

11 MARCH 2025

KEY DECISION: NO

REPORT NO. ACE2505

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN 2025-28

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Following the declaration of a climate emergency in June 2019, the Council has been delivering a number of projects that seek to mitigate against the impacts of climate change. In July 2023, a revised action plan was agreed, with a view to refresh the action plan annually to reflect progress made and current priorities.

In light of this information, a refreshed climate change action plan for the Council is proposed which will cover the period 2025-28. As well as this, a redrafted Climate Change Strategy 2025-28 has been drafted to reflect the Council's current approach to climate action.

Recommendations requiring decision:

Cabinet is asked to:

- i) Agree the Climate Change Strategy 2025-2028 (Annex 1)
- ii) Agree the Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2028 (as detailed in section 3.3 of this report)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. In June 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency with a motion unanimously passed by Council and pledged to make:

1. The Council's Operational emissions to be carbon neutral by 2030.
2. A green and sustainable Rushmoor.

The Climate Change Action Plan details how it is planned to make progress against these targets.

1.2. The Climate Change Action Plan 2023-26, which was agreed in 2023, with an action that it would be refreshed on an annual basis.

1.3. This report seeks Cabinet approval to the revised climate change action plan which sets out actions to directly reduce the Council's carbon footprint and ensure a greener and more sustainable Borough. This will be reviewed and

updated annually and an annual report detailing progress against actions will be published.

- 1.4. The Climate Change Strategy has also been revised to reflect this approach to the Council's climate action to ensure that the Strategy and Action Plan are in alignment.

2. Approach to date

- 2.1. The Climate Change Action Plan 2023-26 was developed in an evidence-based way, with the actions linking back to the Council's two climate change targets: The reduction in the Council's operational carbon footprint, and to become a greener and more sustainable Borough. This refresh is building on this existing action plan.
- 2.2. The Council's target regarding carbon neutrality, refers to the Council's Operational Carbon emissions. When developing the Council's approach to climate change action planning, independent advice was sought in order to seek recommendations for targeted actions, which could be achievable, taking into account financial and technological constraints.
- 2.3. Progress against the twelve actions within the Climate Change Action Plan 2023-26 were published in an Annual Report (2023/24). This report can be found on the Council's website ([Climate change action plan - annual report 2023/24](#)) and illustrates good progress against actions, as well as detail on further activity that has been undertaken.
- 2.4. Further progress towards the actions from the Climate Change Action Plan 2023-26 will be updated on in the 2024/25 annual report in the new municipal year, alongside an updated Carbon Footprint. Actions that have been removed or amended as significant progress has been made or completed include:
 - Reference to the Council's car fleet switching to electric vehicles
 - Refresh of the Council's Procurement Strategy
- 2.5. As well as completed actions being removed, some actions were reframed either by combining relevant actions or being given a broader scope, such as those regarding community engagement and young people. There are also two new proposed actions added regarding single use plastic reduction and the promotion of active travel.

3. Climate Change Action Plan

- 3.1. The Climate Change Action Plan 2025-28 has been split into three sections:
 - Becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030
 - Becoming a greener and more sustainable Borough

- Annual Report and Carbon Footprint

This will ensure clarity to which action is working towards each target.

3.2. The Action Plan 2025-2028 contains ten actions set out below. This Action Plan does not aim to summarise all the activity that the Council is undertaking to support the climate change and biodiversity agenda, much of which is undertaken as business-as-usual following changes in recent years. The annual report, as set out in Action 10, allows for the full range of associated activity to be reported on an annual basis, alongside progress to reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

3.3. The ten priority actions proposed for 2025-2028 are as follows:

Becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030 (Council's Operational Emissions)

Action 1: Consider opportunities arising to reduce gas consumption and increase renewable energy generation, including continued commitment to review the feasibility of transitioning electricity across the Council's sites to 100% renewable tariffs.

Action 2: To continue to explore options for switching the Council's remaining vehicles to lower carbon alternatives, as well as exploring opportunities to work with contractors on the Council's broader fleet.
To continue to support the improvement of access to electric vehicle charging facilities across the Borough.

Action 3: To review processes for the Council's capital programme so that environmental impacts are incorporated into business case development and whole life cycle carbon assessments are undertaken. To develop and introduce Climate Change Impact Assessments (CCIA) for new Council projects and proposals.

