

Gravesham Borough Council

Climate Change Annual Report

December 2020

Foreword from the Leader of the Council

It gives me great pleasure to present to you this first Climate Change Annual Report of the council.

Climate change is a reality. Over the course of the last 250 years, our actions have increased carbon dioxide emissions by more than 30%, resulting in higher temperatures and changing the world we live in. Without taking action now, the impact will be devastating.

Councils have a key role to play in creating and facilitating low carbon communities and supporting the national commitment to tackle climate change and, as Leader of the Council, I take this role very seriously. From waste collection and recycling to planning policy arrangements, the council has the ability to minimise the environmental impact of its own operations as well provide community leadership and support to reduce the wider impacts on climate change for the benefit of every person who lives, works or visits the Borough. But this is not something that can be achieved by the council alone.

As this report sets out, the council has made significant and positive steps over the last year to deliver against its Climate Change pledge and turn words into actions. The council is also very clear on how it can continue this work into 2021 and future years. But to truly achieve change, every resident, business and key partner organisations needs to play their part.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating for many of us and has created unprecedented levels of uncertainty within the economy at a local and national level. It has, however, also had noticeable effects on our environment and created a unique opportunity for us all to rethink the way we behave, both as a council and as individuals. Increased levels of home working, coupled with reductions in commuting and more walking and cycling as part of our daily lives have all had positive impacts on the local environment. It is critical that we learn from our experiences over the last year and use these to shape our behaviours going forward.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the delivery of the activity set out in this annual report and I hope, we can continue to work together for the benefit of the Borough as a whole.

Cllr John Burden

Leader of the Executive

Introduction

“Gravesham Borough Council with this motion declares we have a climate emergency and we will begin to take action to prepare for the borough to become carbon neutral by 2030”

At its Full Council meeting on 25 June 2019, Gravesham Borough Council passed a motion to declare a climate emergency and, accordingly, committed to taking a lead in achieving Carbon Neutral status.

In the global context of long term climate change, this motion represents a small step. As a local authority however, we have a social responsibility to improve the lives of local residents wherever possible and should therefore take a lead in the borough; taking action to reduce carbon emissions will also help make Gravesham a cleaner and more pleasant place to live in the short term.

For Gravesham, carbon neutrality means the complete reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and does not include other emissions such as nitrous oxide (N₂O) and methane (CH₄).

In view of the Administration’s commitment to Climate Change, and recognising the commitment to climate change made by the council as a whole through its Corporate Plan, a cross-party working group has been established. This comprises of Members, Management Team and senior Officers with the purpose of providing oversight of the actions of the council to deliver its Climate Change commitment, as set out in the Climate Change Action Plan. This group is supported by an internal officer group consisting of lead officers contributing to the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan.

A specific Climate Change Reserve has been established to provide seed funding of activities relating to the council’s Climate Change agenda. The reserve was set up with a £500k budget and to date funding has been used to fund a pilot public space recycling scheme at St Andrew’s Gardens and to purchase a two-year license for the Carbon Reduction Options for Housing Managers (CROHM) tool which will enable data analysis as a basis to develop plans to deliver activity to reduce carbon emission within the council’s housing stock.

Borough and Council Emissions Baseline

It is important to recognise that the council has been undertaking actions to reduce carbon emissions across its own estate and the wider Borough for many years.

