CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2030

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To note progress on the Working Group's action plan on the Carbon Neutral by 2030 policy.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 In June 2020 Council resolved that the Carbon Neutral policy and action plan be approved and that an annual report of progress is provided to the Review Committee.

3 CARBON NEUTRAL ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 The current action plan is appended to this report. Additional columns to the table have been added to provide commentary on progress, and a RAG rating, where RED signifies no progress; AMBER signifies progress but with timescales slipping; and GREEN signifies that progress has been made as expected.
- 3.2 Of the 20 actions identified within the plan, 8 have progressed and are on track for completion against original agreed set dates, 9 have progressed but have not completed within the original timescale set. A further 2 have not progressed.
- 3.3 A significant cause of delay has been the impact of Covid-19 upon timescales generally for delivery of projects, and specifically the prioritisation of addressing adjustments to Covid-19 that impacted upon availability of resource to address other projects such as carbon reduction.
- 3.4 It should also be noted that many of the projects are linked to furthering opportunities of carbon reduction within existing Council projects, such as the Asset Development Programme, or the production of a new Local Plan and therefore outcomes are closely reliant upon the progress of these projects.
- 3.5 However, on a positive note it is still felt that those projects, where the timescale has slipped as a result of Covid-19, will still be achieved.

Report on Green House Gas (GCG) emissions

- 3.6 The base year of 2018/19 reported 1,777 tonnes of CO² produced across the Council's activities.
- 3.7 The key outcome and measure for establishing the effectiveness of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan is to compare existing CO² production against the baseline activity of 2018/19.
- 3.8 Unfortunately, there has been a delay in obtaining accurate meter readings of utilities to obtain a statement of CO² production for the year 2021/22. The

- regularity of the reading of utility meters across the Council assets was not kept up through the Covid pandemic due to priority being given to ensuring Covid security across assets and staff welfare.
- 3.9 It should be further added that a reduction in CO² usage over that past year would be expected, but it would not necessarily be attributed to the introduction of any carbon reduction measures; rather, it would be due to the impact of Covid lockdowns that central government introduced, which resulted in the closure of leisure facilities and Council buildings. Therefore, the data (when it does become available) will still have limited use in determining a direction of travel for carbon production across Council services.
- 3.10 To ensure that CO² production data is available in a timely fashion in the future, it is proposed that a Key Performance Indicator reflecting CO² use is incorporated into the corporate performance reporting cycles.

4 CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER

4.1 It is 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 will be required. At present, the Council is sharing with Brentwood Borough Council a Climate & Sustainability Officer post on a trial basis. It is proposed that this is formalised through a service level agreement.

5 PROPOSED FUTURE WORK

Carbon Neutral Working Group – Terms of Reference

- 5.1 The existing scope for the terms of reference of the Carbon Neutral Working Group are focused upon what the Council can achieve through reducing carbon usage within the Council's direct control.
- 5.2 In line with the Working Group wishing to put forward a wider sustainability strategy to address climate change, that seeks to influence and support partners and residents across the district, the Terms of Reference for the Working Group have been reviewed. (Appendix 2)
- 5.3 It is proposed that the Working Group formally adopts the new Terms of Reference to reflect the wider role the Working Group wishes to adopt.

5.4 Sustainability Strategy Consultation

- 5.5 Rochford District Council has begun to deliver projects that will make a real difference and influence over its own carbon footprint. However, Councils in general only have a direct control over 2-5% of the carbon produced in its district and 30% influence over the remainder of the district.
- 5.6 The Carbon Neutral Working Group recognises 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 its own assets and operations.
- 5.7 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 other residents to support the district's journey to achieve net zero.
- 5.8 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.
- 5.9 The Carbon Neutral Working Group has considered its actions so far and presented to the March 2022 Executive a consultation document that addresses a wider district-wide approach to creating a Sustainability Strategy see Appendix 3. At the time of writing this report, it is anticipated that the proposal will be approved by the Executive.
- 5.10 For a district-wide strategy addressing climate change to be successful, a wide consultation and engagement will be undertaken of stakeholders, as delivery of the sustainability strategy will require the support of key partners and residents.
- 5.11 The findings of the consultation will be reported back to the Carbon Neutral Working Group to shape and finalise the draft Sustainability Strategy. A report outlining the proposals of the Working Group will be presented to the Review Committee this autumn for consideration.

6 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 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. A resource of £20,000 has been requested, subject to Executive approval, to ensure a suitable communication and engagement campaign can be delivered.
- 6.2 The development of a Key Performance Indicator incorporated into the Council's performance reporting cycle will formalise the monitoring of outcomes of the carbon neutral policy.
- 6.3 The risk of further slippage of progress against the action plan will be minimised by the scheduling of quarterly, as a minimum, meetings of the Carbon Neutral Working Group where progress on the action will be reported.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Environmental implications are addressed within the body of the report.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A resource of £20,000 has been requested to ensure a suitable communication and engagement campaign can be delivered. There may also be a recharge for the Brentwood Borough Council 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.
- 8.2 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.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None arising out of this report.

10 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed as no decision is being made.

11 RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
 - (1) That progress be noted on the Carbon Neutral Action Plan (Appendix 1).
 - (2) That the change in the Terms of Reference for the Carbon Neutral Working Group be noted.
 - (3) That it be recommended to the Executive that a formal service level agreement is drawn up to secure continued access to the Climate & Sustainability Officer.
 - (4) That the proposed public consultation on the draft Sustainability Strategy be noted.
 - (5) That it be noted that a further report outlining the proposed finalised Sustainability Strategy will be presented for consideration by the Review Committee in the autumn.

Assistant Director, Place & Environment

Motor

Background Papers:-

None.

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Objective	Action	By When	Update	RAG
Assets				
Reduce the consumption of energy and water across all of our activities	Undertake an internal audit of energy and water usage across all the Councils assets.	April 2021	Meter readings scheduled and are incorporate into Annual visit – interrupted due to Covid 19	
	Pursue options to install renewable technologies at suitable sites within the Council's estate	April 2025	Part of Asset Development Project (ADP). Air Source heat pump for Freight House to negate gas	
	Establish cost and feasibility of introducing Automated Meter Reading (AMR) across the Council's property estate	April 2022	Not Started – awaiting transfer of assets under ADP – installed as part of ADP	
	Set CO2 reduction targets for Council Offices and leisure centres	April 2024	Need to establish baseline first – need a meaningful – non-covid year.	
	Continue to switch street lighting existing lights come to end of life, where Council owned, to well-designed and well directed LED lights	Ongoing	Installed 45+ LED lights (Rayleigh Leisure Centre) + further 40 in Hullbridge areas.	
Purchase energy from renewable sources wherever possible	Consider the purchase of electric vehicles when replacing any of the Council's own fleet and if this is not possible look to purchase a hydrogen powered vehicle.	Ongoing	Feasibility of Hydrogen investigated and ruled out at present. Review of Council Fleet and procurement of electric vehicles.	

Objective	Action	By When	Update	RAG
	All hydrogen used to power fleet vehicles should have been produced using electricity from renewable sources.	Ongoing	n/a	
	Ensure council's procurement strategy specifies that low carbon lights and appliances are procured	April 2021	In place for assets maintenance programme and part of ADAP	
Work with and where possible require our suppliers and contractors to reduce the impact of the goods and services by considering whole life costs and ending our use of single use plastics	Include in contracts specifications the Councils wish to end its use of single use plastics	April 2021	Under review – include in wider Sustainable Procurement Policy – draft for presentation to CN2030 Working Group – final review being undertaken	
Apply to all activities undertaken by us, including contracted out services as new contracts are negotiated	Include in all new contracts the Councils aim to reduce/eliminate its Carbon Footprint.	April 2021	In-place – reference made to CN2030 Action Plan, although ideally need a stronger environmental statement in form of Sustainable Procurement Policy – see above.	
Minimise our impacts of travel by using more sustainable travel solutions or alternatives to travel.	Encourage the Council's workforce and enable them to take action in their workplace. The Council will support its staff by promoting increased awareness, conducting behavioural change programmes, encouraging the use of existing flexible working policies, low	Ongoing	Policies now in place through flexible working.	

