

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 10 February 2025

Report Title

Climate Emergency Annual Report 2025

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

On 30 October 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and set out its action plan covering the following seven policy themes of Monitoring and Measurement; Energy; Housing; Transport; Waste; Built and Natural Environment; and Influence and Engagement. A theme covering Adaptation was subsequently added to the action plan to recognise the work to prepare for climate impacts and mitigate those already being felt throughout the Borough.

At its meeting on 23 March 2020, Cabinet resolved to establish the targets of:

- The Council's carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2030 (NZ30)
- Borough-wide carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2040 (NZ40)

A Climate Emergency Action Plan was established, and this report outlines progress towards the updated Climate Emergency Action Plan reported for the 2024/2025 period. Also included is a summary of climate change data, for greenhouse gas emissions from Council operations April 2020 – March 2024 and across the Borough of Rotherham, 2005 – 2022. Local area emissions data are published two years in arrears by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

This report covers the eight policy themes detailed above and in addition includes a summary of the Council's progress on nature recovery action. A forward plan for 2025/26 is also proposed.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approves the Climate Change Action Plan in Appendix 2, noting the key achievements and opportunities summarised in Appendix 1 and section 2 of this report.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1	Climate Change Progress Report 2024/25
Appendix 2	Climate Change Action Plan 2025/26
Appendix 3	Climate Change Data Summary
Appendix 4	Initial Equality Impact Screening Assessment
Appendix 5	Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

- [Rotherham Council \(2020\). Responding to the Climate Emergency. Cabinet 23 March 2020:](#)
- [Rotherham Council \(2021\). Climate Emergency Annual Report. Cabinet 22nd March 2021:](#)
- [Rotherham Council \(2022\). Climate Emergency Annual Report. Cabinet 25th April 2022:](#)
- [Rotherham Council \(2022\) Climate Emergency Action Plan 2022/23. Cabinet 17th October 2022.](#)
- [Flood Alleviation Update. Improving Places Select Commission 25th October 2022.](#)
- [Rotherham Council \(2023\) Climate Emergency Annual Report 20th March 2023](#)
- [Flood Alleviation Update. Improving Places Select Commission, Tuesday 19 September 2023, 1.30 p.m. - Rotherham Council](#)
- [Rotherham Council \(2023\) Council Building Decarbonisation Programme Cabinet Report - Monday 18 September 2023](#)
- [Rotherham Council \(2023\) Rotherham Council Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Expansion. Cabinet 16th October 2023](#)
- [Rotherham Council \(2024\) Cabinets Response to the Improving Places Scrutiny Review - Nature Recovery Monday 16 September 2024](#)
- [Rotherham Council \(2024\) Section 19 Report for Storm Babet, Improving Places Select Commission, Tuesday 22 October 2024.](#)
- [South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority \(2024\) Net Zero Update. Audit, Standards and Risk Committee. Tuesday 26 November 2024.](#)
- [Rotherham Council \(2023\) Transport CO2 emissions in Rotherham](#)
- [Rotherham Council \(2024\) Waste Collections Policy. Cabinet 16th December 2024](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Climate Emergency Annual Report 2025

1. Background

1.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency on 30th October 2019 and since then has committed to driving down carbon emissions with a view to achieving the following targets:

- The Council's carbon emissions to be net zero by 2030 (NZ30)
- Borough-wide carbon emissions to be net zero by 2040 (NZ40)

1.2 The Council also declared a Nature Crisis for Rotherham on 25th May 2022. It is recognised that the decline in nature is intrinsically linked with the climate emergency, and this is reflected within the action plan detailed in Appendix 2.

1.3 This report details progress to date and presents a proposed Action Plan for 2025/26.

1.4 On the 10 January 2025, the World Meteorological Organisation announced that 2024 was the warmest year on record, with the past ten years being the warmest on record. Average global temperatures exceeded 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for the first time, though long term warming measured over decades remains below 1.5°C. Global Green House Gas emissions are also at a record high. This does not mean that the targets set within the 2015 Paris Agreement cannot be reached as annual average temperatures fluctuate, but this continued upward trend highlights the urgent need for action on carbon emissions.

1.5 The Met Office has also recently produced smaller resolution climate scenarios to support adaptation activities at a local level.