SCATTER Tool

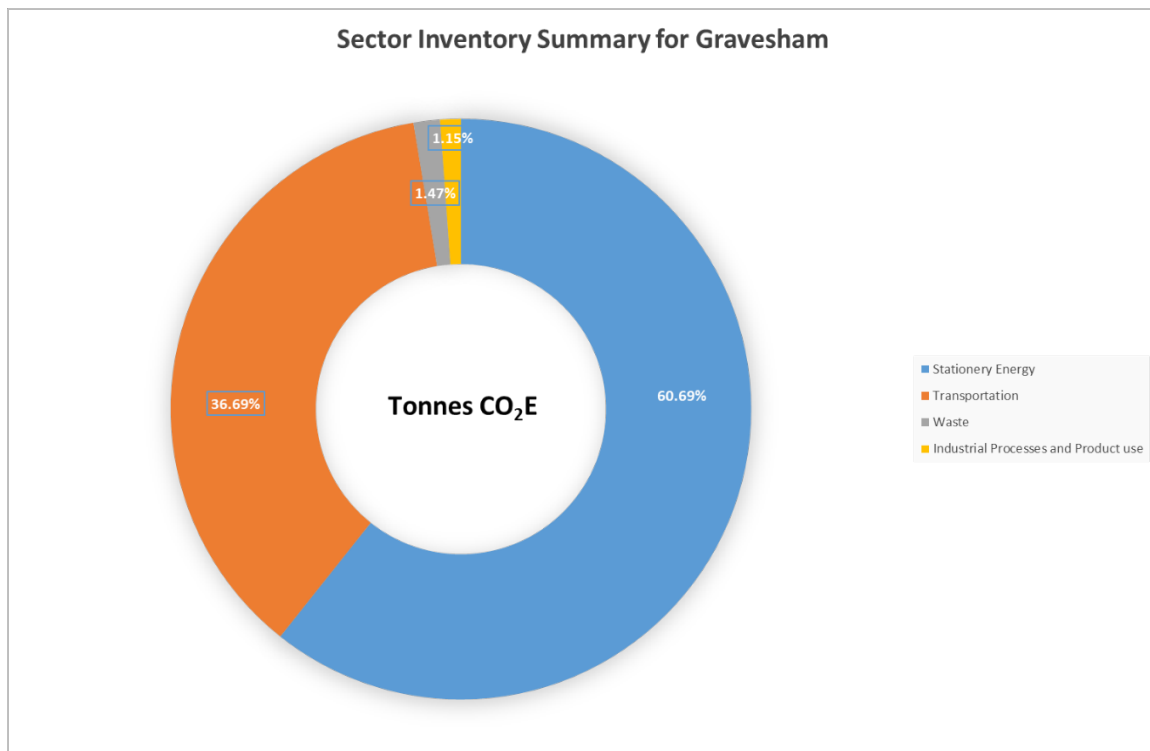
In order for the council to evaluate success in implementing actions to deliver its Climate Change Commitment, it is important that there is an established baseline measurement across key areas of carbon reduction such as housing, planning, waste, travel and energy.

As one of the tools the council is using to establish the baseline, the council has adopted use of the SCATTER Tool (Setting City Area Targets and Trajectories for Emissions Reduction) to report on borough-wide emissions to carbon reporting frameworks. This will also help to inform the setting of carbon reduction targets through a better understanding of potential pathways to meeting commitments in line with national and international objectives.

It should be noted that the SCATTER Tool provides details on all greenhouse gas emissions; carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrous oxide (N₂O) and methane (CH₄) which is reported in CO₂ equivalent. It is not possible to separate out individual emissions and therefore the data within the tool provides an indication of the emissions levels across the borough, but not solely for carbon dioxide emissions.

