

Ashford to Zero Plan

Our route to net zero carbon emissions

Consultation draft 2021



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Image courtesy of Alison Jane Miles.

Foreword

Climate change, caused by increased greenhouse gas emissions, is having a devastating impact on our planet. Without decisive action to reduce emissions, we are likely to experience an increase in damaging weather events and accelerated loss of habitats and species, which have serious negative consequences for all of us. We must make the most of the assets we have, reduce wasteful processes and respect our natural environment.

Our borough, sitting in the heart of the Garden of England, with its beautiful countryside, varied towns and villages, needs us all to consider how we can adapt and change our behaviour to lessen our impact locally. And in turn, influence and support positive change nationally and globally.

We have set out the actions we as the council can take to reduce emissions associated with our own activities, together with actions that need a collective approach to reduce emissions across the wider borough. Are there further actions we should include, how can

you help achieve the actions? It is vital that everyone plays a part in ensuring the future health of our planet and therefore ourselves, by living more sustainably.

Our consultation process will culminate in an action plan for the borough and be presented together with our strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The commitment and determination we show now, to achieve carbon neutrality, will shape the future for generations to come. It is imperative that we all strive tirelessly to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions with a 'can do' attitude that inspires each and every one of us to tackle, this, the greatest of challenges and be successful.



Cllr Clarkson, Leader

1. Introduction

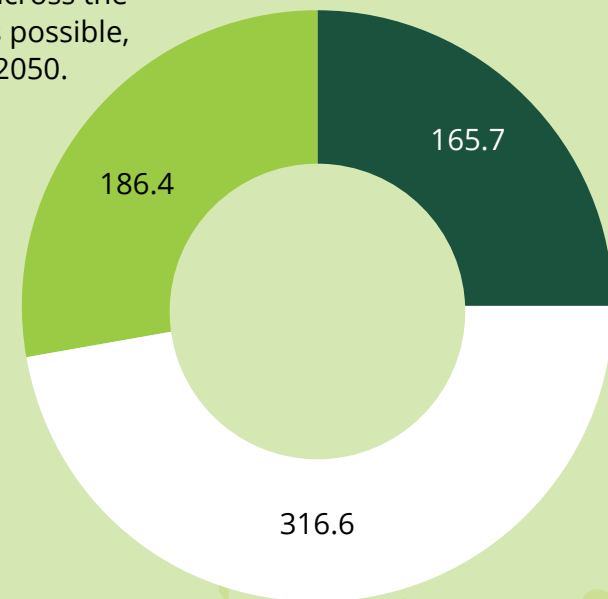
The council is consulting on the actions needed to achieve net zero carbon emissions.

Our ambition is to reach this target by 2030 for the council's own estate and operations. We will work with residents, business, statutory and voluntary organisations to deliver significant reductions in carbon emissions across the borough as rapidly as possible, reaching net zero by 2050.

In 2018 the borough's total carbon emissions was 598.6 ktCO₂ (BEIS Data). The pie chart below shows how different sectors make up this total. 70.2 ktCO₂ is absorbed by land use such as forests, cropland and grassland,

2018 CO₂ emissions by sector (kt)

Industry
Transport
Domestic



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The Kent and Medway Emissions Pathway report identified a total of 681 ktCO₂e for Ashford

There are many wider benefits associated with tackling climate change: Improved health and wellbeing through cleaner air, warmer homes and increased opportunities for outdoor leisure and recreation; reversing the decline of habitats and species and protecting the natural environment; reducing adverse weather events; creating a circular economy to eliminate waste and ensure the safe use of natural resources.

The Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) 'Principles for a Green Recovery', adopted as part of our Recovery Plan, will continue to guide decision making through the lifetime of this action plan.

- » All investment to support recovery and future growth should have low or zero carbon emissions, use resources efficiently and aim for environmental net gain.
- » Employees and residents are supported to protect and enhance their wellbeing through a cleaner environment and more access to rich and varied nature.
- » Communities are well connected both digitally, and through an effective network of footpaths, cycle ways and public transport.
- » Future development and existing communities are resilient and adapted to the changing climate and severe weather events
- » Biodiversity is protected, restored and created; nature-based solutions are considered first and invested in at every opportunity.
- » Ensure any green recovery solutions are equitable and fair; a green and equitable recovery go hand in hand.
- » Greater partnership working and collaboration.

A full description of the Principles for a Green Recovery is in Appendix 1.

In tandem with this consultation we are gathering information on the financial cost of implementing actions and the carbon savings they will achieve. This information will be used to set out a timeline to ensure we use our resources to maximise the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The principle of reduce first and then offset will be followed.



