (FRA) by the Environment Agency.

► The Paris Agreement and UK Commitment

The Paris Agreement is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and finance, signed in 2016. The Paris Agreement's long-term temperature goal is to hold the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 °C, recognizing that this would substantially reduce the risks and impacts of climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels was issued in October 2018.



This report stated that, in order to remain within a 1.5 °C increase, governments must cut emissions of greenhouse gases (globally) by 45% by 2030.

UK COMMITMENT

The Climate Change Act 2008 introduced the UK's first legally binding target for 2050 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% compared to 1990 levels. On 27th June 2019 the UK government amended the Climate Change Act and set a legally binding target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from across the UK economy by 2050 with five yearly carbon budgets to set actions and review progress. The achievement of this target will bring to an end the UK's contribution to climate change. There is also a requirement under the Climate Change Act to produce a 5 yearly national climate change adaptation programme. In April 2021, responding to growing evidence of the impact of climate change, the UK government upped its ambitions further by committing to set into law a more ambitious UK climate change target. Its policy now is to reduce UK emissions by 78% by 2035, compared to 1990 levels and net zero carbon by 2050.



NET ZERO/CARBON NEUTRAL

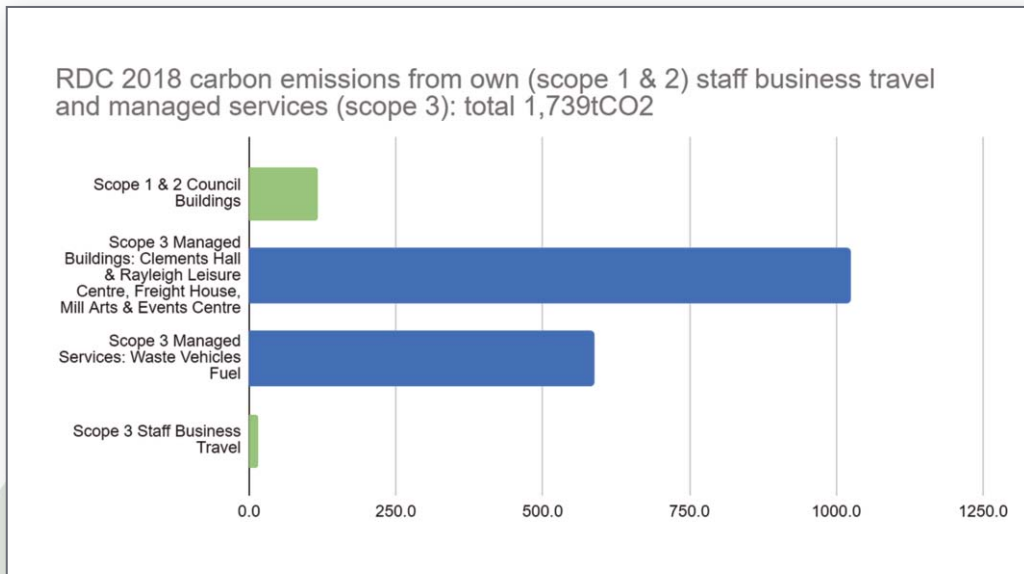
Carbon neutral means that the amount of carbon that is emitted (released) is the same as that absorbed from the atmosphere. To achieve net zero emissions, all worldwide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions will have to be counterbalanced by carbon sequestration (removal or offset)

Rochford Net Zero Carbon Commitment - Rochford District Council aims to become a net zero carbon district with respect to carbon from its own, managed and those emissions under its influence by 2030

► Own Estate and Services Emissions (Scope 1,2 and part Scope 3)

The carbon footprint for Rochford District Council own estate and managed services emissions has been calculated based on the gas, oil and electricity consumption of buildings (Scope 2) business mileage and fuel data for waste services (Scope 3). 2018 is the (Scope 1) baseline year using UK government emissions factors which equates to 1,739tCO₂e.

The Rochford DC own estate, and thus emissions, are relatively small when compared to managed buildings (mainly leisure centres and the waste contract fuel use).