1.6 National Policy Background

1.7 On 12 November 2024 at COP29 in Azerbaijan, the UK Prime Minister announced an increase in ambition in relation to its net zero target, including reducing emissions by 81% on 1990 levels by 2035. This target is aligned with the UK's sixth carbon budget and with the recommendation of the Climate Change Committee aiming to limit global warming to 1.5°C. The announcement aims to reduce emissions by investment in UK based renewable energy and investment in green jobs.

1.8 A number of other policy changes have emerged since the previous annual report. Including a lifting of the ban on onshore wind in England and the launching of Great British Energy backed by £8.3billion which aims to speed up delivery of renewable energy. Funding has also been allocated to invest in carbon capture to deal with residual emissions. The establishment of Great British Energy may present future opportunities for the Borough should further investment in renewables become available.

Regional Background

- 1.9 The Council continues to work closely with its regional counterparts. The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and its member authorities are developing plans for future activities to provide a clear evidence base for regional action. Opportunities have been recognised in the region surrounding clean growth, retrofitting homes, industrial decarbonisation, and transport. Developing a clean, green economy is a particular priority and the Mayor has recently set up SY Energy, which is a partnership board bringing together key local stakeholders to work on tackling the challenges which may be preventing investment in the region.
- 1.10 The Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission has also released an updated Climate Action Plan for the region. This action plan acts as a framework for delivery and focusses on four main pillars including: climate adaptation, rapid emissions reduction, nature restoration and ensuring a just transition. These pillars are then focused on seven outcomes which have been the basis for the recommendations for monitoring included within this report.

2. Progress Report

- 2.1 A full progress report and action plan for 2025/2026 is detailed within Appendix 1 and 2. Key progress is highlighted below with respect to the specific themes of:
- Monitoring and measurement
 - Energy decarbonisation
 - Transport
 - Housing
 - Waste
 - Built & Natural Environment
 - Influence & Engagement (including culture and heritage)
 - Adaptation
- 2.2 Nature Recovery is included within the Built & Natural Environment theme to align with existing work streams around tree planting and woodland management.
- 2.3 **Outcomes**
- 2.4 Feedback in February 2023 from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) recommended that in future the programme consider focussing on outcomes. This report therefore considers the desired outcomes of the overall climate change programme and provides a number of key performance indicators that can be better monitored moving forward. It also presents measurables which are designed to demonstrate progress against the key outcomes and targets associated with this workstream. These are included alongside a data overview in

section 2.5 which is presented for transparency purposes. This approach will also support future decision making to enable the impact of actions to be better prioritised based on importance and impact.

2.5 Monitoring and measurement

2.6 The Council annually monitors its operational carbon footprint as well as Borough-wide emissions using data available from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero. The data below aims to present a more outcome focussed approach as described above.

2.7 The Council's ambitious net zero by 2030 target for its operational emissions aims to demonstrate leadership whilst also reducing its impact on the environment. The performance measures outlined below in relation to this target are aimed at decarbonising the Council's scope 1 and 2 emissions, plus business travel. These emissions form the Council's direct influence.

2.8

Net Zero by 2030 Performance Measures							
KPI	UoM	Reporting Year				DoT	RAG
		20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24		
Natural Gas and Biomass Heating	tCO ₂ e	1,741	1,818	1,766	1,694	↑	
Fuel Use in Corporate Fleet Vehicles, Plant and Tools	tCO ₂ e	2,531	2,522	2,504	2,446	↑	
On Site Diesel Generation	tCO ₂ e	3	4	0	0	↑	
Fugitive Emissions of F-Gases	tCO ₂ e	138	138	138	90	↔	
Electricity Use in Buildings	tCO ₂ e	2,077	1,930	1,810	1,945	↓	
Street Lighting	tCO ₂ e	1,530	1,384	1,267	1,356	↓	
Business Mileage/Transport	tCO ₂ e	221	273	384	396	↓	
TOTAL NZ30 Emissions	tCO₂e	8,242	8,068	7,869	7,927	↓	
Annual Percentage Change*	%		-2.1	-2.5	0.73	↓	
Cumulative Percentage Change†	%		-2.1	-4.5	-3.8	↓	

* Change in total, annual NZ30 emissions compared with the previous year.

† Change in emissions since 2020/21. The NZ30 target was adopted in March 2020.

2.9 Emissions from the Council's buildings have increased since 22/23. This is a result of a 7% increase in the carbon intensity of the National Grid electricity during this period, and a gradual return to the office post COVID. The impacts of the Council's energy efficiency measures have therefore been relatively small. The challenges experienced are detailed below in section 2.16.

2.10 Performance against the Council's commitment to support the transition of the Borough to net zero by 2040 target is not as easily measured. Data provided by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is provided 2 years behind.

Net Zero by 2040 Performance Measures							
KPI	UoM	Reporting Year				DoT	2024 Status RAG*
		20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24		
Total Borough Emissions [†]	ktCO ₂ e·yr ⁻¹	1,522	1,514	1,425	-	↑	
Percentage change against 2005 baseline [†]	%	-44.9	-45.2	-48.4	-	↑	
Percentage fossil fuels in local energy mix [†]	%	80.8	80.3	79.7	-	↑	
Local renewable generating capacity [†]	MW	90.6	92.9	94.2	96.4	↑	
Dwellings within 3 miles of RMBC EVI	%	-	-	-	90%	↔	
Council homes rated EPC band C or above	%	-	46.5 [‡]	50.9	53.9	↑	
Household recycling rate	%	43.3	45.0	44.5	-	↔	
Household recycling contamination rate	%	7.70	6.70	6.40	-	↑	
Residual Waste per household	kg·yr ⁻¹	507	495	473	-	↑	
Performance DoT (Direction of Travel) Key: ↑ Improving, ↓ Declining, ↔ Uncertain/No Change * Status RAG scores reflect climate change targets and committed actions e.g., a KPI related to EVI (electric vehicle charging infrastructure) is rated green because the Council's target for 95% of dwellings to be within 3 miles of its EVI network by 2025 is very likely to be met: see section 2.25, below. † NZ40 Emissions and local area energy statistics are reported by calendar year. Calendar years are aligned with the Council's municipal year reporting periods according to which comprises the greater part of each e.g., 2020 NZ40 emissions appear under 2020/21 in the table above. ‡ 46.5% figure correct as of October 2021. With regards to household waste data, the Council is broadly average when compared across all local authorities but when compared with similar Council's improvements can be made.							

2.11

The above performance measures aim to track the following key outcomes:

- Progress towards a net zero Borough by 2040
- An increase in access to publicly available EV charge points, supporting the transition to a cleaner transport system.
- Healthier, warmer social homes
- Improved recycling and waste management

- 2.12 Measurement of change relating to net zero 2040 emissions requires work to understand better which emissions are within the Council's influence and how this can be monitored. The table above presents the available data from existing monitoring regimes and Strategies, such as the Rotherham Public EV Charging Strategy which already exists. Further data is available within Appendix 3 which highlights work already done to interrogate available datasets and understand the Borough's existing emissions status. It is expected that this area of monitoring will develop over time.
- 2.13 In addition, a number of actions proposed within the 25/26 action plan provide opportunities for monitoring and in particular the development of a Net Zero 40 Strategy covering the wider Borough will identify further outcomes for delivery in future years.
- 2.14 As explained in section 1.10 the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Action Plan has seven themes focussed not just on carbon emissions and energy but also on nature recovery, adaptation and ensuring a just transition for communities. It is recognised that the Council does not yet have metrics available to assess all components identified in the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Action Plan, though all elements are addressed in some way as part of the qualitative actions proposed in Appendix 2.
- 2.15 Further detail is available in Appendix 3.
- 2.16 **Energy**
- 2.17 The Council has developed a detailed route map to net zero which includes a Heat Decarbonisation Plan covering all relevant components of the Council's corporate estate that need to be decarbonised prior to 2030. Unfortunately, progress against this plan has been met with a number of financial and technological challenges throughout the 2024/25 period.
- 2.18 In 2023, the Council submitted a bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Phase 3c scheme to fund works to five council buildings which were planned for decarbonisation during 2024. Unfortunately, this application was not successful, and the Council was therefore unable to progress with the works. In addition, emergency replacement of gas boilers during this time has meant that some of the originally approved buildings will no longer be eligible for the Phase 4 scheme. Alternative sources of funding are being reviewed for these sites, but the Council has since submitted another bid to the PSDS4 scheme to decarbonise three additional buildings.
- 2.19 The Council also has an ongoing project to decarbonise five Town Centre buildings including the Town Hall, Civic Theatre, Riverside House, Clifton Park Museum and the Orchard Centre. The heating systems within these buildings are challenging to decarbonise due to

their age, the sites' electrical capacity, and the space available for plant. The Council was successful in being awarded government funding to upgrade these buildings in readiness for a heat network which aligned at the time with grant funding received by a private sector company to construct a heat network covering the town centre.