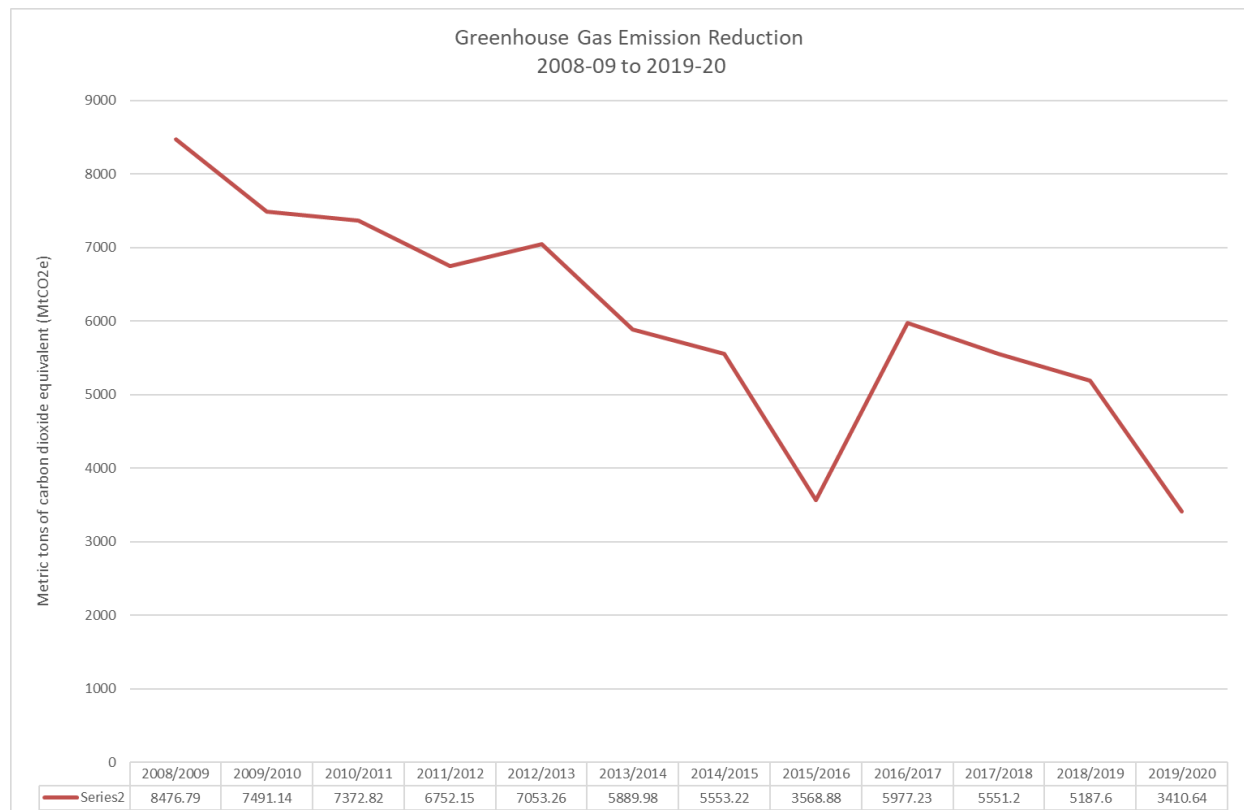
As shown in the chart below, transportation and stationery energy were the largest areas contributing to the borough's CO₂ emissions in 2017 (most recent data available). Transportation relates to areas such as rail, freight and on-road emissions. Stationery energy relates to emissions from buildings such as domestic housing stock and industrial and commercial buildings.

Accounting for over 97% of all emissions, focused actions on these two sources will be fundamental to reducing carbon emissions in the borough.



Greenhouse Gas Report

The Climate Change Act (2008) placed a duty on the UK to ensure that net carbon emissions (greenhouse gas) are reduced by 80% by 2050 from the levels in 1990. The Government require local authorities to report against the emissions levels from council operations and a new baseline for this was introduced in 2008/09. The chart and table below, provide a summary of the overall reduction of Greenhouse Gas emissions from GBC operations since 2008-09:



The Council's total gross greenhouse gas emissions are recorded against three specific 'scopes' for categorising the emissions:

- **Scope 1 – All Direct Emissions** from the activities of an organisation or under their control. Including fuel combustion on site such as gas boilers, fleet vehicles and air-conditioning leaks.
- **Scope 2 – Indirect Emissions** from electricity purchased and used by the organisation. Emissions are created during the production of the energy and eventually used by the organisation.
- **Scope 3 – All Other Indirect Emissions** from activities of the organisation, occurring from sources that they do not own or control.

