

Climate Emergency Action Plan

May 2023



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

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Foreword

"I am pleased to present the council's latest climate action plan, which details what we will do locally as part of the wider effort to address the climate and ecological emergencies.

"As a council, we declared a climate emergency in 2019 and have been working with dedication to reduce our emissions that add to the problem, with our new climate emergency action plan setting out what we plan to do next.

"One of the main calls to action from the recent Warrington Climate Emergency Strategy - developed by the independent Warrington Climate Emergency Commission - is for residents, organisations, and partners to develop climate action plans for themselves at home, at work and in the community.

"We have responded to this call and urge others to do so too. We can't solve the crisis alone, but it is vital we all play our part."



Cllr Janet Henshaw

Cabinet member sustainability and climate change

Executive Summary

The climate crisis is an important and pressing issue that demands a local response.

This report sets out our response as a council. It should be read alongside the new climate emergency strategy developed by the Warrington Climate Emergency Commission. This wider strategy sets out what needs to happen across the borough. It encourages us all to play our part and take action. It also encourages the council to show leadership. Through this action plan we intend to do so.

By taking action to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies we can bring many benefits to our communities and help make Warrington a healthy, thriving, greener, resilient and sustainable borough.

Our plan seeks to ensure that we:

- Reduce the pollution from our activities that add to the climate crisis;
- Adapt so we are more resilient to the impacts of changes in the climate that are already unavoidable; and
- Use our various roles and influences to help the borough as a whole decarbonise, adapt to unavoidable change and help nature recover.

We aim to be net zero for greenhouse gas emissions with respect to our operations by 2030, and to support wider efforts for the borough as a whole to reach near zero by 2041.

To inform our actions we've calculated our carbon footprint using the method advocated for local authorities. Heat, power and transport account for the lion's share of our known operational emissions. Like many organisations we have reasonable data for emissions associated with our use of fuel and power, but limited data for our wider indirect impacts, e.g. the emissions associated with the goods and services we procure. From the data we have, our emissions have been falling, dropping by a half since 2014/15, but they need to fall further and faster. To stay in line with a UN Paris Agreement aligned "carbon budget", our emissions need to fall by at least 13.7 % per year. This gives us a total remaining carbon budget of 27,901.75 tonnes CO₂e until 2030.

The plan sets out what we are going to do to change our operations and how we will use our wider influence to support the objectives of the new Warrington Climate Emergency strategy:

	Goal	Area for action	
Changing our operations	Net Zero Operations	Building decarbonisation	
		Fleet decarbonisation	
		Staff travel	
		Commissioning/Procurement	
		Waste reduction	
	Resilient organisation/services	Off-setting residual emissions	
		Identifying risks	
		Adapting to climate change	

		Using our influence	Using our influence to support wider efforts
Energy, buildings and infrastructure			
Resources, consumption & wider impacts			
Resilience and nature			
Awareness, engagement & support for action			

Operational steps include:

- Developing a building decarbonisation framework, and establishing a new building decarbonisation contract
- Upgrading remaining legacy outdoor lighting to LED
- Setting high standards for new building projects
- Consolidating operational sites, including confirming a depot location and the site for a new waste transfer station
- Developing a fleet/plant decarbonisation plan, and introducing interventions to increase the efficiency of our existing fleet and vehicle use
- Improving messaging to staff and visitors on sustainable travel options
- Expanding the provision of pool bikes, promoting e-bikes, and investigating the potential for electric pool cars
- Establishing a staff car sharing database
- Reviewing our essential car user policy
- A new sustainable procurement policy, and updated standard contract terms and conditions with a programme to decarbonise our contract register
- Moving to paperless operations where practical and legal
- Improving recycling provision at our buildings
- Exploring options to limit waste and increase durability, remanufacture, reuse, recycle and reprocess resources for further use
- Developing an agreed approach to off-setting that explores local opportunities to invest in natural carbon stores and emission reduction schemes
- Updating our woodland restoration and management plan to outline how we will manage our existing tree stock going forward
- Reviewing and raising awareness of the climate risks to our operations and ensuring climate risk is part of our business continuity template
- Undertaking a climate adaptation review using the Local Partnerships' local authority Adaptation Toolkit

Steps to support wider change include:

- New active travel schemes, and workplace, school and residential travel plans
- Promoting the uptake of electric vehicles by implementing our EV strategy
- Improvements to bus services across Warrington including new electric buses
- A new freight strategy to promote sustainable logistics
- A report on the scale, nature and cost of retrofitting homes across Warrington to help secure investment and plan for new green skills
- Developing support for retrofit improvement, including seeking funding for property improvements
- Ensuring the new Warrington housing strategy reflects climate emergency concerns
- Promoting net zero and climate-ready approaches for new developments
- Exploring the feasibility of local solar farms and other renewable opportunities, including group buying schemes
- Developing the business case to secure investment in local heat networks
- Investigating arrangements to sell renewable power locally, drawing on ideas developed in the Rewire NW project
- Developing interventions to boost domestic recycling, reduce consumption and promote circular economy practices
- Embedding climate change and ecological considerations in decision making processes
- Preparing for measures to come in under the Waste and Environment Act including food waste collection
- Promoting climate and nature friendly diets and local and sustainable food production
- Raising awareness of the wider impacts of our purchases and investments
- Contributing via the Cheshire resilience forum work plan to review national risks at the local level highlighting climate change as a key risk to the area
- Addressing the increasing risk of severe weather linked to climate change in the council's Major Emergency Plan
- Ensuring new development takes account of the impacts of climate change on flood risk and adopts Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS)

- Supporting communities at risk of flooding
- Working with key partners to deliver flood risk management schemes
- Reviewing the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Applying biodiversity net gain to maximise benefits within the borough through the emerging Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Cheshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Promoting the use of green infrastructure to achieve biodiversity net gain on development sites
- Embedding adaptation principles within the Warrington design guide SPD
- Extending the rewilding programme to increase biodiversity on council-owned land and verges
- Promoting action in support of the Warrington climate emergency strategy, including new routes for engagement
- Extending and embedding carbon literacy
- Supporting partnership work on climate change

To progress the plan we will:

- Establish a corporate climate emergency group to drive action and report progress
- Introduce a climate and sustainability implications section in committee reports
- Introduce a climate and sustainability impact tool for developing projects
- Lobby government on legislation and finance where necessary
- Report our carbon budget alongside our financial budget
- Establish a system to record and gather relevant information to facilitate production of annual emission reports including steps to improve data collection relating to our 'scope 3' emissions
- Extend Carbon Literacy training across all parts of the workforce and establish a Carbon Literacy Alumni network
- Develop a communications programme to showcase staff actions and council initiatives
- Expand our internal Climate Champions network and increase involvement
- Embed climate in HR processes e.g. in recruitment and performance
- Review employee benefits to reflect climate and ecological objectives
- Engage regularly with the workforce on climate issues

This plan is not the first or last word on our climate actions but the latest iteration in an ongoing effort to ensure we play our part. It will be reviewed and improved over time.



Introduction

The climate crisis is a global issue but one that has an important local dimension. Our local activities add to crisis which in turn impacts communities locally. These impacts are real, serious and will get worse if ignored.

This document sets out our actions in response to the climate crisis¹. It presents what we are doing and plan to do as a council to:

- (i) Reduce the pollution from our activities that add to the climate crisis
- (ii) Ensure we adapt so we are more resilient to impacts of changes in the climate that are already unavoidable
- (iii) Play our part in the wider local effort to address the climate and ecological emergencies to ensure we use our various roles and influences to help the borough as a whole decarbonise, adapt to unavoidable change and help nature recover.

In creating this plan we are answering the call in the wider Warrington climate emergency strategy² for all who live, work, study, or do business in Warrington, to develop an action plan in support. This wider framework specifically calls on us as the local authority to “Show leadership on the local journey to net zero and climate resilience.” Through this plan we aim to do that, not just to focus on our operations, but how we intend to use our influence and activities to encourage wider change. We are not legally required to develop a plan but have done so because it is a critical issue.

We all have a part to play and must play it as best we can. You can use the new strategy, as we have, to help review your activities and identify actions within your area of activity that will contribute towards the wider local effort. We urge you to join us in doing so. We share the view that the strategy presents, that by that taking action on climate change locally we can help create:

- **A healthy Warrington** with better homes, clean air, a more active population, and less traffic congestion
- **A thriving Warrington** where we all benefit from the economic opportunities presented by the changes needed, and where nobody is left behind
- **A greener Warrington** where we help nature recover and biodiversity to flourish and enjoy all the benefits this will bring
- **A resilient Warrington** where we are better prepared to cope with the disruption from extreme weather patterns and the wider shocks climate instability brings, and
- **A sustainable Warrington** where we use resources wisely, live fulfilling lives, and safeguard opportunities for our children and grandchildren to do likewise.

We have not sat idly by since declaring a climate emergency in 2019. We were already working to tackle climate concerns prior to this date too. By declaring an emergency, we were responding to the growing body of international evidence to go further and faster, and have since taken steps so that we do just that. This plan is the latest iteration or ‘snap shot’ of our activity and plans, it is not the first or last word on the subject.

¹In the face of the alarming evidence about climate crisis we declared a climate emergency in 2019. We set up a climate emergency commission to advise us, and lead the wider public conversation. This wider conversation resulted in a new borough-wide strategy. We have since adopted a climate change and sustainability policy which confirms our support for the wider strategy and that we will develop this action plan in support

²Developed via the Warrington Climate Emergency Commission, see warringtonclimatecommission.org.uk

Context for action

The problem

Greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution from human activities across the globe - including Warrington - is changing the composition of the atmosphere. As a result, the atmosphere is now trapping more heat. This extra heat is disrupting climatic systems, changing weather patterns and driving rises in sea levels. These changes have serious consequences for humanity and the natural world. They are altering the environment which supports our lives and livelihoods. If we don't take action, the situation will get much worse with catastrophic results. The changes in climate are already having impacts locally and certain changes are already unavoidable.

The main greenhouse gas driving unnatural climate change is carbon dioxide (CO₂)³. Most of this greenhouse gas pollution comes from burning fossil fuels for heat and power and transport. Other greenhouse gases include methane, nitrous oxide and F-gases.

Closely linked to the climate crisis and the human activities that have contributed to it, is an unfolding ecological crisis with sharp declines in biodiversity resulting from pollution, land-use change and changes in rainfall and temperature patterns.

The solution

To address the climate crisis, we need to stop the pollution causing it and do this quickly. This requires a rapid shift away from the use of fossil fuels. We must also take steps to capture and store more CO₂ by natural or artificial means. The priority is to reduce emissions as far as possible and mop up any that remain by capturing and storing them. This is a radical change for a world where the economic system has been based on the widespread extraction and use of fossil fuels for energy. But these radical changes have already begun. Indeed some changes that would have been unimaginable not long ago are now the new normal.

With some further unnatural heating 'locked in' from past pollution, we also need to adapt to the changes that have happened or are unavoidable. In Warrington this means preparing for warmer wetter winters, hotter summers with longer dry spells, and more storm conditions. It also means building resilience to wider shocks to the system that result from changes to the climate across the world, e.g. changing patterns of disease, supply chain disruption, and impacts on food security.

To address the ecological emergency we need to help stop run-away climate change and help nature recover by ensuring local semi-natural habitats and ecosystems are protected and by making more space and conditions for nature to flourish.



³In the UK in 2019, CO₂ accounted for 80% of GHGs with methane 12%, nitrous oxide 5%, and fluorinated gases 3%.

Our goals

This plan is focused on three main goals

(1) Net Zero Operations

We aim to be net zero⁴ for greenhouse gas emissions with respect to our operations by 2030.

To put this into context:

- Nationally, the Government is committed legally to ensure the UK is 'net zero' by 2050. Under the Climate Change Act Government is required to set out how it will stay within a series of binding 5 year 'carbon budgets' on route to the net zero target
- Locally, the Warrington Climate Emergency Commission has recommended the Borough as a whole should stay within a Paris Agreement⁵ compliant carbon budget. This means reducing emissions by 13.7% per year to reach 'near zero' emissions by 2041⁶.

By setting a 2030 target for our own operations we aim to show leadership and encourage others to aim for 'net zero' early too.

(2) A resilient council

We aim to adapt to the impacts of changes that are already unavoidable

We seek to

- Build a better understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities we face from climate change across the organisation
- Adapt our practices and the services so they are more resilient and fit for the conditions we will operate in

(3) Using our role and influence to support wider efforts to address the climate and ecological emergencies

We aim to use our influence to stimulate wider change and play our part meeting wider objectives set out in the new climate emergency strategy for Warrington.

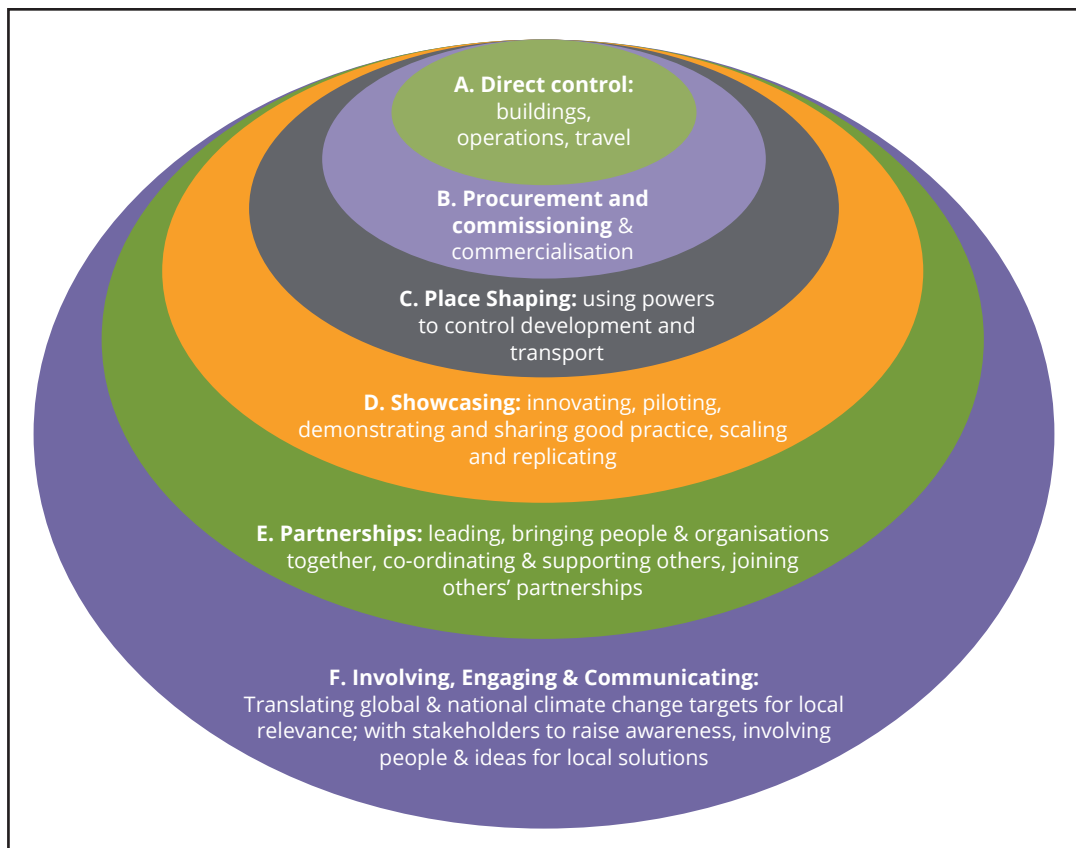
We recognise that the emissions arising from our operations are only a part of the picture. As a council we can have much wider impact through our influence. We have various roles as a local authority (Figure 1) and must use these to support wider change.

⁴'Net zero' is the point when the amount of greenhouse gas emissions have been reduced as far as possible to near zero before 'offsetting' that which remain by capturing and storing an equivalent amount by natural or artificial means.

⁵Globally, the UN's Paris Agreement on climate change sets out the international response. This seeks to limit unnatural heating. The aim is to keep the average global temperature rise to well below 2°C and pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C

⁶The Commission's recommended target is based on an independent assessment by the Tyndall Centre for climate research. This assessment translates what the UN's Paris Agreement on climate change means for CO₂ emission reductions in Warrington Borough

Figure 1: The influence of local authorities.



Source: Climate Change Committee, 2020, based on Coxcoo, R. & Roberts, S. (2020) Climate Action Planning Tool for Local Authorities, Centre for Sustainable Energy. <https://www.cse.org.uk/news/view/2541>

Approach

Our broad approach relies on a combination of:

- **Policy** – We need to make sure our policy is clear and backed up with the relevant information and decision making and governance processes⁷
- **Investment in people** – We need to invest in our staff and elected members to ensure we are all equipped to translate what the climate agenda means for our particular roles. We all have a role, but our roles will be different.
- **Communication** – We need to be clear about the direction we are heading so people know what we are trying to achieve. Meeting our goals will not be easy, there will be significant issues to address. We need to communicate effectively so we can learn from each other and find solutions.
- **Co-operation and partnership** – By working with others we can have a bigger impact than we can alone.
- **Recognising and seeking co-benefits** - Many of the things we need to do to tackle climate change have other benefits in tune with our wider objectives for Warrington. We are not just playing our part in response to a wider climate crisis, but to serve the people of Warrington, and make Warrington a better place to live, work, study and do business.
- **Responding to opportunities** – We don't have all the resources to do what needs to be done so must respond to opportunities that align with our objectives when they present.
- **Seeking to overcome barriers** – We need to highlight where resources, powers and current technologies limit our options as part of efforts to overcome such barriers. We are acting in good faith but without access to all the tools and resources needed, we will not be able do all the things that need to be done.