Action 4: Identify and reduce the use of single use plastics across all council buildings and events.

Action 5: To develop the Council's offsetting approach with a view to ensuring that any offsetting undertaken by the Council has a local impact.

Becoming a Greener and more Sustainable Borough

Action 6: To continue to engage young people on climate change. This includes the ongoing Climate Trackers Scheme in partnership with Wonderseekers (Winchester Science Centre), as well as introducing a Youth Climate Ambassadors Group to increase the offering for young people in the Borough.

Action 7: To use the Council's communications channels (including through Member engagement) to promote opportunities for residents and local businesses to reduce their own carbon footprint, including promoting schemes to improve the energy efficiency of their home or business.

Action 8: Continue to engage with the wider community on climate change, to allow residents to find out more of how they can reduce their negative environmental impact. This includes the annual Eco Fair, development of the Rushmoor Climate Community Group and community initiatives.

Action 9: To encourage and promote active travel, by removing barriers and promoting initiatives, which will also lead to improved health and wellbeing.

Annual Report & Carbon Footprint

Action 10: To review, update and publish the Council's carbon footprint on an annual basis, publish an annual report detailing all that the Council has achieved in relation to its climate action plan and associated strategies (e.g. Green Infrastructure Plan). To publish the Council's Climate Action Scorecard, assessed by Climate Emergency UK, with commentary to provide context.

Consultation

3.4. Rushmoor Climate Community Group was launched in October 2024. One of the objectives of this group is to consult on policy and plans. The Council sought feedback on the Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2026 and recommendations to be considered as part of the revision for a plan for 2025-2028.

3.5. As a result of the feedback gathered by the Rushmoor Climate Community Group, the changes to the action plan were presented to the Policy, Project Advisory Board (PPAB). Similar feedback was sought from the group, which then informed the final draft of the plan.

3.6. All feedback and recommendations were incorporated into the refreshed plan where applicable.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Risks

4.1. The Council set out two targets when declaring a climate emergency in 2019, not achieving the targets as set out within the climate change strategy poses a reputational risk to the organisation and this is reflected in the Council's corporate risk register.

Legal Implications

- 4.2. There are no anticipated implications arising from the proposed action plan.
- 4.3. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 allows for the Council to do anything deemed necessary or desirable to deliver or support its functions and duties providing that that action is not otherwise prohibited by statute (the general power of competence).
- 4.4. The Climate Change Act 2008 provides an overall framework for climate mitigation and established legally binding emissions targets for the UK, including reaching net zero by 2050. Although it places no specific requirements on local authorities, they are widely expected to play an important role in delivering net zero in several policy areas.
- 4.5. The contents of a Climate Change Action Plan and its subsequent actions may be authorised by a variety of statutory powers and duties, depending on what those actions are. Legal powers to undertake those actions emerging from the Plan will be investigated as part of the implementation process and be subject to the democratic process as applicable.
- 4.6. The Equalities Act 2010 and section 149 Public Sector Equality Duty, requires the Council to have regard and take any required action to reduce and eliminate discrimination, victimisation, and harassment between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Financial Implications

- 4.7. A climate change reserve was created in November 2020 and this will be used to support actions included in the proposed plan and could also be used to support other activity within the climate change action plan. At the end of the last financial year (2024/25), the balance of this reserve was £6,309.
- 4.8. In addition to this, the use of UKSPF Funding will be considered to deliver climate change action within the action plan.
- 4.9. Other actions will be funded through relevant service budgets and in accordance with the financial procedure rules. Wherever possible, external grants and funding sources (such as the Farnborough Airport Community Environmental Fund) will be sought to support the delivery of the action plan. Members should note that the delivery of some of the actions contained within this plan could have financial implication and business cases will be developed and presented for consideration where this is the case.

Resource Implications

- 4.10. The coordination of delivery of the climate change action plan is supported by the Climate Change Officer.

Equalities Impact Implications

- 4.11. Equalities Impact Assessments will be undertaken on the individual actions within this plan if required.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This refreshed Action Plan reflects the progress that has been made within the existing plan, as well as our commitments for the coming year.
- 5.2 The refresh of the action plan has consulted with both the Rushmoor Climate Community Group and Members through the Projects, Policy Advisory Board as part of this process.
- 5.3 Cabinet is asked to approve the ten priority actions contained within the refreshed Climate Change Action Plan as set out in 3.3, which will help to deliver against the Council's climate change targets. Cabinet is also asked to approve the Climate Change Strategy 2025-2028 (Appendix 1) to ensure that the Council's approach to Climate change action is detailed and aligned with the Action Plan.

