

COMMUNITIES, LEISURE AND ARTS POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 6 February 2024
Time: 6.30 p.m.
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Bryant, Eagle, Forecast (Chairman), Fort, Mrs Gooch (Vice-Chairman), Harper, Hinder, Naghi and T Wilkinson

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

AGENDA

Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Urgent Items
4. Notification of Visiting Members
5. Disclosures by Members and Officers
6. Disclosures of Lobbying
7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information
8. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2024 - to follow
9. Forward Plan relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference 1 - 5
10. Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update 6 - 26

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 4 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 4 p.m. on Friday 2 February 2024). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899**.

To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit the [Council's Website](#).

Issued on Monday 29 January 2024

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive







MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 JANUARY 2024 TO 30 APRIL 2024

This Forward Plan sets out the details of the key and non-key decisions which the Cabinet or Cabinet Members expect to take during the next four-month period.

A Key Decision is defined as one which:

1. Results in the Council incurring expenditure, or making savings, of more than £250,000; or
2. Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards in the Borough

The current Cabinet Members are:

 <p style="text-align: center;"> Councillor David Burton Leader of the Council DavidBurton@maidstone.gov.uk 07590 229910 </p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"> Councillor Paul Cooper Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development PaulCooper@Maidstone.gov.uk 01622 244070 </p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"> Councillor John Perry Cabinet Member for Corporate Services JohnPerry@Maidstone.gov.uk 07770 734741 </p>
 <p style="text-align: center;"> Councillor Claudine Russell Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts ClaudineRussell@Maidstone.gov.uk </p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"> Councillor Patrik Garten Cabinet Member for Environmental Services PatrikGarten@Maidstone.gov.uk 01622 807907 </p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"> Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid Cabinet Member for Housing and Health LottieParfittReid@Maidstone.gov.uk 07919 360000 </p>

Anyone wishing to make representations about any of the matters listed below may do so by contacting the relevant officer listed against each decision, within the time period indicated.

Under the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution, a Key Decision or a Part II decision may not be taken, unless it has been published on the forward plan for 28 days or it is classified as urgent:

The law and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key and part II decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in the Forward Plan.

Copies of the Council's constitution, forward plan, reports and decisions may be inspected at Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ or accessed from the [Council's website](#).

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Cabinet which are normally held at the Town Hall, High St, Maidstone, ME14 1SY. The dates and times of the meetings are published on the [Council's Website](#), or you may contact the Democratic Services Team on telephone number **01622 602899** for further details.

David Burton
Leader of the Council

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant Cabinet Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update ω	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	7 Feb 2024	No	No Open	<p>Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 29 Jan 2024</p> <p>Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 30 Jan 2024</p> <p>Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 5 Feb 2024</p> <p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 6 Feb 2024</p>	Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update	<p>James Wilderspin</p> <p>Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager</p> <p>jameswilderspin@m aidstone.gov.uk</p>
3rd Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	20 Mar 2024	No	No Open	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Mar 2024	3rd Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring	Paul Holland, Adrian Lovegrove

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
4						<p>Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 6 Mar 2024</p> <p>Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 12 Mar 2024</p> <p>Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 13 Mar 2024</p>	Report	paulholland@maidstone.gov.uk, adrianlovegrove@maidstone.gov.uk
<p>Key Performance Indicators</p> <p>Key performance indicators are reviewed annually. This report proposes the KPIs for the period 2024/25.</p>	Cabinet	Leader of the Council	20 Mar 2024	No	No Open	<p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Mar 2024</p> <p>Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee</p>	Key Performance Indicators	<p>Carly Benville, Anna Collier</p> <p>carlybenville@maidstone.gov.uk, annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk</p>

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
5						6 Mar 2024 Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 12 Mar 2024 Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 13 Mar 2024		
Parish Charter Review Review of Parish Charter	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts	20 Mar 2024	No	No Open	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Mar 2024	Parish Charter Review	Orla Sweeney orlasweeney@maidstone.gov.uk
Preventing Financial Exclusion	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts	20 Mar 2024	No	No Open	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Mar 2024	Preventing Financial Exclusion	Anna Collier Orla Sweeney annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk, orlasweeney@maidstone.gov.uk

Agenda Item 10

Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee

6 February 2024

Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Corporate Leadership Team	16 January 2024
Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	29 January 2024
Housing, Health, and Environment Policy Advisory Committee	30 January 2024
Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee	5 February 2024
Communities, Leisure, and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	6 February 2024
Cabinet	7 February 2024

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet
Lead Head of Service	Anna Collier Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	James Wilderspin, Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This is the biannual report on the implementation of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan. The last update report was published in July 2023.

This report includes updates on (i) the Council's decarbonisation progress in achieving Net Zero by 2030, (ii) updates on the new strategic direction for targeting net zero housing and transportation, and (iii) key achievements and an overview of each action's status of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan (**Appendix 1**).

