

# Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan: Year 1 Progress and Year 2 Action Plan

For Cabinet on 22 September 2022

## Summary

**Lead Member:** Cllr Luke Everitt - Environment, Sustainability and Carbon Reduction

**Lead Director:** Paul Taylor - Director of Change & Communities

**Head of Service:** Gary Stevenson - Head of Housing, Health & Environment

**Report Author:** Karin Grey – Sustainability Manager

**Classification:** Public document (non-exempt)

**Wards Affected:** [All]

Approval Timetable	Meeting Date
Climate Emergency Advisory Panel	3 August 2022
Portfolio Holder	22 August 2022
Management Board	24 August 2022
Cabinet Advisory Board (CAB)	7 September 2022
Cabinet	22 September 2022

## Recommendations

Officer / Committee recommendations as supported by the Portfolio Holder:

1. That Cabinet acknowledge this summary report, which provides an update on the progress of the year 1 action plan of the adopted Corporate Carbon Descent Plan.
2. That Cabinet acknowledge and note the findings of the updated yearly Greenhouse Gas report up to and including 2021/22.
3. That Cabinet note the climate emergency and carbon reduction is focused on both reducing and reaching the carbon neutral goal for our own operation and services as part of the Corporate Carbon Descent Plan. At the same time work is also

progressing to develop the borough wide Climate Emergency strategy to empower and support our communities in meeting the carbon neutral goal.

4. That Cabinet recommend approval of the year 2 action plan as set out in the report to support the delivery of the objectives as identified in the Corporate Carbon Descent Plan. That Cabinet note several of the year 2 actions are already in progress and are part of the next phase of activities linked to year 1 actions. Information on progressing the year 1 action plan have also been communicated via members briefing and the members information pack.

## 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Further to the Full Council, (FC29/19), declaration of a “climate and biodiversity emergency”, the Climate Emergency Advisory Panel (CEAP) was established as an advisory body to Cabinet (CAB150/19), to direct the work on the climate emergency and support the delivery of the Councils ambition to make our own operations and services carbon neutral by 2030.
- 1.2 In addition, the declaration included progressing actions on how the wider community including businesses, organisations and individuals can be encouraged to make their own contributions to meeting a goal to make the Borough carbon neutral by 2030.
- 1.3 To support staying within a global temperature threshold of 1.5 degree centigrade, requires limiting cumulative carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions over the coming decades. By not reducing our carbon emissions in the recommended timeframe we add to the environmental impacts of rising global temperatures. Because global temperature change is determined by cumulative emissions, the pace at which we reduce emissions is important. The longer we wait, the sooner the remaining carbon space in the atmosphere is used up.
- 1.4 A carbon audit, which is a greenhouse gas assessment, of the councils’ operations and buildings was undertaken in 2020 based on 2018/19 data, (the complete data set available at that time), with a recommended reduction pathway and actions to meet the carbon neutral target set out. The resultant Corporate Carbon Descent Plan and year 1 actions were adopted in March 2021 (CAB115/20). The Corporate Carbon Descent Plan is recognised as a strategic policy document and forms part of key Council decision making.
- 1.5 This report provides a summary of progress during 2021-22 in meeting the targets as set out in the year 1 action plan. Including an update on current year 2 progress. See Appendix A for the year 1 summary report.
- 1.6 The carbon audit/greenhouse gas assessment has been updated and includes the most recent 2021/22 data. Thereby providing a detailed and accurate overview of emissions associated with our own operations/services and buildings and how this relates to the goal of meeting the carbon neutral target by 2030. Greenhouse gas assessments will continue to be carried out to monitor progress.

- 1.7 The recommended year 2 action plan has been developed in consultation with services across the organisation and CEAP and is included with this report. It sets out the work streams to be progressed and/or completed during 2022/23. Many of the actions included are linked to and build on year 1 progress. See Appendix B for the year 2 action plan.
- 1.8 Actions will continue to be 'built on' and updated on a yearly basis to enable ongoing progress to be made to work towards meeting the ambition of achieving the Council's carbon neutral target by 2030.

