

Climate Change Strategy

2023 - 2030



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A word from our Deputy Leader, Councillor Amanda Serjeant

Climate change is one of the most significant challenges humanity faces globally, and will require us to make substantial changes in the borough of Chesterfield.

In 2019, Chesterfield Borough Council declared a climate emergency and with support from members of the local community we created our first Climate Change Action Plan. Now, four years on we have made some significant steps towards becoming a carbon neutral council, but we still have more to do.

Since our baseline year (2019/20), we have reduced our emissions by around a third (32%), to March 2022 and there has been significant work across all council services to reduce emissions. Recent highlights of the work we have completed to date include making sustainability and climate change a central theme of the latest Local Plan, introducing climate change as a formal requirement in our decision making and ensuring all of our energy comes from renewable sources.

We are continuing to do all we can to ensure we focus our efforts where we know it will have the biggest impact – like reducing energy use in our buildings and homes, and this new strategy underpins our plans to achieve our targets, supporting our actions now to safeguard our future.

The latest 'Are You Being Served' council survey showed that a majority of local people are concerned about climate change and looking to find ways that we can make a difference as a community. We have used this feedback along with responses from our recent consultation and targeted research to help develop our new strategy.

The new seven-year strategy (2023-2030) is based around several themes including: buildings and energy use, travel, green space, land use and offsetting carbon emissions. This is our formal commitment to putting climate change at the centre of everything we do as a council, ensuring this is always considered as part of our service output and decision-making processes.

Reducing carbon emissions and making vital steps to cut the environmental impacts from our services will help us to continue to protect our communities and ensure that future projects planned in our borough are equipped for a changing climate.

We are acting now to protect the future of our borough and play our part in the world-wide drive to reduce the effects of climate change.

I am committed to driving our commitment of putting climate change at the heart of all projects we undertake as a council, and I am confident that our communities will join us in progressing our efforts to becoming a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 and help us to lay the groundwork to achieve our goal of being a carbon neutral borough by 2050.



Councillor Amanda Serjeant

Deputy Leader

Chesterfield Borough Council

A Serjeant

1 Introduction and executive summary

- 1.1 Chesterfield Borough Council's Climate Change Strategy 2023 - 2030 and accompanying delivery plan are our public commitment to addressing climate change both within the council and with our communities, setting out a framework for the council's activities for the next seven years. The strategy has been designed to complement our new Council Plan and to ensure that our approach to climate change is embedded within everything we do.
- 1.2 We are fully committed to putting climate change at the heart of council activity and we will continue to demonstrate this, ensuring that it is an integral part of our decision-making processes and service delivery.
- 1.3 Climate change is a significant issue that affects everybody. In common with many other local authorities, the council declared a climate emergency in 2019¹ with the intention of becoming a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 and supporting the transition of the borough to carbon neutrality by 2050.
- 1.4 Following the climate emergency declaration, the council adopted an initial Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) which ran from 2020 to 2023. This strategy is the successor to the first action plan, providing a broad framework for the council's activities between 2023 and 2030. The strategy is accompanied by a climate change delivery plan, which is a working document that will be monitored and reviewed at least annually over the lifetime of the strategy. Having a more detailed, regularly reviewed delivery plan alongside the broader long-term strategy will enable the council to respond to emerging technologies, funding streams, and new information.

1.5 Grounded in an enhanced evidence base, the strategy sets out six themes for our activities during 2023 - 2030:

1: Buildings and energy use

2: Travel

3: Green space, land use and offsetting

4: Communications, engagement and training

5: Data, monitoring, and corporate activity

6: Council influence and partnership activity

Each theme is described at a high level within this document and is intended to provide a structure for activity described more fully in the accompanying delivery plan.