1,790tCO₂e

Rochford DC own estate Services Emissions were 1,494.5tCO₂e



▶ District Wide Emissions Carbon Footprint

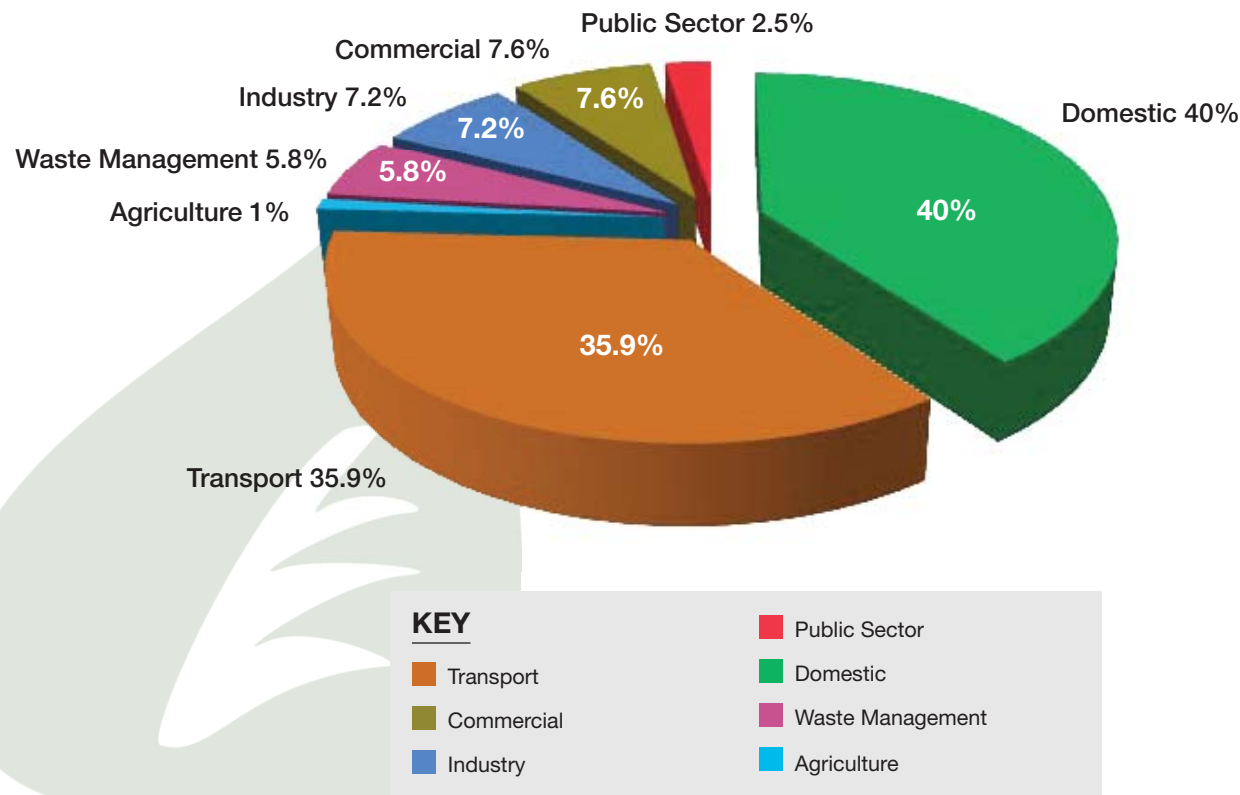
Annual Source of Carbon Emissions (tCO₂e) in the Rochford District (based upon data from 2018-19)

The Governments Department for Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) publishes an annual data set of data for CO₂e emissions under the influence of local authorities.

The baseline year data set is for 2018 which as a pre covid year reflects better the emissions impact. Rochford district carbon emissions were 320,500tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e).

320,500tCO₂e

Rochford district carbon emissions were 320,500tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e)



tCO₂e

tCO₂e refers to tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents, a unit that summarises all greenhouse gas emissions as one figure.

Since 2005 CO₂e emissions in the district have fallen. The decarbonisation of electricity supplies has played a significant part in this



► Built Environment and Energy

District wide, the built environment (domestic housing, commercial, industrial & public sector) and its associated use of gas & oil for space heating & electricity is the most significant source of carbon emissions at 57.3%.

As the power grid decarbonises with more renewable energy capacity the focus is to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings and move away from gas to low carbon electric heating such as air source heat pumps and generate more local renewable energy. A focus for the council will be to signpost sources of grant funding to improve the energy efficiency of households experiencing fuel poverty.

