

**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** Environment and Climate Change  
**Date** 08 of October 2025



## CLIMATE CHANGE – ANNUAL UPDATE OCTOBER 2025

### KEY DECISION

**Author** Alex Robinson  
**Lead Officers** Alex Robinson, Fabian Oyarzun, Veronica Chan  
**Contact Officer** Alex Robinson

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To report the annual summary of actions taken, and progress made, on the eight strategic themes set out in Stevenage's 2020 Climate Change Strategy.
- 1.2 The report also highlights action being taken by the Council at county level through the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) and the work being undertaken at neighbourhood and individual level to drive behavioural change across the town.
- 1.3 To note that while Stevenage continues to make progress towards the national net zero target, achieving this by 2030 will require ongoing legislative and financial support from central Government.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS – CABINET:

- 2.1 Welcomes the progress made in delivering the 2020 Stevenage Climate Change Strategy over the past year across the eight strategic areas. Of particular note is Stevenage's lowest historical GHG emissions in 2023,

delivering a 7.2% decrease from 2022 levels, and 22.6% lower than in the baseline year (2018) resulting in Stevenage's per capita emissions in 2023 being lower than county, regional, and national averages.

- 2.2 Endorses work to secure ongoing external funding, partnerships, and income-generating opportunities, particularly in terms of renewable energy generation, to support delivery of the 2030 net-zero target and build long-term resilience.
- 2.3 Delegates authority to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change to review and update the Strategy over the coming year as required, to ensure it continues to align with the Council's corporate priorities.

### 3 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Tackling climate change is a global issue. The hierarchy of impact and levels of responsibility for action used in this report is illustrated in the framework below.



Figure 1. The Council's Climate Action Approach: the 9 levels for Climate Change Strategy.

- 3.2 This report highlights the current global and UK position, with a primary focus on the actions taken over the previous year to deliver Stevenage's 2020 Climate Change Strategy<sup>1</sup> and action plan.
- 3.3 Climate action in Stevenage is cutting emissions while improving residents' lives by lowering energy bills, tackling fuel poverty, and making homes warmer and more comfortable. Cleaner air, healthier travel choices, enhanced green spaces, and greater resilience to extreme weather also contribute to better wellbeing and a more sustainable town.
- 3.4 In February 2024, the Council launched the Stevenage Action Plan Tracker<sup>2</sup> on the Kausal platform. This supports effective delivery of the Strategy and

<sup>1</sup> Available at: [Stevenage Climate Change Strategy](#)

<sup>2</sup> Available at: [Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

Action Plan by capturing detailed progress on the 50+ priority actions linked to the Strategy and its priorities. The following sections provide further detail on these actions.

- 3.5 Appendix 1 provides a detailed update on Stevenage's Climate Change Strategy and action plan delivery.

## 4 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

### Level 1 – Global Climate Action

- 4.1 The Paris Agreement, adopted at COP21 (2015) enshrines the established, legally binding obligations, alongside mechanisms for finance, technology transfer, capacity-building, transparency, and a system of progressively stronger Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) reviewed every five years. COP29 in Baku (2024), built on this including increasing climate finance from US\$100 billion to US\$300 billion pa by 2035 with an aspirational annual target up to US\$1.3 trillion via public and private sources.

### Level 2 – UK National Climate Action

- 4.2 In acknowledging the need to accelerate both mitigation and adaptation climate change responses worldwide, as part of COP29 in 2024 the UK reaffirmed its existing 68% reduction target on GHG emissions by 2030 and pledged to an ambitious target to increase this to 81% by 2035. Nationally, the continuing downward trend is positive. Provisional figures for 2024 estimate a 4% decrease from 2023, which is 54% lower than in 1990 as shown in the figure below