Objective	Action	By When	Update	RAG
	carbon and sustainable travel, the use of ICT.			
	Encourage car sharing whenever possible	No-progress	Was on hold dur to Covid 19 – now to review appropriateness	
Ensure environmental risks and opportunities are managed positively	To include a section on all Council reports to state the impact of the decision being proposed on the Council's carbon footprint.	June 2020	Pending – organising a carbon literacy course for staff for 2022	
Improve our performance to prevent all types of pollution and reduce CO2 and other harmful emissions from our activities.	Encourage and enable energy saving behaviour by all council staff	Ongoing	Pending – organising a carbon literacy course for staff for 2022.	
	Work in partnership with other Councils in Essex to share ideas and implement schemes that could lead to a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint.	Ongoing	Regular Attendance ECC organised – District and Borough Climate Forum, Meeting with ECC to explore opportunities	
	To continue to work with the Private Hire/taxi trade to improve on the efficiency of their vehicles through the introduction of electric taxis through installation of charging points at taxi ranks.	Ongoing	Ongoing conversations with licence holders and wider licensing network.	

Objective	Action	By When	Update	RAG
Minimise the production of waste from our own activities and adhere to the principles of the waste hierarchy	Encourage staff to eliminate the use of disposable plastics in all the Council's activities	No progress	Recycling Officer post in place – campaign now pending	
Set objectives and implement action programmes in order to minimise the negative environmental effects and increase the positive effects of our activities.	Identify areas suitable for renewable energy in the local plan	April 2023	Top early to start – will dove tail into Local Plan process.	
Open Spaces				
Protect, conserve and enhance our District's high quality natural environment and its biodiversity whilst improving our parks and open spaces, public rights of ways and green corridors.	On Council owned sites plant trees to provide shading, plant drought resistant species. To identify suitable scheme to improving the biodiversity and value to nature of the Council's parks.	April 2022	Parks For Nature scheme approved by Executive – progressing for April 2022 start	

Carbon Neutral Members' Working Group

Terms of reference

- 1. To understand the implications and recommend a policy to Council on how it can reduce its carbon footprint and become carbon neutral by 2030.
- 2. To consider and understand the costs and to investigate external funding sources.
- 3. To consider how the Council can encourage developers to design carbon neutral homes and industrial estates through the planning process.
- 4. Achieving the strategic aims of the Group through the Council and engagement with individuals, community groups, businesses and other partners in the district, including schools and young people who should have a voice to help shape our future.
- 5. Investigate steps that may be taken by the Council and by Rochford residents and businesses to work towards the Council's commitment to achieving netzero carbon status by 2040 and towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
- 6. Review and produce a new plan of action that is realistic, measurable and deliverable for recommendation to the Council
- 7. Monitor delivery of the action plan once adopted to ensure that significant progress has been made to deliver the action plan by October 2022.
- 8. Make recommendations to the Council, Executive or others that would help to achieve the Council's climate and ecological objectives.
- 9. To include and consider the needs of the open space users balanced against the Council's objective to improve its carbon footprint.





Foreword



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 five years as well as setting out some important context on policy and emissions data.

The Council has already begun the journey towards carbon neutral. We have put forward ambitious development plans for the new Council Offices that will have a BREAMM rating of 'Excellent' indicating that we are

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

Cllr. Simon Wooton Leader, Rochford District Council following the current best practise to address sustainability issues faced in constructing and operating new buildings. The Council has developed policy to promote EV and hybrid vehicle leasing scheme; and introduced a 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 while creating truly sustainable economies and models for growth.





