

CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Head of Service: Gillian McTaggart, Head of Policy,
Performance & Governance

Wards affected: (All Wards);

Urgent Decision?(yes/no)

If yes, reason urgent decision required:

Appendices (attached): Appendix 1 – Progress Update on Year 1
Climate Change Action Plan ,

Summary

Climate Change is now widely seen as one of the most prominent and urgent global issues. Recognising the Council's key role in helping to address the serious and accelerating impact of Climate Change on the environment and people's lives, full Council approved an ambitious Climate Change Action Plan at its meeting on 20 January 2020.

There is a strong commitment to Climate Change across the Council and a number of key targets have been met this year. Adjustments have also been made to the Action Plan in order to accommodate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and enable progress to be made where this has been possible. A green recovery is a vital component of the Council's recovery plans and work continues to take place to deliver the Climate Change Action Plan.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Consider and note the progress made on the delivery of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan and Single Use Plastic Policy over the past year, a period which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- (2) Note and understand that any action that has been subject to delay remains part of the Action Plan and will be completed.**

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1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 This report outlines the progress over the past 12 months in delivering the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.
- 1.2 2020 has by no means been a typical year and the COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted significantly on the delivery of all Council priorities this year including this Action Plan. Some areas of work were accelerated where opportunities arose, especially in the use of digital technology which could not have been imagined when the Action Plan was agreed on 20 January 2020 at full Council.
- 1.3 All of the agreed objectives within the Climate Change Action Plan which formed part of the Service Delivery Plan for 2020/21 were reviewed due to the impact of COVID. As a result a number of the objectives in the plan were deferred until 2021/22. This reports outlines the progress and positive actions that have been made.
- 1.4 This report also outlines the work towards implementing the Council's Single Use Plastic Policy.

2 Background

- 2.1 In recent years there has been a fundamental societal shift regarding the importance of tackling climate change, at a local, national and international levels.
- 2.2 Global climate change is a key concern, with the United Nations and the international scientific community highlighting the potentially severe global societal, environmental and economic impacts that human-made climate change pose.
- 2.3 A cross party task and finish group was established to oversee the development of the Council's first Climate Action Plan. This was approved by this Committee and full Council on 20 January 2020 alongside the approval of the target, that the Council would be carbon neutral by 2035.
- 2.4 The Climate Change Action Plan details objectives to be completed over a 4-year period in order to combat climate change. The Council aims to be net carbon neutral by 2035 and this is proposed through a number of themes:
 - Theme 1 - Council Leadership and influencing others
 - Theme 2 – Improvements to the environment
 - Theme 3 - Council buildings and energy use
 - Theme 4 - Tackling and minimising waste

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- Theme 5 - Council transport & switching to lower polluting vehicles
- Theme 6 - Use of technology & information systems

3 CO2 emissions in Epsom and Ewell

- 3.1 The borough of Epsom and Ewell has already made a positive contribution to tackling climate change by seeing its total emissions decrease from 363kt CO₂ to 240kt CO₂ over a 13 year period (as shown in Figure 1 below) with an overall decreasing trend. However, these emission reductions are not sufficient and come at varying rates across different sectors, domestic emissions remaining the highest emitter in the borough (as shown in Figure 2 below). This is the most up to date data available for local councils from DEFRA.
- 3.2 The Council appointed an Environment & Sustainability Project Officer to support the delivery of the Action Plan. They were appointed in January although this role supported the Council's emergency response with a key role in the Community Hub until the end of July.
- 3.3 The Council's ambitious commitment to be carbon neutral by 2035 will be delivered by working with and alongside residents, the business community and other key partners to ensure we are actively seeking to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the most effective way.

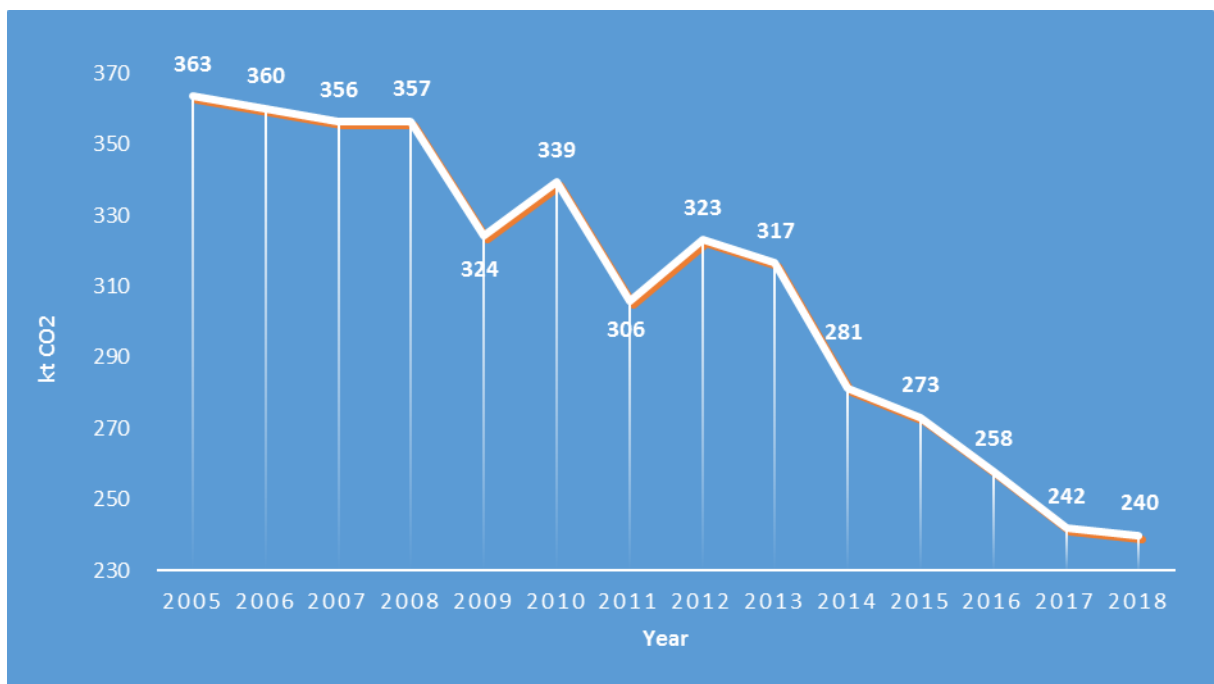


Figure 1 - Total borough emissions (2005-2018). Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2018>

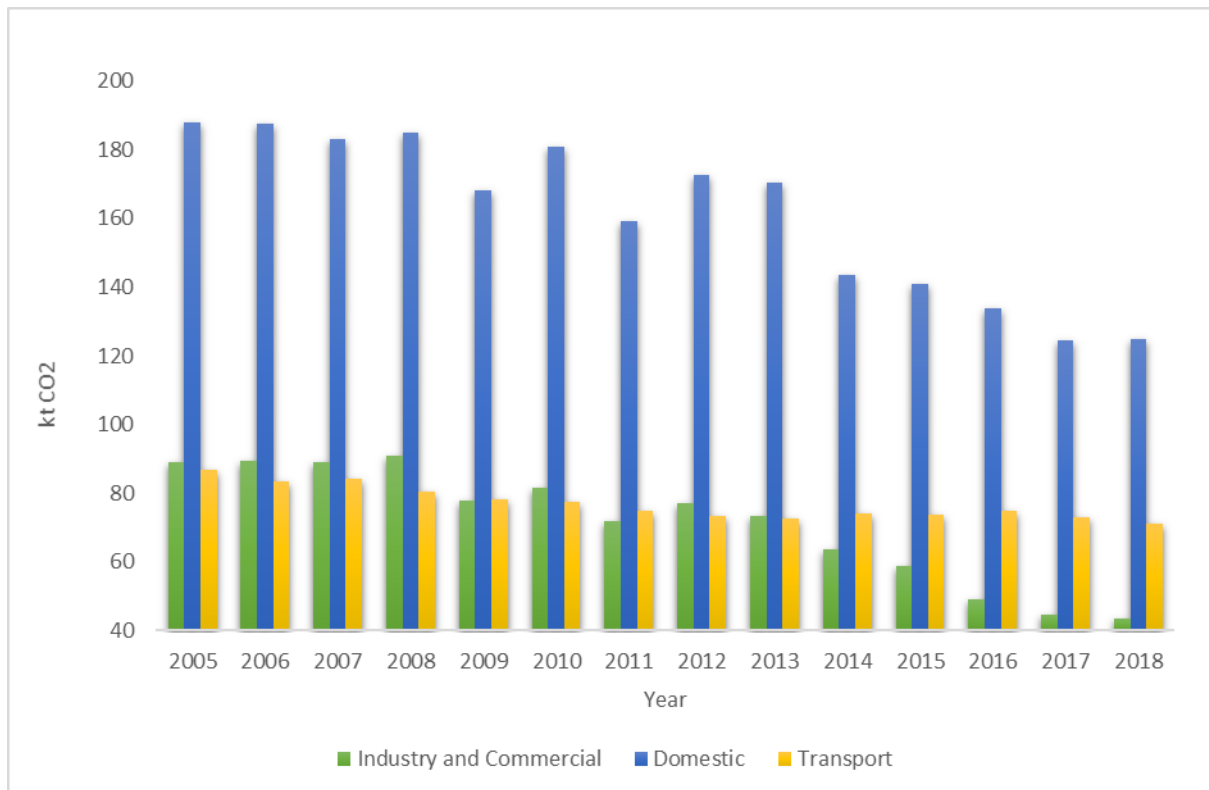


Figure 2 - Emissions in borough by sector (2005-2018) Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2018>

4 Progress on the Climate Change Action Plan

4.1 Despite the significant impact that the pandemic has had on local government, the wider public sector, local businesses and the community, some good progress has still been made in the current financial year including the key deliverables highlighted below:

4.2 Key deliverables that have been achieved include:

- The appointment of an Environment and Sustainability Project Officer;
- Improved signposting information on the Council website in relation to climate change to promote behavioural changes;
- Increased communication to residents and business relating to climate change;
- Significant reduction in physical meetings due to the use of digital technology and the shift to virtual member committee meetings;
- New Biodiversity Action Plan 2020- 2030 to reflect commitment to climate change

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- DEFRA Annual Status Report for Air Quality reported to Committee with a plan of action to address areas of concern and published
- The inclusion of climate change as a consideration within the 2020 Asset Management Plan

- 4.3 All of the agreed objectives in the agreed Climate Change Action Plan were included in the Service Delivery Plan for 2020/21. The Service Delivery Plan was revised following impact of the COVID pandemic and included a reduced number of Climate Change objectives. Although some of those removed from the Service Delivery Plan have progressed especially when working with partners.
- 4.4 A detailed overview of the objectives and their status is shown in Appendix 1 and the Table below provides a summary of the progress to date.

Status	Number of objectives	%
Green/ Achieved	22	62.85
Amber / Partially Achieved	4	11.42
Deferred until Year 2 but partially completed (Grey)	4	11.42
Deferred until Year 2 (Blue)	5	14.28
Not completed (Red)	0	0
TOTAL	35	100%

5 Impact of COVID-19

- 5.1 Overall, a total of 22 objectives were fully achieved and 4 were partially achieved. Furthermore, 4 actions that were anticipated to be deferred until Year 2 have progressed. This is a hugely positive step forward in terms of the delivery of the Action Plan given the time restraints as 30 out of 35 objectives have been started and or/completed in Year 1.

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- 5.2 Due to the Council's response to the COVID-19 emergency, a number of officers whose work contributes to the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan were redeployed to other duties including work on the Community Hub supporting some of the most vulnerable in the community. This has delayed some actions but also delivered a number of positive impacts, and some key themes and targets have had to be adapted in order to comply with national COVID-19 guidelines.
- 5.3 These positive impacts included:
- 5.3.1 Significant reduction in printing and usage of materials such as paper as a result of less officers attending Council buildings.
 - 5.3.2 Expedited delivery of digital improvements. This includes introducing video conferences, virtual meetings and new cloud based solutions and reducing the amount of travel by staff. This will in turn have had a dramatic impact on carbon emissions.
 - 5.3.3 The reduction of the number of staff commuting into the office has also led to a reduction in secondary emissions due to less car usage and less resource use in council buildings.
- 5.4 However, there are some negative impacts in relation to the pandemic:
- 5.4.1 A noted increase in the amount of Single-Use Plastic throughout society as result of the pandemic i.e. use of coffee cups, increase in PPE wastage etc. This has led to difficulty in achieving our targets relating to promoting the use of more sustainable materials in packaging;
 - 5.4.2 Changing recycling rates in comparison to 2019/20 (full extent yet to be analysed) as a result of changing waste habits as a result of the pandemic.
 - 5.4.3 Previous guidance on sustainable transport and the use of buses/public transport will need to be altered in accordance with national guidance on safety and keeping transmission rates to a minimum;
 - 5.4.4 Changes in the use of public transport due to the risk of transmission which will impact on sustainable transport solutions.

6 Single Use Plastic Policy (SUP)

- 6.1 This Committee approved five pledges relating to Single Use Plastics on 26 March 2019: this contained the Council's commitment to take leadership on tackling plastic waste. A number of early actions were introduced to discourage use of SUP's. The five principles were:
- Measure our use of single-use plastics and set targets for reduction
 - Work with our employees and suppliers to encourage them to take practical steps to reduce the use of plastic