## **2. Progress Update 2021-2022**

- 2.1 The Corporate Carbon Descent Plan is a key strategic policy document for the Council and sets out the ambition for the Council on how it can reach its 2030 carbon neutral target for its own operation and services.
- 2.2 The actions and projects proposed each year will evolve and change as detailed feasibility studies are undertaken and new reduction opportunities are identified. The aim of the year 1 action plan was to set the scene and initiate various activities specifically around behaviour change, service provision and building assessments to identify where significant improvements could be made to reduce carbon emissions. Detailed buildings assessments will continue to develop and added to.
- 2.3 As projects are identified these will be brought forward and will be subject to their own approval process.
- 2.4 With regards to the year 1 action plan most actions have been completed, such as the development of the Tunbridge Wells climate action website and intranet page, initial staff engagement and first tranche of carbon literacy training. Equally, the climate emergency impact assessment toolkit has been developed and is now being used for all new projects, reports etc. with the aim to review this toolkit, update/improve and include carbon pricing in due course. The progress updates on the year 1 action plan can be viewed in Appendix A.
- 2.5 In addition, several actions have evolved into the 'next phase' and are being progressed during year 2, such as communication and community engagement activities and the development of the borough wide climate emergency strategy.
- 2.6 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council was identified in a Laser case study on how to successfully obtain grant funding as part of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), with the importance of having detailed information available up front as the key requirement. A total of £1,489,000 was awarded to develop heat decarbonisation plans for the council's property portfolio and implement specified decarbonisation projects at the Depot and Weald Sports centre. The next phase of PSDS funding is due to open. However, during each round, funding becomes more limited and allocated to a wider pool of public sector organisations such as schools, health care and a smaller amount for local authorities. Funding is also linked to heat decarbonisation and specific requirements around property ownership, bill payer and age of current heating systems to ensure significant decarbonisation can be achieved.

- 2.7 In addition to the specific actions identified in the year 1 action plan, general activities across the Council have supported improvements to the environment, biodiversity, and carbon reduction. Such activities included the refurbishment of Crescent Rd properties with additional insulation and the installation of air source heat pumps. Installation of solar PV, rainwater harvesting and improved insulation to the Amelia Scott building. Similarly, improvements to the thermal efficiency of the Town Hall and Assembly Hall roof have been made.
- 2.8 Parks and green spaces continue to implement nature friendly solutions and improve local biodiversity. For example, drought tolerant perennials and shrubs in addition to native and pollinator friendly plant species are planted in our parks and green spaces, including meadow planting. As well as the use of peat free compost and waste reduction. Through s106 funding the Kent High Weald Partnership supported by the Kent Wildlife Trust are also preparing a scheme of improvements for biodiversity and a 50-year management plan for council owned woodland in Pembury.
- 2.9 With regards to the existing solar PV installation (October 2014) on the Tennis Centre roof of the St John Sports Centre, up to May 2022, the total amount of electrical energy generated since installation comes to 703,682 kWh, which amounts to 355,337kg of carbon dioxide avoided.
- 2.10 The expansion of the Tunbridge Wells car club is also being progressed with the aim of adding at least three additional vehicles to the fleet. A car club is part of the sustainable transport mix, with a minimum of 9 private cars taken off the road by each car club car in England & Wales and 27% less carbon emissions per car club car, compared to the average UK car and with car club users making more trips by public transport, and walking and/or cycling after joining a car club.

### **3. Updated Greenhouse Gas Report**

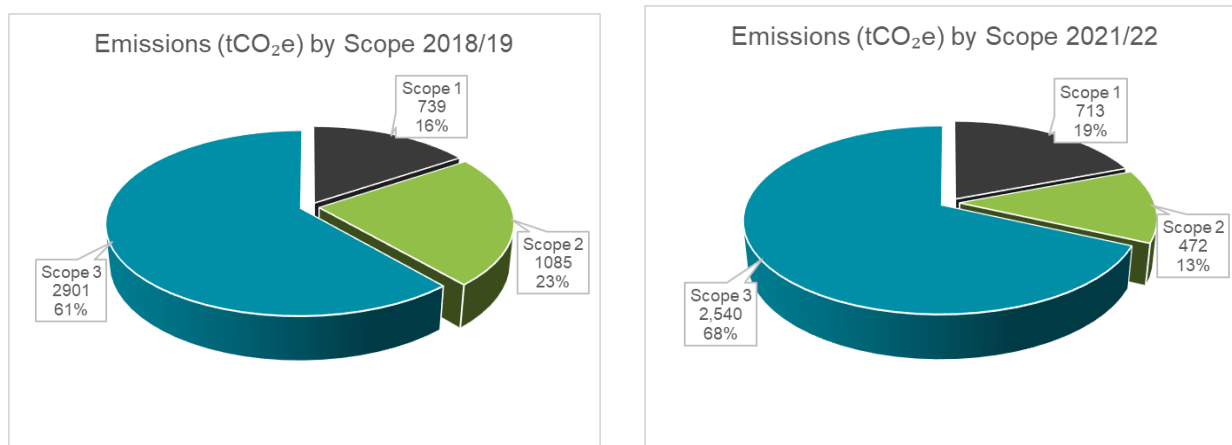
- 3.1 The Council undertook its Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions assessment in accordance with guidance published by the Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). In line with the previous assessment, it includes scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions.
- 3.2 The previous assessment undertaken was based on 2018/19 data sets prior to the pandemic. The 2021/22 assessment also includes a small amount of data relating to gas and electricity use during the 'fit-out' of The Amelia Scott, but future years will fully reflect this additional building in our energy usage data. However, some of this increase, will be compensated for, by the energy efficiency works to be undertaken in 2022/23 and the decarbonisation of heat by the removal of gas boilers, at the North Farm Depot and The Weald Sports Centre. Whilst electricity usage will rise, the amount of gas used will drop. Work to the Depot and Weald sports centre will start towards the end of 2022.
- 3.3 The Council's total carbon emissions tonnes of carbon (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) per year.

