

**INVESTORS
IN THE
ENVIRONMENT**



Gateshead Council

Silver Level Audit Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gateshead Council has adopted the Investors in the Environment accreditation to guide its Climate Emergency plans and actions and is now in its second year. The last 18 months have been a challenging time for public sector organisations and the council is to be commended for progressing with aspects of its action plan.

The Investors in the Environment (iE) accreditation requires organisations to work towards high-level criteria and targets, followed by an official audit/ review process. The objective is to identify how an organisation is performing against agreed targets and environmental performance. iE is pleased to award Gateshead Council Silver Level accreditation with a score of 75%. This recognises the council's efforts to continue to work on climate action despite resources and priorities being largely focused on responding to the challenges created by the Covid 19 pandemic.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE PAST YEAR WERE:

- Full Council approval of an impactful Environmental Policy that will drive behaviour to reduce environmental impact across all services.
- Implementing carbon reduction actions that have reduced emissions by 19% against previous year based on report usage and emissions conversion.
- Refining the Action Plan and making progress with implementation across several areas – including Waste Strategy, EV transition plan and Ways of Working.
- Introduction of the Sustainability Impact Assessment (Environment and Climate Change) for cabinet report to inform Council decision making.
- Appointment of a Climate Change Communications Officer to share plans and progress with staff, stakeholders, and the local communities.
- Extension to the use of district heating schemes and further investment in renewable energy.
- Securing funding to support Gateshead's SMEs to reduce their environmental impacts.

KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENTS ARE

- Resource data management
- Reporting carbon footprint to international best practice of the Green House Gas Protocol
 - Create a clear carbon footprint calculation methodology with a clear route to net zero
 - Develop a document that describes and analyses resource use and carbon emissions performance for each year
- Increase staff climate and sustainability knowledge and council expectations of how they can contribute to net zero through service and job actions through regular training and workshops.
- Better understanding of the carbon emissions of the economic development/ regeneration spend the council is committed to, the implications on carbon budgets/accounting and demonstrate a preference for low carbon projects.
- Communications internal and external to the Council
- Ensure the Environmental Policy and Net Zero commitments are embedded in other Council policies including the Local Plan
- Continue to secure resources to deliver net zero commitments and relevant aspects of the Environment Bill such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Net Gain, biodiversity targets, resource reduction, air and water quality, metrics, and monitoring.

INVESTORS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

The Investors in the Environment annual audit consist of an assessment of five key areas of an organisation's Environmental Management System (EMS). These areas include:

- Environmental Policies
- Resource management and reporting
- Progress against targets
- Carbon footprint
- Action Planning including social / environmental projects
- Reporting and Communication

The scope of this audit included a review of Gateshead Council's (GC) operations and identification of good practice, opportunities for improvement and identification of risk to GC's environmental practices.

The review included examination of evidence (key documentation and policies) and a series of interviews with service leads to understand current practice and identify where changes and improvements have been made.



REVIEW FINDINGS

Below is a summary of performance, highlighting areas of strength and improvement. Each section of this has been assessed according to the framework below (please refer to the full self-audit sheet template for scoring detail).

Fail	0 Points: A failing score means that this criterion has not been met nor is any progress demonstrated.
Action Needed	1 point: Action is needed to improve and should be considered in alignment with the auditor's comments and an appropriate timeline. These will be discussed during quarterly support calls to help improve.
Pass / Compliant	2 points: The criteria have been met, though there may also be suggestions to improve.
Outstanding	3 points: This criterion has been exceeded as measured against the basic iIE criteria and may demonstrate a significant improvement since the previous year or may highlight best practice.

Gateshead Council (GC) Civic Centre was selected as the primary site for the first review since it is the largest site and where the Climate Emergency and most other policy leads are based. For Green Level accreditation the civic centre and at least one other site will be reviewed/ audited.

Note: Due to Covid19 sites are classed as reviewed rather than audited with a note made for a physical site visit to ensure actions are as confirmed by staff. A series of questions and paperwork trail has provided adequate evidence of actions for the purpose of this review.