Rochford DC are using its planning powers, primarily through their Local Plans, to ensure low emission new buildings and homes, as well as ensuring new developments are built to minimise their environmental impact. This section also covers renewable energy generation in the area as well as climate adaptation measures.



Aim

- To improve the energy efficiency of all domestic properties in the borough to EPC rated C or better
- Support organisations to achieve net zero through nondomestic gas reduction and efficient use of electricity
- Council owned and managed buildings to be net zero by 2030
- Increase renewable energy generation
- Place Making Charter: Achieve carbon-neutrality and, where possible, carbon negativity throughout the lifetime of buildings
- To ensure that new homes built in the district meet the net zero emissions standard
- As the Local Planning Authority, new development should preferably be located in areas that are not at risk from flooding.
- Work with Environment Agency to support households and businesses in flood risk areas using nature based solutions

► Transport and Air Quality

Transport, mainly personal car ownership represents the 2nd most significant source of carbon as well as nitrous oxide emission (affecting air quality) at 35.9%. RDC has adopted the Essex Climate Commission Strategic Approach:

Avoid: Encourage residents to avoid or reduce unnecessary private car journeys.

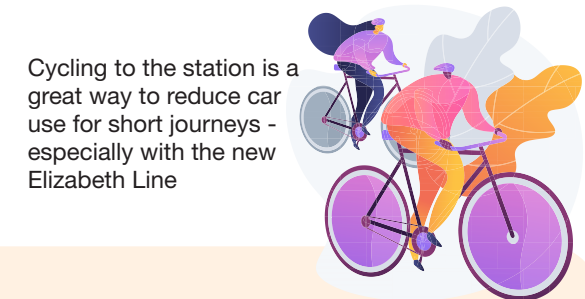
Shift: Embrace a shift in attitude towards active and sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling, and taking the bus or train to encourage their use and reduce pollution and congestion.

Improve: Where road journeys are essential, we want to improve vehicle efficiency by making alternatively fuelled options, such as electric vehicles, easier to run for both personal and professional use.

Nitrous Oxides (NOx) are as significant indicator of poor air quality as well as being a potent green house gas (273 times that of CO₂) is also a major public health issue with clear evidence that particulate matter (human made air pollution) is having a significant contributory role in a range of poor health outcomes including respiratory disorders and cardiopulmonary mortality. NOx pollution is emitted by automobiles, trucks and various non-road vehicles (e.g., construction equipment, boats, etc.) as well as industrial sources such as power plants, industrial boilers, cement kilns, and turbines.

Rochford has relatively low transport emissions of other Essex districts given its rural nature

Rochford district has 21 public EV charging points



Aim

- To invest in zero and low-carbon vehicles across the Council fleet
- Encourage a modal shift in transport from personal car use to local cycling, walking, use of public transport and street car clubs
- To improve the public Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure across the Borough

► Natural Environment

The climate crisis is deeply connected to the ecological emergency. This section looks at what Rochford can do to protect and increase biodiversity in the area, the management of their green spaces, and biodiversity net gain requirements for developers.

Wallasea Island rewilding project sits within a Special Protection Area which covers the Crouch and Roach estuaries, and which is special for overwintering waders and wildfowl including brent geese as well as improving sea defences.

Wallasea Island
www.rochford.gov.uk/wallasea-wetlands-project



RSPB Wallasea Island is a stunning landscape of marshland, lagoons, ditches and sea. The landscape has been restored through a managed realignment project. This ambitious project used more than three million tonnes of earth from the tunnels and shafts created by the Crossrail project in London. The 1,850-acre reserve is pioneering an approach that could be taken up around the world as a model for coastal habitat creation and natural flood risk management

Aim

- To increase biodiversity and ecosystem functioning across the district, eg net gain from new developments
- Implement the measures from the 2021 Biodiversity Topic paper and commissioned wildlife sites review to support the new local plan to 2040
- Support the The Essex Forest Initiative committed to plant £1million worth of trees over the course of five years

2 Sites of Special Scientific Interest



230 acres of Country Parks

► Waste

Waste management requires energy use, and as such emits carbon emissions which contribute to climate change. The disposal of waste can also emit other greenhouse gases such as methane which has a greater greenhouse effect than carbon dioxide, as well as causing other environmental impacts.