This action plan has eight priorities:

Priority 1: Raise awareness of climate change and increase understanding and knowledge

Priority 2: Ensure the council's decision making processes, including those as the Local Planning Authority, strategic documents, plans and procedures contribute to reducing carbon emissions and increasing local resilience to climate change

Priority 3: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation by increasing renewable energy generation and consumption

Priority 4: Encourage and enable a shift towards cleaner modes of transport and reduce car dependency

Priority 5: Enable business growth while maximising opportunities to reduce carbon emissions

Priority 6: Reduce the environmental footprint of buildings through retrofitting existing buildings and new build developments

Priority 7: Protect, enhance and increase green space for the benefit of people and wildlife

Priority 8: Reduce waste and continue high levels of recycling

Headline actions for each of the priorities are set out in the following sections, together with key facts and a summary of what we are already doing.

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2. Our consultation

We are keen to understand how we can best work with residents, business and local organisations to reduce carbon emissions across the borough. Everyone can play a part in tackling climate change - be that by making personal changes in the way we live or looking at how we work, or as a business or organisation thinking about our products, services and

processes and how to reduce their environmental footprint. We are interested to know your views and what you are already doing or would like to do to reduce your carbon emissions. This will help us to understand what are the highest priorities and how we can enable everyone to contribute to tackling climate change.

For each of the 8 priorities we are asking:

1. Do you agree with the priority?
2. What actions are you already taking which contribute to achieving the priority?
3. Are there any other actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to support achieving the priority?
4. How can the council help you take action to achieve the priority?
5. Are there any other actions you feel should be included in the priority?

The consultation will run from June to October 2021, during this time an online questionnaire will be available at: www.ashford.gov.uk/environmental-concerns/carbon-neutral-agenda/carbon-neutral-action-plan-consultation/

We will also be running a residents Facebook group for discussion and questions and answers. To sign up please go to: www.ashford.gov.uk/environmental-concerns/carbon-neutral-agenda/green-agenda-focus-group-sign-up-form/

A series of workshops will be held to understand challenges and opportunities in specific priority areas and invitations will be sent as these workshops are arranged.

3. Action Plan

3.1 Priority 1 - Raise awareness of climate change and increase understanding and knowledge

By providing information we can increase everyone's understanding of what they can do and then put that understanding into action. The actions each of us can take will be dependent on individual circumstances but doing the most we can is important.

Priority 1: Raise awareness of climate change and increase understanding and knowledge

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
1.1 Maintain ongoing internal and external 'carbon neutral' communications	Identify monthly themes and create plan	Staff and residents are well informed about climate change and actions they need to take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are motivated to make lifestyle changes and influence others	1. Number of views / hits / shares from ABC media 2. Number of local community media platforms with information on climate change 3. Percentage of residents survey returned with positive action to tackle climate change responses
	Create new website page and content, making sure to use KCC and other local authorities' content		
	Use residents survey results and other internal data such as active travel monitoring to inform comms plan. Explore research by other partners to gain insight to influence behavioural change, such as Keep Britain Tidy		
1.2 Increase staff skills and knowledge	Continue roll out of Sustainability Friends training and investigate other training opportunities to increase knowledge and skills	Increased staff confidence to implement carbon neutral actions and challenge where decisions are not contributing to tackling climate change	1. Percentage of staff completing Sustainability Friends training
1.3 Encourage others to promote a low carbon, environmentally sustainable ethos	Highlight opportunities for schools and business to gain eco-certification, such as green flag status for schools	Increased awareness of climate change in young people Business community strives to be carbon neutral	1. Number of schools and business with an eco-certification / award 2. Number of businesses disclosing carbon emissions
	Encourage event organisers to run sustainable events that minimise environmental impact	Local events have low carbon footprint and promote environmentally responsible behaviour	

What we've been doing:

Our website and social media channels are regularly updated with environmental information. We have run features on our dedicated web page, Facebook and Instagram covering issues such as food waste, saving water, recycling, including specific campaigns for Christmas and Easter, alongside linking to other wider campaigns such as Plant Britain and Kent Plan Bee.

A Green Agenda Facebook group has been opened up to residents to encourage them to have their say through lively debate on the things that really matter to them and help to make the borough a better place for all. This focus group will be about sustainability, carbon neutrality and environmental topics.

Our own staff training programme, '**Sustainability Friends**' has been completed by **75%** of staff and will resume once we are able to return safely to the civic centre.

Engaging young people is very important and we are working with schools on a gardening and recycling project.



3.2 Priority 2 – Ensure the council’s decision making processes, including those as the Local Planning Authority, strategic documents, plans and procedures contribute to reducing carbon emissions and increasing local resilience to climate change

Decisive leadership is critical to achieve our ambition to have the councils own estate and operations net zero carbon by 2030. Every decision, whether by the elected members or staff, will be carefully considered to ensure the outcome is positively contributing to reducing carbon emissions.