Purpose of Report

Recommendation

This report asks Committee to consider the following recommendation:

1. That the Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee recommend to Cabinet to note the strategic considerations for tackling net zero borough wide and action plan updates shown at **Appendix 1**.

Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve all its priorities.</p>	<p>Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance</p>
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>Delivering the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan supports the achievement of the Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected cross cutting objective. It also supports cross cutting objectives of Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved as delivery of actions have the opportunity to improve the health of residents in the longer term and reduce residents' energy costs.</p>	<p>Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance</p>
Risk Management	<p>Already covered in the risk section (see paragraph 5)</p>	<p>Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance</p>
Financial	<p>The specific costed proposals will be funded from within existing budgets. Future changes to policies and strategies will need to be assessed to understand the impact to ensure they remain affordable during the year and in future years as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.</p>	<p>Section 151 Officer & Finance Team</p>

Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance
Legal	Local authorities have a duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 in exercising their functions to have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Council's Biodiversity and Climate Action Plan demonstrates compliance with the statutory duty.	Legal Team
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes. Some individual actions may have implications in the future and the appropriate review and documentations will be completed as required	Information Governance Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	No implications	Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance
Procurement	Some actions will have implications and the appropriate procurement exercises will be undertaken	Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The updates in this report and recommendations will support the continued implementation of the	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

	Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.	
--	--	--

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee adopted the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan on 21st October 2020. The last update was July 2023.
- 2.2 Since the last update report, officers have explored options to focus the Council's Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy in discussion with Cabinet and with consideration to PACs feedback over the achievability and impact of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan. These included ways forward in achieving net-zero housing borough-wide, progressing sustainable integrated transport, solar energy generation investment, local energy action plans, and biodiversity enhancements.
- 2.3 The largest emission sources in the borough are from domestic electricity and gas consumption which accounts for nearly one third (32%) of total CO2e emissions in Maidstone Borough (216ktCO2e in 2021), and transportation which accounts for 52% of total CO2e emission in Maidstone Borough (354ktCO2e in 2021).
- 2.4 The focus and priorities of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy has changed to areas where reducing the largest impacts of the Borough's carbon emissions can be made.
- I. Net Zero Housing - Progress with looking at how the Council can improve the condition of domestic homes, looking at gaps and how we add value through the potential new energy officer role, while also looking at the Council's own buildings and growing housing stock.
 - II. Sustainable Integrated Transport - To focus on 'future focused transport innovation workshop' for Councillors to develop a shared vision, expand awareness of innovative transportation solutions, enabling long-term sustainable transport planning, and building political commitment for environmentally friendly transportation, with preliminary work to bring data/inputs from a variety of stakeholder views (including young people) to the workshop for consideration.
 - III. Develop a 'Parking and Borough wide EV strategy' - to explore partnerships, provisions for on street infrastructure, that align with national climate goals, reduce range anxiety and stimulate the EV market, and look for opportunity to combine it with the town centre lighting strategy to include on street EV chargers.
 - IV. Renewable Energy - to maximising the renewable energy generation on MBC estate.
 - V. Create a Planning policy framework for solar farms in the local plan - creating zoning for renewable energy generation for longer term policy and allocated land as part of the local plan review process.

2.5 A summary of progress for the five areas are outlined in this report.

MBC Decarbonisation

2.6 The Council has set an ambitious net zero by 2030 with substantial financial commitment already set aside. As outline in [Appendix 2](#) of the July 2023 Action Plan Update report, the most substantive impact the Council can directly have on reducing Carbon Emissions are of its own operations, buildings, fleet, and contracts.