2 Strategic and legislative context

Council Plan

- 2.1 Our vision at Chesterfield Borough Council is ‘putting our communities first’. We are here to serve and support our communities including our residents, tenants, businesses, visitors, students, and voluntary groups. Together we will continue to make our borough a great place to live, work, visit and invest in.
- 2.2 The council, as a community leader, service provider, employer, and commissioner of goods and services, has a responsibility to take urgent action with partners and local communities to combat the negative impacts of climate change.
- 2.3 Our Council Plan contains three key priority areas: Making Chesterfield a Thriving Borough, Improving Quality of Life for Local People, and Building a More Resilient Council.
- 2.4 The Climate Change Strategy and delivery plan, and the use of our Climate Change Impact Assessment Tool, result in climate change considerations and activities being embedded throughout the council’s activities. The priorities set out in the delivery plan will inform key priorities such as asset management, fleet management and delivery of energy efficient, low carbon homes.
- 2.5 This document has close links with council strategies for economic growth (the Growth Strategy), local planning control (the Local Plan) and council strategies to manage our commercial and domestic property portfolios (Asset Management Strategy, and Housing Strategy).

- 2.6 In addition to the council's internal policy and strategy, locally, Derbyshire County Council has adopted the goal of reducing emissions generated by the county council to net-zero by 2032 with a further aim of achieving county decarbonisation by 2050². Vision Derbyshire, which is a collective of local authorities across Derbyshire (including Chesterfield Borough Council) has developed a Climate Change Strategy in partnership which has been referenced and embedded in our own delivery plan.
- 2.7 As a result of the strong collaborative regional working across Derbyshire, the area was successful in securing a County Deal from government, as part of plans to 'level up' investment across the country. The deal will mean the establishment of an East Midlands Mayoral Combined County Authority, with extra investment for our county as well as the transfer of specific powers in areas like transport, bus services, housing and skills from central government to a local level, giving greater autonomy to local leaders over decision making and funding. Over the forthcoming years, this is likely to enable partners to work together and maximise opportunities to tackle the impacts of climate change across the County.

Legislative responsibilities

- 2.8 The UK is a signatory of the Paris Agreement which set the international target to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C with the aim of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels³. To reach this goal, the UK has adopted a legally binding target to reach net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 (as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 amended in 2019⁴).

- 2.9 A range of specific regulations have a bearing on council and wider borough activities. These include government commitments to:
- Phase out the sale of fossil fuelled vehicles⁵
 - Phase out sale of natural gas boilers⁵
 - Modify the building regulations to include the Future Homes and Buildings Standard in 2025
- 2.10 It is important to note that (as yet) English second tier local authorities have very little explicit statutory obligation to conduct activities to address climate change or report on emissions. This is significant because without statutory obligations, additional funding and guidance for activity is not available from central government. This has led to a wide range of different approaches, levels of activity, available funds, and reporting measures across different local authorities in the UK.
- 2.11 It is anticipated that there will soon be a requirement for English local authorities to publish their emissions and progress towards net zero. By developing an annual report approach, the council will be well-placed to meet this anticipated requirement, and to demonstrate progress towards delivering the strategy and reaching organisational targets.

3 Climate change

- 3.1 Climate change is a major long-term shift in the Earth's weather patterns. While there are many natural factors that affect the climate, scientists agree that human activity (mostly burning fossil fuels) is the main cause of the changes we are experiencing.
- All reputable science indicates climate change is real and is caused by human activity.
- 3.2 Changes to the climate in Chesterfield have already been observed: peak summer temperatures have risen by an average of 1.9°C and average winter rainfall has increased by 12% since records began in 1880⁷.
- 3.3 Future changes to the climate depend on how quickly humans act to change our activity, but current projections suggest that we can expect average summer temperatures in the borough to increase by between 1.6 and 6.3°C by 2080 (when compared to pre-industrial levels). We can also expect winter rainfall to increase by between 6% and 56% over the same period. The wide margin of possible effects is a reflection of the uncertainty in how global emissions will change over the next fifty years.
- 3.4 The expected changes in the climate are likely to result in a local increase in the frequency and severity of floods, droughts, and heatwaves. The effects are likely to disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in our society, particularly residents in areas of high deprivation, the disabled, young children, and the elderly.

4 Actions to date

- 4.1 Following the council's climate emergency declaration, Chesterfield Borough Council developed a Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) detailing thirty-nine actions to be carried out by the council before 2023. This CCAP was formally adopted by the council in early 2020⁸ and amended in 2021⁹ to include six additional actions to build an evidence base for future activity, and improve organisational capability for further development.
- 4.2 Becoming carbon neutral will involve the council changing its energy and fuel use. A preliminary estimate of emissions taken for our baseline year (2019/20 – when we declared a climate emergency) shows total annual emissions from council sources to be around 3,867 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e).