⁷Council's Cabinet adopted a climate and sustainability policy in October 2022 to set out the broad approach we intend to take

- **Being creative** – How we operate, deliver and fund the services we provide will likely need innovation to secure the transformation needed. Taking a creative approach will need space for trial and error and learning.
- **Ongoing review** – This first version of the plan does not map out every step on our climate journey. It identifies our next steps. The programme will be refreshed on a regular basis, it is a living plan informed by the actions we take.
- **Consideration of impact** – We need to consider the impacts of wider changes on local people and businesses and ensure our interventions help ensure a just transition and follow an inclusive approach.
- **Investment in technology and local enterprise** – We can no longer rely on the technologies that resulted in our current predicament, but will need to invest in alternative technologies. The creation of new technologies and innovations presents an opportunity for the local economy.

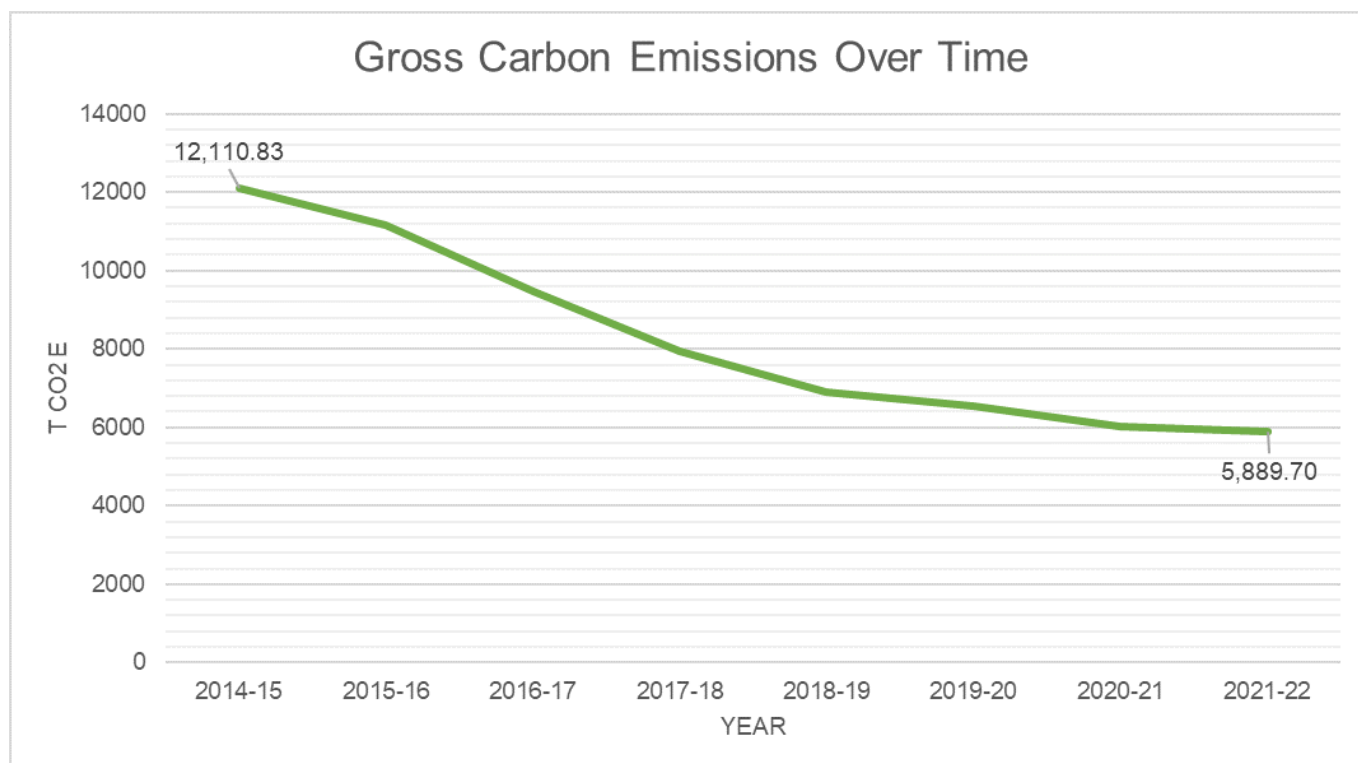
The current position

Operational emissions

Since declaring a climate emergency we've prepared an inventory of our operational emissions. To do this we've used a Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool designed to help local authorities report in a consistent way⁸.

We've calculated our emissions back to 2014/15, as far as the tool lets us, so that we can track progress over time. We've seen year-on-year reductions so far with the total footprint falling by half. In the year we declared a climate emergency our carbon footprint was 6,556 tonnes CO₂e (2019/20). This is our baseline carbon footprint.

Figure 2: Warrington BC's annual carbon emissions between 2014/15 to 2021/22



Since 2019, our emissions have fallen by around 670 tonnes. Latest data for 2021/22 reveal our emissions are around 5,889.7 tonnes CO₂e. This is broken down in Figure 3.

⁸The Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool developed by Local Partnerships and the Local Government Association to aid carbon reporting within local authorities
<https://localpartnerships.org.uk/greenhouse-gas-accounting-tool/>

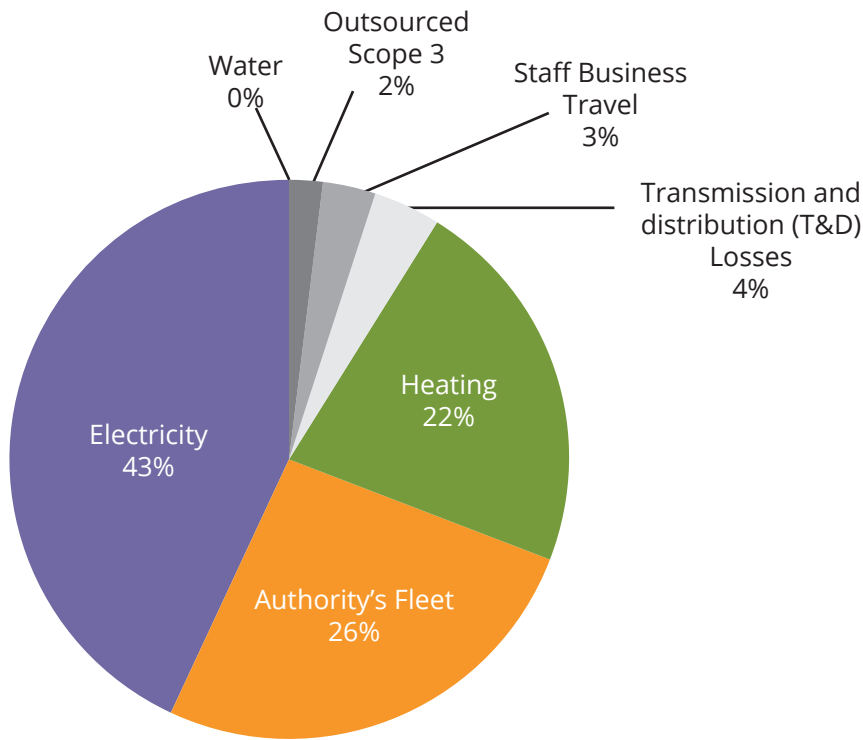


Figure 3: A breakdown of Warrington BC's carbon emissions in 2021/22

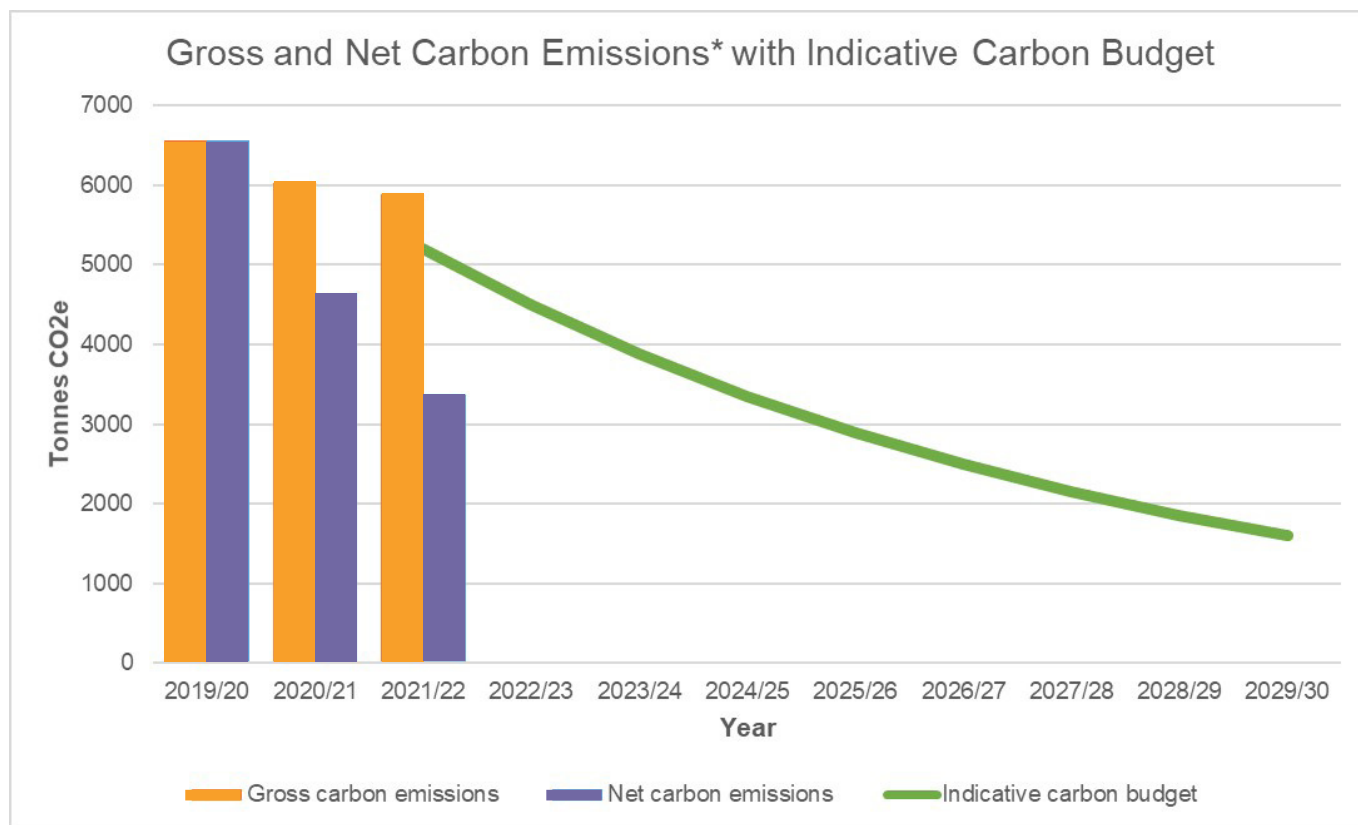
The scope of the inventory focuses on emissions that are within our operational control. It provides a useful baseline to track progress, but is only part of the picture. Like most organisations who report emissions, we have good information on the emissions directly associated with the fuels we burn to heat our buildings and to operate our vehicle fleet and plant (scope 1). We also have a good understanding of the emissions associated with the electricity we use for our operations (scope 2). However we only have a limited picture of the wider indirect emissions associated with our activities (scope 3). In our case, we have only included scope 3 emissions where data is more readily available: our water consumption, staff business travel and outsourced vehicle mileage. Our indirect impact will be much higher than this and we must bear this in mind.

Recommendations from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Research outlined in the Warrington Climate Emergency Strategy⁹ suggest emissions for the borough as a whole need to fall by 13.7% each year from 2020 in order to remain within a Paris Agreement aligned carbon budget. We are committed to adopt a carbon budget in line with that of the wider borough and our emissions should therefore expect to fall according to the trajectory in figure 4.

This gives us a total cumulative carbon budget of 27,901.75 tonnes CO₂e by 2030.

⁹The Warrington Climate Emergency Commission published a strategy in 2022 which sets out the actions that are needed to become a net-zero borough by 2041 <https://www.warrington.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/Climate%20Emergency%20strategy.pdf>

Figure 4: Gross and net carbon emissions with an indicative carbon budget



* Gross emissions include our use of purchased grid electricity. Our net emissions take account of renewable energy certificates that we hold. We acquired generation certificates for our Hull solar farm in October 2020 which cover our electricity use for the 2021/22 year and part of 2020/21.

Boroughwide emissions

Emissions data for Warrington¹⁰ indicates that transport and energy make up the vast majority of the borough-wide footprint. Other emissions arise from waste, industrial processes and agriculture, forestry and other land uses. The total footprint estimated for the borough in 2019 was 1,979,088 tonnes CO₂e.

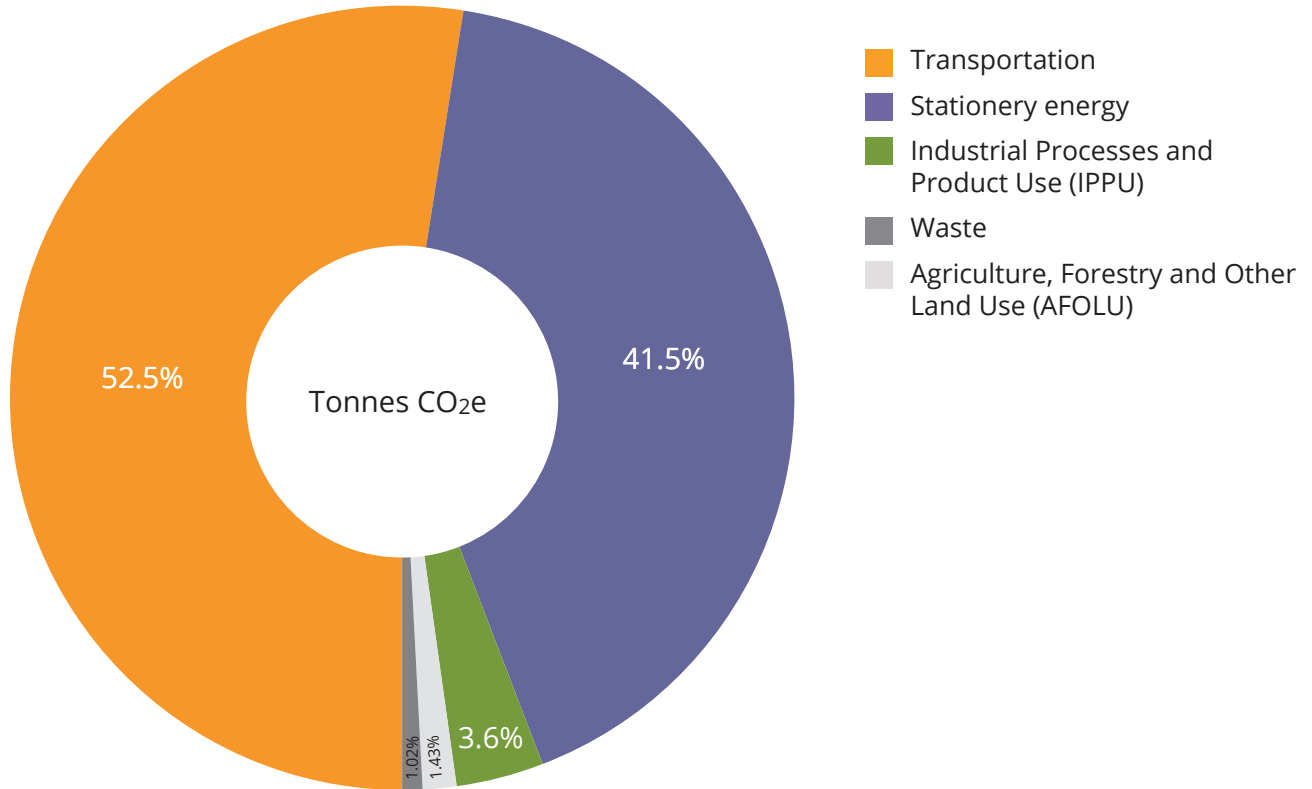
Though the council only directly make up a small percentage of borough-wide emissions, it is estimated that local authorities have influence over around a third of total emissions in the area¹¹.

¹⁰Borough emissions data is available via the SCATTER tool; a local authority focussed emissions measurement and modelling tool SCATTER (scattercities.com)

¹¹Committee on Climate Change report 2020 Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget - Climate Change Committee (theccc.org.uk)

Figure 5: Emissions inventory for Warrington borough

Sector inventory summary for Warrington with Total



Over the remaining part of this document our planned actions are set out in greater detail according to our three main goals. Under each goal we present the main areas for action with background information, a summary of recent activity and challenges and our intended next steps. A summary of the planned actions is presented in appendix 1.

Figure 6: The structure of this action plan

	Goal	Area for action
Changing our operations	Net Zero Operations	Building decarbonisation
		Fleet decarbonisation
		Staff travel
	Resilient organisation/ services	Commissioning/Procurement
		Waste reduction
		Off-setting residual emissions
		Identifying risks
		Adapting to climate change
Using our influence	Using our influence to support wider efforts	Travel, transport and connection
		Energy, buildings and infrastructure
		Resources, consumption & wider impacts
		Resilience and nature
		Awareness, engagement & support for action

Areas for action

Goal 1: Net zero operations



Area: Building decarbonisation

Background

Our operational estate and its emissions

We have a diverse property portfolio used to deliver our services e.g. offices, depots and community centres. It includes a number of listed buildings, including the Town Hall, 88 Bank House and Walton Hall, some dating back several hundred years. The buildings across the estate have multiple purposes with some occupied by third parties.