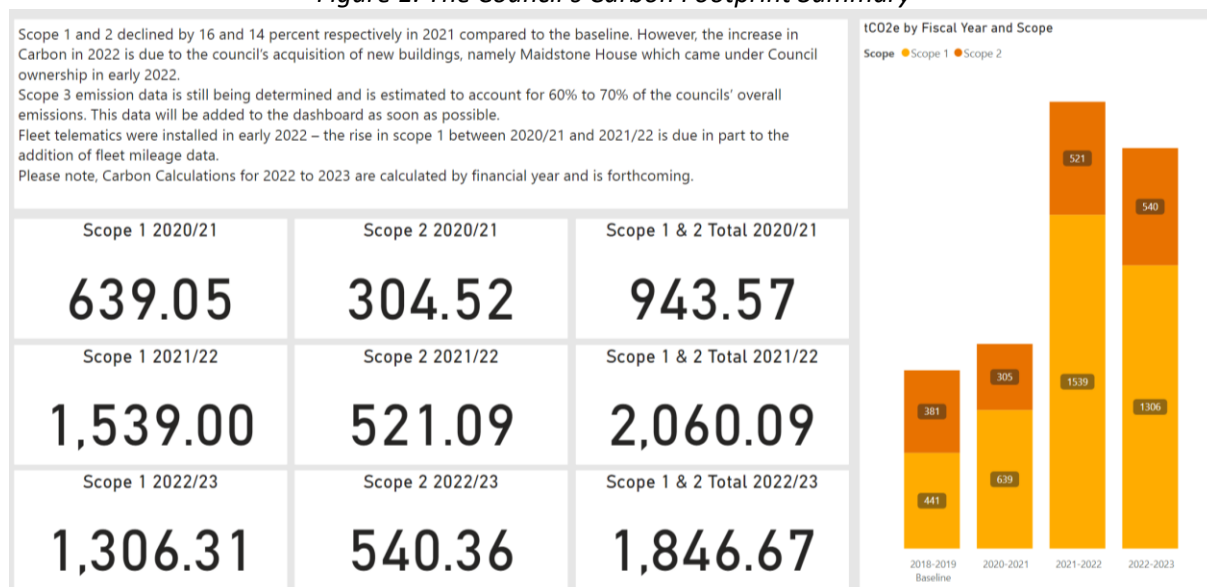
Carbon Footprint

2.7 The Carbon Footprint of the council’s buildings and fleet is updated twice a year using automated energy data by Laser Energy. The Council’s dashboard is used to calculate MBC’s scope 1 and 2 emissions (Reporting on scope 3 emissions is still under investigation). This process helps to identify priority building upgrades and fleet replacement priorities, enabling officers to accurately monitor progress/changes in carbon emissions of the Council. The dashboard also shows the Boroughs historic emissions by sector, which support officers on Borough wide priorities in keeping with the National Government’s 2050 Net Zero commitment.

2.8 The Council’s total CO2 emissions for scope 1 and scope 2 have decreased overall by 10.4% when comparing financial year 2021/22 to 2022/23. Scope 1 decreased by 15.1% and scope 2 increased by 3.7%. In both years, the largest source of scope 1 emissions is from the Maidstone Leisure Centre, accounting for 51.1% off total emissions. The second largest cause of emissions is Maidstone House (17.6%).

2.9 The emissions produced from our Depot’s fleet/vehicles was not available for tracking until January 2022, therefore data is missing for the most part of FY 2021/22. However, in 2022/23, the largest cause of emissions was the heavy-duty waste collection vehicles used for our Commercial Waste service.

Figure 1: The Council’s Carbon Footprint Summary



Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Application

- 2.10 Officers have committed considerable time to preparing and submitting large scale bids for public sector funding to decarbonise the Council's estate as it is in the direct control of the Council.
- 2.11 In November officers submitted a largescale bid for Phase 3c of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) for £3,126,536 to retrofit Maidstone House. Included in the bid were provisions for developing detailed designs, upgrading the heating system, replacing the glazing, fully insulating the building, upgrading all the lights to LED, and installing Solar PV on the Link business terrace roof. The preparation of this bid included a complex and technical set of documents and schematics, energy saving calculations, costing and quotes evidence, project management programme, and risks register. The submission of the bid is a first come first serve organised by [Salix](#), where applicants need to submit a bid as soon as the portal opens to be in for a chance to be considered. Officers were able to submit the application in under 4 minutes and are currently replying to technical queries and developing the project programme with Salix. Members will be notified should we be successful with the grant application.

Fleet Decarbonisation

- 2.12 The Depot has undergone substantial upgrades to ensure it has the capacity to transition to an electric fleet in line with a direct aspect in the Council's control to reduce emissions from the fleet. The electricity capacity of the Depot was increased by 277kVA by connecting to a nearby substation with minimal ground works needed. The increased capacity has enabled the installation of an additional x10 EV chargers in October 2023, bringing the total to 31 plug in charging points installed at the Depot.
- 2.13 There is now sufficient capacity to charge the growing number of EVs on site for the medium term, which currently stands at 11 EVs with 2 more ordered for 2024, out of a total of 65 vehicles in the fleet (replacement vehicles are selected as per the [Green Fleet Strategy](#)).

Domestic Housing Net Zero

- 2.14 Domestic electricity and gas consumption accounts for nearly one third (32%) of total emissions (216ktCO₂e in 2021). The UK government's aim is to have 600,000 heat pumps a year being installed by 2028, just 55,000 were installed in the UK in 2022. In regard to Action 2.1 to "Explore grants schemes for residents, landlords and housing associations, for retrofitting insulation, and low carbon heating systems," Officers have now completed a net zero scenario for existing housing across the borough, using Parity Projects software. The scenario can be used to develop a cost-effective retrofit programme that aligns with the Borough's carbon reduction targets and gives the Council pathways for every property in the borough to identify the lowest cost route to Net Zero.
- 2.15 The domestic housing net zero scenario shows an average mean cost of £23,400 per house for achieving net zero across the borough, and a mean of £7,800 per house to achieve a minimum Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) C rating. These findings can be used to target specify parts of the borough for investment, or heat pump prioritisation, and can be assessed in

terms of low-income and priority areas. Officers will use the scenario data to develop strategies, identify energy-efficient retrofitting opportunities, and create strategic areas to support Net Zero domestic housing across the borough, seek partnerships, and open up opportunities for large scale funding to support residents reduce their utility costs.