18.7ktCO₂e
from waste management in the district = approx 5.8% of borough emissions

Rochford District Council collects: 8,200 tonnes of recyclables, 11,600 tonnes of compostables, 10,800 tonnes of non-recyclable waste annually from 35,800 households across the District.

This section looks at the influencing role the Council plays in supporting sustainable food production on their land and circular economy initiatives locally. The Council also have an important role to play in waste and recycling locally and improving this.



RDC procured a new waste collection vehicle fleet in 2022 which will be more fuel efficient and trials with Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) renewable diesel to be investigated in 2023

Aim

- Work with residents to reduce the amount of waste created supporting ECC circular economy initiative
- The Council to consider whole lifecycle of materials purchased and when procuring services to minimize waste
- Improve the current dry recycling rate of 61% and offer food waste collection to the majority of households
- Update our external event policies to ensure food and packaging etc is sustainable with low carbon impact
- Increase sustainable food production practices in the district to encourage more fruit and veg is grown locally rather than imported



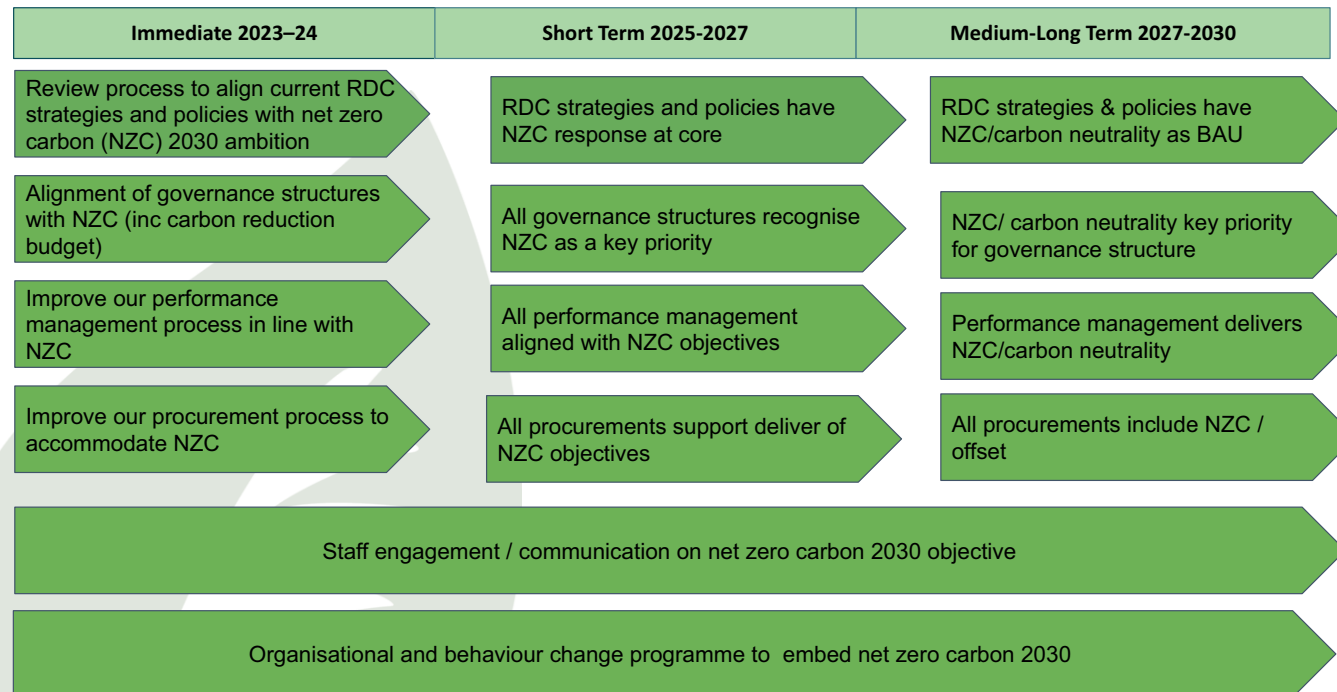
► Governance & Finance

This section aims to understand to what extent climate action has been incorporated and embedded across the whole of the council in all its activities and services in its decision making, forward planning and structures. This section also looks at how councils are raising funds for climate action and whether the councils' investments are sustainable or supporting high carbon infrastructure and industries.