SECTION 1: POLICY MANAGEMENT

The new policy is comprehensive, covers all key resources and environmental impacts. The updated policy will ensure a consistent approach to managing environmental impacts across the organisation and enable the behaviour change required. Adopted at Full Council and with senior level ownership of the policy is commended.

Having the policy available on the intranet for staff and on the internet for stakeholders and the community is positive as it gives a clear indication of the environmental impact priorities of the council. The online version does not contain a signature, responsible officer, and review date, please correct this within the next 4 weeks.

During interviews there was evidence of service referring to the policy to guide the kind of actions they should consider while adopting more sustainable practices. The policy will also support GC in delivering Defra's 25 Year Environmental Plan and the council's obligations in the Environment Bill going forward.

It is encouraging that the current policy makes some reference to legislation. To achieve the full criteria for green level a list of legal compliance, regulations and environmental codes of practice should be maintained within the policy and reviewed annually.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Note all other strategies and policies relevant to this policy.
2. Create a list of legal compliance, regulations, and environmental code of practice document to support the policy.
3. Review once the Environment Bill is given royal assent to make an Act of Parliament to ensure it captures the environmental impacts needed.

SECTION 2: RESOURCE USE MANAGEMENT

This is GC's 14th year of data collection for scope 1 and 2 emissions. As in previous years most of this is energy data and is automatically uploaded to SystemsLink (energy management software) for aggregation and data monitoring purposes. The energy team demonstrated strong data knowledge during the carbon and environmental sustainability review processes evidenced by confident, clear, and evidenced responses to most questions.

To support a formalised resource data collection, analysis, and carbon footprint preparation the Climate Change team are investing in a new carbon monitoring tool. The new system will allow for regular analysis and reporting of emissions.

RECORDING

Baseline year is 2007/8. Key resources have been identified as below and are used for carbon calculations.

- Gas
- Electricity
- Electricity streetlighting
- Transport fuels – Diesel, petrol, and gas oil
- Gas oil
- Business travel

For Green Level it is essential that all significant resources are recorded and for 2022 should include water, waste (recycled, electronic, energy from waste) and paper for example. A brief significant resources review would be a useful exercise to verify resources selected and consider any omissions.

Summary data is still held in an excel spreadsheet this is acceptable, however not ideal. The methodology is not easy to understand and there is room for error. As noted in last year's report, the ideal is for the spreadsheet to be easily understandable to external eyes with medium knowledge. The adoption of a new monitoring tool will address this issue, and the lack of use of intensity metrics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Significant resources review.
2. Enhanced recording of significant resources use.

MONITORING

Consistent and frequent monitoring is an important part of good resource data management with the ideal being at least a monthly data report period for key resources. An increased analytical use of SystemsLink will help with regular monitoring so that energy use and progress against targets can be tracked.

It is essential that detailed analysis of key resources (especially those that feed into scope 1 and 2 emissions) is performed. This includes year on year comparisons and change in resource use explanations and a summary of overall performance against targets.

As recommend last year an asset review of the estate to detect the gap between building design and operational performance would be useful. This would then help with identifying the actions and funding to implement efficiency measure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure monthly monitoring and analysis of resources is undertaken.
2. Undertake an assets review to assess design versus actual building performance.