There are a total of 631 buildings within the council's current property portfolio. These can be broken down into two areas:

- Buildings we operate from
- Buildings we own and lease out to third party organisations

We directly operate from around 70 properties for a variety of uses including office space, care provision, vehicle depots, recreational sites and more. These buildings are included in the council's operational emissions inventories.

The UK has already seen significant decarbonisation of its power supply as coal fired generation has been replaced by gas and renewable energy generation. In future years we expect this decarbonisation of power to continue as we shift to a mix of renewables with battery storage and nuclear.

A significant challenge ahead will be to decarbonising heating, shifting away from the use of natural gas. A quarter of our emissions arise from gas used for heating buildings. 2021/22 consumption figures reveal that Walton Hall and Walton Lea Crematorium are the highest gas users in our operational estate. This is followed by Warrington Market and Penketh Court. Nine out of 10 of the our highest gas using buildings have an display energy certificate of C or below.

Table 1: The council's top 10 highest gas consuming buildings

	Site Name	kWh	Carbon Emissions associated with gas use/tCO ₂ e*	Building use system	Heating system	Age of heating	Display Energy Certificate rating (DEC)
1	Walton Hall & Glasshouses	774,505	141.73	Country house & gardens	Gas boiler	16	G
2	Walton Lea Crematorium	750,236	137.29	Crematorium	Gas boiler	30	G
3	Warrington Market	610,179	111.66	Shopping market	Gas boiler	3	F
4	Penketh Court	510,956	93.50	Social care housing	Gas boiler	13	C
5	Padgate House	343,041	62.78	Social care housing	2 gas boilers	Multiple systems different ages	D
6	Victoria Park	314,050	57.47	Outdoor sports facilities	Gas boiler	30	B
7	Woolston Depot	300,134	54.92	Offices & depot	Several gas boilers	Multiple systems different ages	N/A
8	St. Werburghs	274,739	50.28	Community centre	Gas boiler	5	D
9	Town Hall	233,793	42.78	Council offices	Gas boiler	30	C
10	Town Hall West Annexe	212,238	38.84	Council offices	Gas boiler	30	C

*Calculated using a conversion factor of 0.000183 for natural gas set out by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for 2021/22

Recent work and challenges

We recently rationalised our office provision moving to a new principal office location at 1 Time Square office. This new building utilises solar panels, electric heating, LED lighting and is built to Energy Performance Rating 'A'. A handful of other buildings operate solar PV including Walton Lea Crematorium, Warrington Market and The Base.

With recent spiralling energy costs the heating temperatures in our offices have been adjusted to limit overheating.

The capital cost to upgrade buildings and retrofit low carbon heating systems is often high upfront. Like many local authorities, we have limited access to resources and funding for decarbonisation projects. Where funding opportunities do become available, there are often limited eligibility criteria and tight timescales for project delivery which can hinder progress.

In order to address decarbonisation in our older high emitting buildings, we have made several funding applications to the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) to replace end of life gas boilers with ground source heat pumps. At the time of writing, we have had offers of funding towards the cost of schemes at the Town Hall, its West Annexe, and Walton Hall. If these schemes progress they will help tackle emissions at three of our top 10 gas using buildings.

Though there has been some success with improving buildings on a project-by-project basis, a more joined-up approach is needed to tackle the wider building portfolio and co-ordinate decarbonisation efforts. Unfortunately we no longer routinely collect the data for our buildings needed to develop detailed building decarbonisation programme. At the time of writing, a report is being taken to Cabinet to secure approval to award a four year Decarbonisation Contract that will help address decarbonisation in our 50 top carbon emitting buildings.

Between 2014-2018 we upgraded the majority of our street lights to LED, a programme which delivered significant carbon savings. There are now over 27,480 street lights in the borough which have been converted. The remaining 105 streetlight units have plans to be upgraded to LED.

There remains an opportunity to upgrade legacy external lighting at some sites including parks and countryside sites, and two small car parks. It is yet to be determined the extent of LED lighting replacements in parks. We know there are 160 lighting units along various footpaths which haven't yet been converted. The majority of flood lights on council managed sports facilities have already been converted. The vast majority of lighting in council-owned car parks are LED, with only a small number of units at our smaller car parks in Lymm that have not yet been replaced.

Over time we have built-up in house experience of solar generation through our involvement in a variety of projects. These projects include installing solar panels on buildings owned by others including social housing properties and on a large commercial building. With the benefit of this experience, we have invested in the creation of three large solar farms outside the borough. Since October 2020 we have retained the necessary number of renewable energy certificates (REGOs – Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin) from one of our solar farms in order to cover the electricity we purchase for our operations.



Next steps

Develop a Council building decarbonisation framework

- Take stock of current buildings data
- Develop a framework to guide building decarbonisation with support from the North West Net Zero hub

Award a new building decarbonisation contract

- Undertake heat decarbonisation surveys at our top c.50 properties with the highest carbon footprint
- Identify opportunities for improving efficiency, replacing heating systems and increasing renewable energy generation
- Complete subsequent feasibility studies
- Submit funding bids on WBC's behalf for central government funding
- Deliver funded decarbonisation projects

Develop energy reduction interventions

- Promote energy efficiency good practice amongst building users e.g. turning off lights, TV/monitor screens, not using dishwashers
- Consider smart hot-desking system in Time Square offices to maximise use of space and reduce energy usage on floors where few staff are present
- Programme heating systems/building management systems for more efficient operation
- Continue to move council systems to cloud hosted IT solutions as technical or contractual barriers allow and adopt 'wireless by default' IT setup

Set high standards for new council building projects

Consolidate sites and invest in local facilities

- Following on from the principal office consolidation to 1 Time Square, continue to progress work to allow decision to be made on depot consolidation/improvement

Upgrade lighting in council parks/countryside sites and remaining car parks to LED

- Conduct audit of park lighting assets
- Develop a lighting strategy
- Make the business case for an invest to save scheme and seek external funding to



Area: Fleet and plant decarbonisation

Background

In 2021/22 our vehicle fleet and plant were responsible for 1,553.93 tonnes CO₂e, more than a quarter of our total carbon footprint.

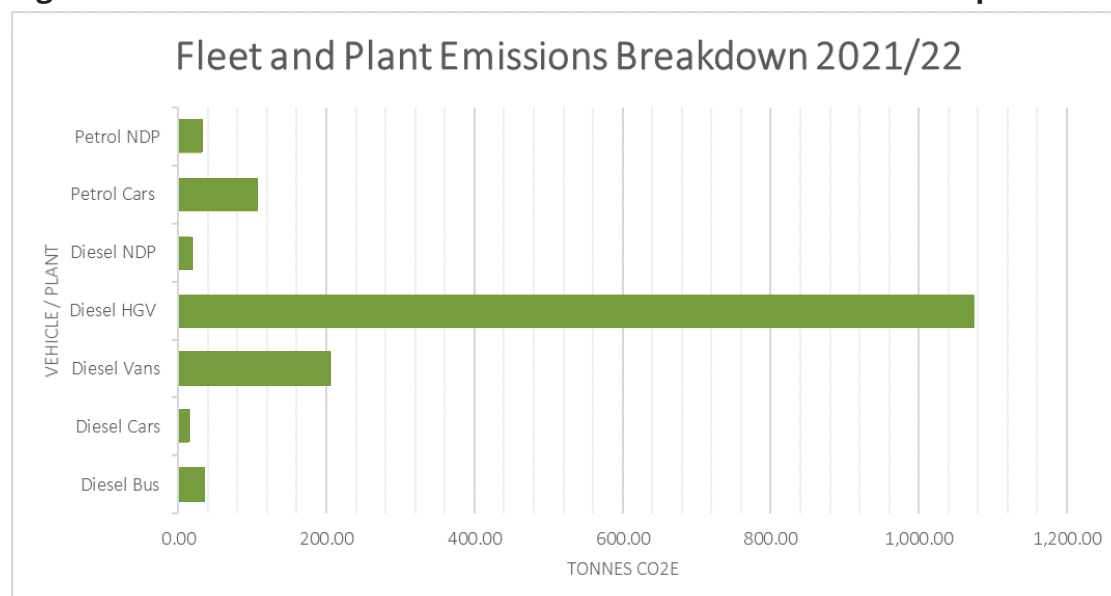
We operate a large fleet of vehicles and plant machinery for a variety of uses, including refuse collection vehicles, road maintenance vehicles and park maintenance equipment. The vast majority of these operate out of three depots at Woolston, School Brow and Victoria Park.

There are a total of 213 vehicles in our operational fleet. 44 of these are leased cars for social services and a further 39 are on short or long term hire. We own the remaining 130 vehicles which range from small cars to vans, heavy goods vehicles (HGV's) and minibuses.

We additionally own and operate more than 600 items of plant equipment, including lawnmowers, hedge trimmers, blowers and more. These range between petrol, diesel, gas oil and battery powered.

The majority of emissions associated with our fleet result from the operation of diesel HGV's. Our Local Transport Plan 4 identifies a need to improve our own fleet of vehicles by increasing the number of council-owned low emission vehicles (Policy CF1).

Figure 7: Carbon emissions associated with the council's fleet and plant 2021/22



Outsourced Fleet

We outsource our highways maintenance services to an external provider who operate a fleet on our behalf. This fleet is comprised of two 18t tipper grabs, 11 tippers (7.5t and 3.5t), 4 diesel vans and 3 cars. These account for around 2% of our total emissions footprint (125.24 tonnes CO₂e in 2021/22).

Recent work and challenges

Most diesel vehicles in our fleet have Euro 6 engines in line with a change in legislation in 2016, which improved the overall economy and reduced polluting emissions. Those that haven't been replaced with Euro 6 are late Euro 5 standard, apart from a very small number of low mileage vehicles which are still Euro 4 standard. There is a long way to go to transition the fleet away from fossil fuels towards lower carbon fuel means of propulsion including electric and hydrogen power.

Our heavier fleet which include specialist vehicles such as refuse collection vehicles is particularly challenging to change. There are fewer alternative low carbon options currently available and where such vehicles are available they are often more expensive to buy compared to their fossil fuelled equivalent.

We are currently in the process of optioneering for handheld plant that could be battery operated and setting up trials for small scale replacements to inform future replacement decisions.

Cars and vans are an easier part of the fleet to decarbonise as there are more choice in the market especially for electric options. We currently have two electric vans in the fleet, and the Mayoral car has been changed from a diesel to an electric model.

Depending on the choice of lower carbon vehicle technology, there are wider infrastructure challenges to overcome to support to changing the fleet. Progress with decarbonising our fleet will rest on our ability to access suitable electric charging or alternative refuelling infrastructure (e.g. hydrogen, biomethane, Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO)) for new low carbon vehicles, which in turn is linked to the long term certainty of occupation of our depot sites where our vehicles operate from.

We lease around 40 cars for social services which operate from Irwell Road Intermediate Care Centre. These leases are renewed every three years. These are being transitioned to hybrid and there is opportunity to renew these leases for electric vehicles in the future. Electricity capacity at Irwell Road should be investigated to determine whether there is grid capacity to install electric charging points.

Alongside investigations into our future depot provision, efforts are ongoing to identify a suitable location to accommodate a waste transfer station to improve our waste collection service and reduce the distance travelled by waste fleet vehicles.



Next steps

Develop a Council fleet/plant decarbonisation plan

- Conduct a full fleet and plant review with support from Energy Savings Trust to identify immediate opportunities for replacement and outline longer term options for hard to replace vehicles
- Develop a decarbonisation plan including timeline for replacement of current vehicles and plant
- Introduce a policy that all new replacement cars, vans (below 3.5t) and plant should be electric, subject to the ability to provide the required infrastructure
- Consider interim charging solutions, e.g. shared use of new bus depot charging facilities, whilst waiting for certainty on future depot locations
- Consider options for replacement of the gully wagon that is due for replacement

Decision to be made on future council depot and new waste transfer station

- Locations to be determined
- Funding to be secured to acquire land and develop facilities
- Infrastructure for charging and refuelling to be included in development plans
- Replacement vehicle timeline to be linked to the availability of a new depot

Develop interventions to increase efficiency of existing fleet and vehicle use

- Investigate opportunities to retrofit existing vehicles e.g. to hybrid or alternative fuels
- Deliver driver efficiency training to optimise fuel consumption
- Provide regular communications on driver efficiency
- Ensure service routes continue to be optimised e.g. refuse and gritting routes

Consider decarbonisation of highways fleet in future renewal of term maintenance contract

Investigate installing electric vehicle charging points at Irwell Road Intermediate Care Centre

- Determine if there is capacity on the electrical grid
- Renew care vehicles leases with electric vehicles



Area: Staff travel

Background

Emissions arising from staff business travel (our 'grey fleet') totalled 179.5 tonnes CO₂e in 2021/22. This is around 3% of our operational footprint. This includes car mileage claimed by staff conducting council duties.

Though not as easy to account for in terms of CO₂ emitted, it is important we also consider how our employees commute and how visitors travel to our facilities.

Recent work and challenges

Business Travel and Commuting

We offer many sustainable travel incentives to employees via our workplace travel plan. This includes an electric vehicle salary sacrifice scheme, Cycle 2 Work scheme and discounted rail and bus passes. There are now 147 employees who have leased an EV and 54 who have leased a hybrid vehicle via the fleet scheme. The number of EV miles claimed for business use by employees have increased in the last 2 years, now making up 5% of all business mileage. Staff who drive and use our Time Square Office can currently benefit from the 56 subsidised public chargers available in the Time Square multistorey car park.

We offer a number of pool bikes out of our Time Square offices which employees can use when necessary. Showers, lockers and secure cycle storage are available at the Time Square offices for staff. Cycle storage is also available at Woolston depot, Walton Hall and Victoria Park.

We used to have six pool cars but these have been reallocated to various services to fill gaps in the existing fleet e.g. where the arrival of replacement vehicles has been delayed.

The Government's Department for Transport have funded six e-bikes, for which a promotional programme is being developed to hold trial events for employees, other employers or potentially the general public to experience e-bikes in a controlled environment, such as a car park or public area.

Free cycle training is available to anybody who lives, works or studies in Warrington, including all Council staff. Dr Bike (bike maintenance) and bike marking events are held annually at various council sites and are open to all staff.

There are 743 council employees that have essential car user status. These employees are required to have access to a car at all times for work.

Working Practices

Like many others, we have shifted our working practices to adopt more flexible, hybrid working arrangements. Our current corporate policy requires office based staff to work from the office for a minimum of two days per week, with the ability to agree working arrangements with line managers. Where possible teams are maximising the use of online meetings to reduce the need for travel. This applies both internally and with service users, as well as for corporate training. Video-conferencing use has risen from 291k minutes per month in November 2020 to 540k per month, despite Covid-19 restrictions having eased.

The large majority of staff have been consolidated onto a smaller number of sites, further reducing the need to travel between locations. Where possible we aim to make the most efficient use of officer time to limit distance travelled, for example utilising a rostering system for reablement care to improve use of carers time.

Reporting

At present the ways in which our annual business mileage data is gathered is via miles claimed through our HR reporting system. For most this does not differentiate types of vehicle and fuel used. To improve the accuracy of our carbon emissions reporting, we should look to improve mechanisms of collecting this information from employees.

Next steps

Improve messaging to staff and visitors on sustainable travel options

- Highlight sustainable travel options and incentives available
- Identify funds to further implement workplace travel plan
- Change current office policy to allow information boards and poster messaging in Time Square offices

Investigate potential for electric pool cars / utilising car club electric cars for council business

Promote use of e-bikes

- Implement and evaluate e-bike trial scheme
- Develop small scale extended e-bike hire scheme for council staff
- Introduce pool e-bike scheme for work related trips.

Expand provision of pool bikes to other council buildings

- Expand pool bikes to main council sites including care providers, Woolston Depot and Walton Hall

Continue to offer flexible working and ensure hybrid office/home policy is being implemented consistently

Establish and promote car sharing database and schemes among council employees

Improve means of gathering business travel data

- Review current HR reporting system
- Improve accuracy of mileage claimed by differentiating vehicle and fuel type
- Consider reporting modes of public transport and taxis for business use

Review council's essential car user policy

- Review employees need for essential car user status
- Reconsider how essential car users are classified e.g. from 'car' user to 'travel' user, allowing use of other modes of transport including pool bikes, public transport or taxi





Area: Procurement

Background

As a council we procure a variety of work, goods and services which can add significantly to our wider but indirect climate and ecological impacts. Our most recent annual expenditure on works, goods and services was £271M (2021/22). It is important that we recognise the impacts that our expenditure has. It is also important we recognise the demand we exert on the economy as a positive lever for change and work with those who we buy from or contract to deliver services to act in a manner compatible with our climate and ecological objectives.

In June 2021, the Government introduced a Public Procurement Note (PPN) 06/21, taking account of Carbon Reduction Plans in the procurement of major government contracts. We should seek to adopt a procurement policy in line with national guidance.

Recent work and challenges

We currently have little information concerning the indirect emissions associated with our commissioning and procurement. We expect these impacts to be considerable. Whilst having a better understanding of these indirect emissions would be helpful, even without it there is need to engage more closely with suppliers and providers to convey our climate objectives. There is also a need to ensure staff who commission our services are carbon literate and equipped to ensure that specifications reflect our objectives.