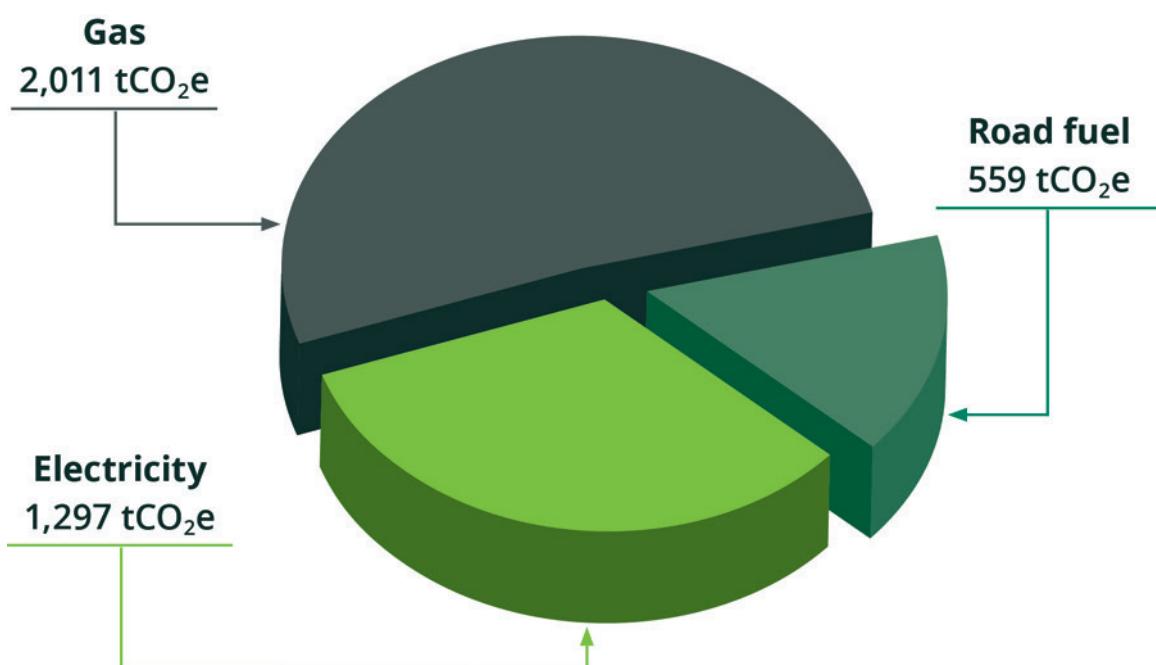


Fig 1: Chesterfield Borough Council emissions 2019/20

- 4.3 In the baseline year (2019/20) we estimate that Chesterfield Borough Council was directly responsible for less than 1% of borough emissions as shown in figure 2 below.

