
REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 24 MARCH 2022**PORTFOLIO: PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT****REPORT FROM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT****SUBJECT: SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY CONSULTATION****1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 To approve undertaking public consultation on the draft sustainability strategy, as appended.
- 1.2 To establish the Rochford Environmental Business Alliance (REBA) working in consultation with the Carbon Neutral Member Working Group.
- 1.3 To establish the Rochford Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (RCCSP) working in consultation with the Carbon Neutral Member Working Group,
- 1.4 To approve the allocation of £20,000 from General Balances to provide support for consultation and engagement on the strategy.

2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Carbon Neutral Member Working Group has recognised the need to develop a wider strategy for Rochford district than the current Carbon Neutral Action Plan addresses.
- 2.2 For a district-wide strategy addressing climate change to be successful, a wider consultation and engagement should be undertaken before the finalisation of the Sustainability Strategy, as its delivery will require support of key partners and residents.

3 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 3.1 In June 2020 the Council approved a policy and action plan on how it could reduce the Council's carbon footprint and become carbon neutral by 2030 as part of efforts to address the challenge of climate change.
- 3.2 It is recognised that the current policy and action plan represent an internal focus to achieving carbon-neutrality across the Council's activities. Clearly, this is a process that the Council can manage / monitor and control to a significant degree, as it relates to our own assets and operations.
- 3.3 However, there is a wider agenda of enabling emission reductions across Rochford District communities. This would require work as a partner with local

businesses, organisations, community groups and residents to support the district's journey to achieve carbon neutrality.

- 3.4 The Carbon Neutral Member Working Group has considered its actions so far and is now bringing forward a strategy that addresses a district-wide approach, ready for consultation to create a Sustainability Strategy – See Appendix A. The background to this strategy is set out below.
- 3.5 The Council has begun to deliver projects that will make real difference and influence over its own carbon footprint. However, councils only have a direct control over approximately 2-5% of the carbon produced in its district and 30% influence over the remainder of the district.
- 3.6 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 carbon emissions moving forward.
- 3.7 This strategy has been brought together by the Carbon and Sustainability Officer, Brentwood Borough Council who has been working with Officers and the Carbon Neutral Member Working Group. The Climate and Sustainability Officer has undertaken the Nottingham University 'Scatter Tool' that has enabled us to create a baseline for the district's carbon footprint.
- 3.8 The baselines will be used to determine how successful the Council is at getting towards its goal of carbon neutrality by 2030 and 2040 which are included in the strategy.
- 3.9 The strategy identifies key targets and objectives to ensure the Council is on track to meet its long-term aspirations of carbon neutrality by 2030 & 2040 respectively. Ensuring the individual projects are delivered will result in the overall outcomes and objectives being met.
- 3.10 The proposed 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. Each theme will have a number of actions that will contribute towards the overall performance of the strategy and its objectives.

Stakeholder consultation and engagement

- 3.11 There is no doubt that the carbon neutral ambition for the district cannot be achieved without action from businesses, residents and communities.
- 3.12 It is proposed that a three-pronged approach to consultation is undertaken, as described below:

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- 3.13 Communications – To inform, educate, promote and engage Rochford district businesses, residents and communities, by making ‘doing the right thing’ more visible and showcasing those who have already taken action.
- 3.14 Stakeholder Engagement – To deliver targeted engagement with residents, politicians, businesses and organisations who have shown a particular interest or expertise in climate action in Rochford district.
- 3.15 Community Engagement – To facilitate climate action at the community scale. Fostering a sense of belonging and providing clear information, advice and guidance at the right level for that community.

Rochford District Businesses

- 3.16 The Council and its partners can support and encourage businesses to commit to achieving carbon neutrality. To that effect it is proposed that a new stakeholder group is established - the Rochford Environmental Business Alliance (REBA), whereby organisations are encouraged to sign-up to a new Environmental Pledge and support is provided by the Council to signpost initiatives such as:
- Adaptation encouraging large businesses to disclose physical risks of climate change, using frameworks such as the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosure, or the Adaptation Reporting Power
 - Actively promote energy efficiency advice and guidance to communities and businesses, particularly Small/Medium Enterprises

Rochford District communities and residents

- 3.17 The climate crisis isn't just a problem to be tackled by local, national or international governments - action is needed by every individual.
- 3.18 It is proposed to establish a new stakeholder group – the Rochford Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (RCCSP) consisting of the parish/town councils and representatives of relevant organisations. The RCCSP would be a strategic group which acts as the lead organisation for partners to collaborate and identify joint work programmes on environmental, climate change and wider sustainability issues.
- 3.19 The RCCSP may require some specialist input procured to support elements of this. For example, administering and analysing large scale surveys; targeting seldom heard groups; setting up and analysing online channels and social media.
- 3.20 This approach would provide for early direct and on-going involvement of as many people as possible. This is considered to be key to maximising the potential to influence change in a more effective way. Giving residents as much information as possible that they need to make the choices that reduce

their carbon footprint is an effective way of enabling them to contribute to the Council's aim for the district to be carbon neutral.

- 3.21 Alongside the engagement work would sit an information campaign prepared focussing on changes that people can make to contribute towards the carbon neutrality. These two pieces of work would then become an integral part of the longer-term strategy.
- 3.22 The Council is already undertaking and planning a range of actions which contribute towards achieving carbon neutrality. While much of this need not be subject to consultation, it is important that the Council communicates what it is doing to promote examples of good practice to its residents and other organisations, in addition to reinforcing its commitment to becoming carbon neutral.

Proposed Consultation

- 3.23 The next step is to develop a communication and engagement plan in order to achieve higher awareness and feedback on the draft strategy from residents, businesses or other interested groups and stakeholders. The results of which will be used to inform and finalise a proposed strategy for consideration by Council in autumn of this year. This approach to consultation could be delivered within an estimated one-off budget of £20,000.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The current Carbon Neutral Action Plan is to be presented to Review Committee in April 2022 to report on progress. An alternative would be to expand this report to Review so as to incorporate the strategy and consultation discussed in above report. However, this will lead to inevitable delay, with any such recommendation from Review Committee having to gain approval, depending on the precise recommendation, at a further meeting of Council or Executive for approval.
- 4.2 A further option is to continue to concentrate on delivering the existing Carbon Neutral Action Plan, although this would be counter to the wider aspirations reflected in the Carbon Neutral Member Working Group.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The establishment of the REBA, and RCCSP will require a commitment to resource to promote and manage. These groups will raise expectations as to the Council's commitment to addressing climate change, a failure to follow through on supporting these groups would invariably result in a risk to Council reputation.
- 5.2 Similarly, the consulting upon the development of a wider reaching and ambitious sustainability strategy will also raise expectations of commitment to addressing climate change. Therefore, it is anticipated that a finalised strategy

that will be presented to Council for approval in autumn of this year, a commitment to adequately resource the strategy, will be requested at that time.

- 5.3 The undertaking of consultation and engagement often draws criticism for not providing meaningful results, and for not engaging with a wide representation of the communities of the district. The establishment of the REBA and RCCSP will go some way to addressing the opportunity for stakeholder engagement, however, a resource of £20,000 has been further requested to ensure a suitable communication and engagement campaign can be delivered.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A resource of £20,000 is requested to ensure a suitable communication and engagement campaign can be delivered. This would be funded from the Council's General Balances. There may also be a recharge for the BBC officer time spent on supporting the preparation of the Strategy; however, this is not envisaged to be significant and can be absorbed within overall staffing underspends for 2021/22.
- 6.2 The resource implications set out are to cover the preparation of the Strategy and undertaking of appropriate consultation and engagement activity only; any resource required to deliver ongoing actions arising from the Strategy would be subject to further decision points and would need to be built into the Council's future MTFS as appropriate.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There is no statutory duty to consult, therefore any consultation carried out by the Council must be lawful, fair and proportionate. The consultation will take into account the Cabinet Office Consultation Principles guidelines.

8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 The Council will need to ensure that the whole community is represented in any consultation and engagement on these matters.
- 8.3 The fact that climate change is happening means that there is a disproportionate effect on younger people and future generations who will have to live longer with the effects of climate change.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

LT Lead Officer Signature: _____



Assistant Director, Place and Environment

Background Papers:-

None.