Transportation Net Zero

2.16 Across Kent, Carbon emissions are generally maintaining a downward trend in terms of tonnes of CO₂ per capita. Across North Kent transport emissions comprise the largest component (39%) of emissions followed by domestic (29%). Across the borough of Maidstone, carbon emissions have steadily decreased from 1044ktCO₂ in 2005 to 677ktCO₂ in 2021. Carbon emissions from transport in Maidstone have showed a slower rate of decline, reducing from 442ktCO₂ in 2005 to 354ktCO₂ in 2021.

2.17 In respect to Action 1.5 to “Deliver an Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy for the borough that provides sufficient EV charging infrastructure” there are currently 66 public charge points in Maidstone and 27 of these are 50 kWh devices. On a per population basis, Dartford has the highest rate of provision in North Kent with 73.6 EV charge points per 100,000 people, whilst Maidstone has 37.3 EV charge points per 100,000 people. Plug-in vehicle ownership is steadily increasing in Maidstone. The zero-emission vehicle mandate requires 80% of new cars and 70% of new vans sold in England to be zero emission by 2030, increasing to 100% by 2035. Maidstone is expected to require 1,377 public EV charge point sockets by 2030 and 2,735 by 2035 to meet the increase in demand from zero emission vehicle users.

2.18 In respect to Action 1.1 to “Update the Integrated Transport Strategy, and work towards a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan” Kent County Council (KCC) is currently consulting on the Kent Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP). The KCWIP is part of the Government’s Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan process. It has a 10-year timeframe but is a ‘living document’ subject to regular review. At present Maidstone Borough Council is preparing for the development of its own LCWIP to cover the Borough. This will be complementary to the KCWIP when it is developed and support the delivery of the active travel actions in Maidstone’s Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.

2.19 The Quality Bus Partnerships has been replaced with Local Bus Focus Groups. Establishing a new Local Bus Focus Group as outlined in the KCC structure within the BSIP, would align with Action 1.8 to “Actively participate in Quality Bus Partnership and ensure that the borough’s infrastructure is bus friendly” as well as supporting several actions in the plan to reduce borough carbon emissions and pollution, while supporting public transportation.

Other Achievements in the Action Plan

Climate Emergency UK Scorecard of the implementation of MBC’s Action Plan

2.20 In October 2023, Maidstone Borough Council was [scored joint 35th place out of 186 Councils](#), and 3rd in Kent on the implementation of our Action

Plan. Climate Emergency UK (CEUK) has assessed all UK Councils on the actions they've taken towards net zero. This is a second phase update on CEUKs 2021 scoring of [Councils Plans](#). Scores across the country were low with the district average score of 29% with Maidstone scoring 35%.

2.21 In summary, MBC has been recognised for its actions and has scored well relatively to other authorities, however several actions were inaccurately scored or missed by CEUK and the full breadth of MBC progress is not completely captured by this scoring. For more information please see CEUK's [Press Release](#). Officers will take these scores on board as part of prioritising aspects of the Action Plan that scored poorly.

Maidstone's Eco Hub

2.22 The Eco Hub hosted 14 events and talks to raise awareness and create positive behaviour change on climate action, energy efficiency, sustainable living, biodiversity loss, and the cost of living crisis, and partnered with over 24 local sustainable businesses, community groups, and charities.

2.23 1,926 visitors came into the Eco Hub over 17 opening days, with an average of 113 users per day. This is a 121% increase in users of the Eco Hub in 2023 when compared to the 2022 pilot project.

2.24 In partnership with The Mall Maidstone, Officer's entered Maidstone's Eco Hub for the '[best local authority/private sector partnership](#)' Revo award, and Maidstone's Eco Hub is one of three projects that was shortlisted for this national award.

2.25 Officers in the climate change team also worked with the communications team, waste team, and welfare officers to run a community support roadshow which visited three locations in the Borough to help residents with the cost-of-living crisis.

Solar Projects

2.26 Officers have identified seven potential solar PV projects on Council buildings to maximise the renewable energy generated on these buildings for direct use by the Council cutting utility bills and reducing the Council's carbon emissions with a relatively fast payback period for investment (outline in Appendix 2 of the July 2023 Action Plan Update report). Progress on these projects includes:

- Submission of the PSDS bid to include provision for a 16 kWp solar PV array to be installed on the Link Building business terrace roof, combined with green roof. Pending success of bid.
- Preplanning advice to install a 122kWp solar PV canopy over the Mote Park Car Park to be private wired and used to reduce costs of the Leisure Centre. Pending Preplanning advice.
- Investigation into doubling the existing 60 kWp array on the Parkwood Depot roof top to private wire for use of the depot, charge the growing number of Electric Vehicles in the fleet. Pending Investment / Council Decision.
- Lockmeadow Leisure Complex has the largest capacity of MBC properties for solar PV instillation of 995 kWp over 4 roof locations. Pending Council Decision.