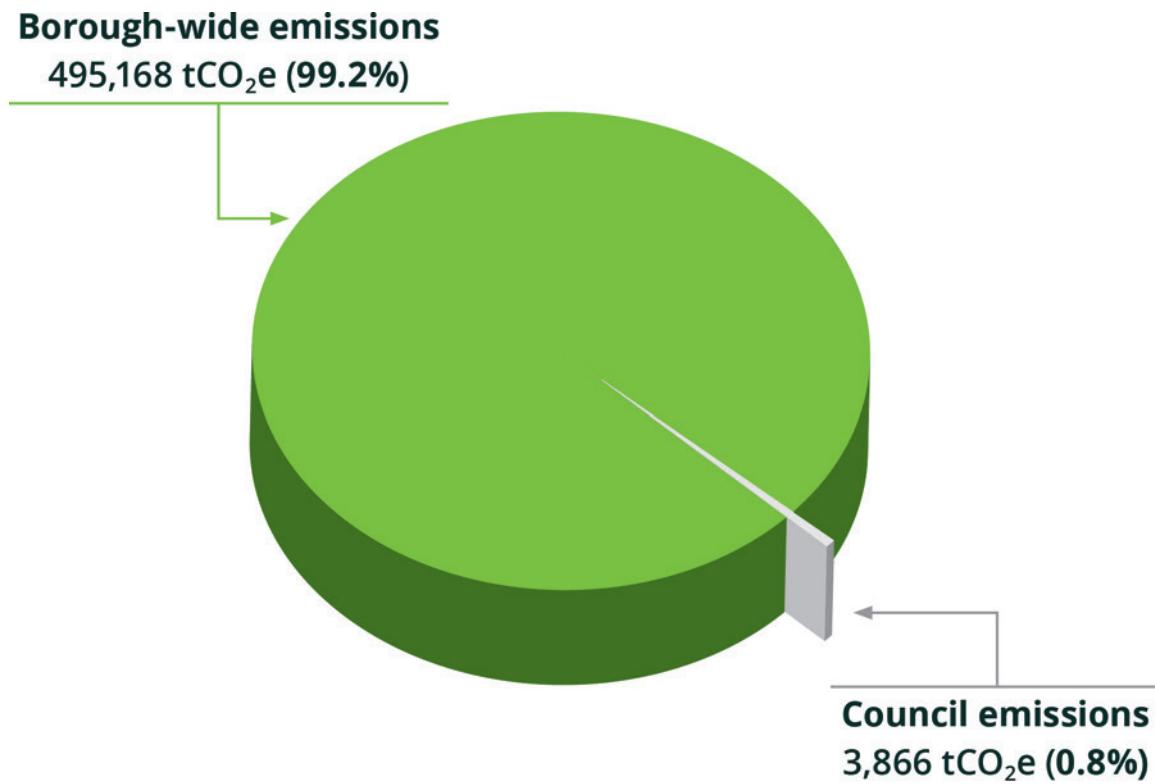


Fig 2: Chesterfield Borough Council emissions as a percentage of Borough-wide emissions

- 4.4 Since declaration of the climate emergency, the council's emissions (relating to the 2030 target) have dropped by 32%, and borough-wide emissions (relating to the 2050 target) have fallen by 7.5%¹⁰ between 2019 and 2020 the most recent data available.

- 4.5 Our electricity use has been produced from renewable sources since April 2020. This has already had a significant impact on our emissions as a council as shown in the shaded area of the graph below.
- 4.6 We estimate that the council has already reduced its emissions by around a third (32%) from when we declared the climate emergency (in 2019) to the end of the financial year 2021/22.