For further information please contact Marcus Hotten, Assistant Director Place & Environment on:-

Phone: 01702 318117

Email: Marcus.hotten@rochford.gov.uk

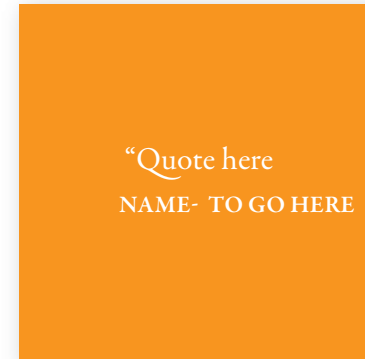
If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

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► Foreword



Cllr. Simon Wooton - Leader



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▶ Contents

Introduction	03
District-wide Emissions	04
Transport	05
Air Quality	06
Built Environment	07
Natural Environment	08
Waste	09
Energy	10
Behavioural Changes	11
Monitoring	12
Actions	13
KPIs	14
Partners and Funding	15

▶ Introduction

The Climate Change Act (2008) highlighted the UK's aim to become carbon neutral by 2050. Rochford District Council has made its own ambitious targets to become carbon neutral within its own activities by 2030 and seeks to ensure the district can meet the government's target too.

This Plan identifies the key changes which need to be made to reduce Rochford district's carbon footprint and environmental impact. The baseline is currently being established, and KPIs will be used to calculate progress. The Plan is a working document and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The current document purpose is to enable consultation on the themes and aims proposed by the Council to help address climate change. A final strategy document is to be presented to Council for approval in late 2022.

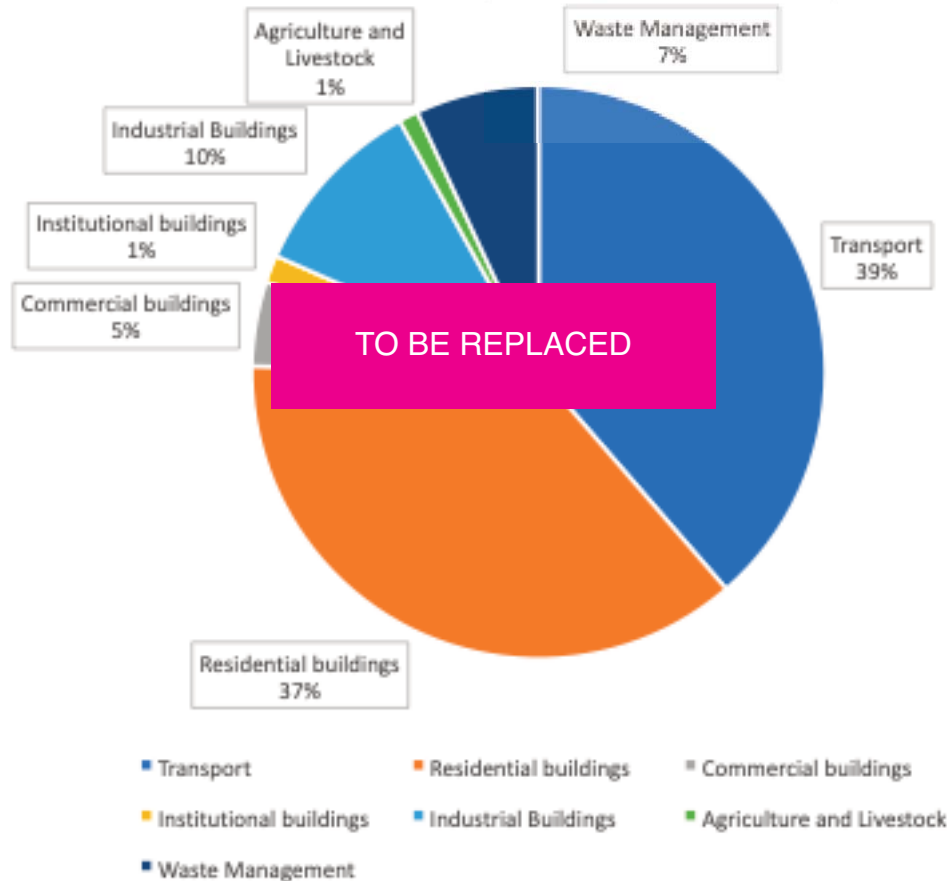


▶ District-Wide Emissions

Annual Source of Carbon Emissions (tCO₂e) in the Rochford District (based upon data from 2017-19)

423234.47 tCO₂e

Annual Source of Carbon Emissions (tCO₂e) in the Rochford District (based upon data from 2017-19)



Using data provided by SCATTER (reference), it was established that an approximate carbon footprint for the Rochford District was 423234.47 tCO₂e, pre-pandemic.

tCO₂e

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

► Transport

Transportation is the largest carbon emitter within the District. Of these emissions, 57% was from on-road transport including private vehicles and 43% from aviation mostly due to the Southend Airport which is located within the district. However, as technological knowledge increases, the use of alternatives to fossil fuels such as biofuels, electricity and hydrogen is expected to become the norm in the future.