2018/19 came to 4,724 tCO<sub>2</sub>e

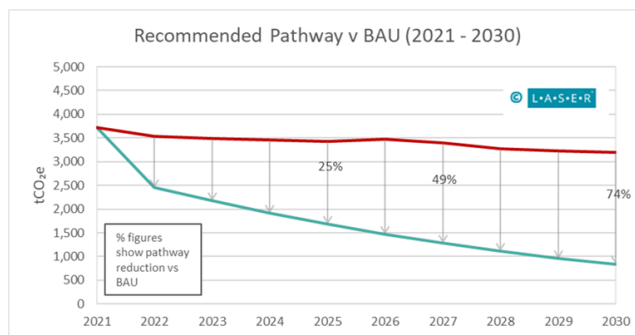
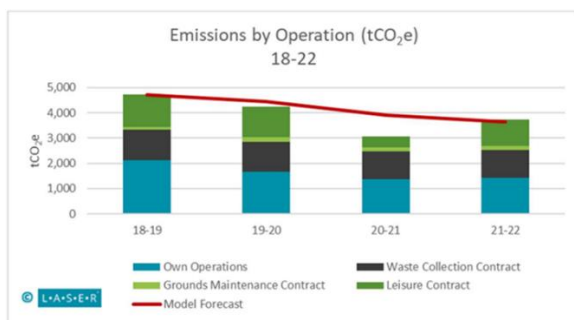
2021/22 came to 3,724 tCO<sub>2</sub>e

A detailed overview of the Greenhouse Gas report comparison 2018/19 to 2021/22 can be found in Appendix C.

- 3.4 As greenhouse gas emissions reporting has become more accurate it has enabled more of the associated emissions from our operations and services to be accounted for. Therefore, to ensure like for like comparison can be made the original 2018-19 data has also been updated. As a result, the carbon footprint for 18-19 has increased to 4,724 tCO<sub>2</sub>e from 3,507 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. These changes have been clearly set out in Appendix C.
- 3.5 The Council's own operation has seen a decline overall in emissions, some of this is due to consumption reduction, however an improved electricity factor has also had a significant impact. The largest drop has been in electricity consumption, which are shown as scope 2 emissions, there has been a small overall reduction from emissions at the leisure centres and some reduction in household waste collection mileage, but gas use, shown as scope 1 emissions, has risen slightly.
- 3.6 The two charts below provide a comparison of emissions from the initial assessment of the 2018/19 and the 2021/22 data sets. Services provided by third party contractors are shown as scope 3 emissions and remain significant emitters of carbon. This is to be expected given this relates to the leisure services provision, the household waste collection and street cleansing service and the grounds maintenance contract.



- 3.7 The graph on the left below depicts the emissions by operation from 2018 to 2022. The recommended pathway approach also shown below on the right, details the emission reduction needed up to 2030. The recommended pathway is based on modelling carried out for the Corporate Carbon Descent Plan and has been updated with the 2021/22 emissions data.
- 3.8 The carbon reduction pathway considered the various reduction opportunities available to the Council including, energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, procurement of green energy and off-setting.



