

Climate Change Strategy 2025-2028

1. Introduction

Climate change and its impacts have been recognised nationally and internationally as the most important environmental challenge faced by the planet. A changing climate is having, and will increasingly have, profound effects on everyone - especially future generations.

The planet's temperature naturally changes over very long periods of time, however anthropogenic climate change since the industrial revolution has seen the Earth's temperature rise. It has been estimated that the Earth's Global average temperature has increased by 1.2°C since the pre-industrial period (1850-1900).

Acknowledging the need to make a clear statement of intent the Council took the unanimous decision in June 2019 to address climate change locally, by declaring a climate emergency and developing a plan to enable:

- A carbon neutral Council by 2030
- A green and sustainable Rushmoor

The aim of this Climate Change Strategy is to co-ordinate and set out a range of objectives into one document to guide the Borough to achieve its targets.

2. Background and Context

Anthropogenic Climate Change is defined as an increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere, caused by human-induced activity.

This warming is caused by increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the atmosphere, most notably Carbon dioxide (CO₂), as well as other gases such as Methane (CH₄) and Nitrous Oxide (N₂O). These gases are emitted as a result of human activity, particularly relating to the burning of fossil fuels (oil, coal, and gas). When fossil fuels are burnt, carbon dioxide is released. Other human practices release carbon dioxide, as well as other greenhouse gases.

These greenhouse gases absorb heat and therefore trap the sun's heat within the atmosphere, creating what's named 'the greenhouse effect'. The more GHG's within the atmosphere, the higher levels of warming.

There are naturally occurring variances in the Earth's average temperature, but the increased emissions since the emergence of the industrial revolution have accelerated this warming.

With increased levels of warming the likelihood of climate impacts are amplified and the impacts of these risks become greater. Therefore, by limiting the levels of warming due to climate change, will mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

Climate impacts within Rushmoor

Climate change will likely affect Rushmoor in a variety of ways. This includes changing weather patterns, such as: warmer, drier summers and wetter winters; both of which could increase the likelihood of heath fires and flooding.

Extreme weather events will not only be more likely, but they could be more severe due to the effects of climate change.

This will also have an increasing impact on the community's health and wellbeing, which includes impacts on mental health, particularly in young people.

The climate breakdown and its impacts will disproportionately affect those who are already most vulnerable.

National Government commitments and legislation

The UK's Climate Change Act 2008 sets the legislative basis for the UK's Climate Change action. A statutory target was set out in the UK Climate Change Act 2008 to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from 1990 by 2050. In 2019, this was amended, and the UK Government committed to a target of becoming Net-Zero by 2050 (Compared to a baseline of 1990).

Since, Government have also committed to a 68% reduction in emissions by 2030, as part of its Nationally Determined Contribution towards the Paris Agreement.

A series of interim targets have been put in place called carbon budgets, which cap the emissions within each period. The current budget (fourth carbon budget) requires a 52% reduction in emissions by 2027.

The Government has now adopted a UK Committee on Climate Change recommendation to increase this target to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment identifies eight priority risk areas:

1. Terrestrial and freshwater habitats and species
2. Soil health from increased drought and flooding
3. Natural carbon stores
4. Crops, livestock, and commercial trees
5. Food production and distribution
6. People and the economy
7. Human health and wellbeing
8. Multiple risks from overseas impacts

Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council also declared a climate emergency in 2019, setting out two targets:

- To be carbon neutral by 2050
- Preparing to be resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise

Rushmoor Borough Council will work with Hampshire County Council to ensure that work is aligned.

3. The Vision and Overall Goals

The Climate Change vision for Rushmoor is that Rushmoor Borough Council will seek to have a positive impact on future generations by working with businesses, communities, and organisations to protect and enhance Rushmoor's environment. Through direct action and by encouraging and supporting others, Rushmoor will address the challenges and opportunities presented by climate change.

Sustainability Motion

To solidify the commitment to this work, the following sustainability motion was set out in November 2024, by Cllr Jules Crossley (Portfolio Holder for Policy, Climate & Sustainability), recognising the urgent nature of the challenges confronting Rushmoor in terms of the climate crisis, the financial situation, the economic environment, and the inequity that some of our residents continue to face.

