

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY and ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

08 February 2023

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

1 CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY ACTION

To update on current climate change and biodiversity measures being undertaken by the Council and consider future options.

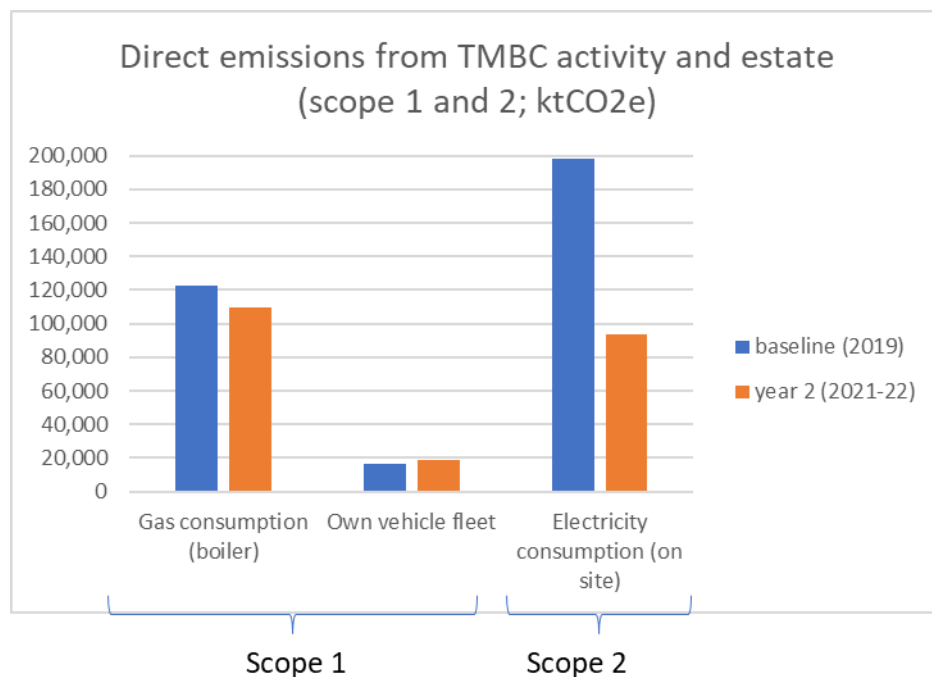
1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 A request was made from Cllr Base in 2022 to provide additional information and update on progress in relation to the Council's climate change and biodiversity measures. This report will provide an update on climate change measures/biodiversity activity currently underway as well as potential options to help us work towards net zero.
- 1.1.2 The Council has announced its aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030. A full update on the Climate Change Action Plan for 2022-23 and new measures for 2023-24 will be brought to Cabinet after April, when data for the current financial year will be available.
- 1.1.3 In addition to this report, Cllr Betts requested a Cabinet Member Briefing note in January on Action Plan measures completed or in progress to be circulated to keep people informed of ongoing work relating to climate change and biodiversity, attached as Annex 1.
- 1.1.4 Members will be aware that the current energy crisis is challenging for residents, businesses and public sector services. This has inevitably shifted focus and attention towards the energy saving measures that need to be implemented at the Council. Switching to renewable electricity and decarbonising heat and transport are increasingly urgent for achieving significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Considered action will balance moving rapidly on energy efficiency renewable energy generation, to ease immediate financial and operational pressures and deliver emissions reductions, with making longer-term investments in deeper decarbonisation measures. The balance of actions will determine the shape of the emissions reduction pathway to 2030 and beyond.