Priority 2: Ensure the council’s decision making processes, strategic documents and procedures contribute to reducing carbon emissions and increasing local resilience to climate change

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
2.1 Review council policies to ensure alignment with carbon neutrality	Embed Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) Green Principles (adopted in Recovery Plan) into Cabinet reports and Project Planning Processes to ensure decision making process supports the carbon neutral ambition	All decisions are made taking account of how the project / policy contributes to achieving carbon neutrality Goods and services purchased by the council have low or zero carbon footprint Staff travel is reduced Office space is rationalised resulting in lower energy input to Civic Centre	1. Percentage of approved projects / policies making positive contribution to carbon neutrality 2. Percentage of suppliers with low carbon accreditation 3. Tonnes of carbon saved from reduced commuting/ business travel 4. Energy requirements of Civic Centre 5. Percentage of community grants awarded where project meets KRF green principles
	Introduce new procurement policies to include carbon neutral criteria to maximise carbon reduction through purchased services, materials and provision of low emissions fleets by contractors		
	Regularise homeworking arrangements; update policies and procedures to support a longer term home working strategy	Council funding supports lower carbon initiatives	
	Include the Kent Resilience Forum ‘Principles for a Green Recovery’ as criteria for consideration when assessing applications for community grants		

2.2 Take a design led approach to delivering sustainable communities	Adopt and deliver the South of Ashford Garden Community vision and strategy - including ‘low carbon communities’	The South of Ashford Garden Community is recognised as an exemplar of low carbon living and a show case for good practice	1. EPC rating on new homes 2. Energy requirement per m² of new build 3. m² of open space per home
	Develop a Carbon Statement of Intent for Chilmington, to underpin decision making delivering current and future projects to exemplar environmental standards		
2.3 Develop evidence based planning policy and guidance	Develop a scoping document to inform the direction of travel in the next Local Plan. To identify issues and discuss options for ‘green’ standards for Ashford	Policies are developed to ensure future development meets high standards of environmental sustainability	1. EPC rating on new homes 2. Carbon footprint of each new development
	Create good practice guidance to encourage development of carbon neutral buildings (residential and commercial) in private and public sector.		
2.4 Introduce offsetting and adaptation measures	Align with Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy action to develop and promote Kent and Medway offset scheme	Council has ability to offset any remaining carbon emissions to achieve zero carbon after all reduction measures have been implemented Local communities have plans in place to deal with flooding incidents and reduce loss to life and property	1. Tonnes of CO₂ offset 2. Number of high risk parishes with emergency plans 3. Number of high risk parishes undertaking KRF training
	Set a budget provision to enable carbon offsetting		
	Increase number of parishes with high risk of flooding with emergency plans		

What we've been doing:

Home working is now established following its inception in response to the coronavirus pandemic 'work from home' requirement. Virtual meetings both internal and with external partners and the public have become accepted and are resulting in increased participation and engagement. It is estimated that the CO₂ saving from members attending meetings virtually rather than traveling to the Civic Centre saves approximately 7.3t CO₂ per year. The Council endorsed the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy in December 2020, strengthening opportunities for collaborative working.



The Chilmington Management Organisation has identified the following projects; a carbon neutral secondary school, planting 6666 trees is underway through the successful urban tree challenge, a cycleway linking to Victoria Park is being scoped, Electronic Vehicle charging points will be integral to development.

3.3 Priority 3 - Reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation by increasing renewable energy generation and consumption

Decarbonisation of energy production is necessary to meet our carbon neutral ambitions. The demand for energy from renewable and low carbon sources will increase as we use more electricity to heat our homes and power vehicles, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) suggests that low-carbon electricity generation will need to quadruple (to 645 TWh in 2050) to replace existing fossil fuel generation and to meet the expected increased demand from transport and heating (CCC (2019), Net Zero: The UK's contribution to stopping global warming). The majority of the energy we use is supplied from outside the borough, we can increase demand and therefore supply by purchasing energy from suppliers using renewable sources. In addition local renewable energy production reduces reliance on major energy suppliers and creates local income which can benefit local communities.