Our procurement strategy recognises our climate journey, though we have considerable work ahead to realise the full potential of sustainable procurement. We currently reflect some environmental concerns in the social value scoring as part of our tender evaluation process although this is only a small part of the wider assessment process.

The specification we use when commissioning work, goods and services is an important lever for change. For example, in considering recommissioning of independent domiciliary care a new geographical model for service delivery will enable more local recruitment and less distance travelled also enable more care works to walk or cycle for client to client.

Next steps

Review and update contract standard terms and conditions to ensure they reflect the council's climate and ecological ambitions

Set a clear sustainable procurement policy

- Make our objectives clearer to those whom procure and commission on behalf of the council and those who supply goods, works and services for us, or who deliver services on our behalf
- Align procurement policy with national public procurement note
- Adopt good practice standards, where available to favour sourcing goods with accreditations or know environmental benefits e.g. fair trade, low food miles food, sustainable palm oil etc

Decarbonise the council's contract register

- Identify significant contracts due for renewal
- Engage with commissioners and suppliers/contractors to decarbonise these contracts
- Have a named climate contact for each contract
- Review available information and seek to improve data



Area: Waste reduction

Background

Eliminating waste not only helps us reduce emissions associated with it but also the associated environmental impacts of its disposal.

Recent work and challenges

We no longer collect routine data on the amount of waste produced at each of our operational sites. Since 2016 we have collected our own waste internally and do not benefit from on-board weighing systems. The carbon emissions associated with our production of waste is therefore unknown, though will add to our scope 3 emissions.

Recycling bins are currently available in only 10 of our operational buildings. Many of our community centres have recently extended their waste contracts to include recycling for 2023/24.

Our internal waste is transferred in Widnes, where it is treated and separated. Residual waste is forwarded to an energy from waste centre in Runcorn. Co-mingled products are separated and forwarded to recycling facilities.

Efforts have been made across many areas of our work to minimise our use of printed resources and maximise online communication and document sharing. There has been a reduction since March 2019 from an average of 540k pages per month being copied and printed to 186k by October 2022. There are some areas where printing is still required by policy, law or contractual agreement.

We dispose of end of life IT equipment via a certified third party who securely collect and recycle it.

Next steps

Become paperless where practical and legal

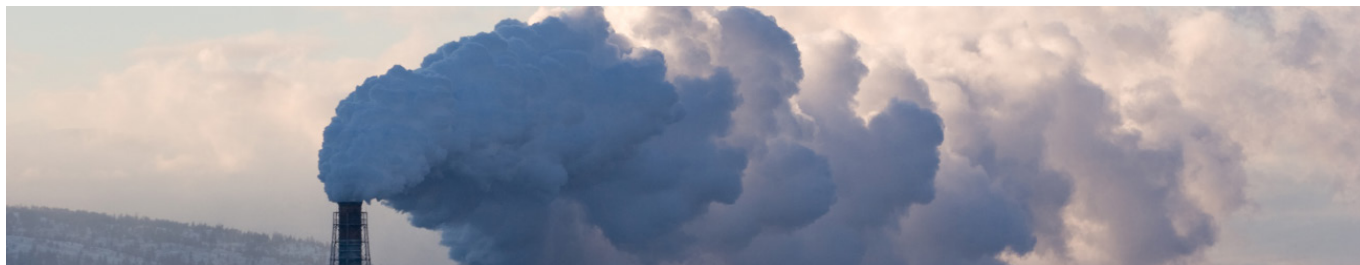
- Shift to electronic council tax notices and offer an opt-in to those who require paper copies
- Shift revenues and benefits services to electronic and offer an opt-in to those who require paper copies
- Investigate electronic signature/execution of legal documents as far as the law will allow
- Continue to monitor printing levels across the organisation
- Continue messaging to employees encouraging paperless working

Improve recycling bin provision at council operated buildings

Improve monitoring of waste

Explore means to stop the use of single-use plastics

Explore options to limit waste and increase durability, remanufacture, reuse, recycling and reprocessing resources for further use e.g. biogas from food waste and recycling of tree waste



Area: Off-setting residual emissions

Background

Our focus must be on eliminating emissions where they arise. However there will always be some residual emissions to address. To reach net zero we need to consider how we can off-set these emissions by investing in the removal or prevention of emissions elsewhere, locally or further afield.

There are arguments against off-setting. There is a danger that some will carry on with 'business as usual' activities and simply buy cheap off-sets to claim carbon neutrality, rather than make necessary changes to reduce their own emissions. There are also concerns on the quality of projects used by those who sell offsets which has led to the creation of various codes to provide assurance.

Recent work and challenges

We do not currently buy offset credits and have yet to take a clear position how we might use off-setting. Where offsetting has been discussed in council meetings, councillors have expressed concerns on the impacts of some offsetting schemes noting the detrimental impacts some can have in the areas they are located, e.g. buying up cheaper land in parts of rural Wales for tree planting which impacts on local rural communities.

Some of our natural assets will be valuable carbon stores, and can be managed to increase carbon storage. The new climate strategy highlights that we need to prevent further loss and degradation to local woodlands, peatlands and saltmarsh to avoid releasing carbon, and to take action to expand woodland and saltmarsh coverage and rewet our peatlands to increase carbon storage. It also highlights the potential to secure investment locally by managing local woodland and peatland under the UK woodland carbon code and peatland code¹².

We took ownership of Risley Moss in the late 1990's and have since been proactive in restoring the expanse of peatland habitat. The 98 hectare site comprises 68 hectares of internationally important lowland raised peat bog that has been degraded over the preceding 200 years. Wetted peatland is an important carbon sink and if degraded, these areas release previously sequestered carbon back into the atmosphere. Since the site entered into Natural England's formal High Level Stewardship scheme in 2011, it has received more than £750,000 in external funding to undertake restoration work and stabilise the habitat. Recent evaluation has identified that the site has transitioned from 'unfavourable and declining' to 'in recovery', with some parts of the site meeting 'favourable condition' criteria. We have not yet investigated the possibility of utilising our peatland restoration work to offset carbon emissions in line with the peatland code.

We manage over 90 hectares of maturing woodland. Due to budget and resource pressures, management of our woodland assets has presented many challenges. A number of these maturing woodland areas with high volumes of ash are rapidly deteriorating due to the prevalence of ash dieback (a serious fungal disease). These areas will need removing and replanting with more suitable tree species. Given the aforementioned resource constraints, managing our existing tree stock going forward needs to be prioritised before we are able to explore new tree planting projects. This will require substantial financial commitment and resource. Given the state of our

¹²The woodland and peatland carbon codes are a voluntary certification standard for UK woodland and peatland projects that wish to quantify the climate benefits of restoration work

existing tree stock, we have not engaged with the woodland carbon codes but could look to do this as part of a future woodland restoration plan.

There is limited land available for new tree planting projects but this should be considered if suitable site opportunities arise and resource permits. We could also look to work with our building maintenance contractor to establish arrangements for existing tree management and future tree planting projects. We are keen to explore partnerships with other parties to fund the establishment of new stock where appropriate with a strong emphasis on appropriate species, location and management from initial establishment through to maturity. We have worked with a number of Parish Councils who have funded the establishment of feature trees within their wards as an investment in the local environment and as enhancements to the streetscape within village centres.

Next steps

Develop an agreed approach to off-setting

- Develop an approach to reflect councillor concerns that makes clear that we intend to use off-setting only for residual emissions and based on prioritising investment in local off-setting projects that help improve the natural environment and/or deliver social benefits

Explore local opportunities to improve natural carbon stores

- Consider opportunities to invest in managing natural assets on our estate in accordance with UK carbon codes
- Consider opportunities to invest in local natural assets beyond our estate in accordance with UK carbon codes

Explore local opportunities for carbon offsetting by investment in local emissions reduction schemes

Update woodland restoration and management plan outlining how we are going to manage our existing tree stock into the future





Goal 2: Resilient Council

The climate is already changing and will continue to do so until we can stabilise global temperature rises by limiting the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. With some change already unavoidable we will need to build resilience as an organisation so that we can continue to function and provide services that are fit for the conditions in which we operate.

Area: Identifying risks

Background

We have a statutory duty, under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, to manage risk as part of a sound system of internal control. In addition The Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 places a duty on us to plan and prepare to respond and recover from major emergency situations. It also requires us to have robust Business Continuity plans to ensure the most critical services can continue in the face of disruption.

When preparing such plans, it is vital that the risks which may impact on service delivery are identified and considered so that we better understand the potential impacts and can identify feasible mitigation measures to manage them.

Under the Climate Change Act 2008, the UK Government is required publish a Climate Change Risk Assessment every five years to set out the risks and opportunities facing the UK from the changing climate. The most recent assessment was published in 2022. In Warrington with climate change we face warmer wetter winters, hotter summers with longer dry spells, and more storminess. Further afield changes in the climate are likely to bring various shocks and pressures, e.g., supply chain disruption and population migration.

Recent work and challenges

Under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) (2004) all areas in the UK were required to establish a Local Resilience Forum, co-terminus with Police Force boundaries. The resilience forum is a multi-agency partnership responsible for meeting the specific duties outlined in the CCA on behalf of the respective organisations who individually hold the statutory duty. Under this, we have a duty to create a business continuity plan to ensure we can continue to exercise our critical functions in the event of an emergency.

We have a risk management policy and strategy which sets our commitment to a structured, systematic and focused approach to the management of risk, to ensure that we:

- Deliver our corporate pledges and priorities
- Provide quality public services making best use of the resources available
- Comply with statutory duties and Council policies
- Safeguard persons to whom the Council has a duty of care

We have a Strategic Risk and Business Continuity Group to provide assurance on the adequacy of the Council's arrangements for risk management and business continuity. Every council function must consider our six key corporate risks. These include:

- Large scale temporary absence of staff or permanent or long term loss of staff
- Denial of site or geographical area (e.g. due to fire, flooding, major incident)

- Loss of electronic communications (inc. loss of landline phones, mobile phones, internet & email)
- Loss of utility services (which would include loss of gas, electricity and water supply)
- Loss of key documents (physical or electronic)
- Complete loss of IT (incl. telephony, email and major systems) for a period of several days up to a few weeks

Currently we do not ask services to directly consider climate change from a business continuity perspective, though it is indirectly related to a number of the above risks.

Next steps

Review climate risks to the council

- Use Local Partnerships' Climate Risk Register Generator to identify the principal risks we face
- Ensure the need for/failure of adaptation is on the strategic risk register, with assessments of financial and reputational consequence

Add climate change as a key risk to the council's business continuity template

- Review risk template in line with good practice guides for business continuity
- Consider how climate change might be assessed and mitigated at service level
- Integrate the climate emergency as a key risk to the council
- Produce guidance and support for managers, including how to measure potential business impact and possible mitigation strategies

Raise awareness of risks from a changing climate

- Roll out carbon literacy training to include discussion of the principal risks we face





Area: Adapting to climate change

Background

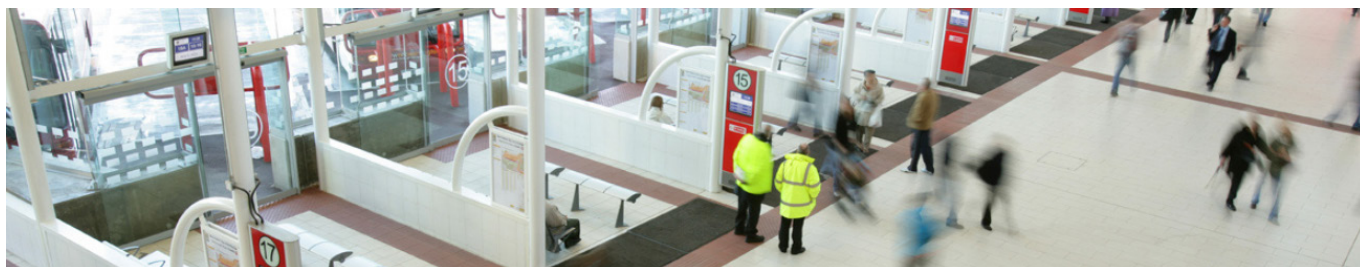
The nature of climate change poses some unique challenges. Climate change will extend over decades and centuries, but we tend to manage risks over shorter periods. Emergency planning tends to focus on responses to exceptional circumstances, but in the context of a changing climate what are presently exceptional events will become commonplace over time as incremental change in the climate continues to occur. We need to begin to adapt our culture and practices over a longer timeframe and move beyond making contingencies for relatively infrequent events to planning for a new normal with a climate different from now.

Recent work and challenges

There has been no recent direct activity to adapt our services to deal with the effects of a changing climate. Our internal Carbon Literacy training course highlights a need for this and aims to embed carbon considerations into the everyday responsibilities of all services.

Next steps

Undertake a review using the Local Partnerships local authority Adaptation Toolkit.



Goal 3: Using our influence for a wider impact

We have a major challenge to drive down our operational emissions to near zero. We could simply focus all our efforts on this challenge alone, but this would mean ignoring a potentially much wider opportunity. The atmosphere does not distinguish between where greenhouse gas emissions come from. So we need to be mindful of taking too narrow a view.

The example we set through how we operate is important, but there are many other ways we can act as a local authority that can influence wider emissions across the borough and beyond. We can exert 'hard' and 'soft' influence. Our influence lies in how and with who we connect. Using our voice is important. We can help showcase examples of good practice. We can bring people and organisations together to make a bigger impact.

We also act as a regulator in areas such as highways, planning, licensing, building control, licensing, trading standards, housing, environmental health and air quality. We can work with people and businesses to help them to comply and take enforcement action where it is necessary and proportionate to do so.

This part takes each of the themes from the new climate emergency strategy to set out planned actions to use our wider influence in support.

Travel, transport and connection

Background

As the local highways authority and with our statutory requirement to deliver a Local Transport Plan, we recognise our role in providing the infrastructure and support to transition the borough towards more sustainable travel.

Our Local Transport Plan (LTP) 4, adopted in 2019, outlines how transport in Warrington will be maintained and improved over a five-year period. The plan explains how we want to make Warrington a thriving, attractive and well connected place, with popular, high quality walking, cycling and public transport networks that support our net-zero future. This means increasing high quality walking and cycling routes across the borough, enhancing bus services and reducing dependency on cars.

The Updated Proposed Submission Version Local Plan (September 21) identifies a vision for Warrington until 2038. Specifically, it states that:

“New development will be successfully integrated into Warrington’s transformed public transport system. The enhanced Green Space and Waterways network will provide popular, high quality walking and cycling routes that promote active lifestyles, reduce carbon emissions, contribute to improving air quality and help tackle climate change.”

There are specific policies within the Plan that serve to embed this principle in all new built developments coming forward within the plan period. The Plan has reached an advanced stage and whilst there have subsequently been a number of modifications, the key principles remain as stated in 2021.

The local bus operator Warrington's Own Buses is municipally owned and we therefore play an important role in improving bus services across Warrington. Our Bus Service Improvement Plan details how we plan to enhance our services and infrastructure to increase bus patronage. In 2021/22, fuel consumed by Warrington's Own Buses had a carbon footprint of 4,422.8 tCO₂e.

One of our objectives is to support residents, visitors and businesses to make the switch away from petrol and diesel-powered vehicles by providing access to electric vehicle charging. This is outlined in our electric vehicle strategy adopted in December 2022.

We have a role in promoting and enabling Active Travel by providing the necessary infrastructure to allow people to travel safely throughout the borough. These plans are outlined in our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and First and Last Mile Transport Masterplan.

Recent work and challenges

Electric vehicles

We have delivered several EV charging schemes across the borough including 56 subsidised chargers at Time Square multi-story car park, 12 chargers at Warrington West train station and six chargers at Lexden Street car park. We have recently launched an on-street charging scheme following successful On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) funding to install 24 charging points across four streets in the borough. We are due to roll out six chargers at the Forge Car Park in Stockton Heath imminently.

In 2022 we were successful in securing Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding to deliver up to 200 chargers across Warrington, providing a mixture of on-street chargers and a number of rapid charging hubs. This roll out is anticipated for completion in 2024.

An electric vehicle Car Club has been launched in the town centre with Co Wheels. This allows residents to hire a car on an hourly basis, only when they need it. It also supports the recent change in parking standards agreed as part of the adoption of the Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) where the default in town centre is to provide no parking, giving residents who do not own a car the ability to access one as and when they need it.

Our EV strategy includes updated guidance for the development planning process, stipulating electric charging points must be installed in all new dwellings plus encouragement of provision at employment sites and council and privately owned car parks. The Local Plan requires all new residential development to offer EV charging infrastructure.

Our Electric Vehicle Taxi Strategy (2022) sets out how we will promote the uptake of EV taxis through our statutory responsibilities as a licensing authority. This includes increasing awareness and uptake of EVs by Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Taxis. Through this work we are looking to increase provision of rapid chargers in convenient locations for taxis by looking at taxi-specific charging points in the town centre. We will look to transition to appropriate emission standards and controls over the age of vehicles within our taxi policy.

Buses

In 2021 we were successful in securing c.£20m Zero Emission Buses Regional Areas (ZEBRA) funding towards converting the entire Warrington's Own Buses fleet of 105 diesel buses to electric. In tandem with this scheme we have commissioned a new all electric bus depot which opened in March 2023, with chargers and electric buses due for installation and delivery during 2024.

The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was published in October 2021 and updated in October 2022. It aims to make Warrington buses more frequent, faster and reliable, cheaper, easier to use and better integrated. The initial Enhanced Bus Quality Partnership (EP) was also agreed in 2022.