LED light upgrades

2.27 Upgrading to LED lighting can have a substantial decrease in utility costs and generally have a very fast pay back period. Several MBC buildings have now been upgraded to fully LED lighting, including:

- The Depot's lights have all been replaced in November 2023 to LEDs.
- Maidstone House Lights have all been replaced with LEDs during the summer 2023.
- The Crematorium Chapel lights have all been replaced with LED lights in Autumn 2023.
- The Elephant House Cob Tree, all the lights have been replaced with LEDs.

2.28 Parking Services remain committed to 100% LED lighting in MBC car parks by the end of 2025. Lamps are being replaced with LED lights as and when they require replacement.

Tree Planting and Rewilding

2.29 Officers are continuing to seek partnerships for tree planting and rewilding projects. In Autumn 2022 and spring 2023 the Council' planted 5,800 trees as part of several partnerships with landowners and Parish Councils ([details here](#)). This planting season, officers have identified a number of potential projects and partners with an estimated 6,000 trees to be planted in Spring 2024. Officers are also supporting the preparation for mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) which came into law in January 2024, to find alternative funding for continued tree planting and rewilding projects.

The Rural England Prosperity Fund

2.30 Climate Officers have led the organisation and distribution of the Rural England Prosperity Fund. MBC was allocated £539,728 to spend between April 2023 and March 2025 to be awarded to projects for rural communities across the borough. Officers supported applicants and supported the panel with technical inputs. Phase 1 of the funding saw grants awarded as listed below:

- Staplehurst Free Church (SFC) which received £45,000;
- Teston Parish Council which received- £45,000
- Hollingbourne Parish Council - phase 1 funding £22,466 / phase 2 funding allocation of £16,906
- Boxley Parish Council - phase 1 funding £22,466 / phase 2 funding allocation of £32,532

2.31 Officers are now in the process of rolling out the second phase of funding, open on Monday 27th of November to Monday 22nd of January 2024, and supported applicants through a free Introductory webinar held on Wednesday 6 December to highlight key information, provide details of phase one's successful projects, and answer any questions, as well as through the [Sustainable Business Directory](#) that showcases an array of eco-businesses to support upgrades and retrofits.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 That the Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee receive these updates every six months and are recommended to note updates on implementation to ensure ongoing progress towards tackling net zero borough wide.
- 3.2 The Committee could ask to receive an update more or less frequently. However, this is not recommended as less frequently wouldn't offer the oversight and more regular updates wouldn't allow sufficient time for substantial work to be undertaken.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee recommend to Cabinet to note the strategic considerations for tackling net zero borough wide and action plan updates shown at **Appendix 1**.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 Responding to the climate emergency is a key corporate risk. Ongoing monitoring of the delivery of the Action plan is a key mitigation as the annual review of the action plan is ensures continued accountability.
- 5.2 Understanding the costs associated with achieving net-zero and allocate resources effectively, prioritise initiatives, putting appropriate capacity to seek funding, and set realistic targets and timelines.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Policy and Resources Committee adopted the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan on 21st October 2020. Progress has been regularly reported to Policy Advisory Committees and the Cabinet.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Continue to update the implementation of the Action Plan, monitor progress, and updates to members.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- **Appendix 1:** Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Implementation Status

Biodiversity and Climate Change *Successes*

Placed Joint
35th
186 Councils

on the implementation of our Action Plan
by Climate Emergency UK and
placed second in Kent



Carbon reduction in scope
1 and 2 emissions from
2021/22-2022/23



Largely due to a reduction
in emissions from the
Leisure centre.



of our fleet upgraded to EV's

54

Officers and elected members
carbon literacy trained
with 3 more training days
booked for early 2024



Climate change newsletter
subscribers doubled in 2023



31

Plug in charging points
installed at the depot



Maidstone residents installing solar panels on
their property through the 2023 Solar Together
Scheme compared with the 2022 scheme.