Priority 3: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation by increasing renewable energy generation and consumption

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
3.1 Increase number of sites suitable for renewable energy generation	Include renewable energy in the call for sites in the next local plan	Local landowners put forward sites suitable for renewable energy generation	1. Number of suitable sites identified 2. Potential renewable energy capacity (MWh)
3.2 Increase local renewable energy generation	Encourage community groups to develop small scale renewable energy projects by signposting to information and advice	Overall energy consumption for the borough is supplied from renewable energy sources	1. Number of small scale community energy projects 2. MWh of renewable energy generated from council assets
	Continue assessing all council owned assets for potential to host solar PV panels and install where financially viable.	Local renewable energy generation increases and creates income for the council and local communities	3. Number of homes powered by renewable energy
	Explore feasibility and if viable invest in solar batteries (small scale and large scale storage site)	The council uses 100% green energy in its operations	4. Percentage of council's energy tariff attributed to green energy
	Complete feasibility study to determine viability of building a solar farm		
	If viable build solar farm		
	Consider and invest in wind power		
	Switch Civic Centre and other assets to green tariff		

What we've been doing:

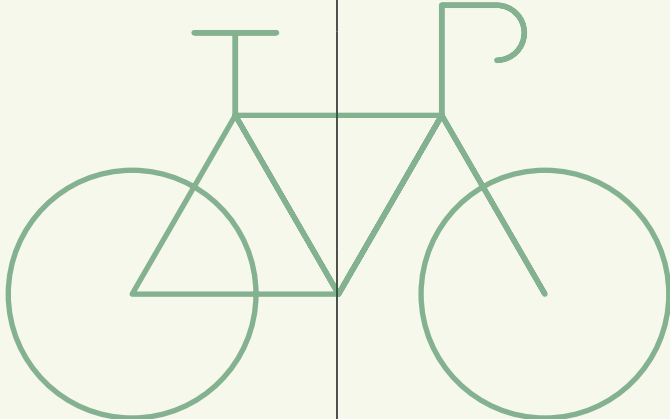
The council has been proactive in installing solar panels on properties since the introduction of the Feed in Tariff scheme. The first Solar PV system was installed in 2011, with the Civic Centre system following in 2012. All the solar PV panels installed by the council generate an estimated average of 357,000kWh per year. If an equivalent amount of electricity was purchased through the grid it would emit 82,481kg of CO₂. Further studies are underway to increase the supply of electricity through solar PV.

3.4 Priority 4 - Encourage and enable a shift towards cleaner modes of transport and reduce car dependency

In 2018 transport within the borough accounted for 316 KtCO₂, 53% of total emissions (BEIS data). In the 2020 Residents Survey 70% of respondents said they typically use a car to travel to work or school. When asked what mode of transport they would prefer to use this decreased to 47% indicating a desire to reduce car use if there are suitable alternatives.

Priority 4: Encourage and enable a shift towards cleaner modes of transport and reduce car dependency

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
4.1 Reduce transport emissions associated with council business and operations	Develop a green travel plan for staff and members for travel to and from work and work related journeys, informed by improved understanding of travel patterns	Greenhouse gas emissions from council related travel and operations reduces significantly through reduction in miles travelled and switching to cleaner forms of transport/vehicles	1. % of electric vehicles in council owned fleet
	Enable increased use of public transport and active travel by provision of incentives and improved facilities such as cycle storage and changing facilities		2. CO ₂ reduction per year from council owned vehicles
	Further explore use of electric bikes /scooters and potential for electric pool cars for use on council business	Air quality in the borough improves	3. Reduction in mileage claimed for staff travel
	Investigate how to encourage / incentivise the take up of electric vehicles through the lease car scheme to coincide with next lease car contract		4. Number of staff purchasing EV through lease car scheme
	When vehicles within the grounds maintenance (Aspire) fleet are due for renewal / replacement, opportunities to minimise carbon emissions through route optimisation and vehicle specifications will be considered		5. Reduction in travel to /from home/work by car
	Within the review of the waste contract consider minimising carbon emissions through route optimisation and contractors vehicle specifications		



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4.2 Encourage active travel in the borough	Implement the agreed action plan for cycling and walking to include active travel plans for business, infrastructure improvements and community based initiatives	Increased confidence in local population to cycle/ walk to local destinations, improved health and wellbeing and local air quality	1. Number of businesses with active travel plans 2. Km of cycleway 3. Number of residents regularly walking and/or cycling
4.3 Enable and facilitate a borough wide reduction in transport related emissions	Develop a parking strategy to encourage an overall reduction in car usage and facilitate electric vehicle patronage	Overall reduction in car dependency, improved local air quality, fewer road traffic accidents, increased patronage of local bus services, all residents can access public transport options to travel to key services	1. Car park usage / revenue 2. Demand for EV charging points 3. % of 'clean' buses 4. Number of bus passengers 5. Number of residents served by community bus schemes 6. % of residents using community bus schemes 7. Number of cars owned per household 8. Number of residents regularly car sharing
	Identify areas that would benefit from 20mph speed restriction and make recommendation to Highways Authority		
	Review community bus scheme and assess demand for future programme		
	Promote existing rural transport services e.g. Kent Connects and Wealden Wheels		
	Work with the Quality Bus Partnership to improve services and patronage of buses including introducing cleaner buses		
	Strengthen anti-idling message promoted in schools through CEO road safety programme and other agencies		
	Encourage residents to use the Kent Connected digital app		
	Improve understanding of future demand for EV charging points, infrastructure capacity and location. Implement a corporate approach to installation and maintenance of EV charging points		

What we've been doing:

The Cycling and Walking Strategy and Implementation Plan have been adopted. We are working with Sustrans to investigate where improvements are needed to link the South Ashford Garden Community to South Ashford.