This commitment further highlights how challenging it will be to achieve the targets that Council set after declaring a climate emergency in 2019.

Council therefore resolved to:

- Support and deliver sustainability across Council's policies, projects, operations, and estate, where sustainability includes, but is not limited to, sound financial management, fair and equitable treatment of residents, staff, and organisations within Rushmoor, and have a positive impact on our environment and biodiversity.
- Introduce climate impact assessments for Council Decisions on all new projects.
- Encourage residents, businesses and organisations working within the borough to be responsible and sustainable.
- Be open and transparent in communications with residents and those working or operating in the borough.
- Foster relationships of mutual respect and collaboration with other councils, public authorities, and businesses to ensure sustainability.

Delivery Plan Priorities:

The Council's Cabinet agreed to a new set of priority themes for Aldershot and Farnborough.

The priority themes are:

- Skills, economy, and business
- Homes for all: quality living, affordable housing
- Community and wellbeing: active life, healthier and stronger communities
- Pride in place: clean, safe, and vibrant neighbourhoods
- Vision for the future and financial sustainability

These Priorities outline five clear themes, whilst also ensuring that sustainability, diversity, and inclusion are at the heart of what the Council does.

Vision for the future and financial sustainability

Within the priority detailing the vision for the future and financial sustainability, it aims to "Create an outcome-led plan to deliver the vision this will include a refreshed and more ambitious Climate Change Action Plan."

The co-benefits of tackling climate change also support other priorities within the delivery plan - in particular:

- Community and Wellbeing: Active Lives, Healthier and Stronger Communities
- Pride in Place: Clean, Safe and Vibrant Neighbourhoods

4. Priority Areas for action

Rushmoor's Climate Change Strategy establishes the strategic framework within which action plans will be aligned over a three-year period. The strategy reflects the important role the Council plays in tackling climate as a leader, facilitator, enabler, and deliverer of services to the Rushmoor community and beyond.

The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will be coordinated and managed by the Council. Implementation will be achieved through a collaborative approach with a range of stakeholders and the local community.

Action Planning

The Climate Change Action Plan has been developed in an evidence-based way, with the actions linking back to the Council's two climate change targets; The Council's Operational Carbon Footprint, and to become a greener and more sustainable Borough.

The Climate Change Action Plan will aim to have between 10-15 focused actions for each year. This enables a clear focus for the year ahead, whilst also allowing for smaller projects and business as usual activity to occur alongside this.

The Actions within the plan are split into sections reflecting the Council's climate targets, to show which actions seek to make progress against which target.

The Council's target regarding carbon neutrality, refers to the Council's Operational Carbon emissions. When developing the Council's approach to climate change action planning, independent advice was sought in order to seek recommendations for targeted actions, which could be achievable, taking into account financial and technological constraints.

The Action Plan does not aim to summarise all the activity that the Council is undertaking to support the climate change and biodiversity agenda, much of which is undertaken as business-as-usual following changes in recent years. An annual report is integrated into the action plan, which allows for the full range of associated activity to be reported on an annual basis, alongside progress to reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

An important element of ensuring delivery of the Action Plan is effective, is regularly monitoring and evaluation of performance. This will be regularly updated with the responsible Cabinet member; Portfolio Holder for Policy, Performance and Sustainability, and the Council's Scrutiny process. Further policy and project matters will be presented to the Policy and Project Advisory Board (PPAB) and progress in delivering the plan will be reported as part of the Council's Quarterly monitoring and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

5. Carbon Footprint

The Council's Operational Carbon Footprint is Calculated annually using Sustrax, by Carbon Footprint Ltd.

The carbon footprint is comprised of three scopes and includes both direct and indirect emissions. The data that each scope encompasses within Rushmoor Borough Council's carbon footprint is shown in the table below.

Rushmoor Borough Council's carbon footprint scopes

Scope 1	Direct Emissions	Gas (Heating and Council Owned Vehicles (Operational Fleet)
Scope 2	Indirect Emissions	Purchased Electricity
Scope 3	Indirect Emissions	Business Travel, Paper, Waste, Water and Supply Chain (Procured Goods and Services).

The carbon footprint is expressed as an absolute amount of tCO₂e. This is the amount of greenhouse gas emissions as represented by tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalence, meaning other greenhouse gases impact are quantified using carbon dioxide's warming effect as reference.

The methodology that is used in SUSTRAX is aligned with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and in relation to supply chain data; DEFRA recommended conversion factors.

All data categories with the exception of supply chain, are based on primary data. Supply chain figures are calculated using contract cost and Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC) code categories. Primary data is used for the vehicle mileage and waste tonnage from the Council's contract with SERCO. The recommendation would be in the future to work with contractors and suppliers to increase the amount of primary data used in the supply chain category to increase accuracy of the footprint.

6. Offsetting

The UK's overall climate change targets relate to becoming net-zero by 2050, as set out by central government. Whilst Rushmoor Borough Council's target is to become carbon neutral by 2030.

There is a distinction between these two terms (net-zero and carbon neutral), and they should not be used interchangeably.

Net zero is defined as achieving change that reduces emissions to the lowest point possible (usually by at least 90%) and then offsetting the few remaining emissions. Whereas carbon neutrality means that emissions generated are matched with the amount of emissions that are offset by the organisation. There does not necessarily need to be an emissions reduction to be carbon neutral.

The target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 refers to the Council's operational emissions. Whilst Rushmoor Borough Council does not currently have a target to become Net-zero, it does recognise the importance of reducing emissions as much and as soon as possible. Therefore, its approach is to aim to have as large a reduction as possible by 2030, given the Council's financial position and its obligation to maintain services for residents.

To achieve carbon neutrality, the Council will have to offset any emissions produced annually by 2030 and every year onward to ensure the Council remains carbon neutral. The intention is to keep the level of offsetting to the absolute minimum, by prioritising emissions reduction. The detail of what offsetting measures this will include will depend on the best practice at the time. The aim is to ensure that any offsetting that is needed, will have a tangible local impact.

7. Resourcing and Governance

Resource & Finance

The earlier that an emissions reduction is made the better it will be for the environment and community wellbeing. Whilst there is also a financial cost with this, adaptation for the longer term is likely to be more costly than taking action to mitigate climate change outcomes in the shorter term. Recognising the financial position of the Council, and any action will be properly analysed looking at cost and impact.

A climate change reserve was created in November 2020, and this will be used to support activity within the climate change action plan.

Other actions will be funded through relevant service budgets and in accordance with the financial procedure rules. Wherever possible, external grants and funding sources will be sought to support the delivery of the action plan.

Where there is a financial implication, business cases will be developed and presented where appropriate for specific actions to assist in the allocation and drawing down of resources.

Governance

Rushmoor Climate Community Group was launched in October 2024. One of the objectives of this group is to consult on policy and plans. The Council sought feedback on the Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2026 and recommendations to be considered as part of the revision for a plan for 2023-2028.

Further policy and project matters will be presented to the Policy and Project Advisory Board (PPAB), and progress in delivering the plan will be reported as part of the Council's Quarterly monitoring and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

8. Rushmoor Climate Community

Rushmoor Climate Community Group Launched in October 2024. This is a forum for those who live, work or volunteer within the borough to engage with the Council on climate, environmental and sustainability issues within Rushmoor.

The meetings of this group will be facilitated and coordinated by the Council. The agenda of meetings will be dependent on the priorities and suggestions of members of the group, Council Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Policy, Performance & Sustainability.

The aims of this group are:

- To **ENGAGE** Rushmoor residents in caring for, protecting, and enhancing our natural environment
- To **CONSULT** and ask for opinions and feedback on Rushmoor Borough Council's existing policies and help shape and inform future policies and plans.
- To **NETWORK & SHARE** information & resources and form partnerships between people and organisations.
- To **CREATE** initiatives by and for residents
- To **RAISE AWARENESS** of climate, environmental and sustainability issues across the community and beyond

This group is a platform where the Council can share current work, as well as consult and gather feedback on future policy, plans and projects around the climate change and sustainability agenda. This Group will be consulted to help shape climate action within Rushmoor.