4

Community organisations provided funding
for carbon reduction projects through the
Rural England Prosperity Fund,
with an expected eight more organisations
to be awarded funding in 2024



500

Eco Bags given to
Maidstone residents

Our main offices,
Maidstone House,
the Depot,
and the Crematorium
upgraded to fully LED



6,000

Trees to be planted
in winter 2023/24

£3,126,536

of funding bid for to retrofit Maidstone House



Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
Active Travel and Green Transportation							
18 Action 1.6 Facilitate a move to electric taxis by providing nine rapid charge points in total by 2025, and twelve rapid charge points by 2030.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee And Councillor Claudine Russell Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	John Littlemore Lorraine Neale	Officers are working with KCC to look at the feasibility of installing a further 2 rapid charging points at Sittingbourne Road car park. Investigation with Swarco is ongoing to look at cost electrical connection work to see if the location is within budget. If the project goes ahead the legal agreement will be the same terms as with the Pudding Lane chargers. It is also suggested that one of the 2 bays served by the charger is open for general public access, and one is reserved for taxis. If Sittingbourne Road car park chargers are installed this would bring total to 4 of required 9 by 2024.	Number of Electric Vehicle Charging Points Installed	2023	9 by 2025 12 by 2030	On track
Action 1.7 Work with the taxi trade to find solutions to licencing that will encourage gradual business led shift to EVs' and promote greener accreditation and campaigns to support taxi trade to move to EVs.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee And Councillor Claudine Russell	John Littlemore Lorraine Neale	This is a joint Kent project and Kent Taxi Licencing meetings continue to be held every quarter. Officers are supporting KCC with developing district net zero plans in terms of target/deadlines/progress for taxis in relation to EVs. Solutions under investigation, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A switch that all new taxis licenced should be Euro 6 compliant, need to follow government guidance so that drivers are subject to changes in requirement at the same time by all licencing offices, so drivers don't switch where they licence. • Requirement for new and reregistered taxi must be euro 6 compliant. • Green taxi scheme for modest incentive, 	Number of EV taxi	2023	Across timeline to 2030	On track

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee						
Decarbonising and Insulating Homes and Buildings							
19 Action 2.1 Explore grants schemes for residents, landlords and housing associations, for retrofitting insulation, and low carbon heating systems.	Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee And Councillor Claudine Russell Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	John Littlemore Philip Jennings	The Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 grant funding agreement has been signed by all relevant parties. The grant is being advertised (targeted advertising first before being opened to wider advertising to relevant wards in the early 2024. Meetings have progressed with Eon to partner to promote and administer ECO Flex (Energy Companies Obligation) to increase ECO's eligibility criteria. The grant provides low carbon heating and insulation measures. There was a delay in the HUG2 grant funding agreement being signed by partners, therefore the roll-out of the scheme has been delayed. This will result in a delay of getting works completed at eligible properties in Spring 2024. Further work is required to partner with Eon and make the Council's ECO Flex statement of intent ready for implementation. This should be ready for advertising to households in early 2024.	Number of residents with EPC rating improvements of A-C from D-G	2023	Across timeline to 2030	On track
Adapting to Climate Change							
Action 5.3 Conduct Borough Climate Impact Assessment and (i) Identify natural flood management (nature-based solutions and sustainable	Councillor John Perry Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee	James Wilderspin Gemma Bailey	Officers continue to seek partnerships on tree planting and nature-based solutions with private landowners of flood elevation efforts. Communications and projects such as the Maidstone Eco Hub comprise climate adaptation information and awareness raising of climate impacts to raise awareness throughout the community and local businesses.	NA	2023	Across timeline to 2030	On track

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
<p>20</p> <p>(ii) urban drainage), Build local communities' resilience,</p> <p>(iii) Support business continuity management, and</p> <p>(iv) Priorities and strengthen power and water supply and other critical infrastructure ensuring more resilient communities.</p>	<p>And</p> <p>Councillor Claudine Russell</p> <p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee</p>		<p>Officers are investigating Local Energy Action Plans (LEAPs) which are strategic documents developed by local authorities and other relevant stakeholders to outline their approach to sustainable energy management and the transition to low-carbon, renewable energy sources at the local level. Costing approximate £120k for a full LAEP. Due to the size of Kent, it would need to be sub-divided into 2-3 LAEP areas and Districts are being encouraged to work together to develop LEAPs. Folkestone are currently undergoing a pilot and planning to share their experience developing a LEAP. Swale are likely to be interested partnership with Maidstone.</p>				
Enhancing and Increasing Biodiversity							
<p>Action 6.6 Work with local farms and landowners to deliver landscape scale biodiversity initiatives Nature Recovery Strategy – including reconnection of habitats, floodplain restoration, reduced chemical inputs and reintroduction of lost native species.</p>	<p>Councillor Paul Cooper</p> <p>Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee</p> <p>And</p> <p>Councillor Claudine Russell</p>	<p>Rob Jarman</p> <p>James Wilderspin</p> <p>Gemma Bailey</p>		NA	2025	Across the timeline to 2030	Not yet due

