

Regeneration, Culture and Environment

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2028

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Summary

The vision of the proposed Climate Change Action Plan aligns with the One Medway Council Plan priority “enjoying clean, green, safe and connected communities.”

This is the third update to the Climate Change Action Plan since the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency in 2019. The aims of the plan are to reduce carbon emissions to achieve net zero by 2050 and increase resilience against the impacts of climate change for both Medway Council and Medway “the Place”.

As well as updated actions, the proposed Climate Change Action Plan has been refreshed to reflect the Council's current approach to climate action.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1. The Committee is invited to comment on the proposed Climate Change Action Plan and supporting documentation, and to note that the Cabinet will be asked to agree the Plan on 26th August 2025.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1 A number of strategies and legislation support the climate agenda:

- The UK Climate Change Act was introduced in 2008, alongside the establishment of the independent UK Climate Change Committee (CCC).
- The Paris Agreement, signed in 2015, is a legally binding international agreement on climate change. It commits to limiting global temperature

increases to well below 2°C, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

- The UN's Sustainable Development Goals have a climate focus, with goal 13 being "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts".
- The UK Government issued a response to the CCC's 2024 Progress Report, committing to producing a detailed plan by 2026 to meet the UK's carbon budgets, with a focus on clean energy.
- The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) 2022 sets out the risks and opportunities facing the UK from climate change.
- The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy was formally adopted by the Council in January 2021 and is due for review. The strategy addresses the climate emergency in Kent and Medway by promoting clean economic recovery and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, poor air quality and fuel poverty.
- The One Medway Council Plan 2024/28 acknowledges the Climate Change Action Plan and the journey to net zero by 2050 within Priority 3: "Enjoying clean, green, safe and connected communities."

3. Background

- 3.1. Medway Council declared a climate emergency in April 2019 and passed a motion committing to establish a clear action plan for Medway to deal with climate change, setting out an achievable and clear timeline.
- 3.2. The Council's first Climate Change Action Plan was approved by the Cabinet in June 2021 and subsequently a "light touch" refreshed version published in 2022.
- 3.3. Quarterly progress updates against the current 2022 version of the Climate Change Action Plan are presented to the Climate Oversight and Implementation Board (COIB), which was established in October 2024 and chaired by the Director of Place. Annual progress updates have been published on the Council's climate change web pages since 2021.
- 3.4. Good progress has been made against both iterations of the plan. An infographic showcasing achievements since the Council declared a Climate Emergency, will be produced to accompany the proposed Climate Change Action Plan when it is presented to Cabinet in August. A list of these achievements is included within the proposed Climate Change Action Plan (Appendix 1).
- 3.5. Progress has been made during a period of significant challenges for the Council arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and on-going pressure on government funding.
- 3.6. **Council emissions** - Annual carbon emission reports for the Council's estate and operations are published on the Council's climate change web pages. Based on the latest available data (2021/22), the Council's carbon emissions have fallen by 31.8% against the baseline year (2018/19). Data for 2022/23

and 2023/24 is currently being collated with the intention of including an update on progress against reduction targets to the Cabinet in August 2025.

- 3.7. **Area wide emissions** – Greenhouse gas emissions estimate data is published annually by the Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). The latest estimated figures, published in June 2024, provide data for the calendar year 2022 (January-December). In 2022, Medway's territorial emissions (those produced due to activities taking place in Medway) were 889.77kt CO₂e, which represents a reduction of 22% since 2018 (the "baseline" year - the year before a climate emergency was declared by the Council). This is broken down into sectors in the table below:

Sector	2018 emissions (kt CO ₂ e)	2022 emissions (kt CO ₂ e)	% difference between 2018 and 2022	2022 emissions as % of total emissions
Domestic	368.61	309.29	-16.09%	34.76%
Transport	323.98	273.81	-15.49%	30.77%
Industry, Commercial and Public Sector	230.91	223.13	-3.37%	25.08%
Waste Management	201.31	54.57	-72.89%	6.13%
Agriculture	25.99	31.88	-22.66%	3.58%
Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry	-3.60	-2.92	18.89% (representing a reduction in the amount of emissions removed from the atmosphere)	-0.33%
Total	1147.20	889.77	-22.44%	100%

- 3.8. In addition to reducing the Council's emissions and enacting the Council's leadership role to support a reduction in area wide emissions, the Council also has a role in responding to the changing climate. In support of this the proposed Climate Change Action Plan (Appendix 1) includes two new distinct **aims**, which are not explicitly outlined in the current 2022 action plan. These are:

- Reduce carbon emissions to achieve net zero by 2050 (for Medway Council and Medway "the Place")
- Increase resilience against the impacts of climate change

- 3.9. The approach taken to developing the proposed Climate Change Action Plan includes:

- Five priority areas have been identified based on Medway's emissions sources and opportunities for delivering the most impactful actions. These are:
 - Knowledge and Empowerment
 - Clean, Efficient and Equitable Energy
 - Sustainable Travel and Transport
 - Resource Efficiency
 - Green and Resilient Medway
- Actions have been updated to reflect progress to date and new opportunities. Action tables are included in Appendix 2.
- Actions have been developed to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound). All actions have defined outputs to ensure clear expectation from the outset of delivery and agreed measures of success.
- The proposed Climate Change Action Plan aligns with and supports new and emerging Council and county wide strategies and plans. A full list of these is included in the Climate Change Action Plan (Appendix 1).