- 2.20 The private sector project to construct the heat network has experienced significant unexpected delays linked with the confirmation of the heat source for the heat network. As the heat network does not currently have a confirmed heat source, and the design of works is heavily linked with the incoming temperature of the heat, the technical specification for these buildings cannot be drawn up. This has meant that the Council has been unable to draw down the full extent of the funding to meet grant deadlines as the measures cannot be designed. Salix, the fund administrator on behalf of the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero has confirmed that any funding spent to date will not be clawed back as it was spent in good faith. Future applications to PSDS for this project are also possible, subject to the usual application processes. This project is therefore on hold until approximately 2026/27 to enable the private sector project to progress. However, LED lighting upgrades have been completed on the relevant properties as part of this scheme.
- 2.21 The Council continues to administer the ECO 4 FLEX scheme which increases the number of residents eligible for the installation of energy efficiency measures to their property. Between April and November 2024, 313 properties have been approved for installation.
- 2.22 The Community Energy Officer has also undertaken 13 engagement events in communities across the Borough, with several more planned throughout the winter period. During these sessions residents were signposted to relevant grant funding and to other organisations which support residents in fuel poverty or with poorly insulated homes.
- 2.23 **Transport**
- 2.24 The fleet replacement programme is scheduled to continue until March 2026. To date, there have been no new electric vehicles added to the Council's fleet which presents a delay against the originally agreed plan. A separate paper will be brought to Cabinet with proposals for next steps in this programme. A number of internal policy changes will be required to deal with a change in processes necessary for implementing the 64 EVs approved. This includes management of vehicles currently kept at officers' homes overnight and ensuring processes are implemented for charging.
- 2.25 Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is a biofuel which can result in up to 90% reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions when used as a direct replacement to fossil fuels such as diesel. The transition to this fuel is easy to manage as only a small change to vehicles is needed in the form of filter replacements. The Council has been trialling this fuel in ten of its existing ICE vehicles over the last eleven months and has proven to be

successful, saving the Council over 80 tCO₂e. The trial has confirmed that HVO is a suitable solution to reduce emissions of the Council's fleet with minimal service disruption, especially for vehicles where Electric Vehicles are not feasible at present. It will not, however, eliminate emissions and does not in and of itself achieve net zero emissions. The change would require additional revenue investment and a paper will be brought forward for consideration with more detail in the future.

- 2.26 Seven (6 sites and 1 reserve) new locations for public electric vehicle charging infrastructure were approved at Cabinet in October 2023, funded through SYMCA and JAQU funding streams. To improve the longevity of these devices, a slight change to the programme was approved via Officer Decision to enable the devices to be ruggedised against vandalism and to include CCTV at each site. These installations are on track for completion by end of March 2025 and are expected to enable the Council to achieve its target of 95% of residents to be within 3 miles of a publicly available Council-owned charge point.
- 2.27 Site investigations are currently underway at Drummond Street car park in readiness for procurement. This scheme will deliver a solar PV canopy and EV scheme at Drummond Street designed to create a hub in the Town Centre for use by residents, visitors, and private hire vehicles. This scheme, funded by the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI), is currently scheduled for completion by end 2025.
- 2.28 The Council has completed active travel infrastructure schemes around the town centre, including on Wellgate, Broom Road and Sheffield Road. These schemes begin to make it easier for people to walk, wheel and cycle for short journeys but changes in transport mode are slow and have seen little change over the last 20 years. To encourage positive behaviour-change and a modal shift towards more active travel, for those that are able, will require more advocates and additional interventions alongside infrastructure. For example, the Council has recently implemented a pool bike scheme for staff use. These bikes, which include electric bikes, can be borrowed by staff for short journeys between sites. However, it must be recognised that short trips which lend themselves to active travel, those shorter than 6 miles / 10 km, generate only a fifth of carbon emissions associated with car trips to or from Rotherham, and the carbon saving associated with these schemes is forecast to be only 0.004% of Rotherham's territorial transport emissions.
- 2.29 **Housing**
- 2.30 Work to deliver ten net zero ready homes at East Herringthorpe were officially completed early in April 2024. All the homes are supplied with heating and hot water from Air-Source Heat Pumps. These are the first 'no-gas' Council homes to be delivered in Rotherham. They are 'zero carbon ready', this means that as the UK electricity system is decarbonised, they will become operationally net zero. They also have additional energy efficiency measures in the form of integrated solar PV