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee						
Action 6.7 Increase borough canopy cover expanding ancient forests and reconnecting of existing woodland including urban woods, and greening town centres.	Councillor David Burton Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	James Wilderspin Rob Jarman	Officers continue to work closely with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) and investigated 5 large scale tree planning projects in autumn 2023. Two projects are going forward in spring 2024, one is in continuation at Nettlestead Yalding on the Angling Societies land planting a further 1000 trees in addition to the thousand planted last winter along the river side. As well as a second project in partnership with a local vineyard to plant 5000 trees.	Number of Trees planted / area of land rewilded	2022	Across timeline to 2030	On track
Making our Estate Carbon Neutral							
Action 7.1 Deliver Maidstone Borough Council 2030 Net Zero Commitment, by: (i) Decarbonising the councils' buildings through low carbon heating, LEDs, insulation and smart controls, (ii) decarbonising the council's fleet to fully EV, (iii) investing in renewable energy generation, (iv) incorporating energy saving principles into	Councillor John Perry Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee And Councillor Claudine Russell Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	James Wilderspin Mark Green Katie Exon Darren Guess	16% of the MBC fleet have now been upgrade to EV's (11 of 65 vehicles total), with a further x2 EVs on order for 2024. There are now a total of 31 plug in charging points installed at the depot. 4 buildings have been fully upgraded to LEDs. Preplanning advise is currently being sought for a solar canopy car port project in Mote Park Car Park, to be private wired to the leisure centre to reduce its operational costs and carbon emissions. On November 7 th 2023, officers submitted a largescale bid for Phase 3c of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) for £3,126,536 to retrofit Maidstone House. Included in the bid were provisions for developing detailed designs, upgrading the heating system, replacing the glazing, fully insulating the building, upgrading all the lights to LED, and installing Solar PV on the Link business terrace roof. The preparation of this bid included a complex and technical set of documents and schematics, energy saving calculations, costing and quotes evidence, project management programme, and risks register. The submission of the bid is a first come first serve organised by	Percentage Change of Carbon Emissions from MBC Buildings, Fleet, Contracts (ie Scope 1, 2)	2022	2030	On track

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
(v) office strategies, and supporting staff to shift to electric/ultra-low emission vehicles, public transportation and more flexible working.			Salix, where applicants need to submit a bid as soon as the portal opens to be in for a chance to be considered. On the 7th of November, officers were able to submit the application in under 4 minutes and are currently waiting to be notified if the bid is successful.				
Action 7.5 Improve data management on all property including leased buildings and prioritise decarbonisation actions and improve EPC ratings.	Councillor John Perry Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee And Councillor Claudine Russell Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	Katie Exon James Wilderspin	Officers continue to improve Data Management for MBC key buildings, and work with Laser Energy and Fidums to monitor consumption. Officers are still working to improve leased data management, particularly for the temporary housing stock.	Percentage change/reduction in Utility costs/KWh for Gas, Electricity, Water usage at leased assets.	2023	Across the timeline to 2030	On track
Communications and Engagement Strategy							
Action 8.1 Support residents (including adults, women, youths and children, faith groups,	Councillor Claudine Russell	Gemma Bailey	A second Eco Hub was run in Summer 2023, a pop-up, walk-in community information centre for residents to access information and see real world solutions to help them become more sustainable. The hub opened for six weeks,	NA	2022	Across the timeline to 2030	On track

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
<p>minority groups, and marginalised groups), partners, and wider stakeholders (Parish councils, farmers, and landowners) to understand the changes they can make to reduce and prepare for climate change. Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting residents to reduce their individual carbon footprints, upskilling and green job creation, buying local, conserve water, and with sustainable lifestyles and Eatwell guidance. Promote schemes which help residents, landlords and housing associations reduce energy bills and decarbonise their buildings e.g. retrofitting grants and the government domestic and non-domestic renewable heat incentive programme. 	<p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Julie Maddocks</p>	<p>throughout the summer holidays, in a unit in The Mall Maidstone. There were 1,926 visitors to the Eco Hub, a 121% increase in users when compared to the 2022 project. 24 local sustainable businesses, charities, and community groups partnered with MBC and shared information, resources, leaflets, and demonstration models of their products, as well as holding events and workshops in the Eco Hub. Visitors commented on how good it was to see MBC acting on the climate crisis and are hopeful that this initiative raised the profile of MBC's action on climate change and biodiversity loss. Overall, the project was a huge success, and the Eco Hub was one of just three projects shortlisted in The Revo's for the best local authority/ private sector partnership Revo award. This award recognises a Local Authority initiative that has had a major impact on the town centre experience for its residents and users.</p> <p>Solar Together scheme phase 3 started in 2023 and will finish in early 2024. The scheme was split into two auctions, spring, and autumn. The spring scheme has so far delivered 768 installations across Kent (68 in Maidstone), however this number will rise once all customers who have accepted their quote receive their install. The autumn scheme closed for registration at the beginning of November, therefore installs are still being completed, but phase 3 of Solar Together Kent looks to be the most successful to date. Final figures for Solar Together phase 3 and expected carbon savings will be available for the next update. There is likely to be a phase 4 of Solar together in 2024. Solar Together has the potential to bring in profit for the Council, with other local authorities seeing profits of as much as £12,000 after three years of the project. Phase one of Solar Together in Maidstone was not very successful with low take up. The officer managing the programme for this phase no longer works for MBC and there was no handover, therefore it is difficult to understand the issues in this phase. Phases two and three have been profitable for MBC with phase 3 likely to be the most successful as there has</p>				