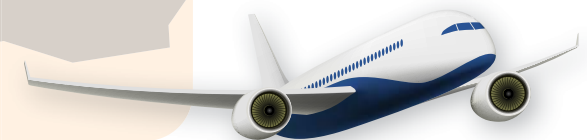
Transport in the District is responsible for 39% of our total carbon emissions

In order to support the change in transportation technologies, and reduce emissions from transport in the District, the council aims to:

- increase number of EV charging points
- Support a Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan
- Work with Essex County Council to implement their plans for sustainable transport
- Introduce car clubs within the District
- Work with Southend Airport to ensure carbon emissions from aircraft are reduced as much as possible
- Consider the purchase of electric vehicles or hydrogen vehicles when replacing any of the Council's own fleet.
- Work with the Private Hire/taxi trade to introduce electric taxis
- Ensure new developments are designed so as to reduce the need to travel by private car

162,661 tonnes of CO₂e emitted in 2018

Road map to go here



▶ Air Quality

The combustion of fossil fuels through activities such as transport can release a range of pollutants which impact air quality. This includes nitrogen dioxide, which can be hazardous to both human and environmental health.

In order to ensure air quality in the Borough remains at a healthy level, the council aims to:

- ▶ Work with ECC and local schools to introduce measures to reduce nitrogen dioxide concentrations around schools
- ▶ Consider the introduction of green buffers along stretches of main road with higher levels of pollutants
- ▶ Encourage the use of low emission and no emission vehicles through the expansion of supporting infrastructure such as EV charging points
- ▶ Encourage schools to take part in “walk to school week” and other campaigns which can improve both air quality and the health of children



Walk to school



► Built Environment

The built environment is crucial for society to grow, however buildings require energy to build and run, and as such have a high carbon footprint.

In order to reduce the carbon footprint of current and future buildings within the District, the Council aims to:

- Signpost residents to government schemes which provide financial support in the decarbonisation of residential properties
- Implement a Local Development Plan that covers sustainability and the environmental impact of new developments
- Continue to switch street lighting existing lights, where Council owned, to LED lights
- Help get improvements to existing buildings to ensure they can become more energy and water efficient
- Secure net zero building standards across all
- Provide long-term solutions to minimise the number of residents at risk of flood risk and coastal change.
- Ensure council's procurement strategy specifies that low carbon lights and appliances are procured



► Natural Environment

The natural environment can help reduce the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere through processes including photosynthesis and carbon storage. Biodiversity is also threatened by climate change and so it is important that we protect the natural environment.

To support this, the council aims to:

- Develop and implement Management Plans for council-owned country parks and green spaces
- Promote the benefits of the natural environment to schools, residents and businesses and work with the community to enhance green spaces through volunteering
- Deliver significant net gains for biodiversity, by delivering new habitats and ensuring any lost habitats are reinstated to a higher degree or standard
- Continuing the work underpinning the Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS)
- Implement the Parks for Nature scheme to improve the biodiversity of the Council's parks

Wallasea Island

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

XX
Sites of Special
Scientific Interest

XX Country Parks

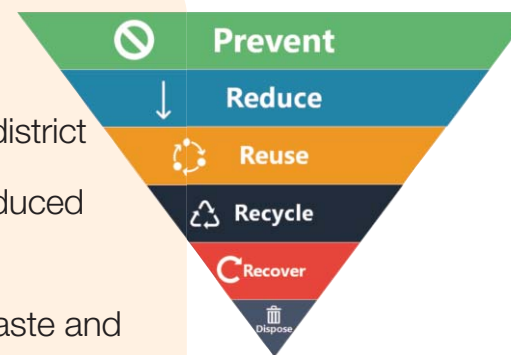


► Waste

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.