We were successful in securing £9.9m capital funding to deliver a bus priority route southbound on A49 Winwick Road and a further £6.3m of funding to support the newly signed Enhanced Bus Quality Partnership Agreement with all bus operators, which will allow the continuation of £2 capped fares for adults, plus reduced child fares, and maintaining additional bus services.

Active travel

We have progressed the LCWIP through bids submitted to three tranches of the Active Travel Fund and via the Warrington Town Deal Sustainable Travel Package (STP) enabling a range of Active Travel schemes to be delivered including:

- Local accessibility improvements for pedestrians and mobility impaired
- Trial of light segregation cycle lanes in town centre
- Improvement of strategic links such as sections of the Trans Pennine Trail and Omega to Burtonwood Cycle route
- Adult and child cycle training using DfT grant and Local Transport Plan funding

We are also working to develop the first CYCLOPS (Cycle Optimised Protected Signals) junction in central Warrington at the Lovely Lane/Lodge Lane/Bewsey Road junction, planned for delivery in summer 2023. Alongside this will be improvements to the whole of the cycling corridor from Sankey Valley to the town centre, supported by Town Deal Sustainable Travel funding.

We have secured Capability and Ambition Fund revenue funding to further increase in-house capacity and skill to design and develop high quality active travel schemes. We are also preparing for future bidding opportunities such as Levelling Up Fund Round 3 and Active Travel Fund Round 4 and 5.

Following market testing and feasibility work, the scope of the Town Centre Cycle Hub project has been redefined to provide two complementary elements within the town centre:

- Community Cycle Hub centred on training, maintenance, advice and cycle hire. A review of potential locations across the Town Centre is underway with detailed feasibility work around various options to understand the viability and sustainability being carried out. There is potential for a public e-bike hire scheme to be incorporated into the community cycle hub project, alongside hire of standard bikes.
- Secure Enclosed Cycle Parking Shelter – plans for a high quality secure cycle parking facility outside the bus interchange is progressing well with a procurement exercise for the shelter provision planned shortly and subject to funding for further sites to be delivered.

We have benefitted from a range of capital-funded initiatives to improve infrastructure supporting greener and more sustainable methods of travel. Such infrastructure requires maintenance which is essential to ensure longevity and for keeping assets in a fit and safe condition. Resource allocation for such maintenance is limited and could hinder appropriate management of these assets. Longevity should be considered during the design stage of future schemes to minimise maintenance requirements as far as possible.

Travel Plans

Through the LTP4 we are progressing Workplace, School and Residential Travel Planning. We launched the Town Centre Travel Plan with early engagement activities planned with new residents in key sites. Significant external funding has been secured from the private sector through voluntary agreement or planning processes. Delivery of workplace and residential programmes is based on external funding which has been secured for delivery over the next 3-5 years.

Travel plans for major developments are usually required as a planning condition and depending on the scale, nature and location of the proposal; contributions may be required to support bus services on an interim basis along with other sustainable travel measures.

Next steps

Continue to investigate and deliver active travel schemes

- Continue delivery of LCWIP, Active Travel Fund and Town Deal STP and cycle training
- Increase in-house capacity and skill to design and develop high quality active travel schemes and prepare pipeline projects
- Pursue new funding opportunities to deliver active travel priorities
- Improve facilities in areas within walking distance of one another to reduce the need for travel and encourage active modes of transport
- Invest in long-term maintenance of greenways and active travel networks

Promote uptake of electric vehicles by implementing EV strategy

- Seek funding for capacity to progress EV charging schemes and explore innovative funding ventures in partnership with the private sector. Pursue EV charging capacity at key locations e.g. community centres
- Facilitate the transition of taxis to low emission vehicles through the EV Taxi Strategy
- Explore opportunities to offer grant assistance or subsidised licenses to EV taxi drivers
- Investigate ways to incentivise use of low emission vehicles over petrol and diesel powered options e.g. differential car charging for parking and permits, congestion charging

Continue to deliver workplace, school and residential travel plans

- Secure further contributions from employment and residential developments to the Town Centre Travel Plan for its ongoing implementation
- Further explore feasibility of implementing a workplace parking levy to ring-fence funds for sustainable transport schemes
- Establish and/or promote car sharing databases and schemes

Develop a freight strategy to implement sustainable logistics policies

- Detailed consideration to be given as part of LTP5 development of options, including freight consolidation centres, last mile delivery via cargo and e-cargo bikes and autonomous robots
- Bring together wider sector operators and distribution companies within the borough to identify challenges and explore opportunities e.g. bio-methane refuelling at Omega
- Support where appropriate any private sector interest in alternative fuel charging or re-fuelling stations in and around Warrington

Improve and maintain bus services across Warrington

- Deliver ZEBRA funded replacement of Warrington's Own Buses diesel buses with electric by 2024
- Continue to develop plans for a mass transit system in Warrington and with neighbouring authorities, focusing on the A49 Winwick Road and A49 Wilderspool Causeway bus priority schemes as an immediate priority for delivery over the next 2-3 years
- Further increase public messaging about benefits of using public transport, both buses and trains
- Work closely with WOB and other bus operators to improve bus services and patronage

Ensure new development promotes sustainable and active travel

- Embed active travel principles within the emerging Warrington Design Guide SPD
- Confirm requirements for new development to contribute towards new and improved public transport services and active travel infrastructure through the updated Planning Obligations SPD



Energy, buildings and infrastructure

Background

To eliminate the pollution driving climate change, the way we use and generate heat and power will need to change radically. This will require a major transformation in local buildings and infrastructure with higher energy efficiency, new non-fossil fuel power generation and sustainable sources of heat. For industrial processes that are difficult to decarbonise there will be a need for carbon to be captured and stored. The development of such infrastructure is in its infancy, although Cheshire is a centre of industrial decarbonisation activity, with investment in the Hynet (hydrogen) project and related projects including work to store carbon emissions in legacy Liverpool Bay natural gas fields.

We will also need to adapt buildings and infrastructure for the changing climate or they may no longer be fit for purpose in the face of greater storminess, heat, longer dry spells, and intense rain fall and flooding. As a council we have various roles, formal and informal, that can help this transformation.

We have some influence on the built environment through our wider assets. Beyond our operational sites and buildings, our estate includes many schools and cultural and leisure facilities and some specialist housing. There are 47 local authority maintained schools within the borough. Gas heating in these schools had a cumulative carbon footprint of 1,992.86 tCO₂e in 2021/22. Our leased out estate includes leisure centres, neighbourhood hubs, libraries and cultural buildings, such as Warrington Museum and the Parr Hall. These buildings are managed by external Community Interest Companies (CICs). We no longer have a substantial social housing stock having transferred these assets in 2010. We do still retrain 96 units of specialist residential accommodation in our ownership, chiefly for supported living, homelessness and children's services. We also own several industrial estates and retail shopping arcades as well as the mixed-use town centre development at Time Square. Our investments include various commercial assets and we have a stake in various companies, within and beyond the borough. In order to help develop more low cost housing, locally, we own a housing company named Incrementum Housing.

We have influence on the wider built environment through our place shaping activities. Within the parameters of national planning policies, our statutory land use planning function gives us a significant role to control and influence what is built, where and how. Warrington's Proposed Submission Version of the Local Plan (September 2021) identifies how there will be a transformation in how Warrington meets its energy needs over the plan period, with a focus on renewable sources and decentralised networks, benefiting Warrington's existing and future residents and businesses and helping tackle climate change. New development will be built to the highest levels of energy efficiency and the Town will be at the cutting edge in the use of new green technologies. Any new developments coming forward will be expected to conform to specific policies that reflect this principle, with the major new urban extensions in South East Warrington and Fiddlers Ferry providing significant opportunities to deliver a step change in sustainability.

We can also play a part though more informal place shaping roles, particularly where sites and developments are in our ownership. Beyond land use planning, we have a regulatory role to ensure minimum standards are met through our building control function as well as enforcement powers over housing standards for private rented properties.

Although we are no longer a major social housing provider, we still have statutory duties relating to housing imposed by the 1996 Housing Act relating to the provision of suitable accommodation within the Borough and the monitoring of our affordable housing stock. We operate the 'Under One Roof' register for social housing applicants and nominate those families and individuals in most urgent need of accommodation to available homes.

Our interest in the success of the local economy and our communities means we have a role in encouraging investment in necessary infrastructure and working with partners to make sure we have the skills in the local workforce to support the changes we need to see.

Recent work and challenges

A new Local Plan is currently going through the formal planning process on route to adoption. When developing the plan we included some new policies designed to ensure development is fit for the future and compatible with our climate concerns. Not all the policies we included were supported by the planning inspector after the inquiry process. We may believe certain changes are needed but still have to work within the confines of the wider planning system where national policy can sometimes limit us meeting our local aspirations. The preparation of new Supplementary Planning Documents on design and planning obligations, together with the preparation of Development Frameworks for our largest development sites provide the opportunity to confirm our commitment to push for the highest possible standards of sustainability in new development.

A new Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan are under development. These will seek to ensure we have the right type of housing in the right places at the right times to meet local needs, and will set out a range of tasks for the Council to undertake in order to meet the strategic objectives. Amongst the identified objectives is the creation of a local housing market that promotes good health and, more particularly, that supports affordable warmth and energy efficiency.

We have a role ensuring minimum building standards are met through our building control function but we do not set these minimum standards. Whilst the national standards have been raised with respect to energy performance, they are still not in line with local net zero ambitions. Further changes are coming, but not as soon as we'd like to meet local objectives. In the absence of a stronger national framework, we have showcased higher standards. Our housing company, Incrementum, is already building homes that exceed the Future Homes Standard (2025) in terms of thermal efficiency and carbon footprint. Its recently completed developments at Sycamore Lane and Chatfield Drive, comprising 161 new homes, make use of communal ground source heat pumps, solar panels and heat batteries. Their thermal efficiency means that tenants will save an estimated 65% on heating bills annually over conventional housing.

We have played a role in some recent housing retrofit work. We were involved in a joint funding bids under the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) programme. Through this work, developed in partnership with neighbouring Cheshire local authorities, we have upgraded 208 homes in the borough.

Under the 'Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard' (MEES) regulations, landlords can no longer let properties if they have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating below E, unless they have a valid exemption. As the local authority we have a role to enforce this regulations. Over time it is expected that the minimum standards will rise meaning more properties will need upgrading. In recognition that future heating needs have to be met in a different way, with new residential connections to the gas grid for heating soon to be ended, we were successful in securing funding from the Heat Network Delivery Unit to undertake a heat mapping and heat network feasibility study. This study has just concluded and identifies the potential for district heat networks to serve heat demand clusters across the borough. The report of the investigation identified two potentially viable low carbon heat network options to serve buildings in the town centre area. It recommended both these options be considered further as part of a follow on detailed project development investigation.

We have developed a reputation as a pioneering local authority for solar power projects. Long before the declaration of a climate emergency, we invested in the installation of solar panels on 1,630 social houses. These continue to provide a benefit to residents. We have also developed a significant solar roof on a commercial building, adding just under a megawatt of solar generation to the Plastic Omnium building. The experience we gained with the earlier projects has been harnessed to develop three new solar farms beyond the borough, one of which generates more than enough clean power to cover our own power use and for which we retain the renewable energy certificates. Land prices, grid connection capacity issues and environmental constraints have made it hard to find a viable solar farm site that we can develop within the borough, although work continues to try to find potential sites.

Limited capacity on the local power distribution network is a brake on local net zero action as well as wider development and regeneration. Warrington spans the boundary of two different distribution network operators: SP Energy Networks (SP Manweb Plc) and Electricity North West. These companies own and manage the local distribution network, and are regulated by Ofgem. Whilst we have no direct role in the operation of the power distribution network, we are consulted as a stakeholder and have worked in partnership with local DNOs on various projects. For example, we recently supported a successful SP Manweb bid for green recovery funding by Ofgem allowing it to bring forward investment that will ultimately improve power capacity in the centre of Warrington. We have helped find a location for a new substation in the town centre

With increasing demands on local power distribution networks as we shift from gas to heat pumps, add electric vehicle charging, and connect more decentralised renewable generation we will need to develop a smarter local energy system (SLES). To explore the development of SLES, we were a participant in the Innovate UK funded Rewire NW Project. The project was led by energy and sustainability charity Pure Leapfrog and investigated the issues of designing a smart local energy system for Warrington including the financial and legal barriers. The aim was to explore the creation of a system that would not only help optimise energy infrastructure but do so in a way that helped capture benefits locally. One part of the project involved the creation of a digital twin simulation of the Warrington built environment. This digital twin tool enables different interventions and scenarios to be tested to help with the optimisation of local energy infrastructure.

The recent Town Deal bid, which we supported, includes the development of an Advanced Construction and Civil Engineering Centre at Warrington & Vale Royal College. This will have a key role in upskilling local people for green building and infrastructure work.

Through our commercial investments we own Birchwood Park with the business park managed by a company called Patrizia. We have encouraged Patrizia to develop a sustainability strategy for the park to take account of our climate objectives.

The Government anticipates nuclear power will play a part in the decarbonised energy mix and Warrington is a major centre for nuclear related business activity, with many businesses located on Birchwood Park. As the local authority and owner of Birchwood Park we are in regular contact with these companies and work with them to assist their development and space requirements.

Whilst the current centre of activity in relation to industrial decarbonisation and hydrogen generation is in neighbouring areas focused on Cheshire West, it will be important to make sure Warrington benefits from the investments taking place. We are already being consulted on potential hydrogen pipeline routes associated with the Hynet project.

Next steps

Report on scale, nature and cost of retrofitting homes across Warrington using Warrington Digital Twin and other data sources

- Make clear the investment needed and the opportunity this presents

Develop support for retrofit improvement

- Improve energy efficiency advice signposting to support where available
- Explore opportunity to develop a retrofit support service for owner occupiers and landlords

Bid for/access funding for retrofit improvements where opportunities present

- Partner with local Registered Providers for a bid under a future funding round of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to enhance the efficiencies of the Council's retained housing stock;
- Develop a Strategic Asset Management Plan for retained specialist housing stock to include consideration of property retrofit to improve energy efficiency, shift to low carbon heating, and benefit from renewable energy where feasible;

Ensure the new Warrington housing strategy reflects climate emergency concerns and aligns fully with the Warrington Climate Emergency Strategy

Make clear the scale of the challenge to help plan for the skills provision

Promote net-zero and climate ready approaches for new developments

- Update Supplementary Planning Document on design
- Update Supplementary Planning Document on planning obligations
- Input to Development Frameworks to promote climate objectives
- Promote net zero climate-ready approaches for development of sites in council ownership
- Showcase best practice in new council-led housing developments for special needs, homelessness, and assisted living

Explore feasibility for local solar farms and other renewable opportunities

- Identify local opportunities and constraints
- Develop business case for investment in schemes and enabling infrastructure
- Investigate arrangements to sell renewable power locally, drawing on ideas developed in the Rewire NW project

Explore opportunity for and promote solar group buying scheme for residents and businesses

Develop the business case to secure investment in local heat networks

Review opportunities to improve leased and maintained buildings e.g. schools





Resources, Consumption & Wider Impacts

Background

We have a statutory obligation to provide kerbside waste services to residents in the borough. Our services include general waste, garden waste and mixed recycling. Borough-wide recycling rates were 46.4% in the most recent quarter. We also provide commercial waste services. All of our waste collections are treated through the same process as our internal waste.

We want to encourage circular economy practices to reduce consumption and waste production, and promote more nature and climate friendly products and diets.

Within the next local plan period, a key objective is that Warrington's levels of recycling will continue to increase, whilst municipal and commercial waste will be reduced. New waste facilities will ensure that residual waste is sustainably managed. Warrington's mineral resources will be protected and contribute to the region's future resource needs. Policies are contained within the draft local plan that seek to support such functions in all new developments.

Recent work and challenges

The Environment Act seeks to standardise waste collection methodologies throughout the country. Under this Act, we anticipate introducing weekly food waste collections across the borough in 2025.

The council own and manage a number of allotments in the borough, which are currently oversubscribed. We additionally own 10 patches of farmland including a mix of grazing and agricultural land, which are leased to farmers.

We have collaborated with the 'Laptops For Kids' scheme to support the use of donated computer equipment for distribution to disadvantaged children.

The council have promoted two repair shops in the borough including Birchwood Repair Café and a pop-up repair shop in Warrington Market.

We have worked with schools to promote healthier and more sustainable school meals and catering in accordance with the Eatwell Guide, where the majority of options are plant-based or use better quality meat. We are also working with schools to educate on food production and reduce food waste, for example by promoting Fair Trade schools.

We have also developed six 'Bread and Butter Thing' sites to reduce food waste and provide affordable food to residents in the borough. These work closely with local suppliers. A community shop is due to open later this year that will offer surplus food, which may have otherwise been wasted.