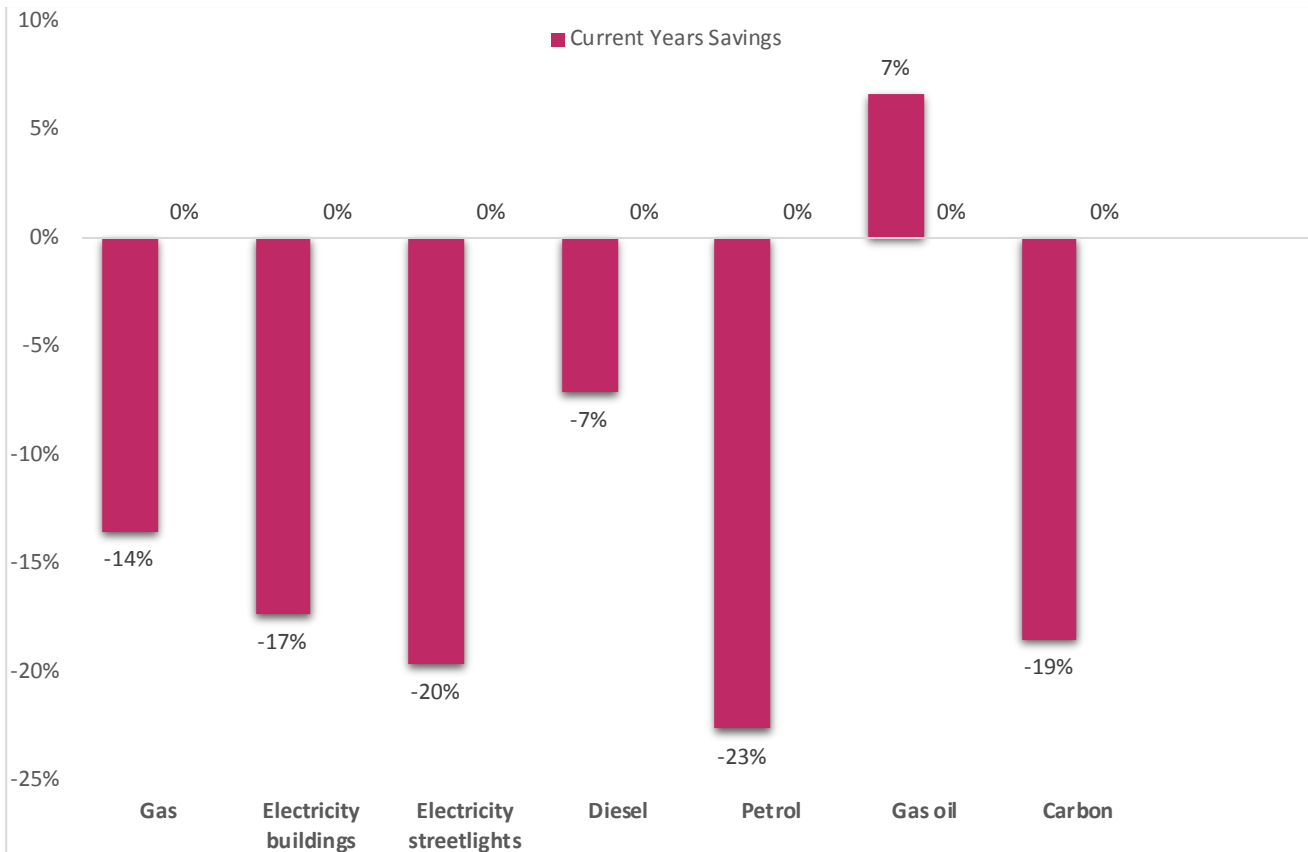
CURRENT YEARS PERFORMANCE

Complete year data for 2019-20 and 2020/21 was available at the time of review and was input into the audit measurement spreadsheet.

Graph 1 below shows the savings made against the previous year 2019/20. This demonstrates strong performance of reduction across all identified key resources apart from Gas Oil where a 7% increase was seen. GC should be congratulated for year-on-year reductions since 2007/8 and for continuing the carbon reduction work of the Energy Service Team over this time.

There have been significant reductions in gas, electricity, and road fuel use over this period (2020/21, 15%, 37% and 30% respectively) resulting in an overall carbon reduction of 19%. This could be attributed to the Covid 19 pandemic, and the change in service delivery and working practices. Maintaining the continuous reductions achieved to date will make important contributions to the council's efforts to achieve net zero.

As discussed above future performance should include a wider range of resources with targets allocated to achieve best practice and EMS requirements.



*Gas oil is a fuel that is cheaper than normal road diesel due to it being a rebated fuel used for heating, vehicles, machinery in the construction and agricultural sector. Gas oil should never be used in any vehicles on public roads

Graph 1: Percentage saving of identified key resources for 2020/21 versus the previous year

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

GC has made excellent performance overall against the baseline year 2007/8. Reductions of 67% and 76% respectively for electricity streetlighting and petrol are notable. The huge reduction in petrol use can again be attributed to the Covid 19 pandemic and the reduction in staff mileage, working from home practices and online meetings. The significant savings in gas and electric in buildings is not all attributable to Covid 19 as many public buildings such as schools and other council buildings remained open to support children of key workers. Swimming pools although closed to the public had to be heated to maintain water temperatures and hygiene. The reductions in gas and electricity use year on year demonstrate well-planned and implemented energy efficiency projects.

