

**Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council  
Policy Statement  
Responding to the Climate Emergency**

**2020**

## **1 Introduction**

1.1 The Council meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019 agreed a motion to declare a climate emergency. It noted that the most recent State of the UK Climate 2017 report identified:

- We will be experiencing summers that are 2.5°C warmer;
- Our winters will be milder with the average temperatures being 2.2°C warmer;
- There may be a 16% decrease in summer rainfall making our summers much drier but more variable;
- Winters will be wetter with an average of 14% more rainfall;
- Mean sea levels around the UK have risen by about 16 cm since the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Council resolved to:

- 1) Join other local authorities in declaring a climate emergency;
- 2) Create a member working group to propose an informed target for the Council's carbon reduction by 2025 and to review it every five years thereafter, and to develop a "Carbon Action Plan" towards these goals, and that this working group should report back to the Council no later than March 2020;
- 3) Develop a strategy for RMBC to play a leadership role in promoting community, public and business partnerships in reducing carbon emissions;
- 4) Mandate officers to lobby government for additional resources to support this strategy where these are required;
- 5) Pledge to produce, in January of each year, a Rotherham Climate Emergency Annual Report, detailing the Council's progress against the Carbon Action Plan;
- 6) Pledge to ask our partner organisations across Rotherham to support us by making clear commitments to dealing with this climatic crisis;
- 7) Require all officer reports from April 2020 to Cabinet and Full Council to contain impact assessments in relation to climate change."

## **2 Climate Emergency Action – scope and underpinning principles**

2.1 This report sets out the Council's commitment to tackling the climate emergency. It provides information about the work undertaken by the Member Working Group since 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019. The report also proposes ambitious and informed targets for the Council's carbon reduction and the key action themes that will form the basis of the Council's climate emergency response.

- 2.2 Any action will, in the first instance, focus on direct emissions from Council activities and emissions associated with the authority's energy consumption. Consideration will also be given to how the operations of the local authority's suppliers and contractors are addressed. Emissions associated with other items and commodities that the authority consumes may be considered at a later point.
- 2.3 The Council will lobby national government and use its influence with external and partner organisations. This is important because the authority produces only a small percentage of emissions in the borough and so in order to secure shared commitments to borough-wide emission reduction, the Council's influence on other organisations will form an essential aspect of carbon governance.
- 2.4 The climate emergency report and developing actions will aim to work to the principles of sustainable development. This means that any climate actions should contribute to the triple bottom line of human well-being/social equity, economic prosperity/development, and environmental protection and stewardship.
- 2.5 The debate about climate emergency is constantly evolving, as scientific research around the issue develops, the political landscape within which local authorities can act shifts, and innovation continues to advance the available avenues for action. Therefore the Council's response must be dynamic and reactive as new ideas and technologies develop, and potential actions become subsequently more or less feasible.

This climate report must therefore be treated as a "living document", which identifies key priorities and potential strategies but can be adapted as necessary. Equally, the climate emergency report is currently still a work in progress, intended to provide information regarding the actions currently being considered and the principles guiding these actions.

- 2.6 The continuing development of a response to the climate emergency must also incorporate a long-term adaptation strategy, alongside mitigation measures. This is in order to minimise the threat to livelihoods and growth across Rotherham from climate change's effects such as flooding and other extreme weather variations. An effective adaptation strategy must be informed by a comprehensive appraisal of likely impacts to the borough; this will be informed by utilising internal and external expertise as well as insight gained from the community.

### **3 “The Big Ask”**

- 3.1 It is recognised that the reduction of carbon emissions is not something the Council can achieve alone and it is therefore necessary to create open and collaborative dialogue with others who share these goals. As such the Council is committed to taking a proactive approach around public engagement, communication and lobbying.
- 3.2 When identifying the actions needed, the Council will focus on what can be delivered immediately as well as aspiration for future years. It is recognised that some of the proposed actions will require further investment and support from national government.
- 3.3 However many of the proposed actions will, over time, result in savings for the Council through introducing more efficient energy supply and usage. In addition many of the actions will contribute to the well-being of Rotherham residents by reducing energy costs, providing better designed homes and communities and improving health.