In order to reduce the carbon footprint generated by waste collected in the District, the council aims to:

- Provide communication campaigns and workshops, to prevent and reduce waste creation, and increase recycling rates
- Work with Essex County Council to change residual waste disposal to a lower greenhouse gas emitting form, such as energy recovery.
- Include in contracts specifications the Councils wish to end its use of single use plastics
- Implement a separate food waste collection scheme across the district
- Maximise recycling through reduced non-recyclable waste capacity
- Ensure the targets from the Waste and Recycling Strategy 2021-2028 are met



▶ Energy

Currently, the majority of energy consumed is generated from non-renewable sources including fossil fuels. The combustion of fossil fuels emits carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, increasing the greenhouse gas effect and causing climate change. New technologies are making renewable energy sources readily available, which either do not emit carbon, or are considered carbon neutral.

In order to reduce energy consumption and help increase renewable energy infrastructure, the council aims to:

- ▶ Ensure all electrical equipment in council buildings is of energy efficiency grade B or above by 2040
- ▶ Train all Council staff to be energy efficient by 2025, including new starters
- ▶ Train senior management to be Carbon Literate by end of 2022
- ▶ Support low-carbon and renewable energy production in appropriate locations in the District
- ▶ Identify areas suitable for renewable energy in the local plan



► Behavioural Change

The council only has direct control over 2-5% of emissions from the district, but has the capability to influence up to a third of the population.

To help the district on its path to carbon neutral and educate local residents and businesses on environmental issues, the council aims to:

- Launch REBA (Rochford Environmental Business Alliance) to educate and encourage local businesses to reduce their environmental impact
- Encourage Schools within the district to become Eco-Schools
- Deliver campaigns for local residents on a range of subjects designed to reduce their environmental impact
- Attend public events to promote sustainable behaviours (energy, waste, biodiversity)
- Encourage the Council's workforce and enable them to take action in their workplace



► 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
- Set CO2 reduction targets for Council Offices and leisure centres
- Continue to monitor Air Quality



► 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
Air Quality	% reduction in Nitrogen Oxide levels
Natural Environment	Area of space in District managed exclusively for biodiversity
	Number of trees planted per year
	Use of chemicals such as glyphosate (l/ml)
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 BEBA

► Actions

CATEGORY	OBJECTIVE	YEAR
Transport	Increase number of EV charging points	ongoing
	Work with Essex County Council to implement their plans for sustainable transport	
Air Quality	Encourage the use of low emission and no emission vehicles through the expansion of supporting infrastructure such as EV charging points	ongoing
Built Environment	Signpost residents to enable them to apply for government schemes which provide financial support in the decarbonisation of residential properties including HUGS (Home Upgrade Grant Scheme) and LADS (Local Authority Decarbonisation Scheme) programmes	ongoing
	Secure net zero building standards across all future residential and commercial developments as soon as is practically possible and deliver the highest possible standards in the interim, including by pioneering modern and low-carbon methods of construction	
Natural Environment	Promote the benefits of the natural environment to schools, residents and businesses and work with the community to enhance green spaces through volunteering	ongoing
	Identify and implement a suitable scheme to improving the biodiversity and value to nature of the Council's parks- Parks and Nature Initiative	
Waste	Implement food waste collection scheme in 2022/23	2023
	Ensure the targets from the Waste and Recycling Strategy 2021-2028 are met	2028
Energy	Train all Council staff to be energy efficient by 2025, including new starters Identify and implement a suitable scheme to improving the biodiversity and value to nature of the Council's parks- Parks and Nature Initiative	ongoing
	Support low-carbon and renewable energy production in appropriate locations in the District, which may mean facilitating new solar or wind facilities through the planning process	
Behavioural Changes	Launch REBA (Rochford Environmental Business Alliance) to educate and encourage local businesses to reduce their environmental impact	2022
	Deliver campaigns for local residents on a range of subjects designed to reduce their environmental impact	
Monitoring	Undertake an internal audit of energy and water usage across all the Councils assets	ongoing

► Partners and Funding

To ensure actions are completed and appropriate funding identified, Rochford District Council will be working with a range of partners including:

- Essex County Council
- Parish Councils
- CORE (CO2 Reduction Essex)
- Essex Climate Commission
- Greater South East Energy Hub
- ASELA
- RSPB
- District and Borough Climate Forum



▶ Next Steps

This strategy is subject to consultation.

This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Published ?????? 2022

Contact us

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????????????@rochford.gov.uk

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Rochford District Council,
Council Offices,
South Street,
Rochford, Essex,
SS4 1BW.

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