LIST OF APPENDICES/ANNEXES:

1. Climate Change Strategy 2025-2028

CONTACT DETAILS:

Report Author – Sophie Rogers, Climate Change Officer
sophie.rogers@rushmoor.gov.uk

Head of Service – Rachel Barker, Assistant Chief Executive
rachel.barker@rushmoor.gov.uk

Climate Change Strategy 2025-2028

1. Introduction

Climate change and its impacts have been recognised nationally and internationally as the most important environmental challenge faced by the planet. A changing climate is having, and will increasingly have, profound effects on everyone - especially future generations.

The planets temperature naturally changes over very long periods of time, however anthropogenic climate change since the industrial revolution has seen the Earth's temperature rise. It has been estimated that the Earth's Global average temperature has increased by 1.2°C since the pre-industrial period (1850-1900).

Acknowledging the need to make a clear statement of intent the Council took the unanimous decision in June 2019 to address climate change locally, by declaring a climate emergency and developing a plan to enable:

- A carbon neutral Council by 2030
- A green and sustainable Rushmoor

The aim of this Climate Change Strategy is to co-ordinate and set out a range of objectives into one document to guide the Borough to achieve its targets.

2. Background and Context

Anthropogenic Climate Change is defined as an increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere, caused by human-induced activity.

This warming is caused by increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the atmosphere, most notably Carbon dioxide (CO₂), as well as other gases such as Methane (CH₄) and Nitrous Oxide (N₂O). These gases are emitted as a result of human activity, particularly relating to the burning of fossil fuels (oil, coal, and gas). When fossil fuels are burnt, carbon dioxide is released. Other human practices release carbon dioxide, as well as other greenhouse gases.

These greenhouse gases absorb heat and therefore trap the sun's heat within the atmosphere, creating what's named 'the greenhouse effect'. The more GHG's within the atmosphere, the higher levels of warming.

There are naturally occurring variances in the Earth's average temperature, but the increased emissions since the emergence of the industrial revolution have accelerated this warming.

With increased levels of warming the likelihood of climate impacts are amplified and the impacts of these risks become greater. Therefore, by limiting the levels of warming due to climate change, will mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

Climate impacts within Rushmoor

Climate change will likely affect Rushmoor in a variety of ways. This includes changing weather patterns, such as: warmer, drier summers and wetter winters; both of which could increase the likelihood of heath fires and flooding.

Extreme weather events will not only be more likely, but they could be more severe due to the effects of climate change.

This will also have an increasing impact on the community's health and wellbeing, which includes impacts on mental health, particularly in young people.

The climate breakdown and its impacts will disproportionately affect those who are already most vulnerable.

National Government commitments and legislation

The UK's Climate Change Act 2008 sets the legislative basis for the UK's Climate Change action. A statutory target was set out in the UK Climate Change Act 2008 to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from 1990 by 2050. In 2019, this was amended, and the UK Government committed to a target of becoming Net-Zero by 2050 (Compared to a baseline of 1990).

Since, Government have also committed to a 68% reduction in emissions by 2030, as part of its Nationally Determined Contribution towards the Paris Agreement.

A series of interim targets have been put in place called carbon budgets, which cap the emissions within each period. The current budget (fourth carbon budget) requires a 52% reduction in emissions by 2027.

The Government has now adopted a UK Committee on Climate Change recommendation to increase this target to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment identifies eight priority risk areas:

1. Terrestrial and freshwater habitats and species
2. Soil health from increased drought and flooding
3. Natural carbon stores
4. Crops, livestock, and commercial trees
5. Food production and distribution
6. People and the economy
7. Human health and wellbeing
8. Multiple risks from overseas impacts

Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council also declared a climate emergency in 2019, setting out two targets:

- To be carbon neutral by 2050
- Preparing to be resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise

Rushmoor Borough Council will work with Hampshire County Council to ensure that work is aligned.

3. The Vision and Overall Goals

The Climate Change vision for Rushmoor is that Rushmoor Borough Council will seek to have a positive impact on future generations by working with businesses, communities, and organisations to protect and enhance Rushmoor's environment. Through direct action and by encouraging and supporting others, Rushmoor will address the challenges and opportunities presented by climate change.