Next steps

Develop interventions to improve domestic recycling rates

- Increase messaging on what can and can't be recycled
- Review residential recycling patterns
- Develop targeted interventions in communities with lower recycling rates

Develop interventions to reduce consumption and promote circular economy practices

- Support businesses to adopt circular economy practices
- Promote ways to recycle or compost food to households and businesses
- Enable and promote repair cafes/shops
- Promote community sharing

Embed climate change and ecological considerations in the decision making process

- Integrate climate and nature into decision making processes
- Include a 'climate implications' segment in all committee and cabinet reports and prepare a guide for report writers on how to account for climate
- Align strategic plans and policies with climate goals
- Review and improve involvement of citizens in decision-making processes e.g. set up citizen assemblies with appropriate representation of all segments of the community

Prepare for measures to come in under the Waste and Environment Act

Promote climate and nature friendly diets

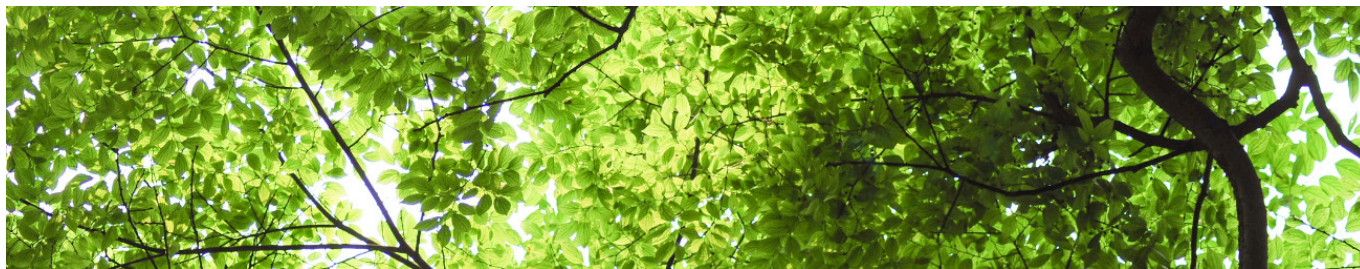
- Review catering arrangements and contracts
- Take advantage of existing promotions and campaigns to raise awareness about impact of our diets
- Raise awareness about environmentally damaging products e.g. palm oil

Promote local and sustainable food production

- Explore Environmental Land Management Schemes with local farmers
- Continue to encourage local food production via management of allotments and explore options within local planning process for new allotments provision

Raise awareness of the wider impacts of our purchases and investments

- Divest pensions and investments from fossil fuels
- Consider environmental and social implications in our financial strategy



Resilience and nature

Background

The borough as a whole needs to adjust to the extreme weather patterns and the associated impacts already being experienced as well as to adapt to future unavoidable climate change with the wider disruptions this will bring.

Whilst we do not have a statutory duty to lead on the co-ordination of local climate adaptation, we do have some obligations that are related to the adaptation response. Under the Civil Contingencies Act we have a role in identifying risks and planning for emergencies to help build resilience. As the Local Planning Authority we are required to take account of the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change when planning development.

Flooding from intense precipitation can cause damage to people, buildings and other facilities as well as infrastructures; affect mobility and disrupt transport services; overwhelm storm water drainage systems and affect wastewater treatment; and may cause other damages and collapses resulting in interruption of energy supply, affecting all other services and infrastructures' components. In some cases, this may even result in loss of life.

The threat of flooding under climate change is amplified through an increase of both tidal levels and predicted flood flows as rainfall intensifies. Rare, extreme rainfall events are becoming more common. Despite anticipated overall summer drying trends, UK climate projections data from the Met Office suggest we will experience increases in heavy summer rainfall events in the future. For urban areas, this will impact on the frequency and severity of surface water flooding. Data published by the Environment Agency indicates that up to 1,032 properties (890 residential, 117 business, 25 critical services) in Warrington could be at risk from surface water flooding under extreme rainfall events (those with 1% annual probability).

The Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) 2010 aims to improve both flood risk management and the way we manage our water resources. The FWMA defines a lead role for local authorities, designating Warrington Borough Council as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The Environment Agency plays a national role in relation to Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM). The Act requires Lead Local Flood Authorities to take the lead in managing local flood risk from groundwater, ordinary watercourses and surface runoff.

It also outlines our duties in respect of Flood Risk Management, including:

- To develop, maintain, apply and monitor a local strategy for Flood Risk Management in the area
- To investigate and record details of significant flood incidents in the area and produce a section 19 report
- Act as a SuDS¹³ Approving Body (Enactment 2024) responsible for approving proposed drainage systems
- Works powers to do works to manage flood risk
- Designation powers to designate structures and features that affect flooding to avoid removal or damage to infrastructure that is relied on for flood risk management
- Maintain an asset register of structures or features which are considered to have an effect on flood risk

¹³Sustainable urban draining systems, a natural approach to managing the drainage of surface water in urban environments

As lead flood authority, we are a statutory consultee in relation to Planning Applications for major developments (over 10 properties or sites of 1 hectare).

Bringing nature in to recovery is closely related to the wider climate emergency. The natural world and biodiversity is under threat from the changing climate and wider human activities, yet natural assets, and the wider use of nature based solutions, can provide useful functions to help us limit impacts of climate change, for example by providing cooling, shade and flood prevention and to help us store carbon.

Recent work and challenges

Under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), we have duties via the Cheshire Resilience Forum including:

- Assessing the risk of emergencies occurring and using this to inform contingency planning in the form of a Community Risk Register; this is at a Cheshire level rather than an individual authority level
- Putting in place emergency plans;
- Creating business continuity plans to ensure that we can continue to exercise critical functions in the event of an emergency;
- Making information available to the public about civil protection matters, and maintaining arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency;
- Sharing information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination;
- Co-operating with other local responders to enhance coordination and efficiency;
- Providing advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (Local Authorities only).

The Cheshire resilience forum has both an Executive and Practitioner level management group that ensures the work programme is sufficient to meet the duties and address the risks through planning, training and exercising relevant to the Cheshire area. The work of the resilience forum is underpinned by the Government national risk register translated into a Cheshire community risk register and agreed on a regular cycle, pertinent to each risk. The Councils Major Emergency Plan is the umbrella plan that is invoked in response to any major incident and which outlines the command and control arrangements to respond and recover from any emergency in line with Cheshire resilience forum and national Government structures. The following plans are in place at a local and Cheshire level:

- Warrington Emergency flood response plan (multi-agency plan)
- Heatwave plan (Cheshire-level based on the national plan, led by Department of Health & Social Care)
- Severe weather response plan (Cheshire-wide multi-agency)

Community resilience is a priority area of emergency planning work for 2023/24. This includes but is not isolated to resilience to major weather emergencies. We are currently working with a group in Croft to prepare a community resilience plan and hope to promote this across Warrington Parish councils to strengthen community resilience borough-wide.

As the local planning authority, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was undertaken in 2018 in order to inform development locations across the borough. More refined work has been undertaken to confirm the suitability of proposed development sites as the Plan has progressed towards adoption.

The most recent, major flood event was a result of Storm Christoph (Monday 18th January 2021 to Thursday 21st January 2021), where widespread flooding was observed across the United Kingdom and throughout the area of Warrington. It is estimated that approximately 1,043 properties were affected with 438 properties internally flooded, and a further 605 properties externally flooded across 32 locations across the Warrington area. A Section 19 report was completed and published in April 2022, comprised of 32 separate investigations.



Many of the drainage systems across the Borough are old with many in poor condition. These systems will have to deal with increased volumes of rainfall going forward as a result of climate change. A particular issue is the very high number of combined and foul drainage systems owned and managed by United Utilities, which are under significant pressure from increasing development sites. This is a significant contributing factor to flood risk going forward.

Further to this, risk of flooding is amplified by a general lack of maintenance to existing watercourses and the existence of contamination or clay type soils which lead to inadequate levels of ground infiltration. Our knowledge on drainage assets is generally improving but still there remain gaps.

Funding available to Local Authorities in respect of flood risk management is extremely limited. Capital schemes must be substantiated to be economically viable to be eligible for funding from Environment Agency.

In 2023, the Government announced plans to ensure new developments in England have to adopt new SUDS designed to reduce the risk of flooding and water pollution by curbing the use of impermeable services and better replicating natural drainage patterns. Regulations for the creation of SUDS will be devised through the implementation of FWMA Schedule 3.

We are working to deliver several major flood risk management projects locally in partnership with the Environment Agency, including:

- Warrington Flood Risk Management Project – to reduce the risk of flooding to 2,000 homes and businesses in Warrington (complete)
- Penketh/Whittle Flood Risk Management Project – to reduce the risk of flooding to 221 properties (ongoing)
- Sankey Brook Flood Risk Management Project – to reduce the risk of flooding to 580 properties (ongoing)

We have also led on a number of other projects including Higham Avenue pumping station (Dallam); Reddish Lane flood management scheme (Lymm); and Dallam Brook pumping station. Draft local plan policies support and seek to enhance ecology and landscaping in a holistic way across sites. The Environment Act 2021 introduced various new requirements for local authorities,

including mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for all Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA) developments. This will mandate a 10% biodiversity uplift on all development sites and is expected to come into force in November 2023. We need to ensure we have the appropriate skills and expertise necessary to meet the requirements of mandatory BNG, e.g. by ring fencing a portion of section 106 funding to support BNG delivery. Currently, we draw on expert advice from the Manchester Ecology Unit to inform planning decisions relating to habitat and biodiversity. We are working with neighbouring authorities and Natural England to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in line with new mandatory requirements set out in the 2021 Environment Act. This will seek to reverse the ongoing decline of biodiversity and nature and restore habitats so that species can thrive. This process will ensure local partners collaborate to agree the best places to help local nature recover. We should seek to dedicate specialist officer time to contribute to this initiative in partnership with neighbouring authorities.

Our updated Local Plan has strengthened policies relating to the protection of areas of underlying peat. We are also looking to secure planning obligations for a management plan for Holcroft Moss, working with Natural England within the wider Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation. Warrington benefits from a rich heritage of tree stock including mature woodlands, specimen trees and tree lined avenues which bring amenity and environmental value to the town. A large proportion of the tree stock was developed during the Warrington Newtown Development Corporation era from the 1970s through to the early 1990s when new housing and industrial developments were established around arterial transport routes bordered by woodland structure planting. The legacy of these plantings makes a major contribution to Warrington's tree cover which in 2016 was estimated to be 13.5%.

We cultivate 18,500m² of pollinator friendly flower meadows throughout the borough in partnership with Parish Councils, local schools, and the Land Trust. In 2021, we began a rewilding programme in some community spaces and verges to enhance biodiversity through bulb and wildflower planting. This programme enhanced the appearance of green spaces and improved local wildlife, bees and other pollinators. The new bus shelter contract includes provision for a number of bus shelters with green roofs.

Risley Moss is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area for Conservation (SAC) and is within the Natural England High Level Stewardship scheme. The site has high biodiversity because of the vast range of connected habitat types including grassland, meadow, fen, bog, reed beds, ponds and water bodies. Rewetting and habitat restoration works have created conditions that have enabled the reintroduction of a number of very rare plant and invertebrate species previously absent from the site.

In addition, rewetting works at Risley Moss help to provide flood attenuation, as the hydrological stability of the mire system, afforded by the management interventions, reduces and slows rainwater runoff into adjacent watercourses, reducing downstream flood risk.

We have been working for over 30 years to manage and monitor Great Crested Newts species at Rixton Clay Pits Nature Reserve, a protected species with large populations in Warrington. We have delivered land management interventions to enhance habitat and breeding waterbodies. This site is also a designated SSSI, SAC and is within the Natural England High Level Stewardship scheme. Retention of the in-house specialist habitat and land management expertise held by our ranger team will be essential for the authority to sustain and enhance biodiversity resilience.

We have been working to transform former Gatewarth landfill site from scrub into open areas of species rich grassland, managed to create appropriate habitat to support ground nesting birds. These capital works are nearing completion but will need sustained grassland management, reduced indiscriminate public access and disturbance from dogs to improve ground nesting bird breeding outcomes.

Next steps

Contribute via the Cheshire resilience forum work plan to review national risks at the local level and highlight climate change as a key risk to the area

Address the increasing risk of severe weather linked to climate change in the Councils Major Emergency Plan

Ensure new development takes account of the impacts of climate change on flood risk by applying the latest climate change allowances as necessary at planning application stage as part of the flood risk assessment (FRA) process

- Ensure FRA's identify effective flood mitigation measures and include these in development proposals
- Ensure FRA's demonstrate how proposed development will not increase flood risk up or downstream of the site, considering all sources of flood risk (fluvial, surface water runoff and drainage)

Ensure flood risk is considered in all stages of the planning process

- Deny development on land where there is high risk of flooding
- Provide flood risk advice and input to planning policy officers
- Comply with FWMA Schedule 3 Implementation

Ensure new developments adopt SUDS in line with new government legislation

Support communities at risk of flooding

- Identify communities at risk of flooding in the borough
- Develop and support flood action groups
- Provide information to landowners and farmers on their responsibilities for managing land drainage to minimise the need for enforcement

Continue to work with key partners to deliver flood risk management schemes

- Ensure schemes are compatible with biodiversity net gain
- Continue to develop collaborative projects with United Utilities and Environment Agency
- Ensure schemes consider increasing flood risk under climate change

Review the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and implement agreed measures

- Align strategic documents with Environment Agency and Government policy

Continue to build our knowledge of key drainage features and flood risk across the borough

Confirm how the council will apply biodiversity net gain to maximise benefits within the borough through the emerging Planning Obligations SPD and Cheshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Promote use of green infrastructure to achieve biodiversity net gain on development sites

Embed adaptation principles within emerging Warrington design guide SPD

Extend rewilding programme to increase biodiversity on council-owned land and verges through planting of wildflowers





Awareness, Engagement, & Support for Action

Background

Awareness and engagement are crucial to promote wider action. Here the council has a unique position and leadership role. We can use our voice to tell the local climate story and so help translate what the global climate crisis means for Warrington. We can also play our part in bringing interests together, or work in partnership with others to achieve more than we can in isolation. Part of our potential role involves signposting people and organisations to available support, or trying to secure support for action where it is lacking.

Recent work and challenges

Upon declaring a climate emergency, we convened the Warrington Climate Emergency Commission. This commission is not a council committee, but a forum that's speaks with an independent voice. It is comprised of a number of advisors with a knowledge and interest of climate issues and representatives from organisations from different sectors from across Warrington. Membership includes representatives from business, youth, and the voluntary sector as well as organisations with an interest in looking after the natural environment. The commission's purpose is to advise the council on meeting its climate emergency commitments as well as to lead the wider local conversation on climate matters. We are represented and present our work at forum meetings to get feedback on it.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that the commission's early activities had limited visibility. More recently we have been able to give it more prominence, although to achieve its full potential much more work will be needed. We now host the commission's web page on our website and recently established a mailing list to help the commission build a wider network of interest. With the benefit of some visibility and public channels of communication, the commission has helped draw together the new climate strategy for Warrington. This built on an initial discussion paper that was subject to public consultation, with the online consultation survey hosted by us. A key challenge going forward will be promoting action in support of the strategy, including helping to build wider means of engagement and support. Too few people are aware of the work going on and what the climate challenge means for them.

Our staff are a key route to encourage action and to get the message out more widely. Since establishing a small climate emergency team, we have increased coverage of climate topics in our staff newsletter and started to build a network of in-house volunteer climate champions. The champions have been a valued test bed for creating a bespoke accredited carbon literacy course for staff and members.

We have made good progress promoting carbon literacy in house having already achieved bronze status as a Carbon Literate Organisation. Through this work we have had contact with other Warrington-based organisations using carbon literacy. We have also been approached by other organisations seeking advice about adopting Carbon Literacy as well as requests to use our course. On the basis of our experience and wider demand we have recently bid for funding to develop a "carbon literacy plus" offer and are awaiting the outcome of this. We have also contributed to wider sub-regional partnership work via the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission. This commission has recently made a series of recommendations for sub regional action.

Several schools in the borough are signed up to the Let's Go Zero campaign, committing to be zero carbon by 2030. The council are official supporters of this campaign and have done some initial

work with schools to promote the initiative. We will also continue to support the borough-wide “count me in” campaign, which seeks to get organisations and individuals to make their own climate pledges. This campaign is being used on Facebook and Twitter to drive participation in this.

Through work on the council’s nature sites, our team of rangers have established effective working partnerships with Natural England, volunteer organisations and the regional business community who engage with the sites as part of their respective corporate social responsibility agenda. We have representatives on the Great Manchester Wetland Partnership and Carbon Landscape Partnership Steering Groups. Both of these programmes focus on the protection, restoration and cultural heritage of mosslands and wetlands throughout the region. The team also provide environmental education services to schools, colleges and universities, and stage events and activities to a range of organisations and the general public, to help raise the profile and importance of the works undertaken.

Next steps

Promote action in support of the Warrington climate emergency strategy

- Develop communication assets to help promote the new climate strategy including social media sharable images and videos
- Explore options to fund wider publicity interventions including paid for advertising, e.g. bus back adverts, and poster sites
- Continue using the council’s social media channels and press output to communicate climate emergency related stories and encourage action
- Continue the climate pledge campaign
- Convene a wider climate communications group – the Warrington climate action network - to help coordinate and amplify communication across Warrington
- Contribute to the planned Warrington climate action group to help develop a wider communications programme
- Support the creation of a climate action website
- Assist the commission to produce a regular climate emergency e-bulletin
- Support the commission’s first annual public Warrington Climate Emergency Forum event/s

Promote routes for engagement

- Promote the new climate emergency e-bulletin sign up
- Promote the national ‘Let’s Go Zero’ campaign to local schools and explore opportunities to share good practice locally
- Promote business commitment through the SME Climate Hub
- Promote existing community initiatives concerning practical action linked to the climate and ecological emergency, e.g. community upcycling and repair projects
- Explore opportunities to harness existing networks and partnerships or develop new ones to engage different sectors with the climate and ecological emergency
- Explore opportunities to engage with sections of the community using and accessing council services, e.g. youth services, adult day centres
- Continue to recruit and support volunteer climate champions in house

Extend and embed carbon literacy

- Progress carbon literacy training in house to meet Carbon Literate Organisation Silver Standard
- Subject to securing funding, extend opportunities for others in Warrington to use carbon literacy as a means of engagement

Support partnership work

- Continue to provide secretariat for the commission’s meeting programme and ensure the council plays its part in the wider local climate conversation through the commission
- Work in partnership with local colleges and the new Education and Skills Commission to develop green skills work including exploring the possibility of establishing a green skills academy, a proposal document is being developed for consideration
- Continue to support the activities of the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission

Driving the plan forward

Governance

This plan is the route to achieve our climate emergency ambitions in line with our new climate and sustainability policy (appendix 2)

The cabinet member for climate and sustainability is responsible for championing the plan, although all cabinet members have responsibility for championing the plan's actions in their respective portfolio area.

