

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

17 July 2024

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 CLIMATE CHANGE MONITORING AND REPORTING

To seek approval for publication of the Climate Change Action Plan Year 4 Progress Report, the Climate Change Action Plan Year 5 2024/25, and the Carbon Audit 2023/24.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 TMBC has committed to producing annual climate change action plans and publishing our greenhouse gas emissions (Carbon Audits) to track progress towards the council's carbon neutral by 2030 aspiration. A Progress Report for the Climate Change Action Plan Year 4 (2023/24), a draft Climate Change Action Plan Year 5 (2024/25), and the Carbon Audit for year 3 (2022/23) are attached as Annexes 1, 2 and 3 respectively. This report summarises progress achieved to date, the new action plan and trends in emissions from the Council's estate and operations.

1.1.2 The most significant sources of emissions across TMBC's estate and operations remain leisure facilities and refuse collection vehicles. Addressing emissions from these sources will make the largest impact on emissions towards the 2030 carbon neutral aspiration. There is no 'quick win' for tackling these emissions. The council will need to further investigate technically and practically feasible options for heat and vehicle fuel use, as well as making substantial investments and use of grant funding, as set out in this report and its Annexes.

1.2 Climate Change Action Plan Year 4 Progress Report

1.2.1 The annual report on delivery of the climate change action plan is attached in Annex 1. The report highlights the key achievements from the 2023/24 action plan in two sections: tackling emissions on TMBC's own estate and operations and tackling emissions across the Borough. The annual progress report includes the detailed monitoring report against the full action plan in its annex.

1.2.2 The report shows good progress on climate action delivery for 2023/24, with over a third of actions completed for the year, with the rest ongoing as multi-year projects. No actions have a red RAG rating.

1.3 Climate Change Action Plan Year 5 2024-25

1.3.1 The climate change action plan for 2024/25 contains ongoing items, new phases of multi-year projects, and new actions. Key ongoing actions include the Local Plan; the installation of further EV charge points in council-owned car parks; the roll-out of food waste recycling to flats; support for renewable, retrofit and energy efficiency measures for home-owners and social housing in the borough; and further rounds of business and community grants.

1.3.2 Five of the new actions are under the TMBC Estate theme that includes the decarbonization of leisure facilities using the Sports England Support Fund and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme grants awarded to the council for use in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

1.3.3 Other new actions include the roll-out of energy efficient devices, working with Mid Kent College to support the delivery of Retrofit Training and future green jobs, and monitoring and enhancement of habitats and wildlife areas on council owned land.

1.4 Carbon Audit 2023-24

1.4.1 The Carbon Audit is a statement of the emissions produced by the council's own estate, operations, and activities for the year. The 2023/24 Carbon Audit presents the high-level picture of emissions since the baseline of 2019, a detailed breakdown of emissions by council activity, and provides a discussion of significant changes in emissions. The Carbon Audit 2023/24 is presented in annex 3 of this report. It shows that total gross emissions have fallen by 8% relative to the baseline, while total net emissions (that do not count emissions from renewable sources) have fallen by 10%.

1.4.2 The 2023/24 carbon audit shows continued strong reductions in emissions that the council has the most direct control over. These are emissions from the estate that the council owns and operates, such as the Gibson buildings and Tonbridge Castle, and emissions from the council's own vehicles. Emissions from these sources are known as scopes 1 and 2. Gross emissions from scopes 1 and 2 were 44% below baseline in 2023/24. These significant reductions are due to the rationalisation of Gibson office space, increased home-working, reduced printing and more efficient devices, and the investment in an electric parking enforcement vehicle.

1.4.3 The council also has a Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin contract for its electricity, meaning that emissions from electricity use at sites covered by this contract are effectively zero. Taking this into account means that net emissions from scopes 1 and 2 in 2023/24 were 67% lower than the baseline.

- 1.4.4 Indirect emissions from the council's estate and operations are known as scope 3. This includes emissions from leisure facilities, council contracts, and staff travel. Scope 3 continues to account for the lion's share of emissions, at 94% of total gross emissions in 2023/24. Total scope 3 emissions have fallen by only 4% since the baseline.
- 1.4.5 The most significant sources of scope 3 emissions, and therefore emissions from the whole of TMBC's estate and operations, are leisure facilities and the Refuse Collection Vehicle contract. Together, these sources produced 91% of TMBC's total net emissions in 2023/24, and 94% of emissions from scope 3. The climate change action plans, as noted above, set out the council's ongoing investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures to tackle emissions from leisure facilities.
- 1.4.6 Although other sources in scope 3 account for only a small proportion of the overall total, it is worth noting that emissions from staff commuting continue to fall even though home-working rates are similar over the last two years. Staff commuting by car emissions fell 30% from 2022/23 to 2023/24 representing continuing changes in travel patterns, such as increased car pooling, and an increase in staff switching to electric vehicles.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 None.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 The activities in the climate change action plans and carbon audit are funded, or have been completed using funding, grant monies and value for money assessments previously agreed with the relevant service.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 TMBC has committed to the aspiration of carbon neutral by 2030 and to annual reporting on action plan progress and monitoring emissions. There is a reputational risk of non-publication of the annexes to this report.

1.8 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.8.1 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.

1.9 Policy Considerations

- 1.9.1 Climate Change

1.10 Recommendations

1.10.1 That the Climate Change Action Plan Year 4 Progress Report as set out in annex 1 of this report BE ENDORSED.

1.10.2 That the Climate Change Action Plan Year 5 2024-25 as set out in annex 3 of this report BE APPROVED.

1.10.3 That the Carbon Audit for 2023-24 as set out in annex 2 of this report BE APPROVED.

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

Annex 1: Climate Change Action Plan Year 4 Progress Report

Annex 2: draft Climate Change Action Plan Year 5, 2024-25

Annex 3: Carbon Audit 2023 -24

Damian Roberts
Chief Executive