- 3.9 The impact of the pandemic for 2020/21 can be seen in the data for consumption and emissions.
- 3.10 There has been an overall reduction in carbon emissions of 1,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e from 2018-19 to 2021-22. The red line depicts business as usual (BAU) if no additional carbon reduction measures are taken.
- 3.11 Whilst there has been a reduction in emission it is not on target with the recommended pathway to being carbon neutral by 2030. By 2022 emissions should be closer to 2,500 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, whereas emissions are currently at 3,700 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.
- 3.12 The current rate of carbon reduction is not in line with the modelled pathway. The pandemic has also had an impact on capacity and finance to deliver significant up-front changes. Equally, in these initial years the focus is on building assessments and identifying the works necessary to ensure the property portfolio will meet the required standard. Embedding behaviour change across the organisation, ensuring the climate emergency and carbon reduction are a key focus of all activities.
- 3.13 The opportunities exist to increase reduction in line with the recommended pathway. However, it is also a recognition of the current financial pressures on the Council, the availability of resources and priorities. To ensure the carbon neutral target is met will require a significant focus on embedding carbon reduction into all aspects of the Councils activities. Identifying all opportunities to draw funding into the organisation to ensure delivery of carbon reduction measures and having the capacity to deliver on these priorities.

## Next phase for greenhouse gas assessment

- 3.14 Good quality data is vital to monitor ongoing consumption and emission reduction, hence improvements to data collation is to be progressed including the development of dashboards to highlight trends, interventions, and the direction of travel. The data will inform and guide effective decision making and enable a focus on key emission reduction projects.
- 3.15 The original modelling undertaken back in 2020 based on 2018/19 data is being updated; to reflect the additional more detailed information now available, including

the property assessments for carbon reduction that have been completed and key changes to the three main contracts for household waste collection and street cleansing, leisure services and grounds maintenance.

- 3.16 Whilst progress is not on target with the recommended pathway, property services have been able to assess the building stock as to appropriate carbon reduction measures and work is due to start at the Deport and Weald Sports centre.
- 3.17 Behavioural change and other generic improvements such as encouraging and supporting mileage reduction and good practices will continue to be promoted and developed further.
- 3.18 Some improvements have been made to the town hall and assembly hall roof.
- 3.19 Assessing the carbon impact of each project will also enable informed decisions making.
- 3.20 Whilst action to date has been positive, significant progress in carbon reduction will be required now and continue over the next 8 years if the ambition of being carbon neutral by 2030 is to be met.

## **4. Year 2 Acton Plan**

- 4.1 Most of the actions identified in the first few years set in motion the groundwork and foundations to enable detailed specific projects to be delivered in due course. As more information becomes available and funding is identified and secured the actions will be updated and specific projects progressed. The year 2 action plan builds on these fundamentals and is included in Appendix B.
- 4.2 The climate change impact assessment toolkit developed during year 1, will be further embedded into the decision-making process. Equally, it will be important to fully explore future carbon pricing and any potential impacts on council finance and decision making and included within business case analysis. Recognising and highlighting the issues of choosing a high carbon intensive pathway, which may be very costly to reverse and may have a significant negative future economic impact.
- 4.3 Communication and interaction with our communities is key to driving the reduction in carbon emissions required. Councils through our policies and partnerships have a strong influence over more than a third of emissions in our area. As a local authority we influence action on climate change through the services we deliver, our regulatory and strategic functions, and our roles as community leaders, major employer, procurer and vitally an important leadership role, setting an example for others to follow
- 4.4 By developing a borough wide Climate Emergency strategy, we can spotlight our and our Borough's focus on carbon reduction. Thereby, preventing our contribution to the increasingly harmful impacts of climate change, supporting the creation of a just and green low carbon economy, an improved and diverse healthy local environment that benefits all our communities. An initial draft borough wide climate emergency strategy

is currently being developed and will be progressed by the Climate Emergency Advisory Group in conjunction with the Borough Partnership and through extensive consultation with all our communities.