Our Community Enforcements Officers use electric bikes and have a hybrid vehicle. The Housing Service has operated an electric pool car for several years.

There are 14 public electric vehicle charging points in the borough. A study is underway to assess where there are suitable locations for further EV charging points, it is now estimated that 10% of recent car sales are electric vehicles.

Our services are looking at ways to reduce travel, an example of this is where we have enabled new customers to our lifeline service to install the equipment themselves reducing the need for a contractor to travel to their property. Over a six month period this has saved 240 miles of travelling.

Currently two local taxis are low emission vehicles. The green taxi scheme incentivises the uptake of low emission vehicles offering three years 'free' licensing for low emission vehicles.



3.5 Priority 5 - Enable business growth while maximising opportunities to reduce carbon emissions

The ‘greening’ of industrial and commercial businesses in the borough are crucial to reducing borough wide carbon emissions. Sharing good practice and maximising the uptake of government incentives will assist in this aim. Attracting environmentally sustainable industries and social enterprises to locate in the borough will create employment and increase productivity and local incomes.

Priority 5: Enable business growth while maximising opportunities to reduce carbon emissions

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
5.1 Encourage businesses to utilise schemes and advice to transition to lower carbon economy	Promote local low carbon schemes for business such as LoCase and STEM	Carbon footprint of businesses lowers and more ‘green’ industries locate in the borough and a low carbon circular economy develops	1. Number of businesses receiving LoCase and STEM grants
	Work with the Chamber of Commerce to promote low carbon business opportunities	Workforce is skilled in green technology	2. Number of businesses disclosing carbon emissions
	Collaborate with partners to encourage and develop sustainable tourism opportunities for urban and rural business		3. Number of tourism businesses engaged in Interreg Experience project
5.2 Provide information and advice to business	Develop a package of green business support/information materials for top employers	Employers are knowledgeable and able to implement sustainable business practice	1. Number of green business ambassadors
	Identify best practice and create local green business ambassadors to inspire other businesses		2. % of employees working in low carbon businesses



What we’ve been doing:

Promoting the LoCase scheme enabled the UK Electric Bike Centre, based in Biddenden, to gain funding to purchase new equipment such as a bike trailers and e-bikes and also associated equipment such as helmets, locks etc. They were also able to optimise their website and commence a Google Adwords campaign in order to drive more business to the company. This resulted in the creation of seven new jobs, the promotion of green travel, an increase in GVA and the opportunity to explore a relationship with CyclePods, bike storage company.

An Interegg project is supporting sustainable tourism, increasing the off-season offer and linking with more sustainable visits and experiences. 15 local businesses have been successful in joining the programme and are working to develop their offers.

A cycle friendly initiative is being promoted to businesses in the borough.



3.6 Priority 6 - Reduce the environmental footprint of buildings through retrofitting existing buildings and new build developments

Across the UK only 5% of the energy used to heat our homes today is from low carbon sources (Ofgem decarbonisation action plan Feb 2020). There are many different types of buildings across the borough, however the approach should be to first reduce energy consumption as much as possible through the fabric and design of the building and the behaviour of its occupants. The remaining energy requirement can then be fulfilled from a renewable or low carbon source.

Priority 6: Reduce the environmental footprint of buildings through retrofitting existing buildings and new build developments

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
6.1 Council led housing development to be built to highest environmental standards achievable	New build HRA homes to be built to attain EPC rating A or B	Lower carbon footprint of new homes, lower running costs for tenants, showcasing environmentally sustainable building techniques	1. % of EPC ratings at A or B 2. Average energy usage per m ²
6.2 Undertake retrofitting programme for council owned homes	Undertake stock condition survey	Overall carbon footprint of council homes is lowered, tenants benefit from increased thermal comfort and lower energy bills. Health and wellbeing of tenants improves	1. Number of homes retrofitted each year 2. % of home with EPC ratings at C or above 3. Level of satisfaction of tenants with their home
	Explore efficiencies of scale through joint working with other stock holding local authorities/ Registered Providers through Kent Housing Group		
	Develop a delivery plan for decarbonisation of homes to include types of properties, works required and timescales		
	Identify retrofitting pilot projects to test, assess and learn methods		
	Commence phased retrofitting programme		
6.3 Reduce water consumption across council owned assets	Install water saving measures in council owned commercial and residential properties	Residents actively use less water resulting in a reduction in overall water usage. Resilience to future water shortages improves	1. Per capita water use
	Encourage less water usage through behavioural change initiatives		