Total gross greenhouse gas emissions for Scope 1, 2 and 3 for the last financial year 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 was 3410.64 MtCO₂e (Metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent). This is a reduction in emissions of 5066.15 MtCO₂e (59%) since 2008/09 baseline.

The council has set a new baseline for carbon reduction on its own operations and services. The new baseline has been set from 2017/18 financial year. Since 2017, there has been a

significant reduction in emissions of 2140.56 MtCO₂e (23%) with much of this reduction being measured during 2019/20.

Three areas of the Council's own operations and service delivery have contributed to this significant reduction in emissions:

- **Energy use** - Whilst both gas and electric has reduced, electricity has halved in the Kwh use, principally due to the delivery of a programme to retrofitting lighting in its administrative buildings with LED/smart lighting.
- **Reductions in business mileage** - Business car mileage has continued to decrease. Tax incentives encourage staff to select leased cars with lower emissions. The council also supports car sharing where possible and also attendance at meetings virtually.
- **Investment in fleet vehicles** - As part of the council's fleet vehicles replacement programme, all new vehicles are Euro 6 compliant to reduce pollution and the impact on climate change.

Gravesham Borough Council Operations

In addition to the borough-wide emissions data from the SCATTER Tool, in the second half of the year the council has started to analyse emission data specifically in relation to its own operations, using a number of tools:

- CROHM (Carbon Reduction Options for Housing Managers) System
- LGA Carbon Emission Accounting Tool

These tools will be used moving forward to inform actions taken by the council to reduce carbon emissions and enable the council to monitor the effectiveness of these actions.

Carbon Reduction Actions during 2020

In December 2019 the council put in place an action plan detailing a suite of progressive interventions for it to deliver in order to prepare the Borough to be carbon neutral by 2030, and to do what is within its powers and resources to make Gravesham Borough Council carbon neutral by 2030.

During 2020, key areas of activity against the three identified objectives have included:

Objective 1 – Cleaner Environment

- **Increased recycling opportunities** - A food waste recycling trial was completed successfully at Pickwick House and formed the basis of further trials with larger communal food bins at new build apartment blocks at Whitehill, Valley Drive and St Patrick's Gardens.

In addition, a 'recycling on-the-go' bin trial at St Andrew's Gardens started in November 2020 designed to encourage visitors to recycle their litter such as bottles, cans and newspapers while they are enjoying public spaces. Assuming the trial is successful, the new recycling 'on-the-go' bins will be incorporated into the litter bin replacement programme at the Riverside Leisure Area and Woodlands Park by April 2021 as well as being considered for other areas across the borough including some of the smaller shopping parades.

- **Supporting Biodiversity** - Recognising the important role bees play in agriculture, a new allotment bee keeping policy has been developed to help manage and support allotment holders who wish to keep bees on their allotment site.

The council has also commenced its annual winter tree-planting programme, intended to deliver a net gain in the number of trees in Gravesham's public spaces. Since 2017/18, the council has increased the number of trees planted with the net gain in trees increasing from 30 in 2017/18 to 215 in 2019/20 (when the number of felled trees are taken into account).

- **Efficient Route Planning** - During 2019, the workforce in the DSO Building Management team was increased to enable more repairs and maintenance activities to be delivered in-house. This naturally led to an increase in the number of journeys operatives were making and an increase in fuel usage. However, through efficient route planning, the actual amount of fuel used per job has decreased from 1.93 litres in 2018/2019 to 1.43 litres in 2019/2020.
- **Training and impact awareness** - All drivers of vehicles over 3.5 tonnes have been provided with specific training to teach them how to drive in a fuel-efficient manner as a way of contributing to lower carbon emissions.
- **Reducing environmental impact** – Penalty Charge Notices are now issued in non-plastic bags.
- **Policy Impact** – the council are about to launch a consultation exercise on a revised Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy which will mandate the use of Euro 6 diesel vehicles which place stricter measures on CO₂ emissions.