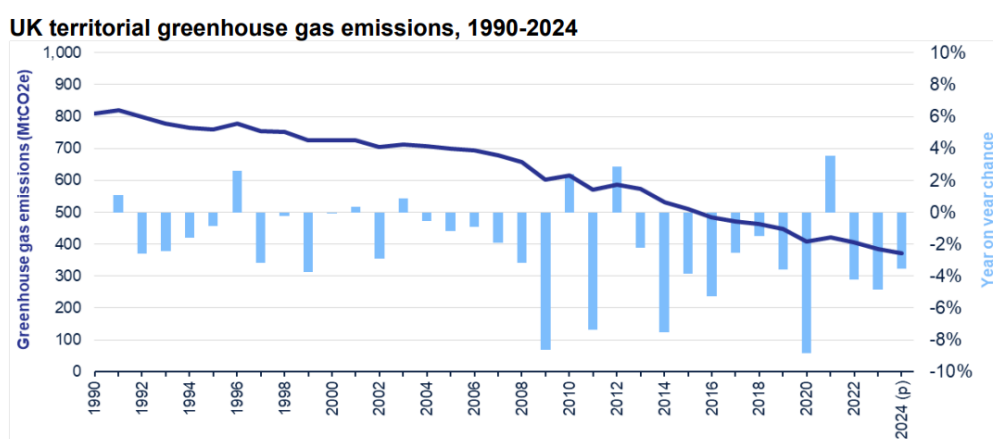


Figure 2. UK territorial GHG emissions, 1990-2024 (provisional figure for 2024).  
Source: DESNZ, National Statistics.

- 4.3 The long-term decrease is largely due to a shift from coal to gas and renewables, energy efficiency, and a decline in energy-intensive industries. In 2023, emissions fell mainly due to lower gas and coal use in electricity generation and industry.

- 4.4 Since 2024, the Government has strengthened its climate agenda, reinstating the 2030 petrol and diesel car ban, scaling up heat pumps, and raising building standards. Great British Energy has been established to decarbonise the power grid and new green obligations have been set within the national planning system. The £6.6 billion Warm Homes Plan will retrofit five million homes, while the Local Power Plan will deliver 8 GW of community-led renewables. Its new approach aims at providing more stable funding for Local Authorities' long-term climate action.
- 4.5 While noting progress the Climate Change Committee (CCC) has cautioned that the UK is not yet on track for its net-zero target. Further action to scale low-carbon electricity in transport, heating and industry plus a significant increase in heat pump adoption and industrial electrification is required.

### **Level 3 – Large Businesses**

- 4.6 Net zero targets now cover over 90% of global GDP, representing up to £1 trillion in UK market opportunities and 480,000 new jobs by 2030.
- 4.7 Stevenage hosts global leading companies in aerospace, biotech, technology and defence, such as GSK, Airbus, Fujitsu, MBDA, and the Bioscience Catalyst, driving innovation and advancing ambitious corporate net-zero targets. Details on the targets and progress by these firms are included in the **Appendix 1, “Level 3 – Large Businesses”**.
- 4.8 The Council continues to collaborate with these major employers to share best practice and accelerate local climate action.

### **Levels 4 & 5 – Regional and Countywide Climate Action**

- 4.9 Collective work at countywide and regional levels is crucial in bringing together resources for the greatest impact, effectiveness, and efficiency. Local Government Re-Organisation (LGR) offers opportunities to further strengthen cross-boundary collaboration and partnerships on climate, including potential devolved powers and funding to support net-zero targets, resilience, and green growth. Such initiatives could play a vital role in aligning local and regional priorities and emerging governance structures.
- 4.10 The Council continues to actively participate in the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), contributing to joint programmes on carbon mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity, retrofit, including Solar Together, “Your Tree Our Future” planting initiative, LEVI EV-charging rollout, the recently adopted Hertfordshire Local Retrofit Strategy, and a new carbon offsetting boilerplate. HCCSP is also working with the Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB) to deliver the Sustainable County Mission.
- 4.11 The East of England Regional Climate Change Forum (RCCF) has also been supporting the Council through regional collaboration opportunities, including work on sustainable procurement practices.

## Levels 6 – Stevenage Level

- 4.12 In 2023, Stevenage recorded its lowest historical GHG emissions (under the influence of LAs<sup>3</sup>) at 282.3 ktCO<sub>2e</sub>, a 7.2% decrease from 2022 levels, and 22.6% lower than in the baseline year (2018). GHG emissions have consistently decreased across all sectors since 2005, with the residential sector as the main emitting sector, followed by transport. Stevenage's per capita emissions in 2023 were lower than county, regional, and national averages. The territorial GHG emissions trajectory for Stevenage is shown below.