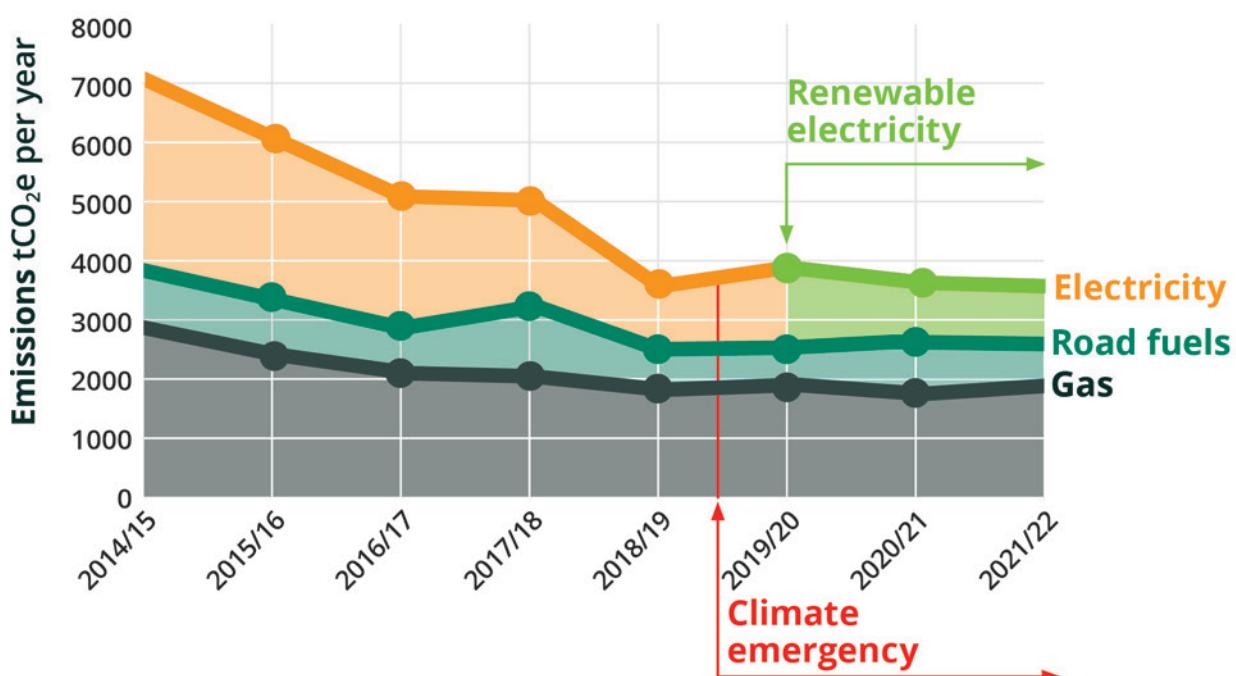


Fig 3: Stacked graph showing council emissions by source

- 4.7 A wide range of other activities have been carried out to support council and borough decarbonisation including:
- Capital improvements within the council's housing stock to improve thermal efficiency is continuing to schedule. The average rating for Chesterfield Borough Council housing stock is currently SAP 72 (Band C). This is well above the national average of 62 (social housing 67, owner occupied 61, and private rented 60.)

- £1.5 million of external funding has been secured to improve thermal efficiency for owner occupiers and private sector landlords with energy inefficient properties. Future funding will be administered through a service agreement with E.ON
- All internal and external light fittings in Chesterfield Borough Council-maintained properties are being switched to LED units when replaced, and virtually all the streetlights, bus stops, and lit bollards in the Chesterfield area are now using LEDs
- Chesterfield Borough Council has received around £170,000 from OLEV for on-street electric car charge-points
- The Local Plan prioritises active modes of travel and this has had a clear impact on the design of a number of residential developments. All new-build houses with off-street parking are being fitted with electric charge points as a standard planning requirement
- The Love Chesterfield Business Awards now includes a Sustainability Award
- The £25.2 million Staveley Town Deal funding includes green / clean developments as a key pillar of the programme
- A tree canopy assessment has been undertaken which estimates a canopy cover of around 20% of the borough by area. This report includes an estimated total value of the trees within the borough for: carbon storage (£2.9 million) and an annual value covering carbon uptake, pollution abatement, and avoided flooding (£4.6 million per year)
- Around 3,500 trees have been planted by the council since the 2020/21 planting season

- Changes to road verge management have taken place to reduce cutting while maintaining safety standards. We mow less frequently than all neighbouring councils and we have also allocated 27 large areas of council-owned land for a meadow mowing regime
 - The Communications and Engagement Strategy developed during 2020/21 is now being progressed. This includes the Chesterfield Climate Action Now campaign (CAN) which is engaging audiences on a range of platforms and issues
 - Climate change questions were included in the “Are you being served?” resident’s satisfaction survey for the first time. The results are being used to inform ongoing communications work on climate change
 - A large number of other local authorities have expressed an interest in the Climate Change Impact Assessment Tool, and several are already operating versions that they have adapted for their own use
 - We have begun an extended programme of training for officers and elected members using the Climate Fresh and Carbon Literacy courses
- 4.8 Development of the Climate Change Strategy 2023 – 2030 has been undertaken with significant internal engagement at all levels and within all services across the council to ensure that the strategy and delivery plan are realistic and achievable. In addition, as part of our ongoing engagement in relation to climate change, and to complement the ‘CAN’ (Climate Action Now) campaign, the council ran a public consultation on the themes of the proposed strategy during November 2022. This consultation has provided additional insight into the priorities of stakeholders and the wider local community and has been used to enhance the originally proposed themes and key activities. Significant activity will be undertaken within the Communications, Engagement and Training theme to continue to develop participation in the council’s climate change activities in the wider community.