Objective 2 – Strategic Environment

- **Decarbonisation of Transport** – the council has commenced work with a partner to install electric vehicle charging points in Parrock Street, Rathmore Road and Milton Place car parks.
- **Supporting our Residents** – the council has run a number of initiatives and campaigns during the year to support its residents in making their homes more energy efficient and securing savings in the supply of energy. Specifically, these include:
 - Warm Homes Grant and ECO/LA Flex – 18 Private Sector households have been assisted with heating measures.
 - Social Housing insulation –89 properties have been assisted where Loft and Cavity Wall insulation have been installed.
 - Solar Together – 23 residents registered for the scheme in the October auction; which supports the installation of solar panels and savings on energy through residents being able to generate their own renewable electricity.
 - Energy Deal – three auctions have taken place in February, May and October 2020. This that resulted in 155 registrations, an estimated £118 average annual savings for residents and estimated 19 Mt of carbon savings.
- **Carbon efficiency of the existing council housing stock** - the council has commenced a proactive boiler replacement programme to ensure council homes have the most efficient A-rated boilers. This programme has delivered a carbon reduction of 111,550kg within the current financial year (April 2020 to Oct 2020).
- **Energy Efficient new build homes** – all new development proposals will benefit from the appointment of a sustainability consultant at the preparation and brief stage of the development. The first scheme to benefit from this input is at St Columba’s Close where consideration is being given to help reduce the use of fossil fuels, reduce CO₂ emissions, lower energy bills and protect the environment.
- **Energy Efficient Street Lighting** - the council has commenced a project to retrofit council-owned lighting assets with LED bulbs, which are an energy efficient, ecologically friendly and long lasting alternative to other forms of lighting.
- **Working with our Contractors** - The council’s innovative approach to ensuring all council homes have a valid gas safety certificate has resulted in less individual home visits being required by our contractor, Swale Heating. So far, this has reduced our carbon footprint by 53,096kg.
- **Planning for Carbon Neutral** – As part of its consultation activity and through the development of the Local Plan, the council have started to consider a number of carbon reduction initiatives including Electric Vehicle Charging Points, Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland management, consideration of application in terms of renewable and low carbon energy proposals and biodiversity.
- **Seeking actions to reduce emissions in council projects** – securing positive climate change impacts are high on the agenda in regeneration projects the council are involved in. By way of example, The Charter development in Gravesend Town Centre will remove dependencies on car usage and provide facilities for electric charging of vehicles.

- **Campaigning and Lobbying** – the council has proactively sought to engage with Highways England, Central Government and other organisations to seek to minimise the impacts of major infrastructure projects, such as the Lower Thames Crossing, on the borough and its residents.

Objective 3 – Progressive Council

- **Leading by example** - the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the council's activity to enable its office-based employees to work in a more agile way. Seventy per cent of office-based employees now have the ability to work remotely and not need to attend the office every working day which, moving forward, will reduce travel requirements and carbon emissions associated with this. In addition, video conferencing is now routinely used by council officers and Elected Members for meetings. A Home-working Task & Finish Group has been established to review remote working and establish more permanent arrangements for this moving forward.
- **Mindful Decision Making** – all decisions taken by the council are required to consider the implications on delivery of the council's Climate Change commitment.
- **Working with Partners** – along with other Kent authorities, the council has committed to explore securing cleaner, less polluting fleet vehicles and is leading on developing the options to take this forward.
- **Efficient Civic Buildings** – the council has commenced a project to retrofit lighting in its administrative buildings with LED and Smart lighting. The activity completed so far is expected to achieve an annual carbon reduction of 97 tonnes per annum across the council estate.
- **IT Infrastructure** - The council has committed to reducing its own data centre power consumption by adopting a "cloud first" policy for new system procurements.
- **Reducing reliance on single-use plastics** - All Gravesham Borough Council Officers have been provided with reusable water bottles, eradicating the need for single use plastic cups in staff and meeting room facilities, reducing the ongoing costs for the purchase of single use plastic cups and contributing towards the "Give me Tap" initiative where by each bottle sold gives a person in Africa clean drinking water for 5 years.
- **Environmentally friendly facilities management** – the council has secured a new cleaning product supplier for its main operational sites which contributes to our intention to reduce reliance on single use plastics by providing products in post-consumer recycled (PCR) plastic, the first company in the UK to make their bottles from 100% recycled plastic. Products are also manufactured in the UK, reducing carbon generation through the supply chain.