The Assistant Chief Executive is the officer lead for championing the plan, although all directors and senior officers have responsibility for championing the plan's actions in their respective directorates.

The plan was developed by a corporate task group chaired by the cabinet member for climate and sustainability. Its development and implementation will be overseen by a new corporate climate emergency group comprised of appropriate officers.

The council's climate and sustainability team, established in September 2021, will play a support and coordination role helping the new corporate climate emergency group progress the plan. This corporate task group will escalate any issues via the Strategic Leadership Team. In recognition that progress will demand new resources, and roles, there will be a need to highlight issues to local members of parliament and direct with relevant government departments and ministers where appropriate.

Progress on the plan will be reported at least annually, initially at greater frequency, to cabinet, with at least an annual report to council. Progress on different work streams within the plan will be subject to scrutiny via various committees of the council in line with each committee's remit and interests.

In order to help councillors take climate and sustainability issues into account in decision-making, a new climate and sustainability implications section will be included in committee reports. In order to help council officers take climate and sustainability issues into account when developing projects, a new climate and sustainability impact tool will be introduced.

Internal Audit will provide assurance on the delivery of elements of the Plan through an annual programme of work, to complement the work of the corporate task group and any scrutiny by the Council's Committees.

Next steps

Establish a corporate climate emergency group to progress the plan

Introduce a climate and sustainability implications section in committee reports

Introduce a climate and sustainability impact tool for developing projects

Commit to lobby government on legislation and finance where necessary

Carbon budget, monitoring and reporting

It is important that we stay within our carbon emissions budget to avoid 'overspending' in early years as we progress towards our 2030 net-zero target. To raise the importance of this, we have provided preliminary figures for our carbon budget within this year's financial budget report. We aim to produce an annual greenhouse gas report outlining our own operational emissions for each financial year. Our emissions will be monitored against our proposed carbon budget to ensure we are on track to reach our target.

In order to streamline the process of producing this report, we need to improve the way in which we record and share data relevant for our emissions footprint. A more efficient reporting process needs to be established whereby data is recorded and gathered in a way that is compatible with the reporting timeline.

Similarly, in recognition that scope 3 emissions appear to make up a only a small percentage of our current footprint, efforts need to be made to improve data collection in areas of the council's activities where we do not currently gather robust information. This includes exploring ways to measure the council's waste generation and improving information relating to staff business travel.

Next Steps

Report our carbon budget alongside our financial budget

Establish a system to record and gather relevant information to facilitate production of annual emission reports

Improve data collection relating to our scope 3 activities

Green Finance

We will not be able to make progress at the speed required without unlocking and attracting sufficient finance. In their Innovating to Net Zero report (2022), the Energy Systems Catapult calculate that the cost of net zero can be kept to within 1-2% GDP if stable and credible strategies are enacted this parliament to help reduce the capital cost. The Office of Budgetary Responsibility estimate achieving net zero by 2050 will cost £1.4 trillion and £400 billion by 2030. In its December 2020 report on Achieving Net Zero, the National Audit Office (NAO) highlighted that local authorities will have a critical part to play and this has been echoed since by numerous respected commentators. Nationally and locally for the Council, green finance will be the key factor in delivering net zero.

Funding for net zero will have to be a combination of public and private sector funds, and we will need to look towards developing and implementing new innovative funding and investment structures. We should see funding and investment as an integral part of the net zero solution, not just a mechanism.

We are seen as a leading council in the use of green finance. We were one of the first councils to develop a Community Municipal Bond and to develop an ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) Treasury Management Strategy. We have developed close links with the international bond markets and have formed a Local Authority ESG Investment Fund (ASIF). We have structured the building out of three solar farms and 164 green affordable homes. We have also secured significant grants towards de-carbonisation projects. With much still to do it is important that Warrington remains at the forefront of green financial innovation, data and analytics. Innovation and managed risk taking need to form part of our culture in line with the findings of the Government's Climate Change Committee Update Report.

Challenges to developing green finances include the accessibility of funding, lack of workforce capacity, internal skills and expertise, conditions of funding and reliability of funding, short deadlines for government funding bids, greenwashing, risk and the lack of a local government innovation culture.

Next Steps

Publish an ESG Investment & Borrowing Strategy with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy each year with progress reported half yearly

Integrate green finance in to mainstream financial decision making

Develop green finance decision-making processes, based on systems thinking

Roll out officer and member training on green finance

Look to invest in green businesses and projects

Ensure there is adequate resourcing in place to bid for government grant funding for climate change schemes and the resource base to deliver the schemes if grant funding is awarded

Maintain and build up a Climate Change Reserve to help fund future climate change initiatives and to mitigate risk

Seek partnership working opportunities both locally, regionally, nationally and internationally in line with the Government's Green Finance Strategy to tap into the significant private sector funding available

Update risk management systems in line with best practice for the emerging climate change agenda

Explore carbon-offsetting investment in line with a council agreed policy

Explore the use of new funding sources which can compete with PWLB, in particular Community Investment Bonds, UK Infrastructure Bank, Municipal Bonds Agency, Green Lenders, Salix, Renewable electricity generation support mechanisms, Energy Performance Contracting

Consider new forms of transaction structures

Organisational development – continuing to progress as a Carbon Literate Organisation

To progress the plan we need to ensure staff and members are equipped to fulfil their roles. We have made good progress promoting carbon literacy in house and need to build on this so that it provides the foundation for developing role specific awareness and skills as well as the wider carbon literate and climate ready culture we need. Our recent bid for innovation funding to combine carbon literacy with follow on support, if successful, will help further develop our capacity and capabilities.

Working with others, both locally and nationally, is important for our own development as an organisation and to avoid re-inventing the wheel. We are an active member of APSE Energy¹⁴ and participate in their events and activities. It is important that we continue to participate to benefit from the learning it provides as well as to contribute our experience for wider benefit.

We actively engage on climate change with neighbouring authorities through sub-regional mechanisms. We have contributed to the work of the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission. This commission has recently made a series of recommendations for sub-regional action.

Next Steps

Extend Carbon Literacy training across all parts of the workforce

Establish an internal Carbon Literacy Alumni network

Develop a communications programme to showcase staff actions and council initiatives in response to the climate emergency

Expand internal Climate Champions network and increase involvement

Embed climate in HR processes e.g. in recruitment and performance

Review employee benefits to reflect climate and ecological objectives

Engage regularly with the workforce on climate issues

- Arrange regular dedicated staff spaces events
- Arrange climate change focus groups

¹⁴The Association of Public Service Excellence's bespoke local authority energy collaboration

Appendix 1: Action plan summary

Goal: Net zero operations

Area: Building decarbonisation

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Develop a Council building decarbonisation framework	Structured route to decarbonise council estate	Short	High	Growth
Award a new building decarbonisation contract	Foundation to develop detailed proposals, funding applications, and the delivery of council building decarbonisation schemes	Short	High	Growth
Develop energy reduction interventions	Lower energy use	Short	Medium	Corporate services
Set high standards for new council building projects	Higher performing facilities in line with net zero and climate resilience objectives	Short	Medium	Growth
Consolidate sites and invest in local facilities	Reduction in number of sites. Improvement in facilities.	Medium	Medium	Growth
Upgrade lighting in council parks/countryside sites and remaining car parks to LED	More energy efficient lighting less power use	Medium	Low	Env & Transport

Goal: Net zero operations

Area: Fleet decarbonisation

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Develop a Council fleet/ plant decarbonisation plan	Structured route to decarbonise council vehicle fleet (and plant) identifying both immediate opportunities for replacement and longer term options for harder to replace vehicles with interim measures for charging and alternative fuels where needed.	Short/ Medium	High	Env & Transport
Decision to be made on future council depot and new waste transfer station	Certainty over future depot location/s to enable investment in new fleet and fuelling and charging facilities. Reduction in refuse vehicle journey lengths	Short / Medium	High	Env & Transport
Develop interventions to increase efficiency of existing fleet and vehicle use	Less polluting fleet and vehicle use	Short/ Medium	Low	Env & Transport
Consider decarbonisation of highways fleet in future contract renewal of service	Decarbonisation of highways fleet	Medium/ Long	Medium	Env & Transport
Investigate installing electric vehicle charging points at Irwell Road Intermediate Care Centre	Establish potential to upgrade lease cars to electric	Short	Medium	Env & Transport

Goal: Net zero operations

Area: Staff travel

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Improve messaging to staff and visitors on sustainable travel options	Higher uptake of sustainable travel options. Sustainable travel options more obvious to staff and visitors	Short	Medium	Corporate Services
Investigate potential for electric pool cars/utilising car club electric cars for council business	Potential for staff to avoid using private vehicles for work and to increase use of lower carbon vehicles	Medium	Medium	Env & Transport
Promote use of e-bikes	Increase uptake of e-bikes	Short	Medium	Env & Transport
Expand provision of pool bikes to other council buildings	Great access to pool bikes across the council's estate	Medium	Medium	Env & Transport
Continue to offer flexible working and ensure hybrid office/home policy is being implemented consistently	Reduction in unnecessary commuting journeys	Ongoing	High	Corporate Services
Establish and promote car sharing database among council employees	Higher uptake of car sharing. Fewer low occupancy car commuting journeys	Medium	Medium	Corporate Services
Improve means of gathering business travel data	Increased understanding of travel modes used for business travel and their impacts	Short	Low	Corporate Services
Review council's essential car user policy	Potential to create greater flexibility in travel choices and reduce private car use where other modes could suffice	Medium	Medium	Corporate Services

Goal: Net zero operations

Area: Procurement

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Review and update contract standard terms and conditions to ensure they reflect the council's climate and ecological ambitions	Council objectives reflected across all contracts	Short	Medium	Corporate Services
Set a clear sustainable procurement policy	Clarity on council objectives within the council and across the supply chain. Reduced climate and ecological impact from procurement and commissioning	Short	Medium	Corporate Services
Decarbonise the council's contract register	Identification of significant contracts due for renewal. Engagement with commissioners and suppliers and contractors. Reduced climate and ecological impact from procurement and commissioning. Improved data.	Medium	High	Corporate Services

Goal: Net zero operations

Area: Waste reduction

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Become paperless where practical and legal	Reduced paper consumption and waste. Shift to electronic notices (with opt-in for paper copies)	Medium	Low	Corporate Services
Improve recycling bin provision at council operated buildings	Increase in sites with recycling provision	Medium	Low	Env & Transport
Improve monitoring of waste	Better understanding of waste and impact	Medium	Low	Env & Transport
Explore means to stop the use of single-use plastics	Reduced single use plastic waste	Medium	Low	Education & Comm services
Explore options to limit waste and increase durability, remanufacture, reuse, recycling and reprocessing resources for further use e.g. biogas from food waste and recycling of tree waste	Reduced waste. Greater resource efficiency.	Medium	Medium	Env & Transport

Goal: Net zero operations

Area: Off-setting residual emissions

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Develop an agreed approach to off-setting	Clarity on approach offsetting to enable use of appropriate off-sets for residual emissions	Medium	Low	Corporate Services
Explore local opportunities to improve natural carbon stores	Identification of local opportunities and potential to improve natural carbon stores	Medium	High	Env & Transport
Explore local opportunities for carbon offsetting by investment in local emissions reduction schemes	Identification of local opportunities and potential to increase local reduction schemes	Medium	Medium	Corporate services
Update woodland restoration and management plan outlining how we are going to manage our existing tree stock into the future	Improved management of stock. Potential to manage to a standard that would count as an off-set	Medium	Medium	Env & Transport

Goal: A resilient council

Area: Identifying risk

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Review climate risks to the council	Understanding of risks for council services	Short	High	Education & Comm Services
Add climate change as a key risk to the council's business continuity template	Climate risks incorporated in business continuity work	Short	High	Education & Comm Services
Raise awareness of risks from a changing climate	Wider awareness of risks from a changing climate	Ongoing	Medium	Education & Comm Services

Goal: A resilient council

Area: Adapting to climate change

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Undertake a review using the Local Partnerships' local authority Adaptation Toolkit		Short	High	Education & Comm Services

Goal: Using our influence for a wider impact

Area: Travel, transport and connection

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Continue to investigate and deliver active travel schemes	Better environment for walking, wheeling and cycling	Ongoing	High	Env & Transport
Promote uptake of electric vehicles by implementing EV strategy	More electric vehicles in use in place of fossil fuelled ones. Wider provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure	Ongoing	High	Corporate services
Continue to deliver workplace, school and residential travel plans	Maintain and increase use of sustainable modes of transport. More investment in sustainable travel modes	Ongoing	High	Env & Transport
Develop a freight strategy to implement sustainable logistics policies	Co-ordinated approach to decarbonising freight. Improved access to alternative fuelling and charging infrastructure	Medium	High	Env & Transport
Improve and maintain bus services across Warrington	New electric bus fleet. More bus priority. Improved bus patronage. Improved user experience	Ongoing	High	Env & Transport
Ensure new development promotes sustainable and active travel	Active travel principles embedded in design and support for new and improved public transport services and active travel infrastructure secured through Planning Obligations	Short	High	Growth

Goal: Using our influence for a wider impact

Area: Energy, buildings and infrastructure

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Report on scale, nature and cost of retrofitting homes across Warrington using Warrington Digital Twin and other data sources	Clarity on the scale, nature and investment needed to retrofit buildings across Warrington	Short	Low	Growth
Develop support for retrofit improvement	More buildings upgraded. Better signposting to existing energy efficiency advice. Greater awareness of need for retrofit amongst landlords and building occupiers. Improved access to finance for retrofit. Improved capacity to provide advice and skills	Medium	High	Education & Comm services
Bid for/access funding for retrofit improvements where opportunities present	More retrofit proposals developed	Medium	High	Growth

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Ensure the new Warrington housing strategy reflects climate emergency concerns and aligns fully with the Warrington Climate Emergency Strategy	Future housing interventions in line with climate and ecological objectives	Short	High	Growth
Make clear the scale of the challenge to help plan for the skills provision	Information to inform provision for necessary skills development	Short	High	Growth
Promote net zero and climate ready approaches for new developments	More 'future proof' buildings and developments (avoiding the need for further and more costly retrofit interventions). New design guides and development frameworks	Short	High	Growth
Explore feasibility for local solar farms and other renewable opportunities	Increased local renewable energy capacity	Medium	Medium	Corporate Services
Explore opportunity for and promote solar group buying scheme for residents and businesses	Increased uptake of solar generation	Short	Medium	Corporate Services
Develop the business case to secure investment in local heat networks	Investment in low carbon heat network infrastructure	Short	High	Growth
Investigate arrangements to sell renewable power locally, drawing on ideas developed in the Rewire NW project	Progress towards a smarter local energy system	Medium	Medium	Corporate services
Review opportunities to improve leased and maintained buildings e.g. schools	Lower carbon climate ready schools	Medium	High	Growth

Goal: Using our influence for a wider impact

Area: Resources, Consumption & Wider Impacts

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Develop interventions to improve domestic recycling	Higher domestic recycling rates. Improved understanding of recycling patterns	Short	Medium	Env & Transport
Develop interventions to reduce consumption and promote circular economy practices	Less waste.	Medium	High	Env & Transport
Embed climate change and ecological considerations in decision making processes	Improved basis for decision taking and developing projects	Short	High	Corporate services
Prepare for measures to come in under the Waste and Environment Act	Boost to recycling. Domestic food waste collection introduced	Medium	High	Env & Transport
Promote climate and nature friendly diets	Reduced meat and dairy consumption. Healthier diets. Less consumption of ecologically damaging foodstuffs	Medium	High	Education & Comm services
Promote local and sustainable food production	Increase in production and consumption of local, seasonal, organic and fairtrade food	Medium	High	Education & Comm services
Raise awareness of the wider impacts of our purchases and investments	Divestment from fossil fuels	Medium	High	Corporate services

Goal: Using our influence for a wider impact

Area: Resilience and nature

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Contribute via the Cheshire resilience forum work plan to review national risks at the local level and highlight climate change as a key risk to the area	Resilience Forum work plan reflects climate risks	Short/ Medium	High	Education & Comm Services
Address the increasing risk of severe weather linked to climate change in the council's Major Emergency Plan	Emergency plan reflects severe weather events linked to climate change	Short/ Medium	High	Education & Comm Services