panels and mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR). They have also achieved an EPC 'A' rating.

- 2.31 The Council has been unable to deliver the three homes in Thrybergh that were intended as a demonstrator project for zero carbon homes and included in previous versions of this plan. Whilst this zero-carbon aspiration has in part been met through the East Herringthorpe scheme there are additional measures which were planned at Thrybergh, such as battery storage.
- 2.32 The two small sites in Thrybergh were narrow and constrained with challenging ground conditions; the design and planning process limited the number of houses on each site making any possible development unviable and unaffordable to progress.
- 2.33 However, given the positive feedback received on the East Herringthorpe homes, the Council has now included a 'net zero ready' standard within its specifications for all future newbuild Council homes delivered as part of the current Housing Delivery Programme. This is notably in advance of the expected Future Homes Standard which is planned to come into force during 2025. The Council will therefore already be in compliance with this expected new statutory requirement prior to its introduction.
- 2.34 The Council is also actively looking to deliver zero carbon homes through other projects in the Housing Delivery Programme subject to affordability/ viability.
- 2.35 The action to create a plan to decarbonise the Council's social housing stock to EPC band C by 2030 is currently on track for completion by March 2025.
- 2.36 **Waste**
- 2.37 Recycling contamination remains a significant issue for the Council's household waste collections. In the 2023/24 municipal year, the annual average contamination rate for households' paper and card and dry mixed recycling collections were 15.58% and 18.66%, respectively. Meanwhile, about one eighth of material disposed as 'residual' waste could have been recycled or composted in kerbside collections. These twin issues represent on the one hand, a direct cost to the Council from contamination charges paid to its downstream waste treatment contractors; and on the other hand, lost revenue from material which could have been recycled. Proposed changes to the Council's Contamination Policy have been approved for consultation by Cabinet in December 2024.
- 2.38 Following the successful introduction of paper and card recycling, the Council continues to transform its commercial Rotherham Business Waste service, in preparation for Simpler Recycling regulations. From April 2025, all businesses with more than 10 employees must arrange for the separate collection of food waste and dry mixed recycling from their

premises, with similar provisions for schools, hospitals and local authorities. To support local businesses' compliance with the new regulations and deliver local economic, social and environmental value, Rotherham Business Waste will offer separate food waste and dry mixed recycling collections, alongside its existing paper and card recycling service. Since the introduction of paper and card recycling – and the commencement of a new pricing structure in April 2024, to incentivise separate collections – most Rotherham Business Waste customers have retained or increased the size and number of their paper and card bins, while down-sizing their containers for residual waste: a tangible expression of increased recycling, amongst local businesses.

- 2.39 Environmentally sustainable waste management is not all about recycling: the Council has also seen improved performance at other levels of the 'waste hierarchy'. For example, the Council has partnered with Rotherham Hospice, to signpost potential users of its bulky waste collection service to consider donating items to charity, instead. Meanwhile, the rate at which items are diverted from recycling or disposal at the Council's HWRC's (Household Waste Recycling Centres) to be re-used in the community has more than doubled since the contract was re-let in October 2023. Thousands of pounds' worth of items have been donated for re-sale and to furnish the premises of local charities, while about twenty bicycles per week are sent to be renovated by Yorkshire Bike Shack, a community interest company based in Doncaster. As part of the Council's HWRC contract, pop up re-use shops will attend relevant events throughout the Borough with a successful 'pop-up shop' recently held at the Rotherham Show. There are also plans for the Council's HWRC contractor on behalf of Barnsley and Doncaster Councils to develop a permanent re-use shop in the Borough. This will emulate successes in other local authority areas and to promote further the region's circular economy.