The actions identified will continue to be reviewed to ensure they are 'fit for purpose' and are supporting the direction of the local authority, with progress continuing to be monitored moving forward.

Future Carbon Pressure

The borough of Gravesham and the surrounding areas are going through a significant amount of redevelopment.

As highlighted earlier in this report, transport is already the second most significant greenhouse gas emitter.

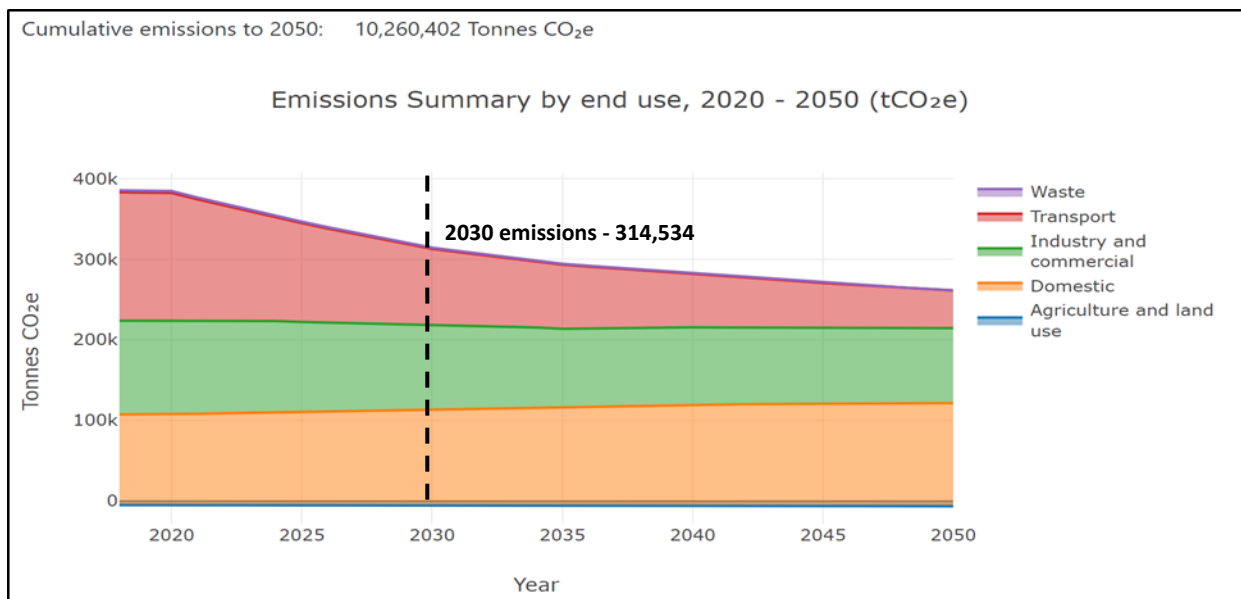
In July 2020, transport for quality of life published “The carbon impact of the national roads programme” and whilst they make the point that carbon increases are often under-estimated, they point out that Highways England predict that the Lower Thames Crossing will increase carbon emissions by 5.7 MtCO₂ over its 60-year life. It is currently unclear how much of this impact will be on the borough of Gravesham and its residents, and concerns have been raised around the modelling assumptions used.