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
<p>24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and encourage residents, businesses and the third sector to install renewable energy generation or develop community energy projects, by providing information and promoting grants, shared investment, and savings schemes. Encourage residents to separate food and recyclables, use appropriate bins, compost at home, avoid contamination and reduce waste production through promoting the circular economy strategy. Support residents, schools and community groups with biodiversity improvement and protection, promoting relevant schemes, such as tree 			<p>been a primary officer within MBC monitoring progress throughout. With a better understanding of data and tracking of progress, phase 4 could be the most successful phase for MBC to date.</p> <p>In 2023 we were allocated £539,728 to spend between 2023 and 2025 on capital interventions in our rural communities as part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). The REPF in Maidstone aims to support rural communities to modernise and improve their assets to provide multiuse spaces that improve health, wellbeing, reduce rural loneliness, while having a positive impact on the local environment, contribute towards net zero, support the local rural economy, and promote community cohesion. In phase one of the REPF £134,932 was awarded to four organisations for improvements to their facilities including the installation of solar panels, heat pumps and double glazing. Phase two of the scheme opened for applications in December 2023 and will support more projects than phase one with £404,796 of funding available.</p> <p>At the end of 2023 officers purchased the carbon literacy for local authority's toolkit. This not only enables climate change officers to train MBC staff and elected members, but also enables us to deliver training to parish councils. In 2024 carbon literacy training will be offered to parish councils in the borough of Maidstone. This programme will help to improve the knowledge of climate change in parish councils and enable more action in the community.</p> <p>The climate change newsletter now has 4,650 subscribers. The newsletter continues to share information on upcoming funding, grants, sustainable initiatives, relevant events and MBC's climate change initiatives.</p>				

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
planting and after care, and encouraging them to enhance biodiversity in their gardens and grounds.							
25 Action 8.2 Provide staff awareness information of biodiversity and climate change at induction and provide job specific sustainability training to each service area.	Councillor David Burton Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	Gemma Bailey	The carbon Literacy for local authority's toolkit has been purchased by MBC, allowing officers to continue training MBC staff for the next three years. The aim is for all staff who attend training to complete action pledges and become certified as carbon literate. To ensure all staff can attend training, the course will continue to be run both online and in person. In person training will also be introduced at the depot in 2024. 46 officers have been trained to date and 41 have completed their pledges to become certified as carbon literate. We now have a good understanding of the programme and the different ways we can roll it out to officers, therefore in 2024 we will aim to train 100 officers through the carbon literacy programme and aim for at least 85% of attendees to complete their pledges and become certified as carbon literate.	Number of Staff carbon literate accredited	2022	Across the timeline to 2030	On track
Action 8.3 Enable local businesses to reduce their carbon footprint by providing information on funding opportunities, carbon calculators, localised supply chains and travel plans that promote active travel and public transport, and support businesses to use the Kent Prepare website to raise awareness of how to prepare for flooding.	Councillor David Burton And Councillor Claudine Russell Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	Julie Maddocks Chris Inwood Gemma Bailey	Economic Development continue to feature a 'green tip' in every monthly Business E-newsletter and promote relevant business support schemes and grants when made available. Achieved a 71% increase in business newsletter sign ups since 2021 to 7,000 with an average 41.5% average monthly open rate. Promoted The Eco Hub pop-up information centre August/September 2023 to local businesses. The climate change website now includes a page for businesses, providing resources, links, and information to assist businesses in improving their sustainability.	NA	2022	Across the timeline to 2030	On track

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
Sustainable Decision-Making Processes and Governance							
Action 9.1 Provide briefings and training for councillors and our managers on carbon, climate change, and biodiversity to create a culture change and ensure climate change and biodiversity are integrated into decision making.	Councillor David Burton Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	Gemma Bailey	<p>Carbon Literacy Training was delivered to a group of eight elected members in October and four have gone on to complete their action pledges to become certified as carbon literate. This training was delivered by an APSE trainer who specialises in Carbon Literacy for elected members.</p> <p>The next carbon literacy training day for elected members will be held in February on a Saturday, to allow elected members who work during the week to attend.</p> <p>The carbon literacy for local authority's toolkit purchased at the end of 2023 licences officers to deliver training to elected members, therefore moving forward carbon literacy training for elected members will be delivered by MBC officers. In 2024 we will aim to train a further 15 elected members.</p>	Number of Councillor carbon literate accredited	2023	Across the timeline to 2030	On track