5 The new strategy priority areas

- 5.1 The principle objectives of the new Climate Change Strategy build upon the council's original climate change commitment i.e. to decarbonise the council's operations to become carbon neutral by 2030, and to work toward decarbonising the wider borough by 2050.
- 5.2 This strategy document represents the next stage of the council's climate actions, intended to run from 2023 to 2030, in particular it makes use of an improved evidence base including:
 - Lessons learned from developing and implementing the Climate Change Action Plan
 - Bespoke research^{7,11-13}
 - Changes in our understanding of the climate emergency from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)⁶
 - Improvement in our understanding of the actions of other local councils
 - Changes in the broader political landscape, with a range of strategies and legislative changes
 - Responses to climate change questions in the residents' satisfaction survey (autumn 2021)¹⁴
 - A public consultation carried out in late 2022.
- 5.3 In addressing the expected climatic changes in the borough and the role of the borough council, we clearly define the targets set by the council and allocate these to six themes which are addressed in detail in the associated delivery plan.

Themes:

1. Buildings and energy use
2. Travel
3. Green space, land use and offsetting
4. Communications, engagement and training
5. Data, monitoring, and corporate activity
6. Council influence and partnership activity



Buildings and energy use

5.4 Council emissions

The council has already made significant progress in decarbonising our energy use during the previous Climate Change Action Plan. Chesterfield Borough Council does however operate a wide range of buildings which are heavily reliant on gas to heat and operate. These operate at a range of scales from small buildings with modest needs, to two leisure centres which represent an extremely large space and water heating requirement.

- 5.5 Over the next seven years, the council will need to take action to significantly reduce its reliance on gas (which represents more than three quarters of the council's current emissions). This is the single largest impact we can have on reducing our organisational emissions.
- 5.6 Throughout the strategy, the council plans to increase capacity to create business cases and take opportunity of emerging external funding, to complement the council's own investment and maximise benefits. This is vital because of the high level of investment that is anticipated to be required, particularly in the decarbonisation of the council's premises, for example, swimming pools and less efficient, older or listed buildings. This business case and investment activity will be supported further by the proposed energy monitoring arrangements in the Data Monitoring and Corporate Activity theme, and also by the council's Asset Management Strategy.

5.7 Borough-wide emissions

In terms of wider emissions, the overwhelming majority of commercial and domestic properties in the borough use gas-fired boilers. While the council has limited influence over privately owned buildings, the council owns, manages, and lets out over 8,500 council houses and other properties.

Work to decarbonise the wider built environment in the borough represents a substantial aspect of national and local initiatives and is included under the 2050 target.

Travel

5.8 Council fleet

The council operates a fleet of vehicles to support a range of different services within the borough. These include the road vehicles used to transport staff and equipment, and specialist machinery (e.g. lawnmowers) used to maintain properties and green space within the borough. While we have trialled a number of alternatives, the fleet is currently mostly petrol and diesel fuelled. Decarbonisation of these vehicles will form a core element of council activities to reach the 2030 target.

5.9 Council grey fleet

The term “grey fleet” includes a range of private vehicles which are used by officers and elected members to travel to and from work, to meetings, and to site visits to carry out their duties. The council has limited control over these modes of travel but can support and encourage transition to alternatives. These may include improved efficiency through car-sharing, alternative forms of transport (e.g. public transport, cycling, walking) or reducing the travel requirement via hybrid working.

5.10 Borough-wide travel

The council’s ability to shape transport across the borough is limited: railway infrastructure, the majority of highways work, and public transport are managed at other levels of government. We do, however have a role in facilitating a decarbonised transport infrastructure in the borough. This may include increasing the number of public charge points available for electric vehicles, improving walking and cycling infrastructure across the borough and by promoting greater use of active modes of travel.

Green space, land use and offsetting

5.11 Green space

Green spaces, particularly woodland, deliver a wide range of benefits to the borough. These include mental health benefits, improvements to air quality and biodiversity, as well as noise, flood, and pollution abatement and carbon storage. The changing climate and need for carbon storage may require some changes in green space land use and should inform our management programme going forward.