3.10. Alongside the action tables (Appendix 2), the proposed plan includes the context for the need for change, the wider benefits of taking action and a high level explanation of why each priority area is important. It also summarises the approach to delivery of the plan and governance. A public facing version of the document will be developed with support from the Design Team, in line with the format of the One Medway Plan. Following approval from the Chief Executive, the public facing version of the plan will be presented to the Cabinet in August.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. A focused Climate Change Action Plan helps to respond to specific challenges and harness opportunities.
- 4.2. The Local Government Association suggests that local authorities, through their policies and partnerships, have a strong influence over more than a third of emissions in their area and many residents and businesses look to the council for leadership on climate action. A large number of actions in the proposed Climate Change Action Plan reflect this either through the implementation of strategy or supporting Medway's communities.
- 4.3. The proposed Climate Change Action Plan includes actions which will support Medway's most vulnerable communities. It is anticipated that delivery against the plan will result in a range of improved outcomes, for example health and fuel poverty, and will help Medway to become a clean, green, safe place for our connected communities.
- 4.4. While each action in the proposed Climate Change Action Plan has a clear owner responsible for that action, it is a corporate action plan owned and delivered by the whole organisation. Success will be achieved by the whole organisation committing to and delivering change, driven by strong leadership

and governance. Actions will be embedded into service delivery plans. Oversight for the delivery of the proposed plan will be led by the Climate Oversight and Implementation Board (COIB), chaired by the Director of Place. Quarterly progress reports will be produced and brought to the COIB before being published on the Council website.

- 4.5. Collaborative action will be key to driving forward action towards net zero for Medway “The Place”, enabled by strong partnership working with a range of key stakeholders.

5. Risk Management

- 5.1. The proposed Climate Change Action Plan sets out two clear aims to achieve net zero and improve resilience, to be achieved through carbon reduction and climate adaptation measures and strong leadership. Not achieving these aims poses a risk to the organisation and this is reflected in the Council’s corporate risk register (Appendix 3).

6. Consultation

- 6.1. A public survey, on the proposed aims and priority areas, was undertaken in 2024 resulting in over 400 responses. The survey results will be published on the climate change web pages when the plan is published.
- 6.2. A number of teams and committees have been consulted during the development of the proposed Climate Change Action Plan:
 - Service areas across the Council
 - Climate Oversight and Implementation Board
 - Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration
 - Community Climate Working Group
 - Member Climate Working Party
 - RCE DMT and C&A DMT
 - CMT
- 6.3. The plan is presented to Overview and Scrutiny ahead of being presented to Cabinet (26th August 2025).

7. Climate change implications

- 7.1. The proposed Climate Change Action Plan is intended to continue to have a direct positive impact on the Council’s aspirations of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Individual actions in the plan will have varying levels of impact on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and/or improved resilience. The actions which are intended to have a sustained long-term impact on behaviour change, such as improvements to bus infrastructure and services to encourage increased bus passenger numbers, will clearly have the biggest impact on greenhouse gas emission reductions. The scientific evidence shows that our climate is changing which will inevitably have consequences on service delivery and an increased demand for a pro-active

response. To do nothing is not an option if we want to provide a good quality service and safeguard the health and wellbeing of Medway's residents and communities.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1. The goal of achieving net zero carbon by 2050 for both the Council and the area itself is a challenging task, coupled with supporting all of Medway's communities to become resilient to the impacts of climate change. The pace and scale of action required, far exceeds the Council's own resources, and is dependent on government policy and funding to achieve it. Actions within the proposed Climate Change Action Plan are funded through relevant service budgets and external grant funding. Delivery of some of the actions contained within the plan may have financial implications and business cases will be developed and presented for consideration through the relevant governance processes where this is the case.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Local authorities undertake a key role in addressing climate change at a local level and are able to decide how best to address these challenges. The publication of a Climate Change Action Plan is lawful under the Localism Act 2011.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Proposed Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2028
Appendix 2: Proposed Climate Change Action Plan Tables
Appendix 3: Corporate Risk Register – Climate Change
Appendix 4: Diversity Impact Assessment

Background papers

Climate Emergency Declaration – Full Council - April 2019:
<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=122&MId=4160&Ver=4>

2022 Climate Change Action Plan - <https://www.medway.gov.uk/climatechangeplan>