London Resort’s consultation in July 2020 advised that they are pursuing an operational net zero emissions goal albeit it is not yet known how this ambition will be achieved.

Areas of Focus for 2021

In order to determine the way forward for Gravesham, both the borough and the council, the council has used the SCATTER Tool. The SCATTER Tool enables the council to map various 'interventions' with a view to reducing emissions across a number of segments. It allows local authorities the ability to model different routes ('pathways') they may wish to take to reduce the level of emissions in their local area. Although the tool maps progress out to 2050, it does allow monitoring at various stages in this period, therefore enabling the council to monitor emissions to 2030, in line with its pledge.

Based on the interventions identified to date, the reduction in total CO₂ equivalent emissions (taking account of all emissions – CO₂, NO₂ and CH₄), there would be an overall reduction of 18.47% in emissions.



It should be noted that the tool assumes that the council is able to have some level of influence/impact across all segments identified. As such the interventions that have been identified take account of the level of control/influence that the council has in terms of affecting the overall level of emissions.

In addition, the figures included within the SCATTER tool do not include reference to proposed locally specific infrastructure projects. For Gravesham, we have both the Lower Thames Crossing and the London Resort projects which we know will have a detrimental effect on the council's Transport emissions and as such, the figures above are not truly reflective of what we know is actually going to occur in the borough.

Key Deliverables in 2021

- Further expansion of recycling opportunities in the borough both in the home and within council owned sites in the Borough.
- Continue to support biodiversity projects through parks and grounds maintenance activity, specifically through an increase in the provision of council owned land designated as Wildflower and 'Set Aside' areas.
- Continued review and adjustment of council processes to reduce or mitigate climate impacts:

- Virtualisation of systems and processes, such as the vehicle permit system, to make such processes carbon neutral.
- Upgrading of the pay and display arrangements within council car parks to reduce cash handling, cash collections and therefore the emissions associated with this activity.
- Continued exploration of the introduction of electric vehicle charging in both off-street and on-street parking areas.
- Further reduce energy usage in council administrative buildings through completing the programme of LED/Smart lighting upgrades, anticipated to result in a further 60 to 70 tonnes per annum carbon reduction.
- Facilitate the take up of active travel by the council workforce by increasing bicycle storage at the Civic Centre and Brookvale Depot.
- Continue to reduce single use plastics within the Civic offices by removing all single use plastic consumables within the Spotlites Café and office areas, including meeting rooms.
- Improve the environment and quality of air of working areas within council administrative buildings by removing Volatile Organic Compounds from the air through activity such as the installation of green walls.
- Further develop council policy around decarbonisation of transport, considering the council's own areas of activity and also how borough wide impacts can be delivered.
- Undertake further activity to recognise Climate Change in planning and development activity.
- Continue to campaign and lobby promoters of significant projects affecting the Borough to consider this council's Climate Emergency and articulate how their proposals are working towards Carbon Neutrality.
- Increase activity to levy external funding where possible to implement sustainable schemes in support of the council's climate change commitment and work towards greener energy, renewables and behaviour change.
- Progress activity to improve the energy efficiency of council-owned homes.
- Continue to promote initiatives and campaigns to residents intended to make their homes more energy efficient and securing savings in the supply of energy.
- Develop support to businesses in the Borough to consider and take action to manage, minimise or mitigate the negative environmental impacts of their activity.
- Working with partners, complete work to deliver energy efficient street lighting in the Borough.
- Increase the focus of climate change in the procurement activity of the council.
- Continue to lead by example and take actions to reduce emissions in council projects.
- Formalise arrangements to enable council employees to work in a more agile way.
- Complete the joint procurement exercise to secure cleaner fleet vehicles.