5.12 Land use

One of the most active areas of concern locally, is how land is managed and used within the borough, particularly when planning and constructing new buildings. The council owns or otherwise controls a proportion of the local land but is limited in influence over the remainder - largely due to national governance of the planning process, and the planning conditions we are able to require. Climate is expected to be a core consideration under the Local Plan and remain a fundamental aspect of how we apply our influence within the borough.

5.13 Offsetting

While we expect to work primarily on emissions reduction measures, in spite of our best efforts, some emissions are likely to remain unavoidable by the 2030 target. These residual emissions are expected to come from some particularly hard to modify buildings (given their use or listed status for example) and potentially from some vehicles where reliable decarbonised replacements are not available. These emissions will need to be offset by negative emissions from other sources (e.g. woodland planting). Offsetting should be a last resort, and the amount of offsetting we need to do will depend on how much the council can reduce its emissions in other ways.



Communications, engagement and training

- 5.14 The council does not have a great deal of influence over national policy, and is not a specialist advice service, but can be locally influential in communicating issues surrounding climate change. This may include raising awareness of the risks we all face and how we can work together to mitigate them, while also highlighting action the council is taking to support residents.
- 5.15 We are able to support community activities aimed at decreasing emissions and increasing local resilience to climate change, and this is likely to be an area of work we expand over the life of this strategy.
- 5.16 In terms of internal activity, we have already embarked on an ambitious climate change training programme for council officers and elected members. This is expected to continue as a standard component of our induction process.

Data, monitoring, and corporate activity

- 5.17 While no statutory obligation exists to report on carbon emissions, the council will need to monitor progression of activity towards the 2030 carbon neutral target to ensure that we are meeting our commitments. This will form part of a series of regular reviews of the delivery plan which will sit under this strategy so that we can adapt and act on new technology, funding streams, and opportunities for renewable energy and heating systems.
- 5.18 Corporate activity will include changing behaviour and the way we work to reduce waste and improve efficiency. The council has already designed and implemented a Climate Change Impact Assessment Tool, which supports decision making by assessing the carbon impact of proposals and key decisions. All council strategies and policies now include climate change as a key consideration, and this tool will be reviewed and updated as required to ensure it remains embedded in the council's decision-making process.

Council influence and partnership activity

- 5.19 Chesterfield Borough Council has contracts with suppliers who provide a range of services on our behalf, e.g. construction and waste collection. We also work with a range of charitable and community organisations, as well as across boundaries with other public sector partners. The council will work together with partners and suppliers to maximise opportunities to decarbonise activities and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Social value in procurement will enable the council to work with suppliers to embed climate friendly activities within contracts, minimise emissions, and provide additional benefits relating to climate change in the local area, for example, by sourcing local sustainable low-carbon construction materials, using low carbon transportation etc.
- 5.20 Chesterfield Borough Council has been a key partner within Vision Derbyshire, which is a collective of local authorities in Derbyshire. Vision Derbyshire organisations are developing a joint Climate Change Strategy which will support and complement the council's own approach.
- 5.21 The East Midlands Mayoral Combined County Authority and County Deal will mean extra investment for our county is likely to enable partners to work together and maximise opportunities to tackle the impacts of climate change across the county.

6 Review and monitoring process

- 6.1 Delivery of the Climate Change Strategy is dependent upon activities being embedded across the council, with partners, and in the wider community. The Climate Change Strategy stretches over a considerable period of time (seven years) and defines an approach rather than a detailed programme of works. The strategy itself will be reviewed at its half-way point, whilst the accompanying delivery plan includes specific activities will be subject to annual reporting and review.
- 6.2 During the annual review of the delivery plan, both internal (employees and councillors) and external (wider public and stakeholder) engagement will take place as part of the council's ongoing Climate Action Now communications and engagement campaign.
- 6.3 In addition, the council will produce a Climate Change Annual Report to monitor Climate Change Strategy impacts. This will influence future action plans and business cases, enable more efficient prioritisation of actions and support communication, engagement, and training activity. It will also enable the council to demonstrate its progress in reaching its target to become carbon neutral by 2030.



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All references accessible as of January 2023.

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