7.12

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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.



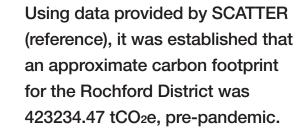
This Plan identifies the key changes which need to be made to reduce Rochford district's carbon footprint and environmental impact. The baseline is currently being established, and KPIs will be used to calculate progress. The Plan is a working document and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

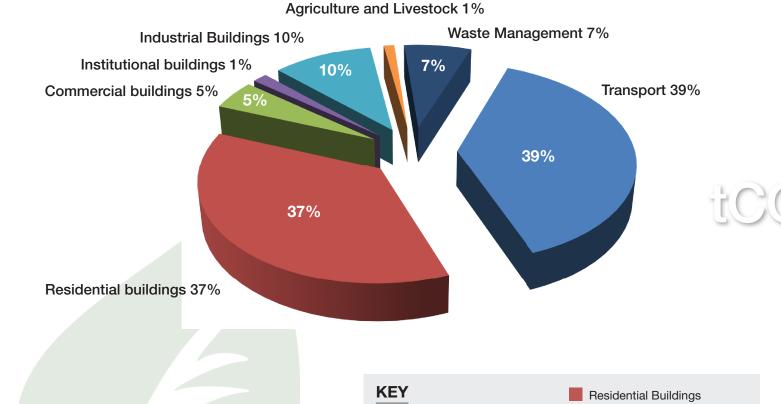
The current document purpose is to enable consultation on the themes and aims proposed by the Council to help address climate change. A final strategy document is to be presented to Council for approval in late 2022.

District-Wide Emissions

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







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

Agriculture and Livestock

Waste Management

Transport

Commercial Buildings

Institutional Buildings
Industrial Buildings

▶ 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.



162,661 tonnes of CO2e

emitted in 2018

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 vehickes 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

Battlesbridge

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

Hockley

Rayleigh

Hullbridge

7.15

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♠ Rochford

Rochford

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





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/wallaseawetlands-project

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.

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



7.20



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 it's 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





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 (I/mI)
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		
папэроп	Work with Essex County Council to implement their plans for sustainable transport	ongoing	
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	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		
Environment	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	ongoing	
Natural	Promote the benefits of the natural environment to schools, residents and businesses and work with the community to enhance green spaces through volunteering	ongoing	
Environment	Identify and implement a suitable scheme to improving the biodiversity and value to nature of the Council's parks- Parks and Nature Initiative		
West	Implement food waste collection scheme in 2022/23	2023	
Waste	Ensure the targets from the Waste and Recycling Strategy 2021-2028 are met	2028	
_	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		
Energy	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	ongoing	
Behavioural	Launch REBA (Rochford Environmental Business Alliance) to educate and encourage local businesses to reduce their environmental impact	t 2022	
Changes	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	

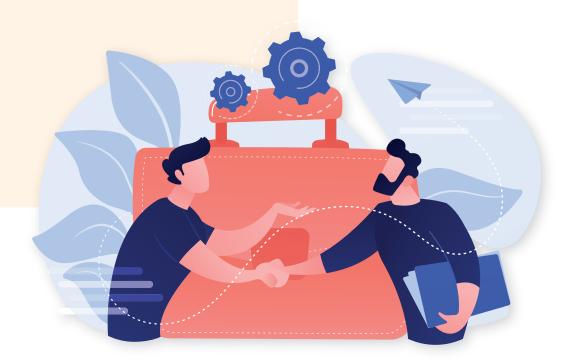


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Partners and Funding

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
- ▶ ASFLA
- ▶ RSPB
- ▶ District and Borough Climate Forum





Next Steps

This strategy is subject to consultation.

This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

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