- Continue to reduce data centre power consumption by adopting a “cloud first” policy for new system procurements and existing systems.
- Actively explore opportunities for community involvement in the borough’s approach to Climate Change to encourage community engagement in Climate Change activities. This will involve exploring opportunities with the Youth Council, through The Gr@nd, to prepare a resource pack for schools to promote Eco Schools status. Also, working with other community organisations, such as Age UK, to provide information and assistance on how to make homes more energy efficient and to promote schemes such as recycling.

Climate CHANGE Strategy

The council is in the process of drafting its Climate Change Strategy 2021-2025, which will be focused on reducing carbon emissions based on the baseline position set out earlier in the report. The strategy will recognise that the council can directly control its own estate and operations but has a role to play in using its influence, working with partner organisations, and supporting residents and local businesses to ensure the borough can effectively respond to the changing climate and protect and minimise the impacts of our actions on the environment we live and work in.

Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy

From a county-wide perspective, the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy has been developed to provide a pathway to deliver specific actions with the aim of meeting the UK Government's target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 for the country.

Whilst the Kent & Medway strategy is working towards the Government's net zero emissions target of 2050, Gravesham Borough Council is committed to achieving this by 2030, with actions that is undertake contributing to the overall county-wide targets.

The aims of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy are as follows:

- **EVIDENCE:** Provide an ongoing evidence and intelligence base; linking data sets to identify hot spots and opportunities, and to build the business case for action across Kent and Medway.
- **POLICY AND STRATEGY:** Facilitate the development of evidence-based policy and strategy to future proof growth, tackle emerging issues and realise opportunities.
- **LEADERSHIP:** Support the public sector across Kent and Medway to play a strong leadership role with regards to challenges and opportunities.
- **ACTION:** Facilitate increased and accelerated action and implementation across Kent and Medway.

The strategy sets out a collaborative approach across the county to tackling the climate emergency. The strategy was recently reviewed in May 2020 to take account of the impact of COVID-19.

Ten priority actions have been identified, and are supported by a detailed implementation plan set out in the full Strategy document. The priorities are as follows:

- **PRIORITY 1: EMISSION REDUCTION PATHWAYS TO 2050**
Set area and organisational five-year carbon budgets and emission reduction pathways to 2050, with significant reduction by 2030.
- **PRIORITY 2: PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION MAKING**
Develop a consistent approach across Kent and Medway, to assess, manage and mitigate environmental impacts (both positive and negative), resulting from public sector policies, strategies, service delivery, commissioning and procurement.
- **PRIORITY 3: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**
Ensure climate change, energy, air quality and environmental considerations are integrated into Local Plans, policies and developments, by developing a clean growth strategic planning policy and guidance framework for Kent and Medway, to drive down emissions and mainstream climate resilience.
- **PRIORITY 4: CLIMATE EMERGENCY INVESTMENT FUND**
Establish a trusted Kent and Medway 'Climate Emergency' carbon sequestration, offset and renewable energy investment scheme and fund.
- **PRIORITY 5: BUILDING RETROFIT PROGRAMME**
Set up a Kent and Medway net-zero buildings retrofit plan and programme for public sector, domestic and businesses.

- **PRIORITY 6: TRANSPORT, TRAVEL AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY**
Set up a smart connectivity and mobility modal shift programme – linking sustainable transport, transport innovations, active travel, virtual working, broadband, digital services, artificial intelligence and behaviour change.
- **PRIORITY 7: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION**
Set up an opportunities and investment programme for renewable electricity and heat energy generation
- **PRIORITY 8: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**
Develop a multi-functional, natural capital opportunity and investment programme – focusing on environmental projects that store carbon, increase climate change resilience, improve air quality and increase biodiversity.
- **PRIORITY 9: SUPPORTING LOW CARBON BUSINESS**
Develop a support programme for Kent and Medway's Low Carbon Environmental Goods and Services sector.
- **PRIORITY 10: COMMUNICATIONS**
Develop a comprehensive communications, engagement and behaviour change programme targeted at residents, employees, businesses and visitors.