### **4 The Council’s leadership role**

- 4.1 The Council has a key role to play as a place shaper and in leading the pace and scale of change needed. In addition to the action taken by the Council, its partners, suppliers and residents, the Council will also seek to influence national government and lobby for the resources and capacity needed to tackle climate change.
- 4.2 The Council will continue to play an active role in the Sheffield City Region, contributing to the emissions targets that are being developed at a sub-regional level and using its influence to secure any appropriate investments. There are significant opportunities to contribute to the refresh of the strategic economic plan to ensure that sustainable development is reflected. Rather than viewing climate change and economic growth as competing agendas, the local authority can support opportunities for greater integration across sectors to support innovation driven growth, for example by promoting green business parks and encouraging green industries.
- 4.3 In addition we will work with other local authorities and national and regional networks (including the Local Government Association, Solace and the New Local Government Network) to formulate our climate action proposals to inform national government policy.
- 4.4 Crucially the Council, through its climate action, will promote the principles of sustainable development and benefits of carbon reduction. The Council will also link carbon action with wider priorities such as social value, the skills and employment strategy, neighbourhood working, inclusive growth and social

justice.

## 5 Proposed Targets

5.1 It is proposed that the following targets are adopted.

<b>RMBC: Council's carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2030</b>
<b>Rotherham: borough-wide carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2040</b>

The purpose of these dual targets is to recognise the borough's carbon footprint alongside the Council's carbon budget and acknowledge the need for the Council to lead by example in securing commitments and pledges from other organisations.

5.2 The RMBC target is ambitious and will require commitment across the organisation, however we are not starting from scratch. The aim is to accelerate current activities such as the roll out of energy switching schemes and integrate carbon reduction into everyday business activities, ensuring that climate impact assessments are undertaken as part of Council decisions and emissions associated across all activities are accounted for.

5.3 In addition the Council has considered analysis undertaken by the Tyndall Centre looking at industrial, commercial and domestic carbon emissions for Rotherham and used this to inform the setting of targets for the borough.

### 5.4 Net zero or zero carbon?

The Council considered whether to have a 'net zero' carbon target or a 'zero carbon' target. Zero carbon requires there to be no emissions at all, whilst net zero carbon means that an organisation is responsible for removing as much CO<sub>2</sub> as it emits, so that the two figures are offset. As this allows emissions to continue for some operations, net zero is considered to be a more realistic aim.

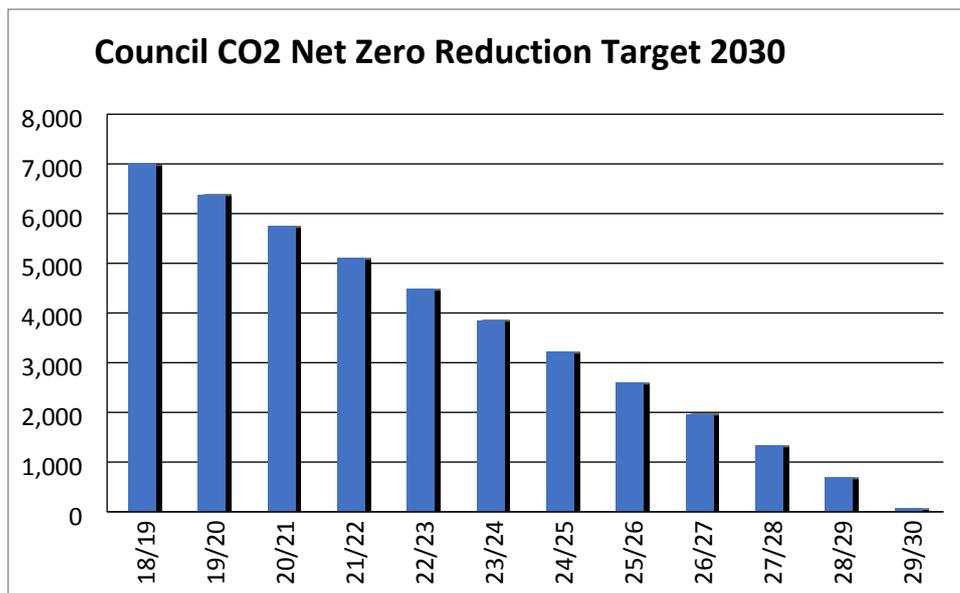
In setting a target for the reduction of carbon emissions, the Council has undertaken detailed analysis to understand and establish its current baseline position. This analysis of the Council's carbon emissions includes looking at operational energy, waste and transport (both fleet and grey). This has also helped to identify the data gaps in the organisation which include:

- No regular formal integration or analysis of collected emission data;
- Issues with reliability of social housing emissions data, based on estimations from asset management software;
- No reliable carbon capture data for trees and other green infrastructure;
- No procurement-related emissions data.

