



ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday, 6 March 2024

Time: 6.00pm

Location: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Contact: Stephen Weaver

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: R Broom (Chair), A Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), J Brown, B Facey, C McGrath, A McGuinness, S Mead, C Parris, E Plater, G Snell and Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, OBE CC.

AGENDA

PART I

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - 12 FEBRUARY 2024

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 12 February 2024.

Pages 3 – 8

3. UPDATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIONS

As previously agreed by the Committee, when it arranged its work programme for the year, it was decided that there would be two sessions on Climate Change. This session is the second of the two sessions. Officers have prepared a PowerPoint presentation capturing progress on the areas Members provided some challenge on when the Committee considered Climate Change at its meeting on 1 November 2023. Members are invited to comment on the update. Pages 9 – 20

4. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

To consider any Part I business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

5. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

6. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 12 February 2024

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), Jim Brown, Bret Facey, Conor McGrath, Sarah Mead, Claire Parris, Ellie Plater, Graham Snell and Baroness Dr Sharon Taylor of Stevenage, OBE.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 6.45pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no apologies for absence received nor declarations of interest made at the meeting.

2 **MINUTES - 16 JANUARY 2024**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee held on 16 January 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **DRAFT E&E SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2024-25**

The Chair introduced the item and explained that items suggested for inclusion in the work programme could be matters that would be suitable for a main review, a one-off update on past reviews or a one-off performance review at an individual meeting. In addition to this, the Committee would be invited to undertake a number of pre-scrutiny policy development items ahead of their consideration at the Executive.

The Chair reviewed the suggestions that Members had provided prior to the meeting and were detailed in the report at paragraph 5 and those made verbally at the meeting as follows:

Town Centre Regeneration

The Committee discussed ways that the Committee might approach such a large issue and it was agreed that it would be best to invite officers to provide an overarching presentation on the current position with the Town Centre Regeneration project and for the Committee to then settle on a thematic approach for an aspect of the project. Members suggested the following thematic options:

- Links to the skills agenda, job creation and apprenticeships in retail, hospitality and the night-time economy and construction.
- Place making
- Use of public space in the town centre

The Chair stated that he would steer away from matters that were the domain of the Planning and Development Committee.

A Member suggested that as part of the overview presentation by Regeneration Officers, that a view of what the town might look like in 10 years' time would be useful.

Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

Members suggested that as the LEP was being subsumed into the County Council a representative from HCC LEP should be invited to attend to brief Members on what impact this might have on the relationship between SBC and the LEP. It was noted that Mark Doran was the new director at HCC with responsibility for the LEP.

Climate Change/Climate Emergency

It was agreed that this would remain on the Committee's work programme as a standing item. The Chair suggested that like way this issue had been covered in 2023-24, the item should be brought to the Committee on two occasions. Once in October/November, when the Annual Scrutiny report is considered at the Executive and Council and then again in March to specifically drill down to issues of interest to Members.

The Chair stated that he would be looking for Environment and Economy Select Committee Members to lead on specific issues regarding the Climate Emergency e.g., Biodiversity, biofuels of the Council's vehicle fleet, decarbonisation of the estate and Housing Stock etc.

Tree Management

Several Members spoke in favour of scrutinising Tree Management. Members stated that the Council had not communicated this policy well to residents. The Council need to explain this better to the public to make it clear that it has little ability to be proactive given the limited resources at its disposal, but any potential review should look at what support could be given to residents who have problems with tree management. A Member suggested that a review of tree management could also look at the planning policy of 3 for 1 trees, which is an SBC policy and needs to be included in the next iteration of the emerging local plan planning policy document.

Parking enforcement

It was noted that it is hard to recruit to this position given the current salary and the difficult nature of the role, which was not a popular area to work in. Members were interested in the level of parking enforcement that was being undertaken. The perception was that very few fixed penalty notices were being issued.

Recycling

A Member strongly encouraged the Committee to add Recycling to the Committee's work programme as they had been undertaking their own informal research with residents and relevant staff regarding this issue. The Member stated that residents are very confused regarding what they should be recycling and into what receptacle items should be placed. In addition, the Refuse and Recycling operatives are finding it increasingly frustrating that recycling is often contaminated when it is collected. The Council encourages people to look at the web site for advice, but anecdotally, it is thought that by and large residents don't look at it. The Members stated that Recycling is currently confusing, and consistency was needed. The Council is currently reviewing its services in light of the Governments 'Simpler Recycling' announcements, and it is expected that an update will be brought to this meeting in due course.

Indoor Market

A Member requested that the Indoor Market be added to the work programme for a brief update at a future meeting. There was a perception amongst the market traders that the footfall had been affected since the bus station was relocated.

Fly-tipping Enforcement

A Member asked what happens around enforcement for fly-tipping? What can the Council do to deter and stop reoffenders? The Member reported that it was often the same people in same area of their ward that were repeat offenders.

Revisit the cost-of-living review.

A Member asked that the Committee revisit the cost-of-living crisis review as the pressure on household budgets had not gone away and they didn't want the Council to lose sight of this important issue. It was agreed that there should be a one-off item on the cost of living.

In response to a question on the new Planning requirement for Biodiversity net gain, the Assistant Director, Planning Policy stated that the new policy had just come into force in February 2024 so time would be needed to see what impact this has had.

A Member stated that it would be important for the Committee to be flexible and to build in some space into the work programme to be able to react to events or to a change in Government if new priorities and requirements were given to local government.

With regard to the Committee's pre-scrutiny policy development item on updates to the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan on 27 February 2024, a Member made a special request that the importance of chalk streams to the region and local area be addressed. 85% of the World's Chalk Streams, which offer unique biodiversity, are in South and East of England. It is very important that their unique status is explained to Members and to the wider public and why they are so important to biodiversity.

and the climate.

The Chair stated that with regard to the work programme he was prepared to give way on his desire to have an update new station gateway as it was not possible for the Committee to do everything on the list.

The Chair stated that he was not keen for the Committee to look at Residential Parking as a scrutiny topic, as there was no satisfactory solution open to the Council that would alleviate the need for more provision across the town which was not possible to achieve within the geography of the area or with the budgets that are available and would only lead to further raising of expectations and then disappointment for residents.

A Member suggested that it would be helpful for newly elected Members to be given an induction training session either just ahead or at the first meeting of the new Municipal Year to explain how scrutiny is undertaken in Select Committees.

It was **RESOLVED**

1. that the Scrutiny Members' feedback on ideas for improving Scrutiny be noted;
2. (i) that having considered the ideas put forward by individual Scrutiny Members, the Committee determines the matters to be added to a work programme of potential Scrutiny review items for 2024-25 as follows:
 - Town Centre Regeneration – Initially an overarching Officer presentation to be provided and then a more focused thematic approach around the local skills agenda, access to work opportunities, placemaking, night-time economy etc.
 - Offer a training session on or before the first meeting in the new Municipal Year to orientate newly elected Members regarding how scrutiny is conducted.
 - Ongoing watching brief on the Climate Emergency – continue with 2 sessions during the year in Oct/Nov to coincide with the Annual Climate Change update to Council and in March to drill down on some specific measures.
 - Invite the HCC to provide a briefing on what the impact might be to the workings of the LEP now it is being brought into the County Council.
 - Tree Management. Officers to provide a one-off performance review session on how the Tree Management Policy is explained to the public to counter the general misconceptions of what is possible within the Councils current resources.
 - Provide a one-off performance review session on Parking Enforcement with some details on the service and the number of fines administered.
 - Receive an update on the current Refuse and Recycling service and look at possible policy changes once Government Guidance is issued in this area.

- Provide a one-off review update on the Indoor Market following up on actions from the 2017 Scrutiny review.
- Provide a one-off review update on the current position with the Cost-of-living review.
- Biodiversity Net Gain – The Committee is considering the Biodiversity Action Plan as a piece of pre-scrutiny policy development work in February 2024 and may look to bring back future updates, if Committee time allows, including further sessions on the Tree Management Strategy and the Green Space Strategy.

(ii) that the Chair will consider the above suggestions made by the Committee and devise a draft work programme schedule that will be shared with the Committee when it meets in the new Municipal Year in June 2024, comprising a main scrutiny review item(s), one-off focused meetings or individual committee item updates.

3. that the process to carry out pre-scrutiny policy development work be noted.

4 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

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Climate Change Update

E&E Select Committee - March 2024

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Zayd Al-Jawad, Assistant Director Planning & Regulation

Fabian B. Oyarzun, Head of Climate Action

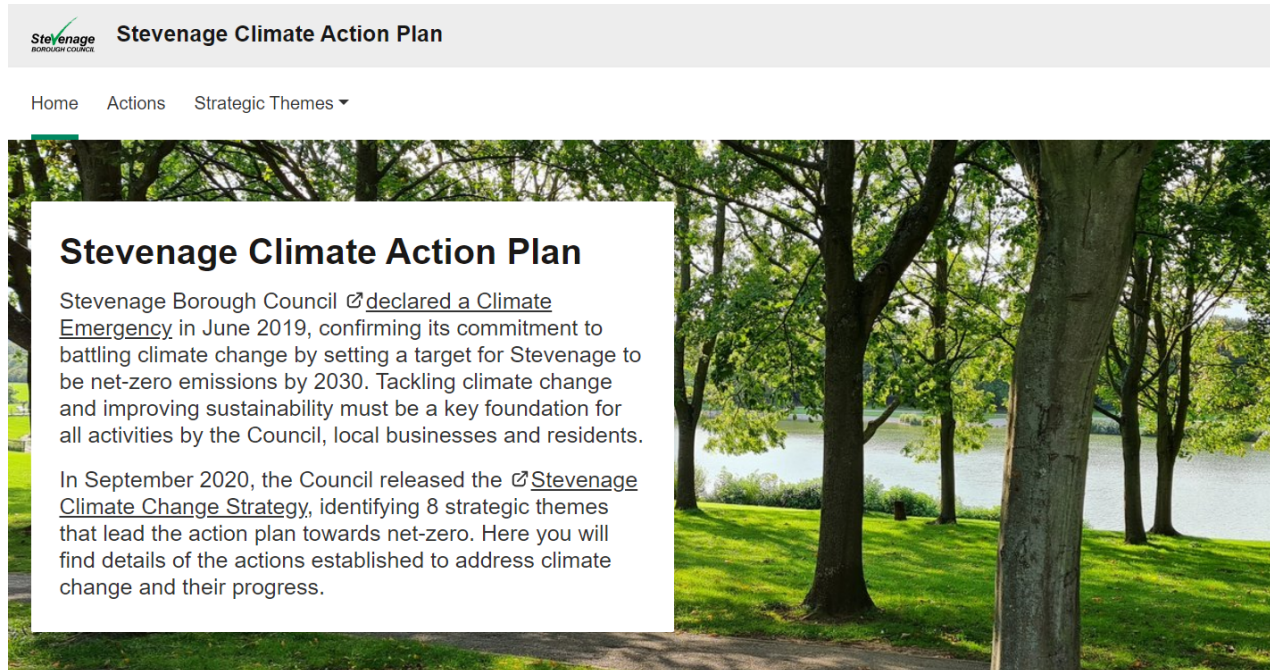
Jennifer Bratchell, Climate Change Programme Lead Officer

Agenda Item 3

Climate Action Plan Tracker

- Action tracker officially launched on February 27, 2024.
- Available at: [Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

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Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Stevenage Climate Action Plan

Home Actions Strategic Themes ▾

Stevenage Borough Council [declared a Climate Emergency](#) in June 2019, confirming its commitment to battling climate change by setting a target for Stevenage to be net-zero emissions by 2030. Tackling climate change and improving sustainability must be a key foundation for all activities by the Council, local businesses and residents.

In September 2020, the Council released the [Stevenage Climate Change Strategy](#), identifying 8 strategic themes that lead the action plan towards net-zero. Here you will find details of the actions established to address climate change and their progress.

Climate Action Plan Tracker

- Actions re-organised in the 8 strategic themes based on Climate Change Strategy

Strategic Themes

Select one of our eight key themes to see what climate-related actions we're working on in that area.



Businesses



Homes



Transport



Construction & Regeneration



Energy & Water



People & Awareness



Waste & Recycling



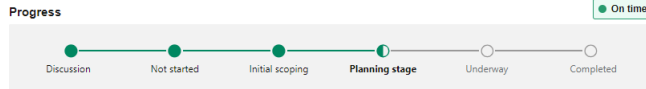
Biodiversity

Climate Action Plan Tracker

- Pathway visuals integrated into related actions

Action: TR1 | Stevenage Climate Action Plan

TR1. Decarbonising SBC's Fleet and Fuel



SBC is aiming to reduce and eliminate carbon emissions from their fleet and non-road machinery through a reduction in diesel reliance.

As part of Stevenage's target to be net zero by 2030, the Council has set a target to decarbonise their fleet before 2020.

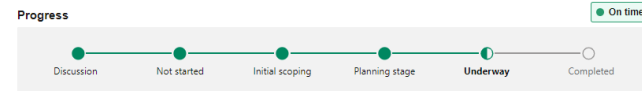
The fleet accounted for approximately 23% of the Council's emissions in their 2018 baseline data.

Decarbonising SBC's transport-related emissions includes reducing carbon emissions across its own fleet, the grey fleet used for operational purposes, and the modes of commuting of its workforce, as shown below.



Action: EW4 | Stevenage Climate Action Plan

EW4. Decarbonise energy supply at SBC Sites



A set of different permanent actions and projects have been undertaken by the Council to monitor and better understand the energy consumption (electricity and gas) across their sites, aiming to introduce decarbonisation actions for its energy supply, primarily reducing dependency on natural gas.

This decarbonisation challenge has positive synergies with broader Stevenage decarbonisation targets, inspiring and leading by example, but also directly contributing to the decarbonisation of the public sector, residential sector, and commercial sector across the town.



Climate Action Plan Tracker

- Our related targets have been included.

[Action: BI3 | Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

BI3. Plant 4,000 Trees in Stevenage by 2030



Stevenage Borough Council aims to increase the town's tree canopy cover to 19%, in line with the recommendation produced by the Woodland Trust in their Emergency Tree Plan for the UK (2020). Increased tree canopy will support the UK becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

Trees are great additions to the places we live, work, play and visit. They provide multiple benefits including:

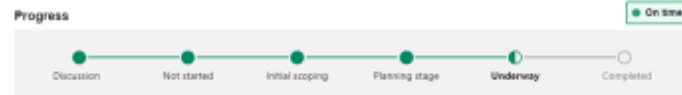


1) Helping to combat climate change: through photosynthesis trees take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen. A single tree can absorb as much as 22kg of carbon each year, potentially keeping it locked up in their wood and roots for decades or even centuries to come. On average, one tree produces almost 118kg of oxygen every year. [\(Earthwatch\)](#)

2) Providing homes and food for wildlife: oak trees can support up to 2,300 species with over 300 of these entirely dependent on oaks for their survival. Many birds and several small mammals, such as dormice and bats, use trees for nesting and shelter. Bees will benefit from

[Action: HO1 | Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

HO1. Decarbonisation of Social Housing



Social housing decarbonisation refers to the process of reducing or eliminating carbon emissions associated with housing units which are designated as social or affordable housing.

The initiative addresses the environmental impact of residential buildings within the social housing sector by aiming to make them more energy-efficient and sustainable. Decarbonisation methods can involve implementing a range of measures, such as improving insulation, upgrading heating systems to more energy-efficient alternatives, promoting renewable energy sources, and adopting technologies that minimise carbon emissions. Through decarbonisation, the Council can make social housing more environmentally friendly, enhance living conditions, reduce energy costs for residents, and contribute to wider efforts in combatting climate change by lowering the carbon footprint of the housing sector.

As part of its Climate Change Strategy, the Council has committed to achieving a minimum EPC band C for all council homes by 2030. An EPC is a certificate that rates the energy efficiency of a property on a scale from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient). EPCs are required when a domestic property is built, sold, or rented.

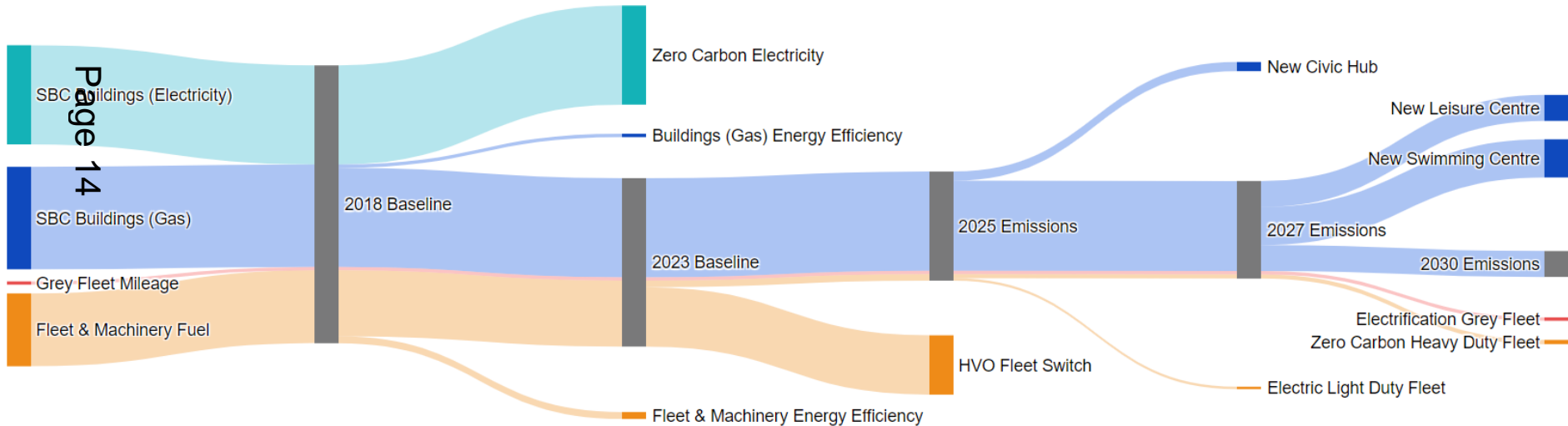
SBC Climate Change Strategy has identified homes as one of the key themes of the action plan. Priorities outlined in this regard include providing energy efficient housing (including retrofitting of current council housing stock), planning policy for zero carbon homes, and exploring opportunities for renewable technologies across HRA buildings.

According to the UK Government Heat and Buildings Strategy (2021), "to meet net zero virtually all heat in buildings will need to be decarbonised", totally moving away from using fossil fuels. In this context, the Government has committed to

Climate Action Plan Tracker

- Sankey diagram: assessing progress against our baseline.

SBC Emissions Baseline and Expected Trajectory



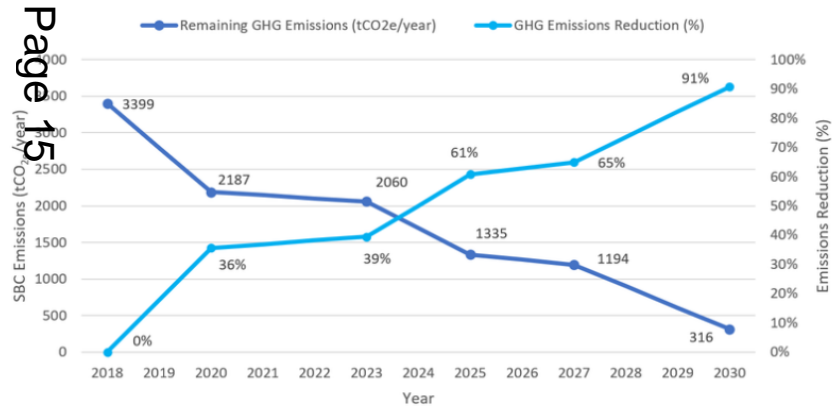
- In the past: Baseline ~3,400 tCO_{2e} (2018); 35.7% saved by switching to **zero carbon electricity supply** (2020) ([Action EW5](#)).
- Currently: **2023** emissions ~2,060 tCO_{2e}, 40% reduction; Switching our **fleet fuel** to HVO ([Action TR1](#)) will reduce over 700 tCO_{2e}/year.
- In the near future: Expected **2025** emissions: ~1,334 tCO_{2e}/year, 61% reduction; Major future projects: low-carbon **Leisure & Swimming Centre** and **Civic Hub**.
- Remaining challenge (2030): ~300 tCO_{2e}/year (mainly gas heating).

Climate Action Plan Tracker

- Simpler visualisation: progress in graphs for the Council and the borough.