Rochford District Council has a number of key strategies that relate to policy, planning and financial forecasting all of which have an influence in embedding its net zero carbon ambition.

The schematic below demonstrates how RDC will embed our net zero carbon ambition into our governance, financing and policies which includes embedding staff carbon literacy

Governance & Finance Road Map



► Collaboration & Engagement

This section addresses how the Council can collaborate with others to improve their own climate action and to support other organisations in the area to decarbonise. More than half of the emissions cuts needed to reach net zero rely on people and businesses taking up low-carbon solutions and we will work with those in their local area to enable those solutions.



162 businesses signed up

**85% of RDC residents concerned or very concerned about climate change

Aim

- Support residents and businesses to understand and implement net zero principles
- Support and engage with local environmental and community groups to achieve net zero
- Encourage schools in the borough to become eco-schools and take part in the “Schools Streets” Scheme
- Develop the local green economy and skills base, to create more low carbon and renewable energy jobs

In Rochford it is estimated that 838 low carbon & renewable energy jobs needed by 2030*



The charity Trust Links Rochford eco-building is designed to be environmentally friendly and fully accessible, enabling classes and workshops to people with physical disabilities. Notable for its solitary bee habitats, which provide a valuable refuge for pollinating insects.

*<https://tiny.one/low-carbon-jobs>

**1335 members of the public responded to the councils' “Sustainability Strategy 2022-2027” consultation held between June 2022 and September 2022

► Behavioural Change

The Council only has direct control over less than 1% of emissions from the District, but has the capability to influence all of its population.

We all have a part to play in tackling climate change. We see our role as a district council to encourage people, businesses and other organisations to do what they can to reduce their carbon footprint and make it easier, where we can, for those changes to happen. A full list of behavioural change approaches can be found in Appendix 1.

House of Commons Public
Accounts Committee 2021,
Achieving Net Zero

"As much as 62% of the future reduction in emissions will rely on individual choices and behaviours, from day to day lifestyle choices to one off purchases such as replacing boilers that use fossil fuels or buying an electric vehicle".

Climate Change Committee
2020, The Sixth Carbon
Budget The UK's path to
Net Zero

"The public need to be involved over half the missions reductions we identified to reach Net Zero actively involve people, whether by choosing to purchase low- carbon technologies like electric cars, or by making different choices, for example on their travel and diets".



► Monitoring

In order to know whether our actions are helping to reduce our environmental impact, there must be a baseline set and regular monitoring.

To ensure a baseline is produced and consistent monitoring undertaken, the Council aims to:

- Establish cost and feasibility of introducing Automated Meter Reading (AMR) across the Council's property estate
- Undertake an internal audit of energy and water usage across all the Councils assets
- Deliver on 2030 net zero carbon targets for its own estate and managed services including leisure centres and waste collection



► Key Performance Indicators

| CATEGORY | KPI |
|----------------------------|---|
| Transport | % reduction in transport CO2 emissions, from 2018 levels |
| Built Environment | % reduction in domestic CO2 emissions, from 2018 levels |
| | % reduction in commercial and industrial CO2 emissions, from 2018 levels |
| | % reduction in council own estate and services CO2 emissions |
| Air Quality | % reduction in CO2 emissions from transport |
| Natural Environment | Area of space in District managed exclusively for biodiversity |
| | Number of trees planted per year |
| Waste | % reduction of CO2e emissions, from 2018 levels |
| | % of waste recycle, reused or composted |
| | Waste production per average household, per year |
| Energy | Total electricity generated from renewable energy projects |
| Behaviour | Number of businesses committed to reducing their environmental impact through working with REBA |