Sustainability Motion

To solidify the commitment to this work, the following sustainability motion was set out in November 2024, by Cllr Jules Crossley (Portfolio Holder for Policy, Climate & Sustainability), recognising the urgent nature of the challenges confronting Rushmoor in terms of the climate crisis, the financial situation, the economic environment, and the inequity that some of our residents continue to face.

This commitment further highlights how challenging it will be to achieve the targets that Council set after declaring a climate emergency in 2019.

Council therefore resolved to:

- Support and deliver sustainability across Council's policies, projects, operations, and estate, where sustainability includes, but is not limited to, sound financial management, fair and equitable treatment of residents, staff, and organisations within Rushmoor, and have a positive impact on our environment and biodiversity.
- Introduce climate impact assessments for Council Decisions on all new projects.
- Encourage residents, businesses and organisations working within the borough to be responsible and sustainable.
- Be open and transparent in communications with residents and those working or operating in the borough.
- Foster relationships of mutual respect and collaboration with other councils, public authorities, and businesses to ensure sustainability.

Delivery Plan Priorities:

The Council's Cabinet agreed to a new set of priority themes for Aldershot and Farnborough.

The priority themes are:

- Skills, economy, and business
- Homes for all: quality living, affordable housing
- Community and wellbeing: active life, healthier and stronger communities
- Pride in place: clean, safe, and vibrant neighbourhoods
- Vision for the future and financial sustainability

These Priorities outline five clear themes, whilst also ensuring that sustainability, diversity, and inclusion are at the heart of what the Council does.

Vision for the future and financial sustainability

Within the priority detailing the vision for the future and financial sustainability, it aims to "Create an outcome-led plan to deliver the vision this will include a refreshed and more ambitious Climate Change Action Plan."

The co-benefits of tackling climate change also support other priorities within the delivery plan - in particular:

- Community and Wellbeing: Active Lives, Healthier and Stronger Communities
- Pride in Place: Clean, Safe and Vibrant Neighbourhoods

4. Priority Areas for action

Rushmoor's Climate Change Strategy establishes the strategic framework within which action plans will be aligned over a three-year period. The strategy reflects the important role the Council plays in tackling climate as a leader, facilitator, enabler, and deliverer of services to the Rushmoor community and beyond.

The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will be coordinated and managed by the Council. Implementation will be achieved through a collaborative approach with a range of stakeholders and the local community.

Action Planning

The Climate Change Action Plan has been developed in an evidence-based way, with the actions linking back to the Council's two climate change targets; The Council's Operational Carbon Footprint, and to become a greener and more sustainable Borough.

The Climate Change Action Plan will aim to have between 10-15 focused actions for each year. This enables a clear focus for the year ahead, whilst also allowing for smaller projects and business as usual activity to occur alongside this.

The Actions within the plan are split into sections reflecting the Council's climate targets, to show which actions seek to make progress against which target.

The Council's target regarding carbon neutrality, refers to the Council's Operational Carbon emissions. When developing the Council's approach to climate change action planning, independent advice was sought in order to seek recommendations for targeted actions, which could be achievable, taking into account financial and technological constraints.

The Action Plan does not aim to summarise all the activity that the Council is undertaking to support the climate change and biodiversity agenda, much of which is undertaken as business-as-usual following changes in recent years. An annual report is integrated into the action plan, which allows for the full range of associated activity to be reported on an annual basis, alongside progress to reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

An important element of ensuring delivery of the Action Plan is effective, is regularly monitoring and evaluation of performance. This will be regularly updated with the responsible Cabinet member; Portfolio Holder for Policy, Performance and Sustainability, and the Council's Scrutiny process. Further policy and project matters will be presented to the Policy and Project Advisory Board (PPAB) and progress in delivering the plan will be reported as part of the Council's Quarterly monitoring and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

5. Carbon Footprint

The Council's Operational Carbon Footprint is Calculated annually using SUSTRAX, by Carbon Footprint Ltd.

The carbon footprint is comprised of three scopes and includes both direct and indirect emissions. The data that each scope encompasses within Rushmoor Borough Council's carbon footprint is shown in the table below.