2.40 **Built & Natural Environment**

- 2.41 The Council's tree planting programme is well established and to date has planted 41,474 trees across the Borough since 2021. The plan to deliver a further 10,000 trees in woodland trees and 500 trees in urban settings is on track to be exceeded by March 2025. Trees naturally sequester carbon from the atmosphere, provide important habitat for wildlife and deliver further ecosystem services, such as mitigating flood risk.
- 2.42 Officers continue to work alongside representatives from the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to contribute to a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. SYMCA are the Lead Authority for this work, but each local authority, including Rotherham, are providing input to ensure that local biodiversity needs are considered. This work is planned to be completed slightly later than the original estimate of March 2025 but as the framework for future action on nature recovery in the region, it is important that this work is representative.

2.43 As part of the 2023 Scrutiny Review of Nature's Recovery in Rotherham, several recommendations have recently been approved at Cabinet in September 2024. These actions have been incorporated into the wider climate change plan for reporting purposes and a steering group set up to manage progress moving forward. This group will support the implementation of the actions identified and enable reporting prior to the statutory deadline of 12 weeks following 1st January 2026.

2.44 **Influence & Engagement**

2.45 The Rotherham Show in September 2024 included for the very first time an eco-village which focussed messaging and cultural activities on the environment, nature and climate change.

2.46 Similarly, the Clifton Park Museum exhibition, Our Habitat Our Home, shines a spotlight on Rotherham's natural history and looks to the future, encouraging visitors to pledge an action to mitigate climate change or to preserve the natural environment. This exhibition will be live until 23rd February 2025.

2.47 Throughout the year, the Neighbourhood's team and Ward Councillors across Rotherham have worked alongside a variety of local and regional partners, including the Green Doctor and the Council's Community Energy team, to host a series of public information events and activities. These events are designed to engage residents and provide valuable advice on how to reduce their environmental impact and save on energy costs.

2.48 The events have covered a wide range of topics to help residents make informed, sustainable choices in their everyday lives. Key themes have included:

- Reducing Energy Use: Practical advice on how to save energy at home, from energy-efficient appliances to simple changes in everyday habits.
- Recycling: Information on how to recycle more effectively, reduce waste, and make the most of local recycling services.
- Tree Planting: Opportunities for residents to get involved in local tree planting projects, improving air quality and boosting biodiversity.
- Composting: Tips on how to start composting at home and reduce the amount of organic waste sent to landfill.
- Reducing Food Waste: Strategies to minimize food waste, save money, and make the most of your grocery shopping including Food Share initiatives.

2.49 These events have not only provided useful advice but also fostered a sense of community spirit, with residents coming together to share ideas, ask questions, and take positive action towards a more sustainable future.

- 2.50 By collaborating with organisations such as Rotherham Federation, Green Doctor and Rotherham Council's Community Energy team, these public events aim to empower residents with the knowledge and tools to make a real difference, both in their own homes and in the wider community.
- 2.51 **Adaptation**
- 2.52 It is important that the Council continues to reduce its carbon emissions but alongside this mitigation activity it is clear that the Borough is already experiencing more frequent extreme weather conditions as a result of climate change. Climate change adaptation is the process of preparing for and adapting to the impacts that climate change will bring. Part of this work will require an understanding of the vulnerabilities of communities and council services to the risks of climate change such as extreme heat, wildfires, and flooding.
- 2.53 A plan has been created to increase awareness of climate risks within the Council to give heads of service the understanding to manage risks associated with their service to minimise future disruption. The plan is based on overall risk to each service, prioritising those earlier in the programme which may be impacted already in times of heat or flood.
- 2.54 Public Health and Adult Care have been involved in a trial to introduce climate change mitigation and adaptation into service plans. The next phase of this work which includes formalising documentation and training Property and Facilities Services, have been included in the 2025/26 Action Plan.
- 2.55 **Forward Plan**
- 2.56 This section highlights the most notable elements of the proposed 2025/26 forward plan. The full plan is available in Appendix 2.
- 2.57 2025 was highlighted as a key milestone in the Council's original climate declaration, marking five years since Cabinet approved its net zero targets. As such 2025 presents an opportunity to review progress made, considering the challenges experienced and the socioeconomic and political changes observed during this time. It is also an opportunity to reflect on a refined view of the Council's carbon footprint following work to improve this dataset and to consider how these impact upon the Council's ability to reach its targets. It is therefore proposed that a review is carried out and an assessment of the recommended approach to the next five years is undertaken. It is also an opportunity, as the Council moves into its final 5 years to improve governance around this programme to enable more focussed progress.
- 2.58 A number of ongoing actions previously tracked have not been included in this year's forward plan. This is because they have been incorporated into business as usual.

- 2.59 Actions incorporated into business as usual include internal climate change training, single use plastics audits, and engagement with a number of external organisations. Implications for partners are also included within section 12 of this report.
- 2.60 The plan proposed in Appendix 2 prioritises actions for which funding may be available but also can achieve the best carbon emissions reductions. However, given the nature of these recommendations a number of these are subject to Cabinet approval for delivery. It has been highlighted in the action plan where this is the case.
- 2.61 One such project is the action relating to the further roll out of HVO. Due to the nature of this annual report, the full details and implications of this scheme cannot be outlined here and as such will be brought forward to Cabinet for consideration separately.
- 2.62 Similarly, the next phase of the Council's Heat Decarbonisation plan has also been proposed.
- 2.63 Actions to decarbonise fleet and Council buildings will have significant impacts on the Council's net zero by 2030 target and the action plan therefore proposes these as a focus for the Council's ongoing decarbonisation activity.
- 2.64 Action to decarbonise the Borough by 2040 must be based on robust data and meet the needs of residents to ensure a just transition. This will require a greater understanding of the Borough's energy system as well as further engagement to understand how NZ 2040 can be achieved.
- 2.65 Two significant actions in the development of this baseline position have therefore been proposed for 25/26.
- 2.66 The first proposal is to develop a business case for the development of a Local Area Energy Plan (or LAEP). A LAEP would provide a baseline position for the Borough energy demand and likely future needs whilst also providing a costed plan for decarbonisation following a number of different scenarios. The primary benefit of this work is that it will support the Council to identify areas of investment as well as identify issues such as limitations in grid capacity. The work also aligns with SYMCA's ambition for a regional LAEP to enable interconnectedness across each local authority. The business case will identify likely costs, funding opportunities for delivery, stakeholders, risks, and procurement implications. It should be noted that a LAEP itself cannot be delivered within 25/26 as it will require significant pre-work, but if successful a future action may be brought forward for consideration in 2026/27.
- 2.67 Secondly, an action to develop a NZ40 Strategy has been proposed. The outcome of the LAEP will be instrumental in delivering this piece of work, as will community engagement and co-creation. If approved, a plan will be created which will set out how residents can become involved in this work and detail what outputs can be expected and when.

2.68 The proposed NZ40 Strategy also links with another action proposed which details the route to net zero for the Borough's transport emissions. This work is particularly important as transport emissions account for 37% of the Borough's carbon footprint.

2.69 The Council's focus for engagement in 2025/26 will link in with the Children's Capital of Culture programme. Young people involved in this programme have chosen 'The World Beneath Our Feet' as a key theme of the programme, presenting many opportunities throughout the year to raise awareness of climate issues and to engage young people and their families in environmental culture activities.

2.70 All proposed actions including those relating to the Council's EV Strategy, its social housing and waste are outlined in Appendix 2.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

Approves the 2025/26 Climate Change Action Plan in Appendix 2, noting the key achievements and opportunities summarised in Appendix 1 and section 2 of this report.

3.2 No alternative options are recommended, as it has been agreed that an annual report will be produced to ensure effective monitoring of actions in response to the Climate Emergency. Larger projects and procurements will be submitted for separate consideration.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 This report has been produced in conjunction with Officers representing each key theme of the action plan. Staff not involved with the programme have also been engaged through internal focus groups. The Council has also shared the 2024/25 Action Plan with the Rotherham Youth Cabinet for their review and actions incorporated where feasible.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 This report is an annual report, and it is proposed that an update against the actions is provided to Cabinet in quarter 4 2025/26. Accountability is via the Corporate Sponsor the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment in collaboration with the Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services and the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy.