► Rochford Sustainability Action Plan 2022-2030

Transport and air quality: Encourage more residents to cycle, walk and use public transport and if they must travel by car to support car clubs and facilitate shift to electric vehicles through improvements in EV charging infrastructure

| AIMS | ACTION BY RDC | CLIMATE (CARBON) | PARTNER ACTION | DESIRED OUTCOME |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| To invest in zero and lowcarbon vehicles across the Council fleet | Develop a Council fleet replacement plan, by June 2023, seeking to replacing council vehicles with electric/hydrogen and exploring low carbon fuels such as Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) by June 2023 Develop business case for renewable diesel by Feb 2023 with aim to roll out across fleet by 2024, if acceptable | Less than 1% total emissions reduction | Energy Saving Trust | Near Net Zero vehicle fleet by 2030 net zero by 2040 |
| To encourage modal shift in transport away from car use across the District. | Support and deliver the development of local cycling/walking infrastructure (LCWIP) by September 2023. Support Active Essex active travel plans for schools. Promote the national Walk to School & work week. Seek to Promote/Develop local car clubs (pay as you go car hire). Support and promote more "School Streets" schools | High – approx. 75.2kCO2 per annum on minor roads in Rochford | ECC Active Essex, SE Essex Health Alliance, Essex Climate Commission | 10% reduction by in local vehicle traffic by 2030; 20% 2040. |
| To improve the public Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure across the District. | Oversee installation of 6 EV charging points on Rochford Estate In 2023. Develop EV charging strategy for district with Energy Support Trust by October 2023. Seek to amend taxi licensing guidance towards hybrid & electric vehicles by April 2024. Identify funding for EV charge points and help with siting | Medium | Energy Saving Trust | Clear EV charging strategy for District. |
| To promote zero-carbon fleet alternatives across the District | To investigate and signpost funding opportunities to establish hydrogen-powered vehicles technology in the district | High | Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Trust | Funding secured for a hydrogen distribution plant pilot project in the vicinity of the district |

▶ Rochford Sustainability Action Plan 2022-2030

Built Environment and Energy: Improve the energy efficiency of buildings in our district with an aim to transition to low carbon heat sources and develop local renewable energy capacity

| AIMS | ACTION BY RDC | CLIMATE (CARBON) IMPACT | PARTNER ACTION | DESIRED OUTCOME |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------|--|
| To improve the energy efficiency of all domestic properties in the district to EPC rated C or better | Work with Energy Savings Trust to promote simple EE measures and help promote grant schemes by Feb 2023. Engage with local adult education and social housing partners to develop low carbon apprenticeship opportunities by April 2025 | High: gas heating = 75% of carbon emissions from homes (99ktCO ₂ e). Electricity emissions declining with decarbonisation of grid | EST, Essex Climate Commission | Near Net Zero emissions from domestic housing 2040 |
| To support industrial and commercial organisations to achieve non-domestic gas reduction and efficient use of electricity | Continue to support and grow the Rochford Environmental Business Alliance for net zero services and funding opportunities | High: non domestic (industry & commercial) gas and electricity emissions equate to 47.9ktCO ₂ e | REBA Colbea | Near Net Zero emissions from commercial & industrial sites 2040 |
| That all Council owned, and managed buildings are net zero by 2030 | Develop council procurement policy to support net zero/low energy lighting, equipment and buildings October 2023 Seek and secure funding bids for Government Decarbonisation fund to support retrofitting of Council stock | Low: accounts for less than 2% of district emissions | LGA Net Zero Energy Hub/Salix | All council owned and managed services buildings achieve net zero by 2040 Street lighting & communal areas in housing stock is energy efficient eg lighting |
| To maximise opportunities for renewable energy generation in the District | Investigate suitability of bulk buy solar schemes eg KCC, with a view to registering and promoting in the District. Consider suitability of Heat Networks and Community energy schemes in new builds. Undertake feasibility studies for council properties for: on site renewables, by December 2023 | Medium | Net Zero energy Hub | Hub Renewable energy capacity reaches 100MW in Rochford by 2030 (Currently in 2022 - 17.3MW, in 2025 projected - 67.3MW) Target -100MW |

► Rochford Sustainability Action Plan 2022-2030

Biodiversity & Natural Environment:

Key outcomes carbon sequestration, improved air quality, improved biodiversity, adaptation and wellbeing

| AIMS | ACTION BY RDC | CLIMATE (CARBON) IMPACT | PARTNER ACTION | DESIRED OUTCOME |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| To increase biodiversity and eco system functioning across the District | <p>Develop and implement management plans for all council owned parks and spaces to maximise biodiversity by December 2025.</p> <p>Continue to promote opportunities for conservation volunteering for schools, residents and businesses</p> <p>Implement the measures from the 2021 Biodiversity Topic paper and commissioned wildlife sites review to support the new local plan to 2040</p> | Low | Essex Nature Recovery Network (ENRN), ASELA | Targets to be set once biodiversity/wildlife review baseline established and incorporated into the new Local Plan |
| To continue to increase tree cover across the district | Supporting the Essex Forest Initiative committed to plant £1million worth of trees over the course of five years. | Limited mitigation – medium adaptation | Essex Forest Initiative | Improvements in air quality, urban greening and reduction in flooding events |

Governance & Finance: Embedding across the whole of the council net zero carbon 2030 in all its activities and services, in its decision making, forward planning and structures as well as funding and investment strategies

| AIMS | ACTION BY RDC | CLIMATE (CARBON) | PARTNER ACTION | DESIRED OUTCOME |
|--|---|------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| To embed net zero carbon (NZC) 2030 in Council policies, strategies, forward planning and investment strategies. | Review all current policies, strategies, forward planning and investment strategies with an aim of embedding in NZC 2030 ambition | Medium | Internal processes | All RDC policies, strategies, forward planning and investment strategies are aim of embedded/BAU and aligned with NZC 2030 by 2030 |
| Council staff are carbon literate and understand how their service area and individual actions can support net zero. | Roll out the SMT carbon literacy training to all staff at the council | Low | Internal comms/ staff induction | Workforce are carbon literate by 2025 |

► Rochford Sustainability Action Plan 2022-2030

Waste Reduction & Food:

Reduce waste at source, move towards a circular economy and increase sustainable food production in the district

| AIMS | ACTION BY RDC | CLIMATE (CARBON) IMPACT | PARTNER ACTION | DESIRED OUTCOME |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| To reduce non-recyclable waste levels and to increase recycling rates to 70% and offer food waste collection to the majority of households | To participate and support county and national recycling campaigns by September 2023. To deliver the 2021 Waste Collection Strategy for District. | Medium | Community engagement | 5% improvement in recycling by 2025, 10% by 2040 |
| External events on council land, ensure food and packaging etc is sustainable with low carbon impact | Update external events policy to ensure sustainable food, packaging etc | Low | Internal policy and working with suppliers | All external events on council land have sustainable food and packaging 2025 |
| The Council to consider whole life cycle of materials purchased and when procuring services to minimise waste | Include waste minimisation in Council contract specifications by October 2023 | Low | Suppliers | Reduction in waste disposal costs for Council Contracts 90% reduction by 2030. |
| To support elimination of waste and the over exploitation of our natural resources. | Support and participate in County cross-border project called 'Blueprint to a Circular Economy' | Medium | ECC | Circular economy principles embedded in the district. |
| Increase sustainable food production in the district | Support rural agricultural businesses to take advantage of and raise awareness of UK Govs Agricultural Transition Plan | Low 3.4kt CO2e associated with agriculture 1% district emissions | NFU Local Farming Groups REBA | All Rochford farmers are taking advantage of and adopting sustainable food and practices that support net zero ambition |

► Rochford Sustainability Action Plan 2022-2030

| Planning, Land Use & Adaptation | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| AIMS | ACTION BY RDC | CLIMATE (CARBON) IMPACT | PARTNER ACTION | DESIRED OUTCOME |
| Achieve carbon-neutrality and, where possible, carbon negativity by promoting the use of renewables | <p>Implement the place making charter as proposed in the local plan consultation https://rochford.oc2.uk/document/207/28281</p> <p>Continue to support large scale renewable energy projects such as 50MW Fambridge Solar Park</p> | Medium | Planning Economic Developmen | <p>New developments are low zero carbon and future proofed for low carbon transport 2024</p> <p>Renewable energy capacity reaches 100MW in Rochford by 2030?</p> |
| To ensure that new homes built in the district meet the current net zero emissions standard | <p>Seek to incorporate net-zero requirement in local Plan Review (2024)</p> <p>Utilise existing planning powers (see also Future Homes) to align with Essex Design Guide by December 2024 (nzcbuildings.co.uk)</p> | Low: prevent lock-in of future emissions and need to retrofit in 15-20 years. | Essex Planning Officers Association New net zero homes standard due 20203 | All new housing achieves net zero status 2030 |
| As the Local Planning Authority, new development should preferably be located in areas that are not at risk from flooding. | Ensure that new planning takes into consideration flood mapping from the environment agency | Low | EA | Minimise new build in flood risk areas |
| To support elimination of waste and the over exploitation of our natural resources. | Support and participate in County cross-border project called 'Blueprint to a Circular Economy' | Medium | ECC | Circular economy principles embedded in the district. |
| At risk properties are identified in the district and supported with adaptation and mitigation measures | Work with Environment Agency to support adaptation & mitigation of households and businesses in flood risk areas, using nature based solutions | Low | Housing EA | Flooding and damage to households and business is minimised in the district |

