

Cabinet

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Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2028

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Simon Curry, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration

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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 actions within the plan aim to reduce carbon emissions in line with the One Medway Council Plan objective to achieve net zero by 2050 and increase resilience against the impacts of climate change for both Medway Council and Medway “the Place”. The plan has been refreshed to reflect the Council’s current approach to climate action.

The report was previously considered by the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 June 2025 and the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 June 2025, the comments of which are set out at sections 8 and 9 of the report.

The report also provides details of the UK City Net Zero Declaration, to which Cabinet approval is sought to enable the Leader of the Council to sign the declaration.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Cabinet is asked to note the comments of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment and Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committees, as set out at sections 8 and 9 of the report.
- 1.2. The Cabinet is asked to agree to adopt the refreshed Climate Change Action Plan and Action Plan Tables as set out at Appendix 1 and 2.

- 1.3. The Cabinet is asked to agree that the Leader of the Council sign the UK City Net Zero Declaration, as detailed in section 4 and Appendix 6 to the report.

2. Suggested reason for decision

- 2.1. To continue to meet the requirements of Full Council's climate emergency declaration, made in 2019.

3. Budget and policy framework

- 3.1. 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 (CCRA3) 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."

4. Background

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. 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.
- 4.3. 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.

- 4.4. Good progress has been made against both iterations of the plan. Infographics showcasing achievements, since the Council declared a Climate Emergency, are included within the Climate Change Action Plan (Appendix 1).
- 4.5. 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.
- 4.6. **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 (2023/24), the Council's carbon emissions have fallen by 36% against the baseline year (2018/19). Data for 2024/25 is currently being collated and will be added to the web pages by the end of 2025.
- 4.7. **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 2025, provide data for the calendar year 2023 (January-December). In 2023, Medway's territorial emissions (those produced due to activities taking place in Medway) were 791.67kt CO₂e, which represents a reduction of 32% 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) | 2023 emissions (kt CO ₂ e) | % difference between 2018 and 2023 | 2023 emissions as % of total emissions |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Domestic | 363.39 | 279.51 | -23% | 35.31% |
| Transport | 327.15 | 273.26 | -16.5% | 34.52% |
| Industry, Commercial and Public Sector | 229.00 | 176.72 | -22.8% | 22.32% |
| Waste Management | 227.16 | 49.00 | -78.4% | 6.19% |
| Agriculture | 18.24 | 16.11 | -11.6% | 2.04% |
| Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry | -3.67 | -2.93 | 20% (representing a reduction in the amount of emissions removed from the atmosphere) | -0.33% |
| Total | 1161.26 | 791.67 | -31.8% | 100% |

- 4.8. 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 **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
- 4.9. The approach taken to developing the 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. The **Action Plan 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 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).
- 4.10. The Climate Change Action 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.
- 4.11. Alongside the Climate Change Action Plan, there is an opportunity to sign the UK City Net Zero declaration, the purpose of which is to further look at opportunities for greater public and private sector collaboration on the issue of green growth and net zero. Signing this declaration will further signify the importance that Medway places on reaching net zero. The draft version is attached at Appendix 6 and Cabinet agreement is sought to enable the Leader of the Council to sign the declaration.
- 4.12. The work on this comes from the Government's commitment to the Conference of the Parties (COP) ambitions towards net zero. In particular, signing up to the CHAMP (Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP) for Climate Action), which came out of COP28.

- 4.13. The Local Net Zero Delivery Group is a partnership set up by Lord Rees of Easton under the direction of Kerry McCarthy MP, Minister for Climate. This Group is now taking forward the Government commitment to delivering the net zero target within the urban areas and has the primary aim of bringing together potential investors with local net zero projects through the work of Local Authorities. The declaration will show how Medway is making the commitment to work with Government, other local authorities, and the private sector on this.

5. Options

- 5.1 Two options are available:

- Option 1: The Cabinet approves adoption of the refreshed Climate Change Action Plan (attached at Appendix 1) to meet the requirements of Full Council's climate emergency declaration, made in 2019.
- Option 2: The Cabinet does not approve the adoption of the refreshed Climate Change Action Plan (attached at Appendix 1) contrary to the requirements of Full Council's climate emergency declaration, made in 2019.

6. Advice and analysis

- 6.1. A focused Climate Change Action Plan helps to respond to specific challenges and harness opportunities.
- 6.2. 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 Climate Change Action Plan reflect this either through the implementation of strategy or supporting Medway's communities.
- 6.3. The 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.
- 6.4. While each action in the 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 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.

- 6.5. 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.

7. Risk Management

- 7.1. The 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).

8. Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 8.1. The Committee considered the report on 12 June 2025 and the minutes of the discussion were as follows:
- 8.2. Officers informed the Committee that the plan includes practical measures that are already in place and Members noted previous investments such as LED lighting and the living bus stop roof in Chatham that contribute towards making improvements.
- 8.3. Members queried progress with on street electric vehicle charging points and were informed that officers were currently procuring a delivery partner so that implementation and construction can be progressed. Officers agreed to provide further information on timelines and funding outside of the meeting.
- 8.4. Members requested that the link to the full survey results of the public consultation on page 10 of the Climate Change Action Plan be updated as not currently a valid link.
- 8.5. Decisions:
- a) The Committee commented on the proposed Climate Change Action Plan and supporting documentation and noted that the Cabinet will be asked to agree the Plan on 26 August 2025.
 - b) Officers were requested to provide further information on EV charging points implementation timelines and funding.
 - c) Officers were requested to ensure that future Climate Change plans include information on relationships with wider partners.

9. Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 9.1. The Committee considered the report on 19 June 2025 and the draft minutes of the discussion were as follows:
- 9.2. The Head of Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Response introduced the report. This was the third iteration of the plan and was focused on providing deliverable targets for the Council led by services.
- 9.3. Public Sector emissions – it was asked why the reduction in emissions in the ‘Industry, Commercial and Public Sector’ lagged behind other sectors. The Head of Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Response stated that the Council did not have direct influence over the sector, so its role was to provide knowledge and empowerment to others to reduce emissions. The team had recently been represented at a number business events to promote pragmatic green policies.
- 9.4. Funding – in response to a question whether services were properly funded to undertake the necessary work to fulfil the work in the plan, the Head of Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Response stated that the services had responsibility for funding their own plans so he could not speak to any financial risk. He added that progress by services against the plan was reported to the Climate Oversight and Implementation Board, which had senior officer representation.
- 9.5. The Chief Operating Officer added that the Council did not have a significant discrete budget with respect to Climate Change, services had their own budget to complete actions in support of the plan rather than a centralised budget. The role of the Council was principally to provide education.
- 9.6. Left behind communities – it was asked what how the plan would encourage left behind communities, officers stated that the focus of the plan was on empowerment and expanding knowledge of residents to enable them to make small modal shifts. Officers were in discussion with the Portfolio Holder about opportunities to bring forward options for future actions.
- 9.7. Progress reports – the Committee discussed how performance was monitored, the Head of Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Response explained that the team received quarterly update reports and produced an annual report including an update on emissions which could be provided to the Committee.
- 9.8. Link with other policies – it was asked whether the Council could promote green policies across Council activities for example could the Council increase areas which have ‘no idling cars’ signage, free bus weekends and storage for recycling in planning applications for new homes. The Head of Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Response undertook to discuss with other services and provide an answer following the meeting.
- 9.9. A Member asked how the Climate Change action plan aligned with other Council policies and to what extent they considered Climate Change

implications in policy development. The Head of Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Change Response stated that the team worked with services to ensure the climate change implications on Council reports were relevant.

9.10. Voluntary Sector – The Head of Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Response was asked to comment on work with the voluntary sector. He stated that the Council tried to provide practical assistance and support.

9.11. Decisions:

- a) The Committee commented on the proposed Climate Change Action Plan and supporting documentation and noted that the Cabinet will be asked to agree the Plan on 26 August 2025.
- b) The Committee requested a briefing note how the Council further green policies across the Council in policy development such as additional car idling car signage and in consideration planning applications.

10. Consultation

10.1. A public survey, on the proposed aims and priority areas, was undertaken in 2024 resulting in more than 400 responses. The survey results will be published on the climate change web pages when the plan is published.

10.2. A number of teams and committees have been consulted during the development of the Climate Change Action Plan:

- Service areas across the Council
- Climate Oversight and Implementation Board
- Informal Cabinet
- Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration
- Community Climate Working Group
- Member Climate Working Party
- Regeneration, Culture and Environment (RCE) Departmenta
- Management Team (DMT) and Children and Adults (C&A
- Departmental Management Team (DMT)
- Corporate Management Team (CMT)
- Overview and Scrutiny (Business Support and Digital (BS&D) and RCE).

11. Climate change implications

- 11.1. The 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 have consequences on service delivery and an increased demand for a pro-active response. The Climate Change Action Plan 2025-28 seeks to respond to the challenges arising, ensuring the Council provides high-quality services and safeguards the health and wellbeing of Medway's communities.

12. Financial implications

- 12.1. 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 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.

13. Legal implications

- 13.1. 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: Medway Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2028

Appendix 2: Climate Change Action Plan Tables

Appendix 3: Corporate Risk Register – Climate Change

Appendix 4: Diversity Impact Assessment

Appendix 5: Communications and Engagement Strategy 2025

Appendix 6: Draft UK City Net Zero Declaration

Background papers

Climate Emergency Declaration – Full Council - April 2019

2022 Climate Change Action Plan