It is proposed that these data gaps are addressed as part of the delivery and monitoring of actions.

## 5.5 Scale of the challenge

Since 2012, the Council has actively reduced energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in operational buildings and street lighting. Audited annual reports show a reduction of 51.98% since the 2014/15 reporting period. Based on 2018/19 emissions (7005 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>) from operational buildings and street lighting, the Council would need to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by an average of 9% (630.5 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>) each year to 2030.



## 6 Developing a carbon action plan

- 6.1 The aim is to develop a portfolio of realistic actions based on scientific evidence, as well as reflecting local political, economic and social priorities. Wherever possible, actions will be drawn from examples of best practice both nationally and internationally. The Council will endeavour to address both mitigation actions (which will address the causes of climate change) and adaptation actions (which will address the impact of climate change). Even with mitigating actions in place the effects of climate change will continue due to emissions already released in previous decades and although adaptation is more difficult to quantify it is essential that the borough is prepared for the future.
- 6.2 Audits on emissions have shown significant gaps in data collection, and in order to monitor effective progress towards these goals, significant internal reviews are required on data collection and management and the sharing of monitoring responsibilities across directorates and services.
- 6.3 Service deliverers must also be engaged in the development of any carbon reduction actions, in order to utilise the total expertise available to the Council

to develop meaningful actions that can be implemented. For this reason this climate report is a working document which details planned actions for 2020/21. However the working group is also considering potential future actions which require more extensive cross-service review and research before implementation.

6.4 Curbing emissions will require significant ambition and commitment. In line with the principle of sustainable development, many of the planned and potential actions will have significant social and/or economic co-benefits or lead to long-term financial savings for the Council. However some will necessitate financial investment and may be reliant on investment from national government. To this end the Council is committed to working with national government to develop national policy frameworks and lobby for additional investment. This will be important if the Council and the borough as a whole are able to curb emissions and thus contribute to the national carbon target.

6.5 In developing the carbon action plan, it is proposed that actions are identified under seven themes. These are: Energy, Housing, Transport, Waste, Built and Natural Environment, Influence and Engagement. These are considered in further detail below.

## 6.6 **Energy**

6.6.1 This refers to the energy that is used across all Council operations and concerns where energy comes from (i.e. the use of non-renewables vs renewables), how efficiently energy is used (such as the energy efficiency of physical capital) and personal behaviours. Potential actions could include investing into energy efficiency improvements of operational buildings and using (and potentially generating) renewable energy, and targeting energy usage behaviours. Such measures will typically necessitate some financial investment however will generally lead to medium and long term cost savings for the Council as well as stimulation of sustainability and renewable energy markets, and job creation within these.

6.6.2 The Council has already been improving efficiency of its energy usage, most recently improving the energy efficiency of street lighting, saving an approximate £430,000 per annum and achieving a 63% per annum reduction of emissions here since 2012. In order to further improve energy efficiency, an assessment of the Council's operational buildings will be required in order to determine potential efficiency upgrades for each building (this will account for cost of measures, carbon savings and long-term financial savings). Alongside improving material efficiency, it is recommended that energy-use behaviours of all staff are targeted through awareness training.

6.6.3 In order to reduce emissions to a meaningful extent, the Council will consider what steps it can take to decarbonise its energy source. Two options exist here:

the first is to switch to a renewable energy provider; the second option would be to explore the potential for investment into renewable energy generation. This latter option would allow the Council to reduce its emissions, while saving energy costs to all operations (approximately £5 million per year) and providing additional revenue through excess energy exported to the national grid. Both options would require significant investment and further exploration of funding and investment opportunities. In addition the Council will continue to support the development of the new Templeborough heat network.