- 4.5 The Tunbridge Wells Climate Action website will continue to be developed further with the home page refreshed to keep it relevant, updated on 'how we are doing as a council' plus climate stories from our communities to inspire others to follow suit. A video highlighting activity and community interaction is also being prepared throughout 2022/23. In addition, several community events are in progress for delivery during the Great Big Green Week 24 September to 2 October 2022, fostering further community interaction.
- 4.6 The most significant issue facing local authorities when tackling climate change is the ability to fund the measures necessary. Property services will continue to monitor opportunities and apply for grant funding as part of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant Scheme (PSDS) and any other suitable schemes that may arise as put forward by government.
- 4.7 To be able to successfully apply for grant funding it is essential to recognise how critical it is to have, 'shovel' ready projects, with all the relevant information available up front to submit the instance funding opportunities open. For example, the PSDS is oversubscribed within a few hours of going live and requires technical very detailed information, including costs and anticipated carbon savings to be uploaded, as soon as the portal opens. To continue to be successful sufficient staffing and resource capacity need to be identified and available to enable the Council to take full advantage and benefit from available grant funding.
- 4.8 Similarly, to direct, develop, and co-ordinate the council's carbon reduction activities across the organisation and borough wide, including carbon financing drawing in investment, identifying renewable energy opportunities and enable communities to deliver suitable projects requires sufficient staff capacity and resourcing. Currently, this is under resourced, with the sustainability team structure and capacity being reviewed separately.

## **5. Options Considered**

- 5.1 That Cabinet acknowledge this summary report, which provides an update on the progress of the year 1 action plan of the adopted Corporate Carbon Descent Plan.
- 5.2 That Cabinet acknowledge and note the findings of the updated yearly Greenhouse Gas report up to and including 2021/22.
- 5.3 That Cabinet note the climate emergency and carbon reduction is focused on both reducing and reaching the carbon neutral goal for our own operation and services as part of the Corporate Carbon Descent Plan. At the same time work is also progressing



to develop the borough wide Climate Emergency strategy to empower and support our communities in meeting the carbon neutral goal.

- 5.4 That Cabinet recommend approval of the year 2 action plan as set out in the report to support the delivery of the objectives as identified in the Corporate Carbon Descent Plan. That Cabinet note several of the year 2 actions are already in progress and are part of the next phase of activities linked to year 1 actions. Information on progressing the year 1 action plan have also been communicated via members briefing and the members information pack.
- 5.5 The alternative option would be to: -
- a) limit the action taken/reduce the trajectory of carbon reductions.
  - b) do nothing, maintain 'business as usual'.

These two options are not recommended. The proposed carbon reductions already include an amount of offsetting and reduces our emissions by a minimum of 74 per cent. Slowing the reductions pathway down further does not meet the council's ambition of meeting carbon neutral by 2030.

- 5.6 Because global temperature change is determined by cumulative emissions, the pace at which we reduce emissions is important. The longer we wait, the sooner the remaining carbon space in the atmosphere is used up. Net zero or carbon neutral strategies must contain measures to start cutting emissions immediately.

## **6. Preferred Option and Reason**

- 6.1 That the year 1 progress report, greenhouse gas assessment and year 2 action plan be approved.
- 6.2 The declaration of a climate emergency recognises and acknowledges the importance of acting, with increasing pressure and requirement for local authorities to take an effective leadership role on climate action. Failure to act could lead to reputational risks and adversely affect the Council's public image.
- 6.3 Similarly, by not acting the Council risks opportunities to stimulating a green recover, locking itself in to ever increasing costs on offsetting and energy costs and missing out on savings though improving the efficiency of their operations. Equally, the risk of missing out on any potential future funding is a significant risk. Government funding is very often tied to approved strategies and defined actions.

## **7. Consultation on Options**

- 7.1 The year 1 progress report, and greenhouse gas assessment has been shared with CEAP and senior staff. The proposed year 2 action plan was developed in

conjunction with CEAP and senior staff. An all-members briefing was delivered in April 2022, with a members briefing pack sent out following the briefing session.

- 7.2 CEAP will continue to steer the direction of the Corporate Carbon Descent Plan and associated action plan, with an annual review and reporting on progress to Cabinet. The Corporate Carbon Descent plan will be refreshed and updated yearly in consultation with members and officers across the Council. With the actions identified in the Corporate Carbon Descent Plan incorporated into individual teams/services objectives.

## Recommendation from Cabinet Advisory Board

- 2.1 The Communities and Economic Cabinet Advisory Board were consulted on 7 September 2022 and agreed the following:

That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

## 8. Implementation

- 8.1 Continued progress and implementation of the year 2 action plan will be overseen by CEAP and Corporate Projects Group, with quarterly reporting and actions by the various departments across the organisation. Likewise for the ongoing greenhouse gas assessments and modelling currently being undertaken.