1.2 TMBC Estate and Operations

1.2.1 Meeting the 2030 goal will require investment in renewable electricity generation and significant decarbonisation measures for heat and transport. Greenhouse gas emissions produced directly by the Council have been reduced over the last three years through a number of policy, behavioural and technological measures. These include rationalizing the Gibson building, increased working from home, reduced printing and increased online services (e-Billing), more efficient IT and equipment, as well measures such as solar charging parking meters. Emissions from the Council's own estate and operations are measured using categories called 'scopes.' Scope 1 measures direct emissions from TMBC's gas boilers for heat and TMBC-owned vehicles. Scope 2 measures the emissions from electricity consumption by the Council's buildings and on streets (e.g. street lighting; car parking meters and lighting). Figure 1 shows changes in emissions from scopes 1 and 2.

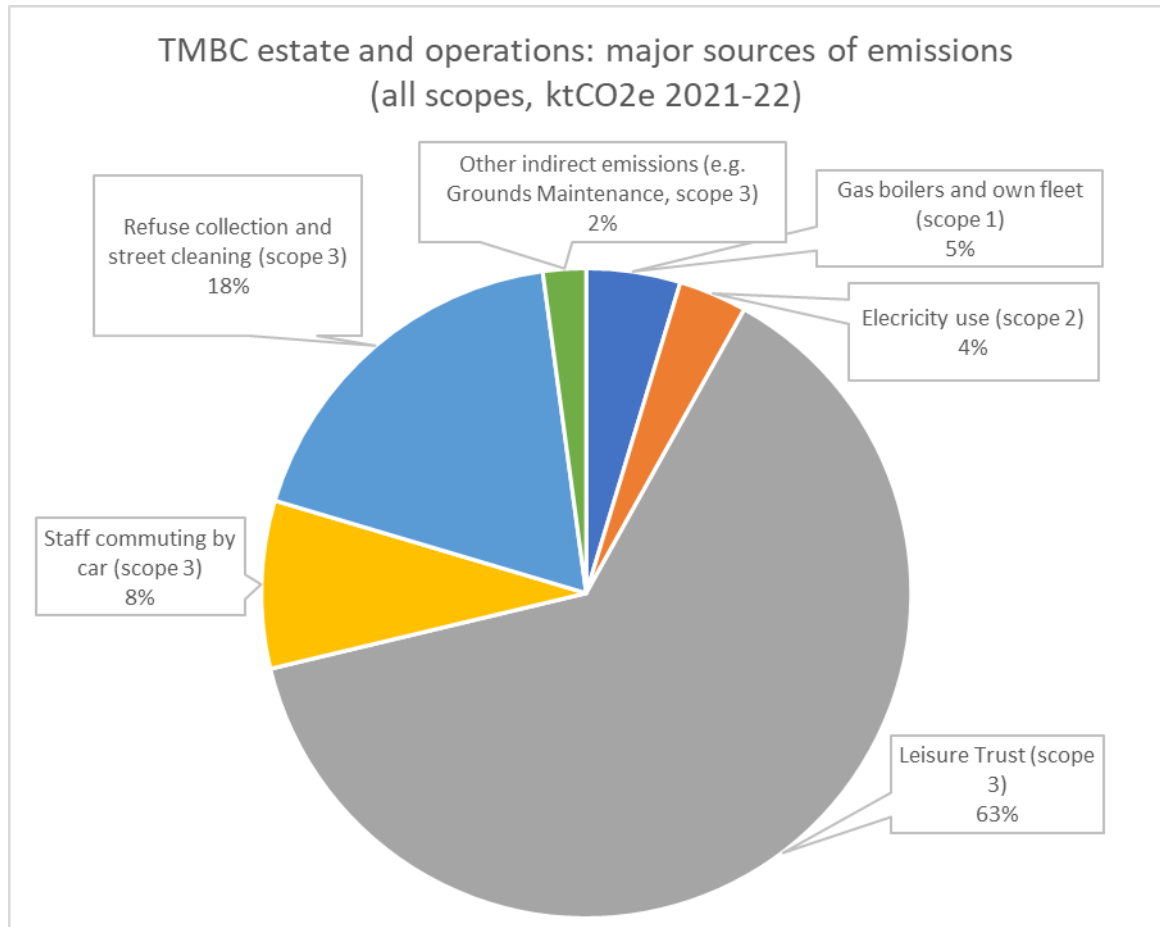
Figure 1: Direct emissions from TMBC activity and estate