This includes an array of energy efficient measures implemented across the council estate. Measures include:

- A Solar PV programme – 35 PV, systems totalling 2MW, installations on various buildings / schools
- District Heating connections – 3 buildings, and 2 communal housing sites connected to the DH network
- A streetlight programme – full LED replacement, and dimming investments over past 10 years

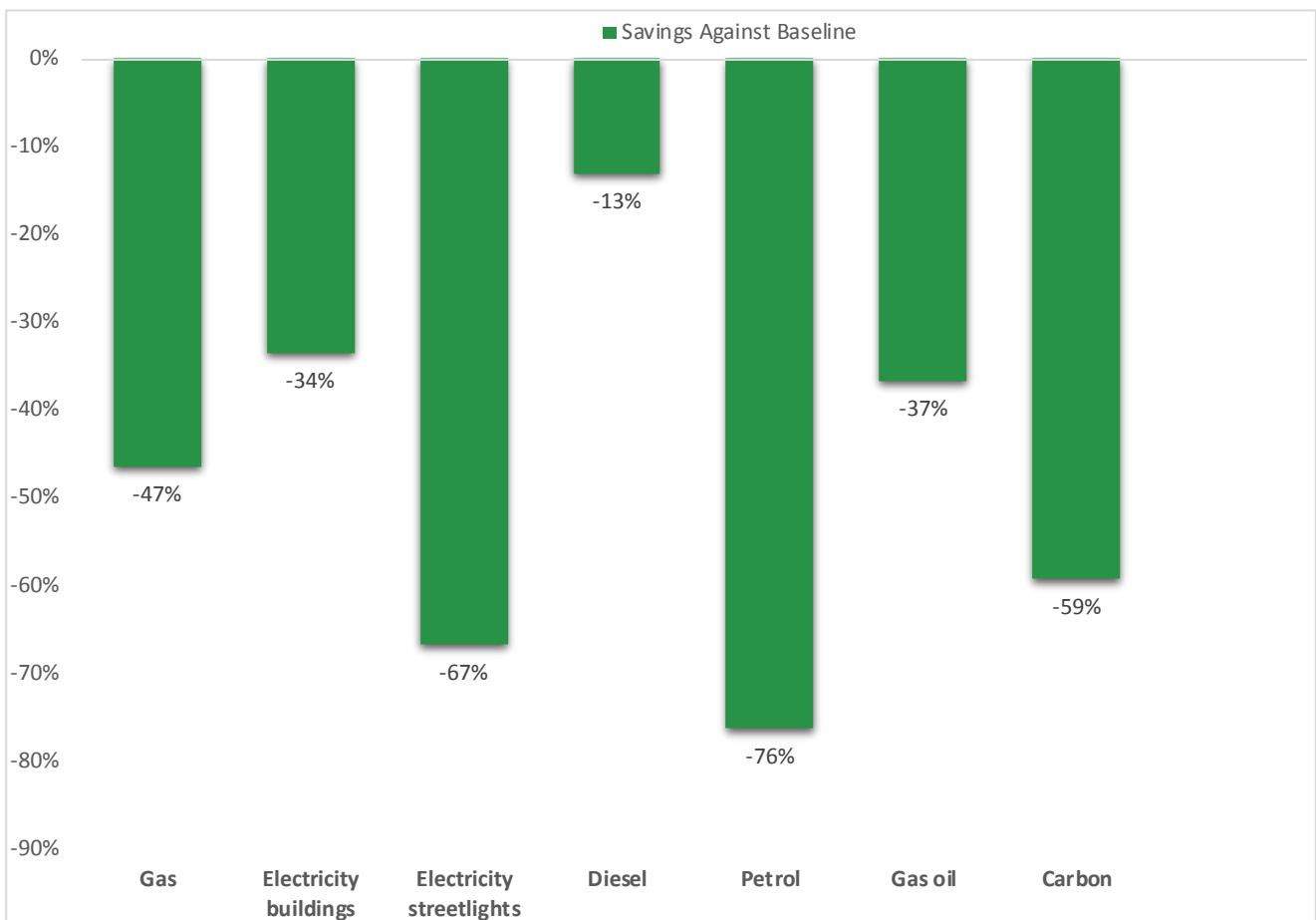
It is important to highlight that future reductions at the scope and speed required to achieve net zero will certainly be more challenging for several reasons including, council decision making priorities, projects selected, funding, legislation, and technology.