6.4 Retrofit councils own corporate property assets	Complete condition survey and undertake study to fully understand cost of retrofitting Civic Centre and likely carbon savings aligned with rationalising floor space and more flexible working arrangements for staff. Utilise this information to determine options for future use	Council assets contribute zero or minimal carbon emissions, assets are less expensive to run, improved conditions for staff and tenants	1. EPC rating of buildings 2. energy usage per m ² 3. Area (m ²) of buildings retrofitted 4. financial saving against cost of measures (ROI) 5. Satisfaction of tenants
	Maintain daily energy reporting to evaluate energy usage and potential reduction / savings		
	Continue ongoing asset management to ensure opportunities to reduce carbon emissions are identified and reflected in future reviews of Asset Management Strategy		
	Develop a planned approach to retrofitting corporate assets as identified by condition surveys and prioritise in Asset Management Strategy to maximise opportunities to reduce carbon emissions		
6.5 Improve the energy efficiency of homes in the private sector	Undertake post occupancy evaluations for corporate assets following completion of retrofitting works	Increase energy efficiency of homes Reduction in CO ₂ emissions from private sector housing Reduction in fuel poverty	1) Amount of funding allocated / spent 2) Number of properties with improved EPC rating 3) Number of PRS properties improved from F and G to band E or above 4) Number of Accredited private rented properties 5) Number of households in fuel poverty
	Work with the Greater South East Energy Hub to deliver the allocated funding available through the Green Homes Grant, Local Authority Delivery Phase 2		
	Continue energy efficiency grants under the Landlord Accreditation scheme		
	Identify properties in PRS below band E requiring improvement under the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and take enforcement action where necessary		
	Actively contribute to Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership to address fuel poverty		
	Promote energy efficiency schemes available to homeowners and private landlords		

What we've been doing:

From the late 1980's there has been an ongoing programme to improve the thermal efficiency of dwellings through insulation upgrades, more energy efficient windows and doors and heating systems. This improves the energy rating of the home and reduces the cost of space and water heating for the tenant. More recently renewable technology has been installed with properties benefiting from solar PV. Air source heat pumps have replaced oil-fired central heating systems (or inefficient Night Store Heaters) in off-gas areas and where a heating system has reached its replacement interval in our cyclic maintenance and improvement programme or where the existing heating system cannot be economically repaired.

The refurbishment of Christchurch Lodge, renovated to provide accommodation for homeless people, has achieved EPC rating of B, through using a fabric first approach with an innovative insulation solution in the 19th century building.

The council's own new build programme has put sustainability as a high priority.

The 2015/16 programme achieved the Code for Sustainable Homes level 4, well exceeding the building regulations in force at that time. This including taking a fabric first approach, installing water saving measures, high efficiency heating systems and renewables.

We are looking at other assets and recently undertook a condition survey of the Civic Centre to understand how its energy efficiency can be improved and inform options for its refurbishment / future use.

A successful bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme will enable the replacement of the gas fired boilers at the Stour Leisure Centre with air source heat pumps. This will reduce the leisure centre's annual carbon emission total by 657 tonnes – (the equivalent to the CO₂ emissions from the annual heating of 243 average UK homes), a reduction of 45% with an energy saving of 40%.



3.7 Priority 7 - Protect, enhance and increase green space for the benefit of people and wildlife

Ashford is a largely rural borough but we must not be complacent and forget the importance of our open spaces, in rural and urban areas, for our own wellbeing and that of the natural environment. Good habitat management can help store carbon and poor habitat management can result in carbon being released.

Priority 7: Protect, enhance and increase green space for the benefit of people and wildlife			
Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
7.1 Improve biodiversity on council owned land	Develop and implement land management plans for council owned land which provide specific vision, aims and objectives for the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of parcels of land in a given locality	Enhanced biodiversity of open spaces in the borough increasing key species. Land management plans will support the balance of appropriate wildlife habitat and biodiversity within amenity spaces and urban areas ensuring that maintenance regimes are appropriate to the character of the land and ensure ecological, social and economic benefits are realised holistically	1. Tree numbers and species information 2. % increase in area (m²) managed for wildlife / biodiversity 3. Number of trees planted 4. Number of trees felled 5. Total CO ₂ sequestered
	Proactively manage ABC tree stock, which will inform future tree management and maintenance programmes	Understanding of tree numbers, species and maturity of tree stock and location Informed tree planting plans Tree warden scheme that will engage local people while supporting the overarching aim	
7.2 Support land based community projects	Publish community - based gardens guidance	Local people grow their own food and community cohesion improves. Health and wellbeing improves, through healthier eating. Awareness of food production encourages local food production and purchase with a reduction in food miles	1. Downloads of community gardens guidance 2. Number of community gardens created
7.3 Reduce environmental degradation through land management and habitat creation	Explore the creation of wildlife habitats in the borough	Improvement in river water quality Increase in biodiversity	1. Number of key species 2. Level of pollutants in local water courses
	Work with land based industries and relevant agencies to implement sustainable land management practices		