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Ensure new development takes account of the impacts of climate change on flood risk by applying the latest climate change allowances as necessary at planning application stage as part of the flood risk assessment (FRA) process	New development takes account of heightened flood risk from climate change. Flood risk assessment process informs new developments	Ongoing	Medium	Env & Transport
Ensure flood risk is considered in all stages of the planning process	Planning process accounts for flood risk at all stages	Ongoing	Medium	Growth
Ensure new developments adopt SUDS in line with new government legislation	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems introduced widely	Short/ Ongoing	Medium	Env & Transport
Support communities at risk of flooding	Greater resilience in communities at risk from flooding	Medium	High	Education & Comm Services
Continue to work with key partners to deliver flood risk management schemes	New flood risk management schemes implemented	Ongoing	High	Env & Transport
Review the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and implement agreed measures	Up to date flood risk management strategy	Medium	High	Env & Transport
Continue to build our knowledge of key drainage features and flood risk across the borough	Good understanding of drainage features and flood risk	Ongoing	Medium	Env & Transport
Confirm how the council will apply biodiversity net gain to maximise benefits within the borough through the emerging Planning Obligations SPD and Cheshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy	New biodiversity net gain obligations on developers maximise local benefits and support strategic nature recovery objectives	Short	High	Growth
Promote use of green infrastructure to achieve biodiversity net gain on development sites	Green infrastructure improvements on development sites	Ongoing	Medium	Growth
Embed adaptation principles within emerging Warrington design guide SPD	More climate ready resilient developments. Design guide informs development.	Short	Medium	Growth
Extend rewilding programme to increase biodiversity on council-owned land and verges through planting of wildflowers	Increased biodiversity	Short/ Ongoing	High	Env & Transport

Goal: Using our influence for a wider impact

Area: Awareness, Engagement, & Support for Action

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Promote action in support of the Warrington climate emergency strategy	Greater awareness, engagement and action on climate and ecological issues. More visibility for climate and ecological issues. More pledges of action and action plans	Ongoing	High	Corporate Services
Promote routes for engagement	More schools signed up to let go zero	Ongoing	High	Corporate Services
Extend and embed carbon literacy	Greater carbon literacy. Council progress to Carbon Literate Organisation silver status and beyond. More organisations adopting carbon literacy	Short/ Medium	High	Corporate Services
Support partnership work	Warrington Climate Emergency Commission develops as vehicle for promoting an effective borough-wide climate response. Council feeds into wider partnerships including skills commission and sustainable and inclusive growth commission	Ongoing	High	Corporate Services

Goal: Driving the plan forward

Area: Governance

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Establish a corporate climate emergency group to progress the plan	Corporate mechanism in place to drive progress with climate emergency action plan	Short	High	Corporate services
Introduce climate and sustainability implications section in committee reports	Implications on climate and sustainability clear at point decisions are taken. Improved information for decision making.	Short	High	Corporate Services
Introduce climate and sustainability impact tool for developing projects	Implications for climate and sustainability factored into the development of projects	Short	High	Corporate Services
Commit to lobby government on legislation and finance where necessary	Better understanding of constraints on local action. Improved allocation of resources. Improved legal framework to support net zero and climate ready transition	Ongoing	High	Corporate Services

Goal: Using our influence for a wider impact

Area: Carbon budget monitoring and reporting

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Report our carbon budget alongside our financial budget	Consideration of climate implications of council budget	Ongoing	Low	Corporate Services
Establish a system to record and gather relevant information to facilitate production of annual emission reports	Efficient means to gather and report relevant data	Short/ Ongoing	Low	Corporate Services
Improve data collection relating to our scope 3 activities	Better understanding of the council's indirect impacts	Ongoing	Low	Corporate Services

Goal: Using our influence for a wider impact

Area: Green finance

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Publish an ESG Investment & Borrowing Strategy with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy each year with progress reported half yearly	Environment, social and governance issues are picked up in the council's treasury management approach	Short/ ongoing	High	Corporate Services
Integrate green finance in to mainstream financial decision making	More robust financial decisions	Medium	Medium	Corporate Services
Develop green finance decision-making processes, based on systems thinking	More robust financial decisions	Medium	Medium	Corporate Services
Roll out officer and member training on green finance	Wider awareness of green finance	Medium	High	Corporate Services
Look to invest in green businesses and projects	Council investments contribute to meeting climate and ecological objectives	Medium	Medium	Corporate Services
Ensure there is adequate resourcing in place to bid for government grant funding for climate change schemes and the resource base to deliver the schemes if grant funding is awarded	Greater number of successful bids funding. More climate and ecological projects delivered	Medium	High	Corporate Services
Maintain and build up a Climate Change Reserve to help fund future climate change initiatives and to mitigate risk	Funding available to support future climate and ecological projects	Short/ ongoing	High	Corporate Services

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Seek partnership working opportunities both locally, regionally, nationally and internationally in line with the Government's Green Finance Strategy to tap into the significant private sector funding available	Greater access to green finance	Medium	High	Corporate Services
Update risk management systems in line with best practice for the emerging climate change agenda	Improved information for decision making	Short	Medium	Corporate Services
Explore carbon-offsetting investment in line with a council agreed policy	Identification of investment opportunities in line with the council's agreed approach to off-setting	Medium	Low	Corporate Services
Explore the use of new funding sources which can compete with PWLB, in particular Community Investment Bonds, UK Infrastructure Bank, Municipal Bonds Agency, Green Lenders, Salix, Renewable electricity generation support mechanisms, Energy Performance Contracting	Identification of competitive sources of finance for climate and ecological projects	Medium	Medium	Corporate Services
Consider new forms of transaction structures	Innovative transaction structure to support green finance investments			Corporate Services

Goal: Driving the plan forward

Area: Organisational development – continuing to progress as a Carbon Literate Organisation

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Impact	Lead Directorate
Extend Carbon Literacy training across all parts of the workforce	Staff engaged in climate emergency response. Staff equipped to translate the implication of the climate emergency into their roles	Ongoing	High	Corporate Services
Establish an internal Carbon Literacy Alumni network	Staff engaged in climate emergency response over the longer term. Learning consolidated and developed.	Short	Medium	Corporate Services
Develop a communications programme to showcase staff actions and council initiatives in response to the climate emergency.	Feedback on council approach. Staff engaged in climate emergency response. Wider awareness. Stimulation of wider action	Ongoing	Medium	Corporate Services
Expand internal Climate Champions network and increase involvement	Staff engaged in climate emergency response. Stimulation of wider action. Feedback on council approach	Ongoing	Medium	Corporate Services
Embed climate in HR processes e.g. in recruitment and performance	Underlines council's value of carbon literacy, underlines importance of climate emergency to job roles	Short	Medium	Corporate Services
Review employee benefits to reflect climate and ecological objectives	Employee benefit scheme supports wider climate approach	Short	Low	Corporate Services
Engage regularly with the workforce on climate issues	Staff engaged in climate emergency response. Feedback to inform council approach	Ongoing	Medium	Corporate Services

Appendix 2: Warrington Borough Council's Climate and Sustainability Policy, October 2022

Warrington Borough Council recognises it has a role to play to help to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies and promote environmental sustainability.

We equally recognise that we can exert this positive influence by how we organise our operations and services, the policies we set, the regulations we oversee, the goods and services we commission and manage, the investments we make and the example we set to others. We know that by taking action to address the global climate and ecological emergencies we can help improve local quality of life, help improve the health and well-being of the communities we serve, help support a thriving and sustainable local economy, and improve resilience to the impacts we face, and help bring nature into recovery.

Our commitment to act

Warrington Borough Council is committed to act in the face of the climate and ecological emergencies. We aim to:

- Show leadership by working to be 'net zero' for carbon emissions across our operations by 2030
- Promote action to help the wider Borough reach 'near zero' emissions by 2041 in line with an independent assessment of what the UN's Paris Agreement means for our area
- Help identify risks and vulnerabilities from a changing climate and take steps to help build resilience and adapt to these changes so that the impacts are less severe than they would otherwise be
- Minimise our environmental impact
- Operate as a resource, energy and water efficient organisation minimising waste energy use and water use, and shifting to cleaner sources of heat and power
- Operate as a travel efficient organisation, minimising unnecessary transport, and encouraging a shift to more sustainable means of transport and to fossil fuel free vehicles
- Help bring nature into recovery

How we'll achieve our aims

Warrington Borough Council seeks to realise its aims by ensuring that climate, biodiversity and environmental sustainability issues are an

integral part of its decision-making, service delivery and resource allocation processes, by learning from and working with others in partnership, and by seeking to show leadership and by encouraging wider action. We will:

- Seek to embed climate, ecological and environmental sustainability considerations in decision making and ways of working across all areas of council activity
- Adopt a climate emergency action plan and seek to limit greenhouse gas emissions through a carbon budget
- Work to be a 'Carbon Literate' organisation helping councillors and staff access certified carbon literacy courses and other relevant training
- Monitor progress and seek to achieve continual improvement
- Communicate progress regularly and publicly
- Support the activities of the Warrington Climate Emergency Commission and play our part to help progress the Warrington Climate Emergency Strategy
- Encourage learning and innovation within and between organisations and work with others to promote carbon literacy more widely and to support the development of skills and expertise needed for the transition to a more environmentally sustainable, net zero, climate ready world.

Responsibilities and resources

All elected members of the council and employees have a role in helping to put this policy into practice. The Council's Chief Executive, directors, and managers have responsibility to incorporate climate, ecological and environmental sustainability issues into business planning and day-to-day procedures and practices. Councillors have responsibility for shaping policy, taking decisions, and scrutinising progress and communicating and encouraging activity in the wider community. The portfolio holder for Climate and Sustainability has the role to champion this agenda at Cabinet. We seek to make the best use of the resources we have available, to make the case for additional resources where needed, and to work with others where necessary to overcome current barriers to action and so deliver cost effective solutions to the problems we face.

Appendix 3: Feedback from consultation with internal Climate Champions

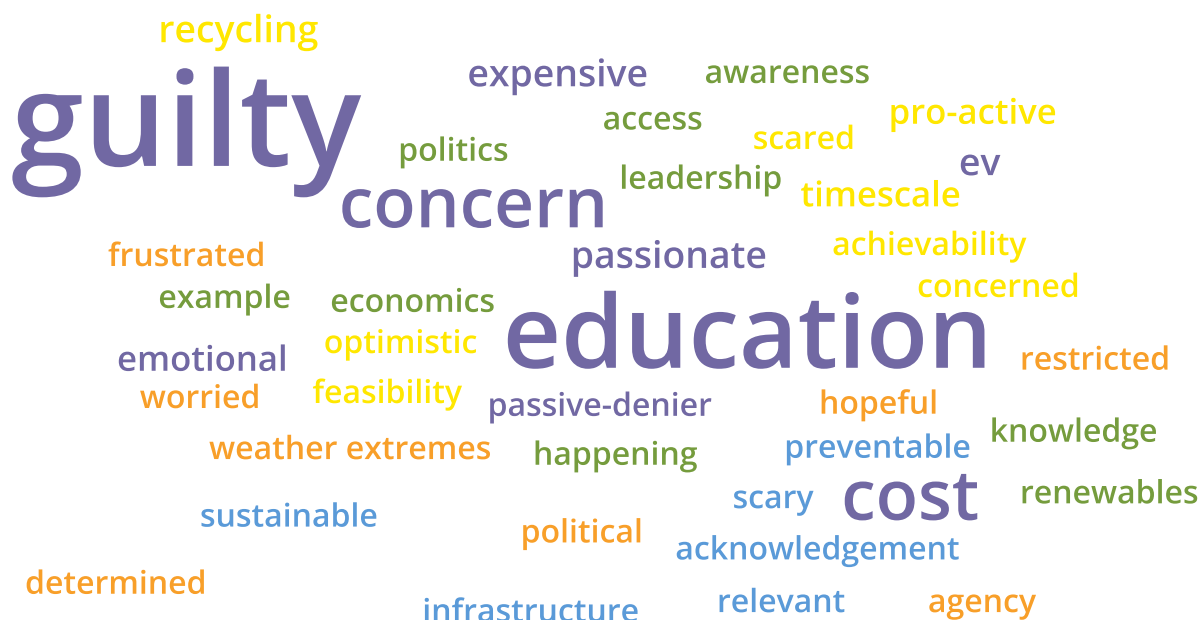
A meeting was held with our internal climate champions and they were invited to give input to the development of the climate action plan. Below is a summary of the suggestions made.

- Suggestion to condense employees working in Time Square offices to certain floors when there are lower staff numbers present, to avoid needing to power/heat the whole building.
- Train staff who drive vehicles on how to drive efficiently and optimise fuel consumption
- Suggestion to adopt an e-billing service for all council tax and revenues/benefits reminders to replace existing printed postal service
- Request to keep council-wide flexible working policy in place to allow minimum 2 days per week in the office, avoiding the need for more staff to travel where not necessary
- Request for financial resource to be secured to allow the council's workplace travel plan to be implemented and delivered successfully
- There is currently a policy which inhibits the use of posters and notice boards in the 1 Time Square office. There was a suggestion to remove this policy to improve messaging on climate work and events, and promote sustainable travel options.
- Review the council's essential car user policy to avoid unnecessary need for staff to have vehicles on hand. It is likely there are many that no longer need this status. Savings from could be reinvested into other environmental or travel projects.
- Currently the Town Centre SPD's requirement for developers to make a financial contribution towards sustainable travel in exchange for a zero-parking provision at new developments. The travel team have also bid successfully for the delivery of travel plans at other sites within the borough. It would be good if this could be expanded further and more sites pay WBC to deliver travel plans at new development sites to ensure that delivery takes place.
- When a planning condition is placed on a permission for a new development, the requirement is that the travel plan is submitted for approval and then implemented for a period of 5 years. More enforcement is needed to ensure these are being implemented. The council could follow up each year with the site to request monitoring data and details of the initiatives implemented.
- Suggest setting up and running climate change focus groups, also incorporating non-Council organisations within Warrington. A place where different organisations, businesses or community groups could discuss what work they undertake and how successful it's been, to exchange ideas and act as a focus for future environmental work in the borough.
- Consider congestion charging in the town centre with exclusions for electric or low emissions vehicles.
- Plant more pollinators in the town centre to improve biodiversity.
- Work with WOB to improve bus services. Consider express bus routes that are more direct during busy times e.g. commuter journeys or to main sites like the hospital.
- Suggest extending cycle infrastructure across town and ensure they are safe
- Limit the use of outdoor heaters in restaurants as these consume a lot of power.
- Centralise procurement so that suppliers are managed by a central team who should consider social value and environmental impact weighting
- Become paperless where possible
- Consider park and ride options to reduce traffic in the town, e.g. at motorway hubs
- Less new housing developments to avoid more vehicles coming into the borough
- All new developments should go further in regards to renewable energy provision

Appendix 4: Feedback from internal Climate Emergency Staff Space

A dedicated staff space was held in January 2023 where colleagues were given the opportunity to reflect on their own personal feelings towards climate change and discuss the council's role in responding to the emergency.

All attendees were asked to write down their top three feelings towards the climate emergency. The results are displayed below.



Many staff recognised areas where they felt the council were doing well concerning climate change, these include:

- Transport – incoming electric buses, cycling map, resurfacing of the Trans-Pennine trail, free EV charging at Time Square and other car parks, Mayoral electric car, and the Time Square community Car Club
- Renewable energy and heat schemes – the council's three solar farms, solar PV installations on social housing, and successful funding bids for ground source heat pumps at the Town Hall and Walton Hall
- Employee benefits – Cycle 2 Work scheme, EV salary sacrifice scheme, and staff pool bikes
- Education and awareness – internal carbon literacy training and work undertaken with schools

Suggested future actions from colleagues who attended the staff space are summarised below:

- Provide more sustainable or green rewards via internal council staff reward scheme 'Warrington Rewards'
- Improve messaging to council partners on importance of sustainability e.g. by encouraging more remote meetings
- Consider putting renewable energy on more council owned buildings and schools
- Consider composting food waste from Warrington Market
- Shift towards a paperless office
- Embed climate change and sustainability in HR processes e.g. recruitment and induction
- Limit use of Time Square appliances e.g. dishwashers
- Improve public messaging on what items can and cannot be recycled in the blue bin
- Increase uptake of carbon literacy training and extend to external audiences
- Consider offering EV pool cars for staff
- Decarbonise the contract register and embed net-zero in tendering and new contracts

- Enable car sharing via databases/apps and provide incentive to do so
- Maximise office space via hot desking to reduce need for all floors to be open
- Utilise means for public messaging to educate and improve awareness, e.g. via digital screens, billboards, social media
- Investigate a workplace parking levy
- Improve design standards to require lower carbon homes and futureproof buildings against severe weather, require more active travel and electric charging provision in new developments
- Consider environmental impact of materials used in infrastructure or highways projects and improvements
- Maximise council managed green space and verges for biodiversity, drainage and carbon capture
- Use council messaging to change the narrative on car use, e.g. publish statistics about Warrington car dependency, traffic levels and air pollution – change the focus from ‘lots of traffic’ to ‘too many car users’
- Separate council targets by directorate and assign responsibility, report regularly on progress
- Arrange internal staff briefings on climate matters and energy saving sessions
- Arrange something similar for communities, working with Parishes and schools
- Make carbon emissions data more tangible and meaningful e.g. add a monetary value or equivalent emissions scenario
- Trial use of electric scooters in the borough
- Extend car club into smaller community locales so they are more accessible
- Introduce park and ride buses from key locations
- Lobby for national funding and support for decarbonisation to level the investment that other parts of the UK benefit from e.g. London
- Use insights into behavioural change to focus climate campaigns
- Improve management of allotments and expand where land becomes available