## **6.7 Housing**

- 6.7.1 As with the above, this considers the sourcing of energy and the efficiency of its use, for both social and private housing (i.e. carbon that is emitted as a consequence of energy use within the home). Potential actions include measures to upgrade the efficiency of new and existing housing, and utilising sustainable energy solutions. Improving energy efficiency in housing generates social co-benefits in reduction of both energy bills and vulnerability to fuel poverty, as well as economic development of sustainable housing markets, and increased employment associated with these.
- 6.7.2 In order to monitor social housing decarbonisation progress towards the 2030 net zero goal, all available data on social housing must be regularly collected and held by the Council. Data for borough-wide domestic emissions is collected by national government.
- 6.7.3 In order to stay within carbon budgets, new social housing should be built to the best possible energy efficiency standards. Passivehaus (regarded as one of the most energy efficient building methods and standards) is one possible choice for this, however further review is required to determine the best achievable standard.
- 6.7.4 At this time local authorities are able to set energy efficiency requirements of new developments higher than national building regulations require (currently EPC E) and it is suggested that the Council should pursue the option of requiring private developers to adopt high energy efficiency standards (e.g. EPC of A or B) .
- 6.7.5 Whilst it is more financially viable to build energy efficiency into new housing, according to [ONS projections](#) in 2041 83% of housing will have been built before 2016 which will require retrofitting to cut domestic emissions in line with national net zero goals. The Council would be keen to work with national government to determine the feasibility of retrofitting Rotherham's housing stock, including a thorough assessment of housing standards and to ascertain the material and financial requirements of retrofitting that would be necessary.

## **6.8 Transport**

- 6.8.1 This refers to the means by which people and materials move across the borough. The focus and scope of this theme is centred on vehicles involved with RMBC's fleet and private vehicles used for work ("grey fleet") as well as a potential way to decarbonise wider transport use and reduce unnecessary car travel. Actions to curb transport emissions include electric vehicle (EV) conversion of the Council's own fleet, and measures to decarbonise wider public and private transport usage, both independently as a local authority and by working with Sheffield City Region (SCR).
- 6.8.2 Rotherham Council has already begun introducing measures conducive to decarbonising transport across the borough. Active transport has been facilitated by the development of cycling infrastructure, and schemes that provide training and bike loans. Public transport improvements have been pursued through participation in the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, and SCR, where public transport is a key economic and environmental priority.
- 6.8.3 The Council has already begun building its Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure; using this infrastructure to support EV fleet conversion will be essential to curbing internal transport emissions in line with 2030 net zero goals. Consensus suggests that the cost gap between EV and combustion vehicles will continue to close, allowing a gradual conversion to take advantage of falling purchase costs, as well as the lower running costs of EVs. If charged from the national grid, EV conversion is estimated to cut a vehicle's emissions by approximately 43%.
- 6.8.4 "Grey fleet" emissions should also be addressed to contribute to reducing the Council's overall transport emissions. This would involve a review of the spatial coordination of staff in order to reduce unnecessary travel during regular working patterns, as well as amending the Council's business mileage reimbursement policy with the expectation that staff prioritise the use of public transport for work-related travel (unless prevented by reasonable circumstances). Based on the most recent internal data available, significant financial savings and emission reductions could be achieved for the Council. The Council is already committed to reviewing its fleet and producing plans for possible conversions to electric vehicles. This work should be completed by early 2021 and will be reported back to members as part of the annual climate report.
- 6.8.5 The Council also has the capacity to reduce borough-wide transport emissions by acting as an enabler in several key areas:
- Expanding promotion of active travel through cycling infrastructure, training, and bike provision (Transport For Life recommends an investment of £12,000,000 per annum into active travel, with a potential

saving of 13,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum and a health benefit of up to £5,000,000 (Dept. of Transport figures).

- Work with transport partnerships to improve public transport services, encouraging a shift from private transport use;
- Explore community transport options in areas where public transport services are unlikely to be profitable for private operators;
- Facilitate borough-wide switch to EVs and Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) through continuing to expand charging infrastructure.