- 1.2.2 Figure 1 shows that the greatest reduction in emissions (ktCO₂e) between the baseline and the last reporting year (2021-22) has been in reduced direct electricity consumption (scope 2). Furthermore, these are gross emissions, as the TMBC owned estate has been on a renewable energy tariff since April 2021.
- 1.2.3 Heat and transport are the largest remaining sources of emissions, accounting for 58% of the scope 1 and 2 total. In other words emissions from heat and transport now exceed those from electricity use.
- 1.2.4 In terms of indirect emissions from the Council's estate and operations only three activities account for 98% of emissions from scope 3; that is, 90% of TMBC's total

emissions from all scopes. Scope 3 is a broader category of indirect emissions associated with the Council's activities or estate, including the Leisure Trust, Ground Maintenance, contracts and procurement. The three major sources of Council emissions are: Leisure Trust activities, refuse collection and street cleaning, and staff commuting by car (see Figure 2). Again, decarbonising both heat and vehicle fuel remain the most significant challenges.

Figure 2: Major sources of greenhouse gas emission from TMBC estate and operations (ktCO₂e; 2021-22)



1.2.5 On-site renewable electricity generation can significantly reduce carbon emissions from electricity use, whether at TMBC-owned sites or in housing and businesses in the borough more broadly. As part of the ongoing work around rationalisation of the Council's office accommodation at Kings Hill the plan is to incorporate carbon reductions, including options for energy efficiency measures and decarbonising electricity and heat.

1.2.6 Solar panels and a lake source heat pump are in operation at Leybourne Lakes Country Park, now managed by the Leisure Trust. The Council has already committed to the installation of approximately 190 solar PV panels on the sports hall roof at Larkfield Leisure Centre. This installation is scheduled to begin in

January and complete late February 2023, delivering electricity generation of approximately 90,000kWh/ year and saving 19tCO₂ per year.

- 1.2.7 Additional energy efficiency measures at Larkfield Leisure Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool (both Leisure Trust sites) include the installation of LED lighting at both centres, and solar PV at Tonbridge Swimming Pool, as proposed in the Carbon Descent reports for each site. The capital plan which was considered by Members at Overview & Scrutiny on 26th January included a proposal to allocate funding to these schemes. Further decarbonisation measures (including heat pumps) identified in the Carbon Descent reports will require both further technical investigation as well as significant additional funding. Due to the anticipated high cost of these schemes it is envisaged external funding will be required to deliver them. The technical investigations into options will provide the detailed evidence needed for writing a robust bid. Members will have an opportunity for a full review of the Leisure centres at a future Overview & Scrutiny meeting.
- 1.2.8 Decarbonising emissions from transport from both the Council's owned fleet (scope 1) and from staff commuting (scope 3) will similarly require further options development, including the cost and feasibility of shifting to an all-electric fleet by 2030; and considering ways to encourage either fuel or mode switching for staff commutes.

1.3 Emissions from other sectors

- 1.3.1 Beyond the Council's own estate and operations, domestic housing and transport remain significant sources of greenhouse gases, accounting for 73% of emissions in the borough. Along with housing, measures to tackle emissions from businesses have supported the introduction of renewable and energy efficiency measures. Annex 1 shows the renewable energy and efficiency measures delivered for domestic private and social housing, and green business grants through the Climate Change Action Plan this year.
- 1.3.2 Although new Building Regulations to reduce emissions from domestic housing are welcome (in effect from 2022 and 2025), new housing will constitute only up to 7% of the Borough's housing by 2030. As such existing housing stock remains an important site for emissions reductions through energy efficiency and renewable energy generation measures, in addition to actions to reduce waste, increase recycling, and encourage good water use management.
- 1.3.3 Climate change mitigation and adaptation are already embedded within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and relevant planning legislation as well as within the council's current local development framework documents. The production of a new local plan however presents a significant opportunity to further embed climate change mitigation and adaptation within new development in the borough. Through this process there is potential to introduce new or heightened standards to manage and mitigate against the impacts of climate change on the borough such as through seeking more efficient and resilient

construction methods and transport infrastructure improvements, while contributing to the restoration and resilience of biodiversity, habitats, and tree coverage.