GC is making great strides in continuing this momentum with projects such as:

- Additional residential properties being brought into the Town Centre District Heating Scheme at East Street Flats.
- The Freight Depot housing development and housing schemes in Chopwell will soon commence.

- A second energy centre is under construction to manage the Mine water Scheme at Shearlegs Road, which will facilitate a heat network extension to Shearlegs Road Depot, Park Road Depot and Gateshead International Stadium.
- A solar farm construction that will support the private wire network and reduce reliance on natural gas.
- Further solar installation at Gateshead Civic Centre.

Future performance will be influenced by decisions made now on building standards and capital projects already committed to. Those decisions already made, have fixed/ locked in additional carbon into future emissions. These additional carbon emissions and any future project development should be modelled and quantified to ensure decisions made now and in the future limit emissions to keep the council and borough within its carbon budget and to ensure success moving forward.



Graph 2: Percentage saving of identified key resources for 2020/21 versus baseline year 2007/08

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement the recommendations from the 2020 Carbon Review
 - a. Review resources managed and create a Resource Management Document
 - b. Refine data recording and analysis process
2. Set annual targets for each key resource used
3. Update progress made from 2014/15 to 2020 in a summary document with case studies to assist with monitoring journey/project direction
4. Communicate progress to date and performance against targets on a regular basis (not less than quarterly) to internal and external stakeholders via website and social media

SECTION 3: TARGETS

A Climate Emergency was declared by GC in May 2019, committing to the Council's activities and future targets of being carbon neutral by 2030 and achieving 100% clean energy across the Council's full range of functions by 2030. Prior to this GC had committed to various declarations as part of its climate change aspirations and to initiate change such as the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and EU Covenant of Mayors.

GC's targets must now align to the council achieving Net Zero by 2030. To support this SMART targets are to be set to ensure reduction in all key resource use and overall improvement of environmental efficiency.

The need to collect and monitor resource data as suggested is because organisations and people use resources not carbon. Carbon is a by-product of resource use therefore targeting resource use reduction is a meaningful way of communicating to staff how carbon can be reduced.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Set SMART targets for all monitored resources including clear targets to achieve net zero emissions
2. Report quarterly against progress

SECTION 4: ACTION PLAN

Much time and effort has been put into developing an organisation wide Action Plan. The action plan covers all key resources and focuses on policy, process and behaviour change opportunities to embed environmental sustainability into strategy and operations.

Each service area has its own set of actions, noting a responsible person, timelines, and progress update. There is evidence of action refinement and of some good progress being made with a number of services such as Communications, Ways of Working, Bereavement Services and Economic Development. The complete delivery of this Action Plan would see the carbon hierarchy being implemented and result in a significant reduction in environmental impact and is something GC should remain committed to.

Areas of note include:

- The introduction of the Sustainability Impact Assessment (Environment and Climate Change) for Cabinet reports to help inform decision making.
- Introduction of environmentally friendly caskets by Bereavement Services.
- Development of the Municipal Waste Strategy for domestic waste.
- Economic development allocating funding to support Gateshead's SMEs to reduce their environmental impacts and demonstrate their credentials in tendering.

Understandably, some services have focussed their attention on the Covid 19 pandemic, and haven't progressed as much as hoped, such as finance, many actions have not been implemented fully and will need to be reviewed during 2021/22. It is encouraging to see the detailed response to the question on pension divestment, covering fund exposure to companies with carbon reserves and high emissions. The actions in Pension Committees Service Plan 2021/22 demonstrate a real commitment to understand the carbon emissions of pension investments, and to explore a net zero pension fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Maintain this organisation wide approach
2. Introduce RAG rating for actions
3. Ensure every service makes progress on actions for next audit

WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A refreshed Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) was launched in 2021. There is no statutory requirement for GC to produce one but have stated their commitment to its publication and regular monitoring and review as best practice. The JMWMS covers GC's aims for 2021-25 and includes an

Environmental Benefits theme. The report acknowledges the ongoing delay in publication of the Government's 'Our Waste, Our Resources: Strategy for England' means some of the future requirements for councils remains unclear.

The waste team are going to work with their contractors on all waste streams to see what carbon information can be provided.

The waste team are working with the economic development team to engage SMEs on waste minimization and ensure that they know their legal Duty of Care. Recently they have increased the council waste offer to SMEs for waste disposal.

Facilities Management have specific responsibility for council operational waste management. There is a waste segregation system in place to collect recycled and general waste separately. Paper is recycled or shredded if confidential and this is evidenced by on site posters and labelled waste collection.

Priority should be given to the management of internal council waste to understand quantity and composition (Paper, cardboard, electrical etc). Working with a local waste management professional to undertake an audit and develop processes is recommended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Actions 1 and 2 are likely to be dependent on a greater percentage of staff returning to work.

1. Undertake a series of site waste audits to understand more about the type and volume of internal council operational waste
2. Monitor and set targets for operational waste
3. Develop and implement a Councils Operations Waste Management Plan
4. Aim to provide carbon information obtained from domestic waste and recycling operators

TRAVEL AND FLEET PLAN

The existing Travel Plan is to be updated this year and will be informed by a staff survey and the councils policy on Ways of Working, to include greater remote/home working.

Good progress has been made on drafting the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan and the funding of EV buses to decarbonise public transport this is in addition to existing incentives:

- Schemes to buy reduced rate travel passes
- Cycle to work schemes
- Electric bikes
- Pool cars
- sustainable planning advice for fleet vehicles

The collaborative work to create 20-minute neighbourhoods to support climate objectives is encouraging and would very much support sustainable communities.

Climate change considerations are now part of asset management considerations and is also a part of Government's Road Maintenance Funding criteria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enforce travel hierarchy across decision making and services
2. Undertake a new travel survey that includes climate emergency and sustainability questions
3. Develop new Travel Plan in advance of the next audit in 2022.
4. Extend incentives to encourage the uptake of sustainable travel modes
5. Increase electric bikes and EV pool cars
6. Create and secure funding for an alternative fuel transition plan
7. Implement a lifecycle approach to vehicle selection