What we've been doing:

The management plan for Queen Mothers Park is in progress together with developing guidance for community gardens. A successful bid to the Urban Tree Challenge will result in 6666 trees being planted at Chilmington, with planting work underway and due to be completed by Spring 2021.



3.8 Priority 8 - Reduce waste and continue high levels of recycling

The council has a good record of recycling rates and continues to have the highest recycling rate in the county at 54.2% for 2019/20. It is important to maintain this excellent recycling rate but also to reduce the amount of waste produced.

Priority 8: Reduce waste and continue high levels of recycling

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
8.1 Work with local businesses to reduce waste	Support reduction in plastic bag usage through reuse / 'use your own' initiatives	Residents are empowered to reduce the amount of waste they produce to reduce tonnage of non-recyclable material collected Local businesses actively support waste reduction initiatives	1. Tonnes of non-recyclable waste collected (residential and commercial) 2. Recycling and contamination rates 3. National and regional litter ranking 4. Number of refill points 5. Volume of water refilled (litres)
	Develop work stream as part of Town Centre reset to encourage upcycling and facilitate establishment of social enterprises with waste reduction objectives		
	Increase number of water refill points in local outlets		
8.2 Ensure council processes reduce waste and maximise recycling	Continue to move to electronic services and digital processes for staff and residents	Residents are confident to use digital services, reducing paper based processes. The council no longer uses single use plastic within its offices and non-recyclable waste is reduced	1. Number (%) of residents signed up for digital services 2. Number of staff undertaking recycling training 3. Volume of paper used in council publications / correspondence 4. Tonnes of non-recyclable plastic waste collected from council offices
	Recycle all the council's technological assets using WEEE and ADISA directives		
	Eliminate single-use plastic within the council office including rolling out consistent bin system removing plastic and paper cups from vending machines		
8.3 Encourage residents to reduce waste	Continue to promote waste reduction including through home composting and garden waste service	Residents are proactive in reducing waste	1. Tonnes of waste collected per household 2. Recycling rates 3. Garden waste services take up



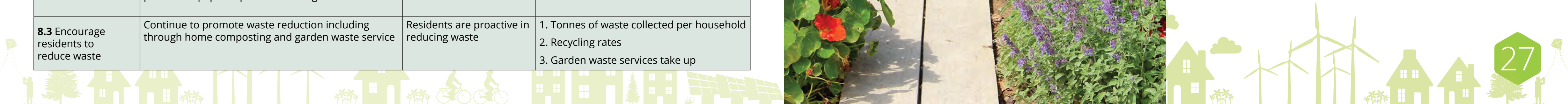
What we've been doing:

As a council, we have consistently improved recycling rates through informative ongoing campaigns to residents and local businesses.

The green garden waste service has been reviewed to increase the use of this service therefore reducing journeys by householders to the tip. Working with our waste contractor collection routes have been optimised. The garden waste vehicles now travel 153 miles less over a two week period which will make an annual saving of 11984 kg carbon.



The council has rationalised the printers within its offices, reducing their usage, together with introducing virtual collaboration tools for effective joint working online.



4. Next steps

All the responses received will be used to finalise the action plan. The final action plan will also be informed by the outcome of a simultaneous study to understand how the council can reach net zero in its own estate and the associated financial costs. This will help us to prioritise the actions that will be most effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, whilst using our resources most efficiently.