6.8.6 Transport is also a key economic and environmental priority for SCR, and is included in the Combined Authority's extended powers and responsibilities as part of its Devolution Deal. RMBC can therefore support transport systems and infrastructure by providing input into and collaborating with the development and implementation of a sustainable transport strategy across the region. This will be a particularly important endeavour in Rotherham's context, where a significant proportion of borough-wide emissions are from journeys through M1 or M18 motorways, which may have little to do with the borough's residents. RMBC officers are working with the SCR and their Active Travel Commissioner and Director, in working to influence the SCR Active Travel Implementation Plan to ensure this maximises the opportunity for evidence-led investment in low/zero carbon transport in the borough.

## 6.9 **Waste**

6.9.1 Waste is an area where the Council has already done significant work, both in terms of recent improvements to recycling services across the borough and alongside Barnsley and Doncaster, to reduce the emissions associated with processing waste through the BDR Waste PFI Partnership. This theme therefore represents commitments to continue to collaborate with this partnership to minimise emissions associated with the processing of waste.

6.9.2 Working across the South Yorkshire authorities through the South Yorkshire Waste Strategy, RMBC can explore extending sustainable waste processing (e.g. reuse and recycling/upcycling and organic waste processing) and reducing waste generally (and specifically non-recyclable waste) through work with industry, awareness-raising and community engagement. The Council will continue to review its approach to recycling and waste collections to mitigate the impact of waste on the environment. Education regarding waste will be particularly important as processing of waste is responsible for 4% of all of the UK's emissions. Given that the majority of UK-wide emissions are indirect emissions associated with the consumption of goods, emission savings here have significant potential. The Council is also exploring opportunities to expand its contractual arrangements with schools to enable schools to access recycling collections that mirror those of Rotherham households.

## 6.10 **Built and natural environment**

6.10.1 This refers to how the Council utilises the carbon capture potential of green infrastructure (e.g. green spaces, trees, woodlands) and manages/coordinates developments and planning to reduce emissions associated with both the development/construction process, and the use of urban space after completion. Potential actions include reviews of planning policies and increasing the capacity of Trees and Green Spaces services.

6.10.2 RMBC's annual tree removals are currently higher than planting, not taking into account that new smaller trees are unable to capture as much carbon as older trees. It is also expected that over the next decade "Ash Dieback" disease will kill many thousands of trees across woodlands, privately owned and Council lands. In order to maintain its green infrastructure, RMBC must allocate an annual planting budget at least sufficient to capture the equivalent carbon to trees lost. It is advisable to support this by conducting an i-Tree survey to establish current carbon capture levels across the borough and enable effective monitoring of these. Strategic tree planting and further expansion of green infrastructure will also be essential to borough-wide climate emergency adaptation measures, for example by providing natural drainage to protect against flooding.

6.10.3 The Council can also reduce emissions associated with the urban environment through planning policy and services. Rotherham's Local Plan already makes provision for climate change and related issues, both in the protection of green infrastructure and in its strategic priorities and land use planning. It may be advisable to review the framework for site allocation at the next available opportunity in order to ensure continued emphasis on carbon reduction. This could be further supported with a Supplementary Planning Document on low carbon developments and planning, to clarify climate-based planning priorities to inform developers' planning applications.

6.10.4 Consideration should be given to introducing specific local planning policies to reduce carbon associated with the urban environment at the earliest opportunity. Two examples proposed so far include:

- The use of Section 106 agreements to require developers to pay into a carbon reduction fund. The amount to be paid would be calculated based on the number of dwellings or m<sup>2</sup> of commercial floor space, with additional amounts based on carbon lost from the removal of green infrastructure (i.e. trees);
- Requiring developers to include emission estimates in their planning applications and monitoring emissions during development;
- The Woodland Trust has been commissioned to create the 'Northern Forest' which would see 50 million trees planted across Northern

England. The land for this has not been identified yet and meetings are taking place with land owners to start discussions about what land is available and appropriate for this type of planting in different towns and cities across the north. The Council is working with the Woodland Trust to explore options for Rotherham.

## 6.11 **Influence**

6.11.1 This will consider actions through which the Council can secure commitments and pledges from other organisations to reduce carbon. This may include other public sector organisations, private partners, or through lobbying central government to shape the national legislative context.

### 6.11.2 **Rotherham Together Partnership**

As part of its response to the climate emergency, the Council has begun communicating its priorities and potential avenues of action to other organisations through the Rotherham Together Partnership. In order to drive progress towards the 2040 borough-wide net zero target, RMBC should consolidate and expand its partnerships around environmental issues.

