

Guildford Borough Council

Report to: Executive

Date: 3 October 2024

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Director: Transformation & Governance

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Report Status: Open

Climate Change Board - Carbon Emissions and Sustainability Progress Report 2022-23

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The annual report gives an overview of Guildford Borough Council's (GBC) progress in its ambition to reach net zero by 2030 in recognition of the Climate Emergency as resolved by full Council in July 2019.
- 1.2. The report summarises the activities and achievements of the Council's Climate Change Board (CCB).
- 1.3. The report includes a summary of the reduction of the Council's carbon emissions for the fiscal year 2022/23, and sets out the progress made by the Council following the adoption of the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) in March 2023.

1.4. In 2019, GBC committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions across its operations by 2030 and making the entire borough carbon neutral. However, the initial years faced significant challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, financial pressures and resource constraints, which slowed progress. However, by early 2023, GBC had established and adopted a comprehensive Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP). This plan sets out a roadmap for reducing emissions across nine key areas of the Council's business and operations.

1.5. Since the declaration of the Climate Emergency, GBC has:

- Formed a Climate Change Board (CCB) to oversee the Council's climate initiatives.
- Established a carbon emission baseline and set a carbon reduction trajectory.
- Adopted a Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) to provide a pathway to achieve GBC's carbon reduction and climate change goals.
- Completed 19 of the 305 actions described in the CCAP, while 86 are in active development.
- Adopted a Corporate Strategy within the past year which includes sustainability as one of the key priorities.

1.6. The Report includes a summary of the carbon emissions report for 2022/23 and illustrates that, for the fiscal year 2022/23, GBC recorded a net carbon footprint of 7,472 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂e), representing a 13% reduction from the baseline year of 2019. Additionally, 2022/23 emissions are slightly lower than the previous year (2021/22), both 2020/21 and 2021/22 can be considered as "non-standard" years in terms of the Council's activities, due to the Covid pandemic and subsequent recovery period. This indicates that there has been real-terms progress in carbon reductions in the most recent year for which figures are available. However, despite this progress, the Council is currently not on track to meet its 2030 net-zero target.

- 1.7. The report identifies and acknowledges that there remain ongoing challenges in terms of financial and resource constraints and the complexities of measuring Scope 3 emissions (indirect emissions from procurement, contracts, and services). The report will include recommendations from our consultants APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) in this respect.
- 1.8. Whilst significant progress has been made since 2019, achieving net-zero by 2030 remains an ambitious goal requiring continued effort, innovation, and collaboration. The Council is committed to overcoming these challenges and will continue to refine its strategies to ensure meaningful reductions in carbon emissions, in line with both local and national climate objectives. The Council's CCB will play a critical role in monitoring and advising on these efforts and ensuring that the borough remains on the path to sustainability.

2. Recommendation to Executive

- 2.1. The Executive is asked to note and comment on the report and to commend it to full Council (meeting on 8 October 2024) in recognition of the Council's current carbon emissions and climate change status.

3. Reason(s) for Recommendation:

- 3.1. The CCB is constitutionally a working group of the Executive and is required to report on its business and achievements to the Executive at least annually. On 23 July 2024, full Council adopted a new Corporate Strategy that included a 'more sustainable borough' at Priority 1 and once again reinforced this Council's commitment to reaching net zero by 2030. For this reason, the Executive is asked to refer the report to full Council for its wider circulation, engagement, and comment.

4. Exemption from publication

- 4.1. No exemption.

5. Purpose of Report

- 5.1. The purpose of the report is to provide an annual update on Guildford Borough Council's (GBC) progress toward its climate-related goals, particularly in response to the Climate Emergency declared in 2019. The report aims to:
- **Assess Progress:** Evaluate the effectiveness of the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) and measure the progress made in reducing carbon emissions within the Council's operations and across the borough.
 - **Inform Decision-Makers:** Present detailed emissions data and analysis to inform the Executive and other stakeholders about the current status of GBC's climate initiatives, highlighting areas of success and identifying challenges.
 - **Promote Accountability:** Provide transparency and accountability by documenting the Council's efforts and outcomes. This will ensure that both the public and Council members are aware of the ongoing actions and future plans related to climate change mitigation.
- 5.2. Overall, the report serves as a tool for informing policy decisions, improving policy and strategic documents in regard to climate. Therefore maintaining momentum toward GBC's long-term sustainability goals.