Appendix 1: Kent Resilience Forum - Principles for a Green Recovery

1. All investment to support recovery and future growth should have low or zero carbon emissions, use resources efficiently and aim for environmental net gain. This means new infrastructure, developments, processes and businesses should be looking to minimise the use of energy and water, reduce waste, promote the circular economy and use renewable energy and sustainable materials where possible. It also means that investment doesn't lock in carbon emissions in the future.
2. Employees and residents are supported to protect and enhance their wellbeing through a cleaner environment and more access to rich and varied nature. This means benefiting from the health and wellbeing advantages associated with: warmer, more energy efficient homes; better air quality inside and outside; increased access to public green space; and a high quality natural environment thriving with wildlife.
3. Communities are well connected both digitally, and through an effective network of footpaths, cycle ways and public transport. This means active travel; public transport and low carbon vehicles are not only the best way to get around in our personal lives but the default for business travel and communications; virtual working is supported and encouraged; and homeworking is enabled to become the norm.
4. Future development and existing communities are resilient and adapted to the changing climate and severe weather events. This means adaptations are in place to cope with, and build resilience against, increased drought, flooding and heatwaves, and new designs account for these from the beginning.
5. Biodiversity is protected, restored and created; nature-based solutions are considered first and invested in at every opportunity. This means species are protected and, where threatened, are recovered; existing habitats and greenspaces are enhanced to regain and retain good health; communities are inspired by, and engaged with, their local environment and are realising the mental and physical health benefits of such a connection; and natural options to tackle climate change impacts such as flooding, temperature change and water management are considered before other options.
6. Ensure any green recovery solutions are equitable and fair; a green and equitable recovery go hand in hand. This means ensuring new greenspaces are planned in areas where everyone will see benefits and not just new development; and the delivery of clean growth does not affect some people disproportionately.
7. Greater partnership working and collaboration. This means engaging all parts of the community to contribute to and realise environmental, economic and social benefits.

Appendix 2: Glossary

ADISA	The Asset Disposal and Information Security Alliance (ADISA) underwrites best practices for data security for asset recovery and disposal companies. ADISA certification reflects the highest standards of safety, environmental responsibility and confidentiality in the industry.
Biodiversity	Biodiversity refers to the variety of living species on Earth, including plants, animals, bacteria, and fungi. While Earth's biodiversity is so rich that many species have yet to be discovered, many species are being threatened with extinction due to human activities.
Carbon Footprint	A carbon footprint measures the total greenhouse gas emissions caused directly and indirectly by a person, organisation, event or product.
Carbon Neutrality	Carbon neutrality means having a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere in carbon sinks. Removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and then storing it is known as carbon sequestration. In order to achieve net zero emissions, all worldwide greenhouse gas emissions will have to be counterbalanced by carbon sequestration.
Carbon Offsetting	The balancing of the emissions of carbon dioxide (CO ₂) or other greenhouse gases (measured in carbon dioxide equivalents [CO ₂ e]) from an activity by providing for or investing in an emission reduction elsewhere. If carbon reductions are equivalent to the total carbon footprint of an activity, then the activity is said to be “carbon neutral.”
Climate Change	Climate change is the long-term shift in average weather patterns across the world. Since the mid-1800s, humans have contributed to the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the air. This causes global temperatures to rise, resulting in long-term changes to the climate.
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide, one of the main greenhouse gases.
CO ₂ e	Carbon dioxide equivalent. Carbon dioxide equivalent is a measure used to compare the emissions from various greenhouse gases based upon their global warming potential.
Greenhouse gases	Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere absorb heat energy and prevent it all escaping into space. This keeps the Earth warmer than it would be without these gases. The increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is magnifying the greenhouse effect and increasing global temperatures. There are many greenhouse gases but these are some of the most important: water vapour H ₂ O, carbon dioxide CO ₂ , methane CH ₄ , nitrous oxide N ₂ O, CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons).
EPC	Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) tell you how energy efficient a building is and give it a rating from A (very efficient) to G (inefficient).

EV charging points	An electric vehicle charging point is equipment that connects an electric vehicle (EV) to a source of electricity to recharge electric cars.
Food miles	The distance between the place where food is grown or made and the place where it is eaten.
HRA	Housing Revenue Account a ring-fenced account of certain defined transactions, relating to local authority housing. It records expenditure and income arising from the provision of housing accommodation by local housing authorities.
Interreg	Interreg Europe will co-finance a proportion of a project that is carried out in partnership with other policy organisations based in different countries in Europe.
KCC	Kent County Council.
KRF	The Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) is a partnership of organisations and agencies who work together to improve the resilience of Kent and Medway, and to ensure a coordinated response to emergencies that could have a significant impact on communities. The KRF is one of 42 of local resilience forums (LRFs) across England set up in response to the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004.
LoCase	The Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) programme is supported by the European Regional Development Fund to provide a free business support programme in the South East. Its aim is to help businesses become more competitive and profitable while protecting the environment and encouraging low carbon solutions.
Renewable Energy	The International Energy Agency (IEA) defines renewable energy resources as those derived from natural processes and replenished at a faster rate than they are consumed.
Rewilding	The process of protecting an environment and returning it to its natural state, for example by bringing back wild animals that used to live there.
STEM	Steps to Environmental Management Scheme. The scheme helps businesses to improve their environmental performance through a series of assessments and certificates (blue, silver and gold).
Sustrans	A national charity whose mission is to make it easier for people to walk and cycle.
WEEE	Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment recycling; a specialist part of the waste and recycling industry.