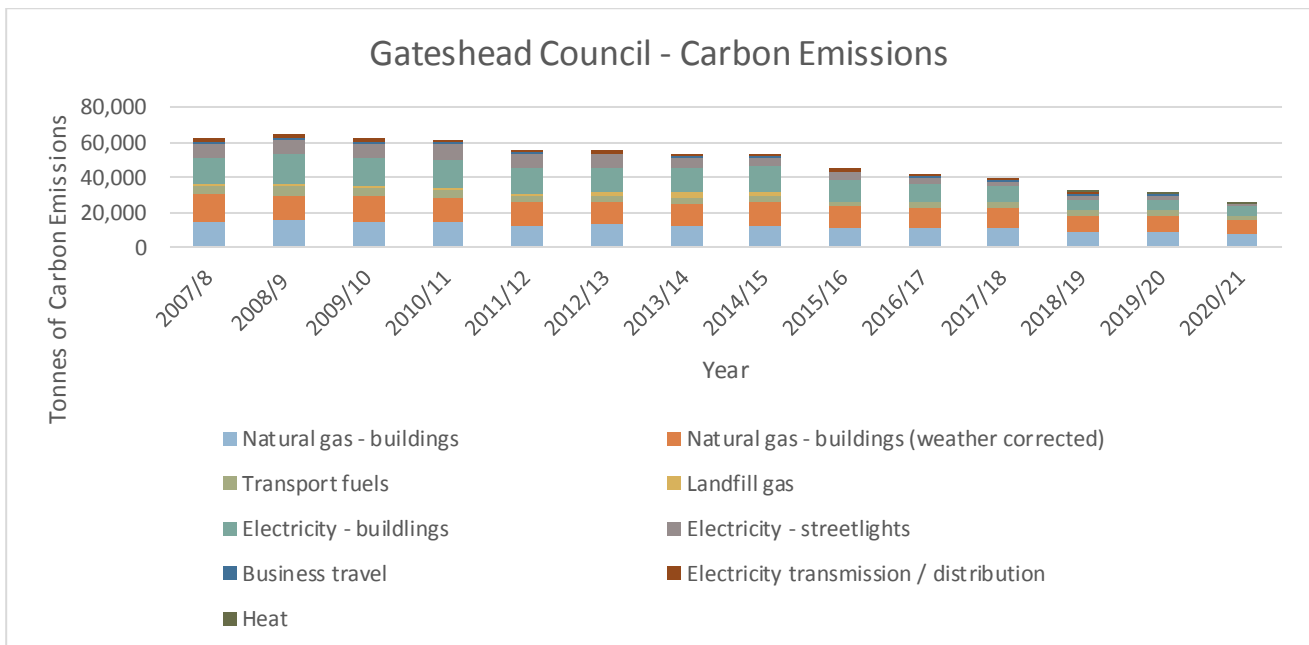
CARBON FOOTPRINT

Calculating a carbon footprint is a vital step in your Investors in the Environment accreditation and an important measure of your council’s environmental performance.

5 steps should be undertaken when reporting a carbon footprint:

1. Define your reporting boundary
2. Determine your period of data collection
3. Explore your key environmental impacts
4. Measure Fluorinated greenhouse gases
5. Report – include scope 1 and 2 emissions and scope 3 to report to GHG Protocol

Currently step 4 and 5 are not undertaken although this could be rectified through the adoption of a new carbon calculation tool.



Graph 3: Gateshead Council’s yearly carbon emission (tonnes) reductions

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are largely similar to last year. To achieve Green Level the recommendations below must be implemented.

1. Implement reporting to the Green House Gas Protocol via a Carbon reporting tool.
2. Create a detailed Carbon Footprint methodology that is accessible and notes the source of conversion factors
3. Develop a narrative confirming GCs boundary, scopes, and associated resources.
4. Report on Fluorinated gases.
5. Report kWhs from self-generated renewables in the narrative (as tCO₂e avoided).
6. Create a reporting methodology detailing how, the frequency and to who.
7. Publish an engaging and easy to understand carbon emissions update for all stakeholders.
8. Undertake a home working carbon calculation to observe the impact on emissions

Note of caution: the CRC scheme reported Emissions in (tCO₂) and not tCO₂e. There are different emissions factors that should be used to obtain the tCO₂e results for GHG Protocol.

GOOD PRACTICE & PROJECTS

All of the good practice and projects noted last year are still being implemented. As the Action Plan is delivered there will be an increasing number of community and environment projects to add to this section.

No recommendations to make.

SECTION 5 – COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Engaging widely has been central to GC's Climate Emergency work and despite the impact of Covid the council has kept communications and engagement efforts moving.

Progress is regularly reported to Cabinet via Climate Emergency reports, such as the Reports to Cabinet – Gateshead Climate Change Emergency and Environmental Audit, Feb 2021. This report details progress to date and an update on the iE audit outcome.

A Climate Emergency Communications Officer has been appointed, to increase messaging, engagement and sharing of progress on this important agenda through a range of mediums.

Commitment to developing a Green Communications Strategy, to ensure stakeholders understand ambition and targets. Development of an evidence base to respond quickly to questions and challenge and to provide an auditable evidence base of GC's Climate Emergency and sustainability journey.

A Climate Emergency and Sustainability page is available on the website, it contains all relevant strategies, plans, updates, and information sources for easy access for communities and stakeholders, this should be regularly updated and maintained.

The following 2 paragraphs are taken from last year's report and should be implemented as part of the Green Communications Strategy.

The Council's Thrive Strategy is an inclusive and ambitious strategy to address inequalities, create opportunities for all and create resilience. However, the Climate Emergency and environmental sustainability issues are not addressed in the current version. Addressing this once the Climate Emergency strategy and carbon management plan are approved should also be a priority as low carbon and nature rich environments are essential for reducing health inequalities and having healthy communities that are adapted and resilient to a changing climate and transition to a green economy.