By engaging with partners in public, private and voluntary sectors, as well as expert groups the Council can:

- Collaborate on specific carbon reduction projects;
- Share knowledge and best practice;
- Support sustainable development and the decarbonisation of Rotherham's economy;
- Secure pledges and commitments from organisations across the borough towards net zero emission goals.

### 6.11.3 **Influencing National Government**

Working with partners, other local authorities and SCR, RMBC should also establish key lobbying lines in order to influence government. These will include, but are not limited to:

- Call on government to create the national legislative and policy context in which local authorities, businesses and citizens are best able to act on climate change;
- Investment for essential interventions as described above (e.g. housing, transport infrastructure);
- Related to the above, join other authorities in asking government to give local authorities a statutory duty in low carbon energy and the associated introduction of a Sustainable Energy Investment Fund;
- Call on government to set net zero standards across all UK developments;
- Call on government to create the fiscal and financial conditions to

stimulate decarbonisation (e.g. tax systems that favour low carbon solutions, an effective financial regime to support innovation, etc.);

- Request direct government support for a thorough assessment of the extent and ways that climate change is likely to impact Rotherham, and then for direct support in implementing appropriate adaptation measures.

6.11.4 The Council will, through its social value policy, commit to securing additional social value from its procurement and commissioning processes. This includes a commitment to work with suppliers and providers to support measures designed to improve outcomes for Rotherham residents and communities as well as measures around greater environmental sustainability, including accessible green public spaces

## 6.12 **Engagement**

6.12.1 Through engagement, the Council will aim to secure the active participation of residents in the design and implementation of strategies to reduce borough-wide emissions and raise awareness of climate change.

6.12.2 To stimulate a borough-wide response to the climate emergency, members and officers have begun to develop a community engagement strategy to implement alongside agreed actions. This strategy will encourage active participation of residents in borough-wide carbon reduction, by relating emission saving to its various co-benefits including cost saving. Engagement of young people will be central to this, as young voices have been central to international environmental movements so far, and it is the youngest generations who will inherit the future, which will inevitably be shaped by the success of our response to the climate emergency.

6.12.3 An internal engagement strategy will also be developed and implemented. This is to encourage Council staff and service providers to be actively involved in identifying areas of high energy consumption and/or emission output that can be acted on. Additionally, service providers and relevant expertise within the Council are to be further involved in the further development and implementation of themed based actions. In addition, once agreed, this climate report will be turned into a strategy document which can be shared with the partners and the public.

## 7 **Summary of planned actions 2020/21**

<b>The Council</b>	<b>The Borough</b>
Produce carbon impact assessments for all cabinet decisions	Engage with the public, community organisations and young people to build support for climate action.

Address gaps in data collection regarding CO <sub>2</sub> emissions	Adopt climate change action as part of the new Rotherham Together Partnership Plan
Explore feasibility of renewable energy self-generation	Work alongside other local authorities and the Sheffield City Region to address shared climate change goals including affordable and accessible public transport.
Commit to requiring efficiency standards for private housing developers that is in line with net zero targets	Lobby national government to influence national government policy and secure appropriate investment towards climate change actions.
Carry out assessment of Council's operational buildings to determine feasible energy efficiency upgrades	Work with national government to deliver on any commitments that may come through the environment bill.
Develop timeline for EV fleet conversion	Work with transport providers, SCR, and relevant organisations to encourage borough-wide EV fleet transitions
Develop awareness training for Council workforce around energy use behaviours	Promote EV charging across the borough
Promote sustainable transport across the workforce including cycling and ULEV leasing	Continue development of plans for Templeborough biomass heat network
Strengthen South Yorkshire partnership commitments to reduce carbon emissions associated with waste	
Complete energy efficiency improvements to street lighting	
Develop a tree planting policy	

## 8 Management, Monitoring and Development

8.1 In order to ensure effective monitoring of the climate response actions, it is proposed that a member working group for climate action continues. Chaired by a Cabinet Member, the group will monitor progress, investigate the feasibility of further action, and report on an annual basis to Council.

8.2 The group will be supported by a dedicated climate action co-ordinator and a

team of climate action champions, one for each of the action plan themes.

**END**