6. Strategic Priorities

- 6.1. The strategic priorities outlined in the report reflect the Council's strategic objectives and commitment to mitigating the impact of climate change and achieving its own carbon reduction goals. These priorities are designed to guide the Council's actions and focus its resources on the most critical areas for achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030.

7. Background

- 7.1. In 2019, GBC declared a Climate Emergency and committed to an ambitious target of achieving net-zero carbon emissions across its operations by 2030 and making the entire borough carbon neutral. However, the initial years faced significant challenges, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and financial challenges which have slowed progress.
- 7.2. In 2023, a review of GBC's capabilities and responsibilities led to a revision of the Climate Emergency to set more realistic and achievable goals. The revised Climate Emergency Declaration focused on reducing carbon emissions from the Council's own operations, including energy consumption in buildings and fleet management. This involves upgrading facilities, increasing energy efficiency, and transitioning to renewable energy sources. The revision recognised that protecting biodiversity and improving air quality were also an integral part of the Climate Emergency and incorporated these issues into the Council's mandate.
- 7.3. In 2023, GBC adopted a comprehensive Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP). This set out a roadmap for reducing emissions across nine key areas of Council operations and worked to support protecting biodiversity and improving Air Quality in the borough.
- 7.4. Since the declaration of the Climate Emergency, the Council has made notable strides:
 - The Climate Change Board (CCB) was formed to oversee the Council's climate initiatives, bringing cross-party borough Councillors, the University of Surrey, Surrey County Council, and local environmental organisations.
 - A carbon emission baseline was established, and a reduction trajectory was set to guide GBC toward the 2030 target.
 - The CCAP with 305 actions, was adopted, with GBC responsible for 243 of these actions. To date, 19 actions have been completed, while 86 are in active development.

- 7.5. For the fiscal year 2022/23, GBC recorded a net carbon footprint of 7,472 tonnes of CO2 equivalent (tCO2e), representing a 13% reduction from the baseline year of 2019. Despite this progress, the Council is currently not on track to meet its 2030 net-zero target. The APSE report (Appendix 1.2) highlighted key areas of concern, including an increase in gas usage at the Spectrum Leisure Centre, which has impacted overall emission reductions.
- 7.6. Scope 3 emissions are included in the annual emissions report. However, these emissions account for services used; water and water treatment, business travel, and waste from Council operations. Procurement contracts are not currently included and will need reviewing to develop a methodology for calculation.
- 7.7. Table 1: 2022/23 sources of carbon emissions by percentage and tonnes of CO2e emitted

2022/23			
Emissions Source	Scope	% Split	TonnesCO2e
Natural Gas	1	44%	3,298
Council Vehicles	1	18%	1,354
Electricity	2	26%	1,964
Gas – WTT	3	7.5%	562
Electricity – Transmission & Distribution	3	2.4%	180
Business Travel	3	0.3%	20
Water Supply	3	0.1%	7
Water Treatment	3	0.2%	12
Rail	3	0.001%	0.10
General waste from council operations	3	1.0%	74
Recycling from council operations	3	0.02%	1.4
Total	-	100%	7,472

- 7.8. The trajectory produced in 2019 provides a pathway to achieve net-zero across Council operations. However, the trajectory also allows for carbon budget setting to be made, with a clear “allowance” of carbon produced per year. Any further emissions can then be carefully planned, and mitigation measures developed.

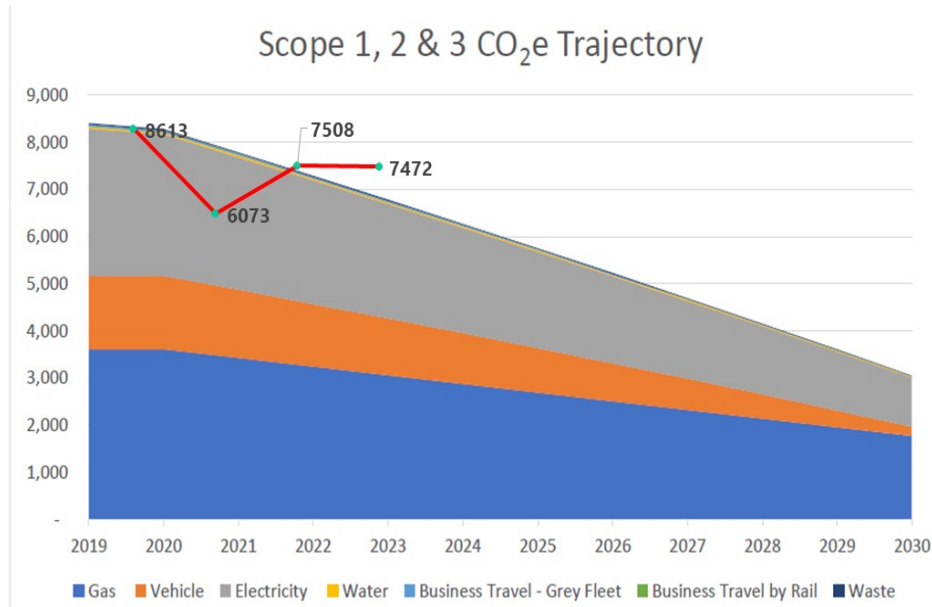


Figure 1: Guildford Borough Councils estimated carbon trajectory to achieve net-zero by 2030 and current carbon emissions (red line).

8. Consultations

8.1. The report has been reviewed by the Portfolio Holder, the CCB, and CLT.

9. Key Risks

9.1. The report identifies several key risks for the Council in respect of its climate goals, most particularly the target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. The risks could impact the success of the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) and the Council's broader sustainability objectives. The key risks include:

9.2. Falling Short of Emissions Reduction Targets

Risk: The report indicates that the Council is currently off track to meet its 2030 net-zero target. The main risk is that without significant acceleration in actions, the Council may fail to achieve the necessary emissions reductions.

Impact: This would undermine the Council's commitment to climate action, potentially leading to reputational damage, financial penalties, and a failure to contribute to broader climate goals.

9.3. Resource Constraints

Risk: Investment is key to the successful implementation of the CCAP. Without sufficient resources, the Council may struggle to complete key actions and maintain momentum.

Impact: Delays in project implementation, reduced scope of climate initiatives, and the inability to address critical areas like Scope 3 emissions could result.

9.4. Incomplete or Inaccurate Data

Risk: The APSE report identifies challenges involved in collecting and managing emissions data, particularly for Scope 3 emissions. Incomplete or inaccurate data poses a risk to effectively tracking progress and making informed decisions. The Council needs to locate, agree and adopt a methodology for managing Scope 3 emissions.

Impact: This could lead to underestimating or overestimating emissions, misallocation of resources, and difficulties in achieving transparency and accountability in reporting.

9.5. Energy Use in Key Facilities

Risk: The Spectrum Leisure Centre has been identified as a major source of emissions due to high gas usage. The risk is that continued reliance on such energy-intensive facilities could negate other emissions reduction efforts. The Spectrum leisure centre was a known risk when the CCAP was first adopted, and work continues to review and decarbonise over the period of the CCAP.

Impact: If energy usage is not optimised, it could significantly hinder the Council's ability to meet its overall emissions targets, requiring costly retrofits or alternative solutions.

9.6. Stakeholder Engagement and Support

Risk: Insufficient engagement with stakeholders, including the local community, businesses, and partner organizations, is a risk that could limit the effectiveness of the Council's climate initiatives.

Impact: Without broad support, initiatives may face resistance, reducing their impact and slowing down the overall progress toward the net-zero goal.

9.7. Financial Risks

Risk: The financial implications of climate initiatives, including the need for increased investment, pose a risk if the required funding is not secured or if climate actions lead to budgetary pressures in other areas.

Impact: Financial challenges could result in reduced scope of climate projects, or reliance on external funding sources that may not be reliable long-term.

9.8. Governance and Accountability

Risk: Weaknesses in governance structures or a lack of clear accountability for climate actions could lead to poor coordination, ineffective implementation, and insufficient oversight of the CCAP.

9.9. Changing External Conditions

Risk: External factors, such as changes in national climate policy, economic downturns, or shifts in public opinion, could impact the Council's ability to implement its climate strategies effectively.

Impact: These factors could either enhance or hinder GBC's efforts, depending on whether they align with or oppose the Council's climate goals, potentially leading to increased costs or required strategy adjustments.

9.10. Technological and Operational Risks

Risk: The reliance on existing technologies or operational practices that may become obsolete or less effective over time poses a risk, as does the potential for implementation challenges with new technologies.

Impact: This could lead to increased costs, project delays, and reduced effectiveness of climate actions, necessitating ongoing innovation and adaptation.

9.11. In summary, these risks highlight the challenges GBC faces in its journey toward achieving net-zero emissions by 2030. Addressing these risks will require careful planning, resource management, and stakeholder engagement to ensure that the Council's climate goals are met in a timely and effective manner.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 There are no financial implications arising from the report

11. Legal Implications

11.1. There are no legal implications arising from the report.

12. Human Resource Implications

12.1 There are no human resource implications arising from the report.

13. Equality and Diversity Implications

13.1. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from the report.

14. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

14.1. The Climate Change and Sustainability implications of the report are significant, as it directly addresses the Guildford Borough Council's (GBC) ongoing efforts to mitigate climate change and promote sustainability across its operations and the broader community. The key implications include:

14.2. Progress Toward Net-Zero Emissions: The report tracks GBC's progress toward its target of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. A reduction in emissions by 13% compared to the 2019 baseline is a positive step, but the report highlights that the current trajectory is insufficient to meet the 2030 target. This underscores

the need for accelerated action and more effective implementation of climate strategies.

- 14.3. Enhanced Understanding of Emissions Sources:** By providing detailed emissions data, the report improves GBC's understanding of where emissions are being generated, particularly in high-impact areas like energy usage at the Spectrum Leisure Centre. This understanding is crucial for developing targeted strategies to reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency.
- 14.4. Focus on Scope 3 Emissions:** The report identifies the challenge of measuring and managing Scope 3 emissions (indirect emissions from the supply chain, procurement, and services). These emissions are often more difficult to control than direct emissions from gas use, fuel use, and electricity use, but can represent a significant proportion of a Council's carbon footprint. Addressing these emissions is essential for comprehensive climate action and aligns with broader sustainability goals.
- 14.5. Long-Term Sustainability Strategy:** The report's emphasis on implementing the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) and engaging stakeholders reflects a long-term commitment to sustainability. The successful execution of the CCAP will lead to sustained reductions in carbon emissions and support broader environmental goals, such as biodiversity protection, waste reduction, and sustainable land use.
- 14.6. Increased Accountability and Transparency:** By monitoring and reporting on progress, the report contributes to greater accountability and transparency in GBC's climate efforts. This transparency is vital for maintaining public trust and ensuring that the Council's actions are aligned with its declared climate emergency and sustainability goals.
- 14.7. Impact on Community and Stakeholder Engagement:** The report's focus on engaging with the local community and stakeholders highlights the importance of collective action in achieving sustainability goals. Effective community engagement can lead to broader adoption of sustainable practices, increased awareness, and stronger support for the Council's climate initiatives.

14.8. Adaptation and Resilience: Although the report primarily focuses on mitigation, the implications for climate adaptation and resilience are also important. Reducing carbon emissions contributes to global efforts to mitigate climate change, while local actions can enhance the community's resilience to climate impacts, such as extreme weather events.

14.9. In summary, the report has far-reaching Climate Change and Sustainability implications, as it not only assesses progress but also identifies areas for improvement and strategic focus. These implications are critical for ensuring that GBC remains on track to achieve its net-zero target and broader sustainability objectives, contributing to both local and global climate efforts.

15. Summary of Options

15.1. This covering report and the CCB Annual report is for information only.

16. Conclusion

16.1. The Annual report sets out the ongoing challenges for the Council in terms of financial challenges and the complexities of measuring Scope 3 emissions (indirect emissions from procurement, contracts, and services). Recommendations from APSE Consultants include improving data collection processes (particularly for Scope 3 emissions) and reassessing the use of certain energy-intensive facilities like the Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant at the Spectrum Leisure Centre.

16.2. Whilst significant progress has been made since 2019, achieving net-zero by 2030 remains an ambitious goal requiring continued effort, innovation, and collaboration. However, the Council has adopted the new corporate priorities and is committed to continue to reduce carbon emissions, in line with both local and national climate targets. The CCB will play a critical role in guiding these efforts and ensuring that the borough remains on the path to sustainability.

17. Background Papers

The minutes of the meetings of the CCB.

18. Appendices

Appendix 1: CCB Annual Report for Executive

Appendix 2: CCB Terms of Reference

Appendix 3: APSE Report: Carbon Emissions 2022/23

Appendix 4: CCAP Action Priority List 231114