Rushmoor Borough Council's carbon footprint scopes

Scope 1	Direct Emissions	Gas (Heating and Council Owned Vehicles (Operational Fleet)
Scope 2	Indirect Emissions	Purchased Electricity
Scope 3	Indirect Emissions	Business Travel, Paper, Waste, Water and Supply Chain (Procured Goods and Services).

The carbon footprint is expressed as an absolute amount of tCO₂e. This is the amount of greenhouse gas emissions as represented by tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalence, meaning other greenhouse gases impact are quantified using carbon dioxide's warming effect as reference.

The methodology that is used in SUSTRAX is aligned with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and in relation to supply chain data; DEFRA recommended conversion factors.

All data categories with the exception of supply chain, are based on primary data. Supply chain figures are calculated using contract cost and Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC) code categories. Primary data is used for the vehicle mileage and waste tonnage from the Council's contract with SERCO. The recommendation would be in the future to work with contractors and suppliers to increase the amount of primary data used in the supply chain category to increase accuracy of the footprint.

6. Offsetting

The UK's overall climate change targets relate to becoming net-zero by 2050, as set out by central government. Whilst Rushmoor Borough Council's target is to become carbon neutral by 2030.

There is a distinction between these two terms (net-zero and carbon neutral), and they should not be used interchangeably.

Net zero is defined as achieving change that reduces emissions to the lowest point possible (usually by at least 90%) and then offsetting the few remaining emissions. Whereas carbon neutrality means that emissions generated are matched with the amount of emissions that are offset by the organisation. There does not necessarily need to be an emissions reduction to be carbon neutral.

The target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 refers to the Council's operational emissions. Whilst Rushmoor Borough Council does not currently have a target to become Net-zero, it does recognise the importance of reducing emissions as much and as soon as possible. Therefore, it's approach is to aim to have as large a reduction as possible by 2030, given the Council's financial position and its obligation to maintain services for residents.

To achieve carbon neutrality, the Council will have to offset any emissions produced annually by 2030 and every year onward to ensure the Council remains carbon neutral. The intention is to keep the level of offsetting to the absolute minimum, by prioritising emissions reduction. The detail of what offsetting measures this will include will depend on the best practice at the time. The aim is to ensure that any offsetting that is needed, will have a tangible local impact.

7. Resourcing and Governance

Resource & Finance

The earlier that an emissions reduction is made the better it will be for the environment and community wellbeing. Whilst there is also a financial cost with this, adaptation for the longer term is likely to be more costly than taking action to mitigate climate change outcomes in the shorter term. Recognising the financial position of the Council, and any action will be properly analysed looking at cost and impact.

A climate change reserve was created in November 2020, and this will be used to support activity within the climate change action plan.

Other actions will be funded through relevant service budgets and in accordance with the financial procedure rules. Wherever possible, external grants and funding sources will be sought to support the delivery of the action plan.

Where there is a financial implication, business cases will be developed and presented where appropriate for specific actions to assist in the allocation and drawing down of resources.

Governance

Rushmoor Climate Community Group was launched in October 2024. One of the objectives of this group is to consult on policy and plans. The Council sought feedback on the Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2026 and recommendations to be considered as part of the revision for a plan for 2023-2028.

Further policy and project matters will be presented to the Policy and Project Advisory Board (PPAB), and progress in delivering the plan will be reported as part of the Council's Quarterly monitoring and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

8. Rushmoor Climate Community

Rushmoor Climate Community Group Launched in October 2024. This is a forum for those who live, work or volunteer within the borough to engage with the Council on climate, environmental and sustainability issues within Rushmoor.

The meetings of this group will be facilitated and coordinated by the Council. The agenda of meetings will be dependent on the priorities and suggestions of members of the group, Council Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Policy, Performance & Sustainability.

The aims of this group are:

- To **ENGAGE** Rushmoor residents in caring for, protecting, and enhancing our natural environment
- To **CONSULT** and ask for opinions and feedback on Rushmoor Borough Council's existing policies and help shape and inform future policies and plans.
- To **NETWORK & SHARE** information & resources and form partnerships between people and organisations.
- To **CREATE** initiatives by and for residents
- To **RAISE AWARENESS** of climate, environmental and sustainability issues across the community and beyond

This group is a platform where the Council can share current work, as well as consult and gather feedback on future policy, plans and projects around the climate change and sustainability agenda. This Group will be consulted to help shape climate action within Rushmoor.