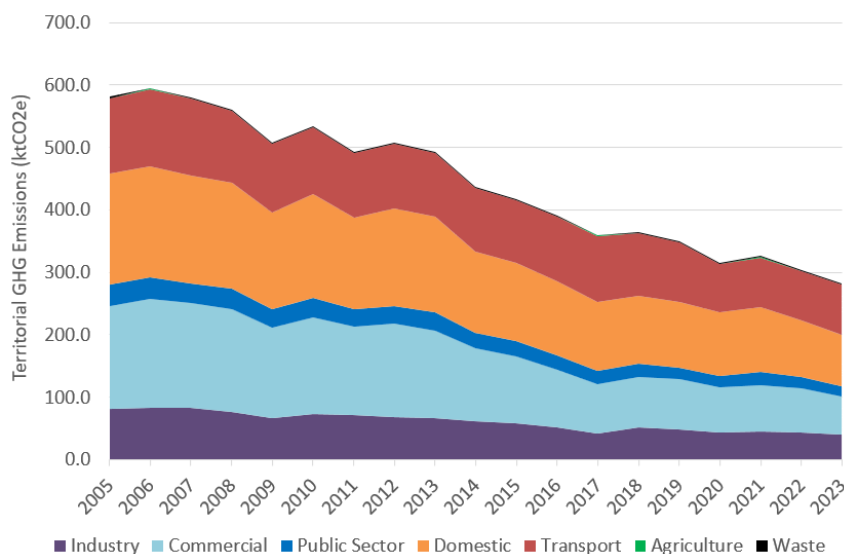


Figure 3. Stevenage territorial GHG emissions within the scope of influence of LAs, estimates 2005-2023 (ktCO<sub>2e</sub>). Source: Based on DESNZ data.

- 4.13 The Council's own GHG emissions have fallen by c.61% from 2018 levels, following the switch to a zero-carbon electricity tariff and the transition of fleet fuel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). These figures are now being reviewed to ensure greater accuracy, with a proposed shift of the baseline year to 2021–22 and the development of a comprehensive GHG accounting strategy. A dedicated officer is leading this work to produce consistent, transparent, and verified accounts across GHG emissions.
- 4.14 The Council's new online tracker referenced above showcases over 50 actions across eight strategic themes, with headlines set out below:
- 4.15 **Businesses:** The Council supports local businesses, particularly micro businesses and SMEs on actions towards net-zero and since 2022 has funded 200 Gold Memberships for Wenta's Action Zero Programme<sup>4</sup>, providing tailored carbon reduction, action plans, monitoring and reporting for 147+ SMEs. In addition, the UKSPF-funded Sustainable Business Programme<sup>5</sup> has provided workshops, 1:1 consultancy for Carbon Reduction

<sup>3</sup> 5.3 Emissions within LA's scope of influence represent a subset of emissions over which councils have realistic control or influence, excluding sectors such as national-level industry and regional infrastructure. This subset provides a clearer picture of emissions the Council the Council can meaningfully impact

<sup>4</sup> Further information at: [Action: BU1 | Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

<sup>5</sup> Further information at: [Action: BU2 | Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

Plans (CRPs), guidance, and Meet-the-Buyer events to help businesses cut costs, adopt low-carbon technologies, and improve competitiveness. In 2024, the Council launched the Stevenage Green Business Grant, offering £70,000 to support SMEs and charities in reducing energy use, water consumption, waste, and emissions, with eight organisations funded. Alongside these initiatives, the Council is embedding sustainability in procurement<sup>6</sup> through its updated Social Value TOMs framework and the new Council's Co-operative Procurement Strategy (2025-2028).

- 4.16 **Homes:** The Council is committed to achieving at least EPC Band C on all 8,000 Council homes by 2030<sup>7</sup>. Through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.1, 240 of the least efficient homes are being retrofitted with a fabric-first approach, including insulation, new windows and doors, ventilation, solar panels, and energy-efficient lighting. In 2025, the Council secured £3.9m from Warm Homes Social Housing (WHS) to upgrade 379 homes by 2029. Other schemes, including the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) and Energy Company Obligation (ECO4), have extended support to private households<sup>8</sup>. The Council also secured £1.5m through the Warm Homes: Local Grant (WHLG) to retrofit 100 low-income private homes. Alongside retrofit works, the Council is also delivering new sustainable housing developments<sup>9</sup>, while the partial review of the Local Plan is strengthening policies for sustainable, low- and zero-carbon homes, energy efficiency, and climate resilience.
- 4.17 **Construction and Regeneration:** This sector is key to meeting climate goals and the Council's regeneration plans are rooted in delivering sustainable, climate-resilient buildings and spaces. The new all-electric Sports and Leisure Centre, due for completion in late 2027, will replace two of the Council's most energy-intensive facilities with an efficient, low-carbon building powered by solar panels, heat pumps, and smart energy systems. Other projects include the new low-carbon Public Services Hub and the relocation of the Indoor Market to an all-electric site at Boston House. The Local Plan is an important tool for the Council to lead climate action. When adopted, the updated Plan will boost existing climate policies and add new ones on energy efficiency, emissions targets, offsetting, overheating and cooling, water management, and green infrastructure.
- 4.18 **Waste and Recycling:** This sector has a major impact on climate change. The Council continues to work through the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (HWP) on campaigns and long-term strategies for waste reduction and recycling, including Recycle Your Cycle and the Herts Sustainable Families initiatives<sup>10</sup>. Since mid-2024, new waste treatment contracts have supported the 2030 zero-landfill target via mandatory use of EfW facilities, and the Council has also upgraded neighbourhood recycling banks. A key constraint on improving Stevenage's currently relatively low recycling rate of 38.1% is being proactively addressed via new solutions to introduce recycling facilities

<sup>6</sup> Further information at: [Action: BU3 | Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

<sup>7</sup> Further information at: [Action: HO1 | Decarbonisation of SBC Social Housing](#)

<sup>8</sup> Further information at: [Action: HO5 | Decarbonisation of existing private domestic housing](#)

<sup>9</sup> Further information at: [Action: HO3 | Development of new sustainable Social Housing](#)

<sup>10</sup> Further information at: [Action: WR3 | Promote the reusing, repairing and avoidance of waste](#)



at 74 new difficult to access flat blocks (funded by £719k from EPR funding) and preparing the Council for the 2026 mandate requiring separate weekly residential food waste collection.

- 4.19 **People:** Stevenage can only achieve net-zero if everyone plays their part. In terms of organisational change, a Staff Climate Champions Group has been established to drive engagement, awareness, and behavioural change on themes such as commuting and recycling<sup>11</sup>. In 2024/25, regular knowledge-sharing sessions and new sub-groups were launched, focusing on sustainable events<sup>12</sup> and greener workplaces. Staff engagement has also been strengthened through Carbon Literacy Training. In parallel, the Council updated its Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA), which now identifies 46 risks across five sectors and two climate scenarios, embedding adaptation and resilience into service planning<sup>13</sup>. Looking ahead, a 5-year Climate Adaptation Plan is being developed to prepare the Council for future climate impacts.
- 4.20 **Biodiversity:** Biodiversity loss is a key issue, and the Council is committed to protecting and enhancing natural spaces, including a commitment to planting over 4,000 trees by 2030<sup>14</sup>, currently being supported by annual plantation of around 100 individual mature trees, the “Your Tree, Our Future” scheme, and the new highly successful Miyawaki micro-woods. A 2024 i-Tree Canopy assessment found Stevenage’s overall canopy cover to be healthy at 22%, though uneven across wards. The Council is also reviewing its tree replacement policies for new developments<sup>15</sup> and has recently adopted a Trees & Woodland Strategy<sup>16</sup>, a Green Spaces Strategy<sup>17</sup>, a Biodiversity Action Plan<sup>18</sup>, long-term management frameworks supporting biodiversity enhancement. The Council is looking at innovative ways of speeding up the delivery of projects included in these strategies. This could include utilising currently unallocated monies collected from developers. Furthermore, the Council is also delivering and monitoring Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)<sup>19</sup> works. Many of these initiatives are supported by the valuable contributions of Green Space Volunteers.
- 4.21 **Transport:** Transport is one of Stevenage’s largest sources of GHG emissions, and the Council aims to decarbonise its fleet by 2030. In October 2024, the entire diesel fleet switched to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), cutting net emissions by 84%<sup>20</sup>, while new electric vans are being procured as part of the fleet replacement schedule. Active travel is also being promoted through the Cycle Hire Scheme with Beryl Bikes, launched in 2024, comprising 45 bays and 150 e-bikes, alongside dedicated staff

---

<sup>11</sup> Further information at: [Action: PA9 | Establish an internal Staff Climate Champions Group](#)

<sup>12</sup> Further information at: [Action: PA5 | Promote event sustainability across the town](#)

<sup>13</sup> Further information at: [Action: PA3 | Develop a Council's Climate Change Risk Assessment and Action Plan](#)

<sup>14</sup> Further information at: [Action: BI3 | Plant 4,000 trees in Stevenage by 2030](#)

<sup>15</sup> Further information at: [Action: BI2 | Implement and update tree replacement policies and strategies](#)

<sup>16</sup> Further information at: [Action: BI10 | Develop and implement a Tree & Woodland Strategy](#)

<sup>17</sup> Further information at: [Action: BI9 | Develop and implement a Green Spaces Strategy](#)

<sup>18</sup> Further information at: [Action: BI4 | Update, deliver, and monitor the Biodiversity Action Plan \(BAP\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> Further information at: [Action: BI8 | Implement and monitor Biodiversity Net Gain \(BNG\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> Further information at: [Action: TR1 | Decarbonising the Council's fleet and fuel](#)

incentives/benefits<sup>21</sup>. A new induction pack to encourage sustainable commuting<sup>22</sup> and business travel<sup>23</sup> is being prepared. Infrastructure upgrades include new cycle hangars and additional EV charging points funded through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) scheme<sup>24</sup>. The Council has also introduced a new taxi licensing policy with reduced fees for low-emission vehicles<sup>25</sup>, supporting the wider transition to cleaner transport.

- 4.22 **Energy and Water:** This sector produces over two-thirds of global emissions, and while the UK aims to decarbonise its power system by 2035, natural gas for heating remains Stevenage's biggest challenge. Since 2022, the Council has procured all corporate electricity under a zero-carbon tariff<sup>26</sup> and continues to monitor usage across 27 sites through Grid Edge digital meters. Energy upgrades have been delivered across leisure facilities under the Everyone Active contract, the pool cover at the Swimming Centre, LED replacements at the Town Centre Clocktower, and lighting upgrades at St George's and Westgate MSCPs, plus Daneshill House<sup>27</sup>. However, cutting gas use will require significant investment, and the withdrawal of PSDS and LCSF funding in 2025/26 risks slowing progress unless new mechanisms are secured. Water is also critical in one of the UK's driest regions: the Council has appointed Telex Water to improve monitoring, leakage detection, and data quality, while the Local Plan review reinforces water efficiency and management policies.

## Level 7-9 – Local Engagement

- 4.23 Local community engagement remained a key focus in 2024/25. Initiatives included an updated Climate Change Communications and Marketing Plan, a dedicated Climate Action Plan tracker portal for resident feedback and educational stalls/giveaways at local events. The Council also provided additional educational online resources, such as an Environmental Days Calendar and a Sustainability Newsletter for Schools and Colleges<sup>28</sup>.
- 4.24 Neighbourhood and street-level work continued via the Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF)<sup>29</sup>, now in its third year, with nine new projects awarded £37,654 across the town in 2024/25, including a community garden, recycling improvements, and energy-efficiency upgrades at local facilities. Three earlier projects were also completed, including orchard and tree planting and garden improvements. The fund, worth £7,500pa per ward, continues to empower schools, charities, residents, and community groups to deliver local green projects that enhance biodiversity, cut waste, and support

---

<sup>21</sup> Further information at: [Action: TR3 | Implement a borough-wide cycle hire scheme](#)

<sup>22</sup> Further information at: [Action: TR2 | Incentives for Council's staff sustainable commuting](#)

<sup>23</sup> Further information at: [Action: TR12 | Decarbonise SBC's business travel & grey fleet](#)

<sup>24</sup> Further information at: [Action: TR5 | Deployment of public Electric Charging Infrastructure across Stevenage](#)

<sup>25</sup> Further information at: [Action: TR6 | Create and implement a low and zero emissions taxi strategy](#)

<sup>26</sup> Further information at: [Action: EW5 | Zero carbon tariff for SBC electricity corporate contract](#)

<sup>27</sup> Further information at: [Action: EW4 | Decarbonise energy supply at Council's sites and buildings](#)

<sup>28</sup> Further information at: [Action: PA1 | Implement Climate Emergency education for residents & visitors](#)

<sup>29</sup> Further information at: [Action: PA4 | Develop and implement a Climate Change Community Fund \(CCCF\)](#)



climate resilience, highlighting the value of local action and partnerships in building a more sustainable Stevenage.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The Council has secured external funding from UK Government sources, Section 106 agreements, CIL, and UKSPF to support pilots, home retrofits, transport upgrades, and energy projects. Local CIL may also fund climate measures like tree planting and lighting improvements.
- 5.2 Significant Government funding has been secured for retrofitting social housing: £2.62m from SHDF Wave 2.1, with £3.97m match from the HRA, and £3.85m from WHSH (Wave 3), with £3.15m Council co-funding - supporting energy upgrades to over 600 homes.
- 5.3 To support fleet decarbonisation, the Council is funding the use of HVO across its fleet, at an extra annual cost of c.£132,000. It has also incorporated six EVs, acquired at an estimated total cost of around £144,700.
- 5.4 The Council is also covering the premium for EDF's Zero Carbon Tariff for Businesses, ensuring carbon-free electricity across its estate, at an estimated cost of c.£18,000 pa, based on the current premium of £3/MWh.
- 5.5 Beyond UKSPF programmes, the Council has supported SME climate action, funding 200 Wenta Gold Memberships (c. £20,000) and launching the Stevenage Green Business Grant (£70,000).
- 5.6 Recycling improvements include eight upgraded bring-bank sites using UKSPF and CCCF grants (c. £25,900). Phase 1 of the flat-block recycling pilot covered six sites, at a cost of c. £12,800. Phase 2, funded by £719,000 from EPR, expanded facilities to 74 blocks. Simpler Recycling rollout is backed by £199,000 for weekly food waste collections, plus £52,000 for project management.
- 5.7 The Council has secured c. £200,000 in BNG contributions from planning applications, with a further c. £2.45m expected from west of Stevenage development. These funds are being used to deliver and monitor biodiversity enhancement projects.
- 5.8 The Council allocates £97,500 per year through the Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF), supporting ward-level sustainability projects led by community organisations.
- 5.9 However, the end of PSDS and LCSF from 2025/26 presents a major financial risk for its estate decarbonisation strategy. Without new funding, decarbonising gas use will require investment beyond current budgets. Alternative sources must be explored, including new Government schemes, countywide strategies, and public-private partnerships.
- 5.10 Climate action offers income opportunities, such as leasing assets for solar PV, hosting community energy schemes, and joint ventures via the Local Power Plan. These could generate revenue through PPAs, reduce energy

costs, and improve resilience, helping offset reduced income from traditional sources and support the transition to net zero. Additional options include EV charging, energy-as-a-service, and BNG contributions.

- 5.11 Achieving net zero by 2030 will require strong business cases. If Government support falls short, existing projects may need reprioritisation to manage financial pressures.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.12 There are no direct legal implications associated with updating or delivering the Climate Change Strategy, however it is likely the UK Government will begin introducing stricter targets with legal implications for those Councils that are not meeting GHG reductions.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.13 The biggest risk is failing to secure enough external funding and support, especially with schemes like PSDS and LCSF ending—widening the financial gap and straining Council resources.
- 5.14 Delivery is challenged by internal capacity limits, supply chain issues, and reliance on external partners—potentially delaying progress and raising costs.
- 5.15 Missing the 2030 net-zero target could damage the Council's reputation amid growing public scrutiny and national benchmarking. National policy shifts or delays may disrupt local plans, while stricter regulations could increase compliance burdens and expenses.

### **Policy Implications**

- 5.16 The annual update on Climate Change supports the Council's own Climate Change Strategy and wider corporate ambitions for a low carbon future across the town.
- 5.17 The actions outlined are consistent with wider corporate priorities, including the Medium-Term Financial Plan, Housing and Regeneration strategies, the Local Plan (currently under partial review), and the Co-operative Procurement Strategy.
- 5.18 At the county level, the report aligns with the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) priorities and the Hertfordshire Local Retrofit Strategy, ensuring local delivery contributes to regional objectives.
- 5.19 Nationally, the report supports Government strategies such as the Warm Homes Plan, the Local Power Plan, and the UK's commitment to carbon budgets under the Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended).

### **Climate Change Implications**

- 5.20 This report highlights the risks, challenges, and opportunities that the Council must address, not only GHG emissions but its wider climate action aspirations. Actions outlined contribute directly to reducing GHG emissions across housing, transport, procurement, energy, and biodiversity.

- 5.21 The proposals also support climate adaptation and resilience. Workstreams such as the Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA), biodiversity enhancement, and sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) strengthen the town's ability to cope with flooding, heatwaves, and other extreme weather impacts.
- 5.22 Failure to progress climate action would increase local vulnerability to climate risks, undermine national and countywide net-zero objectives, and expose the Council to higher long-term costs.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.23 Climate change affects those in most need both in the UK and around the world. Those in deprivation, hunger or unwell are both most affected by climate change and least able to address it. Therefore, the Council is duty bound as one of those in the world that are more able to act, to act now.