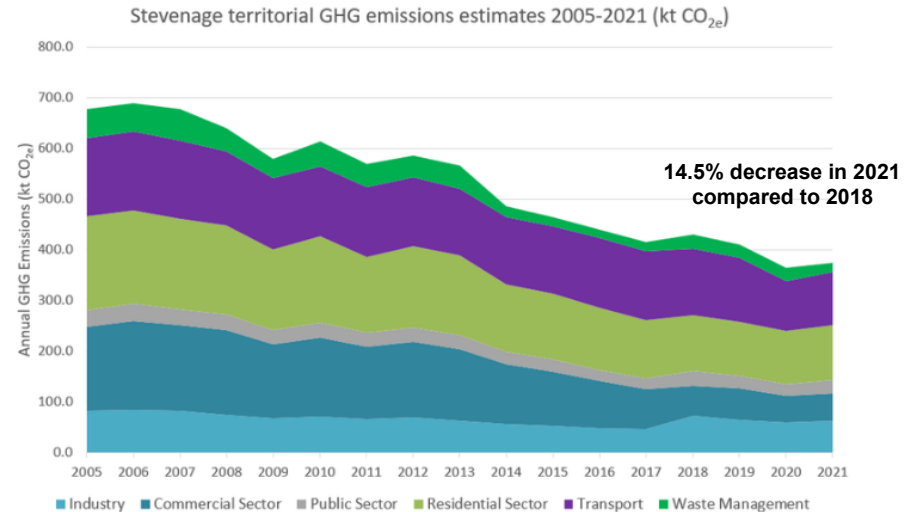
SBC Emissions Reduction (2018-2030)

Below is the trajectory of our emissions in the recent past (since our emissions baseline was created) and in the future towards 2030, based on the major projects we are implementing so far. A remaining challenge is already identified to be addressed by our further climate action.



Stevenage Territorial GHG Emissions

Based on the UK Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) data at [UK Local Authority and Regional GHG Emissions National Statistics](#), the territorial GHG emissions for Stevenage are presented below.



Climate Action Plan Tracker

- **Communications Strategy**
- Voluntary feedback (Cycling UK, FoE, etc.).
- Official SBC communications channels & social media.
- Press release.
- C&N stakeholders & contacts list.
- International & national sustainability key dates calendar to be linked to SBC actions.

Month	Date(s) 2024	Event	Category
March	3rd	UN World Wildlife Day	Wildlife
March	8th/11th	Solar Appreciation Day	Climate
March	15th to 31st	Great British Spring Clean	Waste
March	18th	Global Recycling Day	Waste
March	18th to 24th	Food Waste Action Week	Waste
March	20th	World Rewilding Day	Biodiversity
March	21st	UN Day of Forests	Biodiversity
March	22nd	World Water Day	Climate
March	23rd	Earth Hour	Climate
March	30th	International Day of Zero Waste	Waste
April	1st	National Walk to Work Day	Lifestyle
April	1st to 7th	Community Garden Week	Biodiversity
April	22nd	Earth Day	Climate
April	24th	Stop Food Waste Day	Waste
April	26th	Arbor Day	Biodiversity
May	1st to 31st	No Mow May	Biodiversity
May	1st to 30th	National Walking Month	Lifestyle
May	5th to 11th	International Compost Week	Biodiversity
May	6th to 11th TBC	National Gardening Week	Biodiversity
May	17th	Endangered Species Day	Wildlife
May	20th	World Bee Day	Wildlife
May	22	International Day for Biological Diversity	Biodiversity
May	20th to 24th	Walk to School Week	Lifestyle
May	20th to 26th	Water Saving Week	Climate
May	25th May to 2nd June	National Children's Gardening Week	Biodiversity

Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF)

- **CCCF: Process & Requirements**
- Money from local Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and potentially other funding streams.
- Opportunities for investing in projects that support climate change ambitions.
- Projects with community ownership, support, and potentially reduced costs for SBC while green at local street level.
- £7,500 per ward per year is available.
- Alongside Member's access to their own Local Community Budgets.

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[Action: PA5 | Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

Have a Green Idea? Please Share it With Us!

The Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF)



Here at the council, we want to hear about your ideas for projects that will benefit your local community and environment, helping us to mitigate or adapt to climate change while providing social benefits.

Eligible groups can apply for the Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF) to receive financial support in developing and implementing their projects. Organisations such as schools, businesses, charities, community groups, resident groups, clubs, and societies are all welcome to apply! Faith groups may also apply, provided their projects are inclusive.

HOW DOES IT WORK?



GREEN IDEA:

You're an eligible group with a project idea that has an environmental and social benefit. For example, using a small piece of land in your street or neighbourhood for a community garden.

SHARE IT WITH US:

Your group shares the idea with one of your local ward councillors and then together, share the outline with SBC officers who can provide technical support.

DRAGON'S DEN PITCH:

If it looks like it might work, you present it, dragon's den style, to the SBC Climate Change Progress Group, which meets online. If approved as a possible scheme, an amount of money will be approved conditionally for you.

GREEN LIGHT:

Once approved, the agreed funding amount will be sent to your organisational bank account so the project can begin!

AFTERWARDS:

Once completed, we'd like to visit and get a progress report from you too. Above all, we'd love you to share your idea and scheme with others!



To find out more, please speak with your local councillor, or contact climatechange@stevenage.gov.uk.

Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF)

Current CCCF Projects

Project Name	Ward	Councillor	Community Group	Community Lead	Approval Status	Project Status	Funding Allocated	Funding Delivered	Output/Expected Output
Repair Café	Bedwell	Lyn M-Hall	Bedwell Community Centre	Terry Alderson	Approved	Operational	£ 760	£ 760	A space where members of the community can go to repair their broken items and engage socially. Avoids items going to landfill and promotes a more sustainable mindset within the community.
Coventry Close Community Garden	St Nicholas	Sandra Barr	WNWN	Deborah Pullen	Approved	Operational	£ 600	£ 600	Community garden for residents in the adjacent houses to socialise, create a gardening group, and improve local environmental factors such as air quality and biodiversity. 13 fruiting and flowering bushes, clustered perennials and spring-flowering bulbs to provide a more diverse habitat. Raised beds for vegetable planting and wooden benches built locally from donated wood. Addition of compost, soil conditioner and wood chip to improve soil health.
Peartree Shops Water Harvesting and Flowerbeds	Shephall	Rob Broom	Shephall Resident's Group	Robert Clark	Approved	Planning	£ 2,500	-	Water container to be installed to the side of Peartree shops which will collect rainwater to be used for the maintenance of the flowerbeds outside the shopping district. A sustainable overflow option will be installed and permeable paving used if necessary. The flowerbeds are currently maintained by members of the Resident's group who will be provided funding for plants to improve the year-round colour of the beds and increase the presence of pollinators. A birdhouse may also feature for the area.
Elliot Road Community Garden Allotment	Chells	Loraine Rosatti	Everyone Active Charitable Trust	Juanita Prescott	Approved	Pending payment	£ 1,000	£ 526	The Allotment will be available to the community to enjoy, managed by Everyone Active and volunteers. The aim of the project is to improve mental and physical wellbeing, improve social inclusion and to produce harvests for the Food Bank. We will enhance biodiversity with a range of habitats and vegetation structures available at a site.
Silkin Court	Bandley Hill	Mason Humberstone	WNWN	Multiple (DP, JM, GO)	Awaiting finalised bid	Planning	-	-	Enhancement of the outdoor communal area of Silkin Court which will provide various benefits including: 1) improved climate adaptation through the provision of shaded seating areas within a south facing courtyard with vulnerable groups. 2) improved health and wellbeing of the residents through a sensory garden and the production of local pesticide-free produce. 3) attraction of wildlife and improved biodiversity with bird feeders, tables and boxes, solar powered water features, a hedgehog box, and a bug hotel. 4) water saving feature with the addition of an accessible greenhouse, which will also act as a store for summer furniture, with a water butt.
Leys Primary School Garden	St Nicholas	Sandra Barr	-	-	Approved	On hold	£ 1,390	-	School garden that will enable the running of gardening clubs for small groups of children. Wormery used for food waste and compost bins for leaf/garden waste. Funding for shed, wheelbarrows, compost bins, worms, compost caddies, water butt, wellies and plants/watering system.
Total							£ 6,250	£ 1,886	

Thank you!
Any questions?



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