5.2 Individual Directorates remain responsible for the delivery of actions pertaining to their area of authority.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this update report. The work to be undertaken as outlined within the report will be funded within the Council's existing approved revenue and capital budgets. Where additional Council funding is required to deliver the objectives of the Climate Change workstream, this will need to be identified as part of the Council's annual budget setting process or secured through external grant funding.
- 6.2 As projects are developed, it is imperative that Services give appropriate consideration in the development of the specification to climate change. The Council will need to ensure all procurement activity is undertaken in compliance with relevant procurement legislation either the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Procurement Act 2023 (whichever is applicable at the time), as well as the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 set a legally binding target on the UK to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80%, compared to 1990 levels, by 2050. The 80% target was increased to a 100% target in 2019 (the net zero target). Although there are currently no net zero statutory targets for local authorities, many (including the Council as set out in this report), have adopted commitments to reduce Carbon emissions in line with the 2050 net zero target.
- 7.2 The Council's commitment to net zero and the actions towards this as set out in the report are consistent with the Governments Net Zero Strategy and are indicative of the important role local authorities play in achieving net zero.
- 7.3 The Future Homes Standard has not been finalised by the Government but will complement Building Regulations with an aim to improve energy efficiency in newly built homes from 2025 onwards. As stated in the body of the report the Council will need to ensure that the new homes it builds from 2025 comply with the Future Homes Standard.
- 7.4 As referred to and explained in the body of the report, the Government has announced that Simpler Recycling Regulations are to be introduced and will be in force from April 2025 which will require that all businesses over 10 employees must have a compliant recycling service in place.
- 7.5 Again, as referred to in the body of the report, the Council is required to publish a report in relation to its compliance with the "Biodiversity Duty" as required by the Environment Act 2021. This report has to be published within 12 weeks of the end of the reporting period which is the 1 January 2026.

7.6 As this is largely an update report, other than the above there are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations within the report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct human resources implications associated with this report. The Climate Change team have engaged with a Human Resources representative to ensure any human resources implications are captured early.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 There are no specific impacts of this report on Children, Young People or Vulnerable Adults, though climate change in general can have a disproportionate impact on these groups.

9.2 The actions relating to children and young people in Appendix 2 have been enhanced to encourage a wider young person engagement.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 As per the Initial Equalities Screening Assessment in Appendix 4 there are no direct implications for equalities and human rights as part of this report due to its administrative nature. However, climate change impacts have the potential to adversely affect certain groups to a greater degree than others. For example, those benefitting from higher incomes will be able to recover from flooding events and increasing food and energy prices through the procurement of 'solutions' whereas those on low incomes may not be able to. Similarly, children and vulnerable adults may also be more susceptible to extreme heat.

10.2 Equality impacts may arise as the programme of works develops and as such consideration of equalities and human rights at the project level should continue throughout development, consultation, and engagement to understand the potential impacts. Equality Screening and if required an assessment will be undertaken before implementation of change or significant programmes of work particularly when planning adaptative measures for Council services or buildings in relation to climate change impacts.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 The actions included within this report and its appendices will have a positive impact on emissions.

11.2 A detailed carbon impact assessment is available at Appendix 5.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 The Council continues to work with a range of partners across the programme. For example, the Council works closely with its neighbouring Local Authorities as well as other bodies such as the South Yorkshire Sustainability Centre. The forward plan of actions pertains primarily to actions the Council will undertake, however where there are specific implications for partners these are highlighted within the action plan in Appendix 2.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The costs associated with the delivery of both net zero programmes are high and as such it is important that these schemes are aligned with national funding schemes where this is appropriate. The decarbonisation plan for the Council's corporate estate is a working document and will need to be flexible to ensure best value for money. Similarly, factors outside of the Council's control, such as the decarbonisation of the National Grid may impact its ability to meet its target or require additional funds to purchase renewable energy when compared with existing budgets.
- 13.2 The net zero 2030 target is just five years away and such a short timescale also brings risks around on-time delivery. The Council may need to focus on activities which afford the best reduction of carbon emissions to minimise the need to offset emissions by 2030.

14. Accountable Officers

Andrew Bramidge, Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	27/01/25
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	23/01/25
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	23/01/25

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