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- Where the use of plastics is unavoidable, we will use recycled and recyclable plastics where practicable
 - We will encourage recycling opportunities for the plastic waste we and our supply chain produce in our buildings and in daily operations
 - Support and encourage employee and community initiatives to remove plastic waste and litter from our environment
- 6.2 There has been limited progress on progressing this policy from the initial work undertaken in 2019. Initially we promoted new policy and encouraged staff to change behaviours by removing plastic cups and supplying reusable water bottles.
- 6.3 The ongoing risk of the transmission of COVID-19 has made this more difficult due to the changing nature of waste usage to reduce our reliance on Single Used Plastics. During the COVID-19 crisis, single use plastics have proliferated as people gravitate towards disposable items to be hygienic and improve safety.
- 6.4 There is and will continue to be for some time an increased demand for single use plastics with PPE, hand sanitizers and packaging on food. In addition, during the national lockdown with food establishments closed there is an increase in takeaways and food deliveries.
- 6.5 A further difficulty is the delayed government's waste strategy following public consultation on plastic packaging as central government focuses on other legislative changes due to COVID.
- 6.6 The impact of COVID will have a global and national impact on progress in reducing the use of single use plastics. A key principle within the Council's approach to recovery will be a green recovery and, as we return to a more business as usual approach we can look at solutions within national initiatives to enforce the previous behaviour changes, raising awareness and education. We have had some success including;
- 6.6.1 Increased public information and community engagement via the website and social media in relation to recycling.
 - 6.6.2 Promotion of EEBC websites inclusion of 'Right Thing, Right Bin' helps to detail which waste is recyclable and which bin should be used therefore reducing amount of contamination.
 - 6.6.3 Supported community groups with litter pick materials and information needed. Litter picks were allowed to continue throughout.
 - 6.6.4 Improved labelling/posters near refuse points in Council Owned buildings in order to remind employees which items belong in each bin in order to avoid contamination and help to promote best practice.

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6.6.5 Epsom Marketplace has improved their sustainable practices through the removal of plastic bags and distribution of eco-friendly packaging e.g. tote bags.

6.7 The Council will continue to share best practice and share information about plastic free initiatives; work to embed commitments in sustainable events as they return, sustainable procurement and embed in policies and plans as they are developed. The reduction of SUP remains a key target throughout the Borough.

7 Joint working partnership:

7.1 To deliver the Climate Change Action Plan we continue to work in collaboration with the following:

7.2 Surrey Environment Partnership that is now chaired by this Council: regular discussions and meetings relating to a number of key sustainability issues including waste, emissions reporting and energy. This work includes joint work on waste objectives and offers insight into other opportunities available for local councils.

7.3 Surrey County Council Climate Change Strategy (as reported to the Committee in October 2020): alongside other local authority climate change officers to exchange information about current climate change opportunities and funding available. This also involves data sharing for emissions and provides a useful overview of current county-wide issues. The development of a Carbon emissions dashboard via this partnership is being developed and will be utilised when made available to the Council.

7.4 Work across departments – importance of multi-disciplinary working practices across council stressed e.g. climate change, operational services and planning.

7.5 Action Surrey: Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has worked with the Green Jump Surrey scheme which gives eligible owner-occupied households funds to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Work which can be funded by a Green Jump Surrey grant includes loft, solid wall, cavity wall, underfloor and park home insulation, draught proofing, LED lighting, air source heat pumps and solar hot water systems.

8 Delivering the plan in the future:

8.1 Following the impact of COVID a Green Recovery has become a matter of vital importance. The work on the Climate Change Action Plan will continue with Year 2 and all targets included in the initial plan will continue to be worked on.

8.2 The ambition for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to achieve their net zero target remains a matter of importance.

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- 8.3 The Action Plan is being updated to reflect the objectives that were partially achieved or that have deferred. This will also have an impact on future years on the Action Plan. An updated Climate Change Action Plan will be brought back to this Committee. Work has already commenced on some key deliverables such as increase number of sustainable planting schemes across the borough and implement a network of public electric charging points in the borough.
- 8.4 Important to consider that work on the Climate Change Action Plan is fluid and is adapted around COVID regulations and regulations as the full impact is assessed.

9 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

9.1 Impact Assessment

9.1.1

9.2 Crime & Disorder

9.2.1 None

9.3 Safeguarding

9.3.1 None

9.4 Dependencies

Other

9.4.1 N/A

10 Financial Implications

10.1 None – all agreed in original Action Plan

10.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Where future initiatives have a budgetary implication, they will be reported and considered by the Strategy & Resources Committee in accordance with the Financial Regulations.

11 Legal Implications

11.1 None for the purpose of this report

11.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None for the purpose of this report

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12 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 12.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Green & Vibrant and supports the delivery of the Four Year Plan
- 12.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 12.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** Climate Change is key priority throughout the Action Plan and number of targets included to help reduce emissions throughout EEBC.
- 12.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** Sustainability considered in all targets – positive implications only.
- 12.5 **Partnerships:** Surrey Environment Partnership

13 Background papers

- 13.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- Full Council Climate Change Action Plan 20 January 2020
- Single Use Plastic Policy agreed at Environment & Safe Communities Committee on 26 March 2019

Other papers:

- Climate Change motion to full Council 23 July 2019