Staff realise the importance of the climate agenda and are keen to learn more and be as informed as possible specifically on understanding the evidence, timescale and how they can make a difference through their service and role. Human Resources are eager to begin work on how induction, training and performance reviews can support increasing staff climate emergency and sustainability knowledge and engagement. Public Service Reform also expressed a willingness to facilitate the trialling of greener ways of working to support emissions reduction work and better incorporate environmental sustainability into practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement a Green Communications strategy
2. Identify how much of current communications is about climate and green agendas and make a commitment to build on this
3. Make GC climate and environmental commitments and ambitions a homepage banner
4. Implement Climate, Low Carbon and Environment Sustainability training and learning packages for all staff and Elected Members
5. Provide training and awareness raising opportunities for Gateshead businesses on their sustainability journey.

REVIEW RESULTS

The figures below show the progress GC has made over the last 12 months. The biggest improvements being for Environmental Policy and Action Plan

To achieve Green Level the recommendations throughout this report need to be implemented paying greatest attention to Measuring Resource Use, Carbon Footprint Reporting and Targets.

Action plan work achieved 85% and is demonstrating steady progress and the efforts relating to Environmental Sustainability policy development are clear.

There is work to do on broadening the target setting approach. A score of 58% was achieved as targets have focused largely on carbon footprinting or cost reduction, targets for % reductions of each resource are needed for 2022.

Summary Results 2021			
	Score	Available Score	Percentage
Section 1 - Environmental Policy	18	21	86%
Section 2a - Measuring Resource Use	9	13	69%
Section 3 - Targets	19	33	58%
Section 4a - Action Plan	35	41	85%
Section 5 - Communication	4	6	67%
	85	114	75%

Summary Results 2020			
	Score	Available Score	Percentage
Section 1 - Environmental Policy	14	21	67%
Section 2a - Resource Use Management	11	13	85%
Section 3 - Targets	20	33	61%
Section 4a - Action Plan	32	41	78%
Section 5 - Communication	3	6	50%
	80	114	70%

OBSERVATIONS

Embedding Environmental Sustainability can be challenging and more so for larger organisations with many functions. GC is experienced at implementing strategies that are cross cutting, and so will no doubt draw on this, over the next couple of years to ensure full implementation of their sustainability ambitions and action plan.

The world is 1.2 degrees warmer and only 0.3 degrees away from the Paris Agreement to not exceed 1.5 degree. Time is running out and every kilo of carbon counts. Next year, 2022 is the ideal time for Gateshead Council to work to implement all recommendations to achieve Green Level accreditation and significantly reduce wider organisational impacts.

The progress being made is to be commended given the demand the Covid 19 pandemic has placed on Council staff and wider resources. Hopefully, GC will prioritise implementing the report recommendations and drive progress in the Action Plan in those service areas that undelivered for a number of reasons.

OBSERVATIONS

- Highly motivated and enthusiastic Climate Emergency team.
- Staff recognise they can take action to reduce environmental impact in their own services.
- Desire to enhance carbon emissions methodology and reporting.
- Responsibility for this agenda is spread across the Council.
- Tensions to resolve between economic plans and carbon emissions.
- More detail about what a Low carbon/ green future looks like for GC's communities (It is not business as usual in green).
- An impactful communications and engagement strategy is needed to motivate and drive the changes needed.

NEXT STEPS

This review provided evidence of Gateshead Council's Climate Emergency and sustainability work gaining momentum and becoming part of strategy and operations. To maintain this a series of progress meetings are to be agreed with your local iiE advisor.

There will be a 6-month progress meeting in February 2022 and the next audit will be on 1st Sept 2022 with a pre-audit meeting 4 weeks in advance to prepare reporting and evidence required for the auditor.

NB: Covid19 has changed the way councils operate in the medium term. It has resulted in less travel but increased packaging and PPE. It is currently unproven that home working has a lower footprint than office working, this might be the case in summer but less so in winter, evidence will emerge to inform the decisions organisations have to make.

It is also widely accepted that the more we continue to destroy the natural world the greater the likelihood of coming into contact with unknown viruses, meaning Covid like events becoming more common. This is one of the many reasons why understanding the ecological impact of choices is important.