► Rochford Sustainability Action Plan 2022-2030

Collaboration & Engagement: supporting businesses, communities, charities and schools to achieve net zero

| AIMS | ACTION BY RDC | CLIMATE (CARBON) IMPACT | PARTNER ACTION | DESIRED OUTCOME |
|---|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| To support residents and businesses to understand and implement net zero principles | To continue to provide workshops and resources for residents and local businesses on how to save energy, waste & water use | Medium | BEBA Colbea | Reduction in business and domestic carbon emissions |
| To support and engage with local environmental and community groups to achieve net zero | Ensure the council is involved with and engaged in the work of local environmental and community groups | Low | Comms. Third sector CVS | Third sector CVS working together on net zero District |
| To encourage schools in the district to become eco-schools and similar schemes | Identify those schools keen to become eco schools encourage to take part in schools streets scheme by Sept 2023. | Low | ECC | 25% of schools enrolled by 2030 |
| To create more low carbon and renewable energy jobs | Engage with local adult education and social housing partners to develop low carbon apprenticeship opportunities by April 2025 | Medium | ECC Colleges RSL's | Developing the local green workforce to deliver net zero projects 800 low carbon jobs created by 2030 |

► Appendix 1: Changes we can all make to tackle climate change

What can I do?

You can eliminate waste, reduce your carbon footprint and start making an impact right away by committing to some or all of the following actions. This isn't a list of everything that you can do but we hope it gives you some ideas.

Food

- Set a goal of reducing the food waste in your home from its current levels.
- Commit to only buy what you need and eat what you buy.
- Avoid air-freighted food when they are put of season.
- Buy local food and support the local economy.
- Don't leave the house without a reusable cup.

Electricity

- Take basic steps that cost nothing: turn lights off, hang washing out to dry, wash at a lower temperature and keep showers short.
- Wear a jumper rather than turn the heat up, turn the thermostat down and turn radiators off in empty rooms (if you can without risking your health).
- Seek help if you are struggling to keep warm.

- If you can afford to invest in your home, prioritise the carbon cutting measures that have the biggest impact: insulation (starting with drafts then the loft windows and walls), smart heating (efficient boilers, remote controls that include radiators) and lastly considering solar panels or heat pumps.
- Consider options for buying electricity from a green energy provider if they can demonstrate that your bill goes entirely towards additional renewable power.

Transportation

- Aim to fly less and support your local economy through staycations.
- Cut car emissions by walking, cycling, using public transport, car sharing or working from home.
- Consider buying an electric or plug-in hybrid if you can and only if you need a new car.

Purchases

- Consume less.
- Consume wisely. Consider the supply chain and think about the carbon footprint, fair livelihoods and all other sustainability criteria.
- Buy local.

- Buy high quality things where you can and make them last, buy things that are designed to be repairable and sell on or give away when you have finished with them.
- Choose the most energy-efficient white goods.

Investments

- Use any money you have to help create the future you want to see.
- Look at options for investing in pension and saving schemes that don't support fossil fuel companies and prioritise those that invest in the things we urgently need, such as renewables and reforestation.

"Very few of us are squeaky clean in carbon terms. You don't have to become so overnight but most of us do need to make serious changes over the next few years. It's important to keep moving in the right direction and enjoy the process of cutting carbon out of our lives. Don't beat yourself up, but don't let yourself off the hook either"

Professor Mike Berners-Lee,
Lancaster University

▶ This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis



Published January 2023
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