## 9. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Year 1 progress report August 2022
- Appendix B: Draft year 2 Action Plan
- Appendix C: Greenhouse Gas report comparison 2018/19 to 2021/22
- Appendix D: Climate change impact assessment

Background Papers:

- [Full Council, \(FC29/19\)](#), declaration of a “climate emergency”
- Climate Emergency Advisory Panel - Terms of Reference, [\(CAB150/19\)](#)
- Report of the Climate Emergency Advisory Panel - Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan, [\(CAB115/20\)](#)

- Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy - [Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors](#)

## 10. Cross Cutting Issues

### A. Legal (including the Human Rights Act)

Full Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity emergency in 2019 with the aim to achieve its carbon neutral target by 2030 for its own operation and services and support the wider Borough in working towards meeting the carbon neutral target by 2030.

Achieving a 'net-zero' target by 2030 is currently ahead of the UK's 2050 commitment under the Paris Agreement, signed in 2015, to curb the greenhouse gasses responsible for climate change.

There are no immediate legal implications arising from the recommendations as this report is primarily for noting.

Claudette Valmond, Interim Head of Legal Services – 5 September 2022

### B. Finance and Other Resources

Since the Climate Emergency motion agreed by Full Council the country has had to content with the National Emergency due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, which has resulted in the cost of providing local services exceeding the level of income that can be raised. This has necessitated the temporary use of reserves to meet the additional costs in responding to the pandemic and filling the budget gap from the loss of income.

Since this time further crisis have arisen due to the Ukraine War, significant energy price rises and cost of living crisis.

Whilst the significant increase in energy costs could to some extent have been mitigated by installed energy efficiencies these have as yet not been completed. Similarly, renewable energy generation adds to energy security and reduces the reliance on fossil fuels which have increased significantly in cost. To date the Council has one solar renewable scheme which is providing a small amount of income to the council.

The strain on the council's finances, however, will be felt for some time and the ability of the council to finance new commitments is limited. It will be essential to explore all avenues of finance including private sector funding opportunities, crowd funding and possible opportunities via the UK Infrastructure Bank.

The Climate Emergency motion agreed by Full Council included 'lobbying central government to provide additional resources and to grant necessary freedoms to deliver the motion'. Additional funding has been limited to a small amount of grant funding via the PSDS

only. Similarly, direction from central government is limited. Continuing to lobby government will be key to effect change.

Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development (s151 Officer)

## **C. Staffing**

The year 2 action plan is currently being delivered within existing resources.

Nicky Carter, Head of HR

## **D. Risk Management**

The Council adopted the motion to aim to achieve a carbon neutral target, for its own estate and operation, by 2030 in addition to supporting its communities in working towards achieving a borough wide carbon neutral target by 2030. This year 1 progress report on the Corporate Carbon Descent Plan set out the actions taken to date, and the carbon reductions achieved. It details that carbon reductions are behind target, but also recognises that the opportunities do exist for the Council to achieve its target as well as the potential risks if it does not meet its target.

Karin Grey – report author

## **E. Environment and Sustainability**

This report positively impacts on the environment and biodiversity. It recognises the climate and biodiversity emergency and aims to work towards supporting local improvements to biodiversity if possible and by reducing the Council's own carbon emissions supports environmental benefits.

Karin Grey – report author

## **F. Community Safety**

This report focuses on the Council's carbon reduction commitment and does not impact on community safety.

Karin Grey – report author

## **G. Equalities**

The report focuses on the Council's own carbon emissions and opportunities to reduce these in line with its ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030. There are no impacts on equality issues. Any specific projects would require its separate approval and would include a separate assessment in terms of equality issues.

Karin Grey – report author

## **H. Data Protection**

The report focuses on the Council's carbon emissions and opportunities to reduce these in line with its ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030. There are no direct impacts on data subjects as it does not involve the collation storage etc. of data subjects. Any individual projects brought forward would include its own assessment in terms of data protection and approval.

Karin Grey – report author

## **I. Health and Safety**

The report focuses on the Council's carbon emissions and opportunities to reduce these in line with its ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030. There are no direct impacts on health and safety any individual projects brough forward would require its own assessment including for health and safety.

Karin Grey – report author

## **J. Health and Wellbeing**

This report focuses on the Council's carbon emissions and the need to reduce these to aim to achieve the carbon neutral target by 2030. There are no direct impacts on the health and wellbeing on residents. Indeed, climate change and ensuring sustainable livening, reducing carbon emissions has a positive impact on health and wellbeing. Any specific projects brought forward would also include any assessment on health and wellbeing

Karin Grey – report author