- 1.3.4 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is already required through national planning policy in England and Wales. However, the Environment Act 2021 introduced new requirements to demonstrate at least 10% biodiversity net gain on all development sites, other than a small number of exemptions, that it will be measured using Defra's biodiversity metric and that habitats will need to be secured for at least 30 years. This can be achieved on site, off site, or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures This will become mandatory from November 2023.
- 1.3.5 The new local plan offers an opportunity to explore whether there is potential for a higher percentage target in the borough if it can be evidenced, as well as provide further local detail on where off-site delivery could be best directed. Officers are currently liaising with Kent County Council, the Kent Local Nature Partnership and Kent Wildlife Trust. Consultation on the Regulation 18 Local Plan took place between 22nd September and 3rd November 2022. This document identified some key issues relating to climate change and the natural environment such as lowering carbon emissions through the location of development, construction, energy efficiency and transport; water resource management and flood risk; and biodiversity net gain. The planning policy team are currently processing and responding to the consultation responses as well as commissioning further evidence to guide the proposed approach to the above matters.
- 1.3.6 A response to the current government consultation on future changes to the NPPF will be brought to 14th February meeting of Cabinet. Followed by a report to the HPSSC meeting of 21st March 2023 on the implications of these potential changes on the local plan and its timetable.
- 1.3.7 Measures introduced through the new local plan coupled with the council's own functions would mean that places and habitats are more resilient to extreme heat and flooding, supporting well-being, lower congestion and improved air quality.
- 1.3.1 Further action on wider environment measures, including tree planting and working with schools to tackle poor air quality, are included in Annex 1.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 None.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 Options appraisal of the possible pathways for carbon neutral in 2030 will need to require evaluating the cost of measures for the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions reductions they achieve (£/ ktCO_{2e} of each measure, over the lifetime of the investment). TMBC cannot fund all necessary measures unilaterally. Thus meeting carbon neutral goals will rest on both partnership working, such as

seeking joint-funding, and successful bids for grant funding. There is no guarantee regarding the funding schemes that will be offered between 2023 and 2030, or of TMBC's success in making any particular bid. However, it is important to identify significant emissions reduction potential and value for money options in order to provide clarity on the pathway to 2030. It is also important that we have sufficient evidence in place as this is a requirement needed to apply for grant bids.

- 1.5.2 There is a reserve budget held for climate change. The opening balance this year was £779,920. However, much of this has already been allocated (including funding the installation of PV panels at Larkfield Leisure Centre and salary costs for climate change work). The balance available this financial year for projects to de-carbonise the Council's estate is £215,000.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 In light of the financial pressures and significant expenditures needed for decarbonisation, a medium-term risk remains against the funding needed to deliver on the carbon neutral aspiration.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Asset Management
- 1.8.2 Biodiversity & Sustainability
- 1.8.3 Business Continuity/Resilience
- 1.8.4 Climate Change

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 That Members **recommend** to Cabinet the growing priority of decarbonising heat and transport emissions from the Council's estate and operations alongside existing Climate Change Action Plan measures. Taking forward work in these areas could include:
- Scoping and commissioning the feasibility of heat pump systems at both Larkfield Leisure Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool be progressed with a report on options brought to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 - investigating potential options to reduce scope 1 and 3 transport emissions.

The Chief Executive confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Carrie Spencer
Climate Change Officer

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive