

INVESTORS
IN THE
ENVIRONMENT



Gateshead Council

Silver Level Audit Report

Report Date: September 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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.

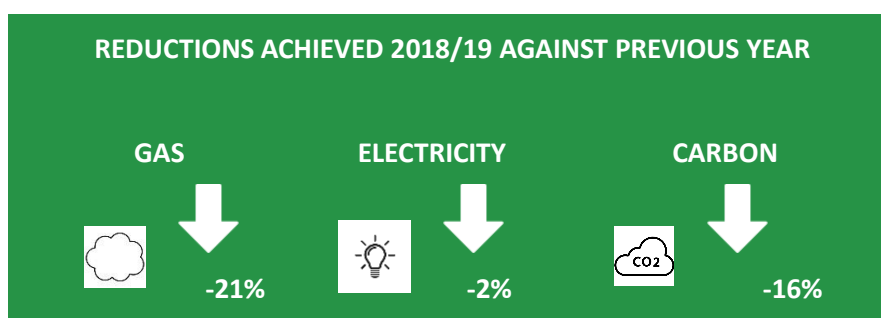
Gateshead Council has decided to undertake accreditation to establish a baseline and a snapshot in time of its Climate Emergency and environmental journey. As well as wanting to demonstrate commitment to minimising its environmental impact, continuous improvement and setting a standard for carbon and sustainability management.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE PAST YEAR WERE

- Declaring a Climate Emergency and developing a robust management plan
- Achieving senior management commitment to environmental sustainability
- Implementing carbon reduction actions that have reduced emissions by 16% against previous year
- Establishing a carbon reporting process with high level of data and process accuracy
- Taking steps to engage staff at all levels on Gateshead Council's environmental journey
- Creating an iE action plan with contributions from all services to reduce carbon and environmental impact

KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENTS ARE

- Ensuring new Environmental Sustainability Policy is adopted and implemented across services
- Update the Environmental policy to support climate and ecological ambitions, ensuring it is relevant to organisational practices and signed by and the responsibility of senior management
- Enhance the Environmental Management System to streamline planning, delivery of actions and reporting of carbon and environmental impact into one document
- Ensure implementation of existing and future policies to avoid a disconnect between policy and delivery across services. E.g. Applying existing policy hierarchies such as in travel and planning
- 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
 - Refine resource management process (collection frequency and monitoring) and documentation
 - Carbon hierarchy
- Ensure the recording and communication of carbon and environmental project successes and learnings to create a baseline, evidence and inform future actions
- 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
- Securing resources to deliver net zero 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 is pleased to announce Gateshead Council has achieved the **Silver level** accreditation with a score of 70%.



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 25 interviews of 1.5 hours with service leads to understand current practice and identify where changes and improvements can be made.

REVIEW FINDINGS

Below is a summary of performance, highlighting areas of strength and improvement. Each section of the 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

An environment policy exists and is quite comprehensive, encompassing both environmental and sustainability issues and legal requirements however revision control needs attention with the last revision being 2014.

The Government’s Environment Bill is on the horizon and GC’s policy should seek to embed the key elements of this Bill locally through identifying and detailing areas of impact and assigning key actions and responsibilities across council services.

The review and relaunch of this policy will be central to integrating its principles into the work of all directorates and driving behaviours that will enable carbon reduction and environmental sustainability ambitions to be realised and committed to. Currently, there are acknowledgments of the climate and environment agenda across some council policies. An updated policy will ensure a consistent approach that all directorates and services can use to identify what carbon and environment actions are applicable to them. Thus, a clear, actionable launch plan will need to be developed to support policy adoption across services.

The existing Environment and Sustainability policy is currently owned by the Energy Services Manager. As is best practice, senior management ownership, endorsement (signature) and responsibility will be necessary to facilitate implementation and ensure accountability. In addition to this, as with other policies across GC the Environment and Sustainability policy should be publicly available via the website and updated as appropriate. This will not only support local accountability and integration but will also increase public awareness and engagement.

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Perform an Environmental Sustainability policy review and update accordingly
2. Deliver the policy launch plan to support adoption across services and report on the success of this and policy use across other services
3. Note all other strategies and policies relevant to this policy
4. Create a list of legal compliance, regulations and environmental code of practice
5. Review once the Environment Bill is given royal assent to make an Act of Parliament

SECTION 2: RESOURCE USE MANAGEMENT

GC has records for key resources used in carbon emission calculations from 2006/7 and has collated data across several areas and different resources to perform carbon emissions calculations. 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.

Improvement in this area could be achieved through the development of a user-friendly, accessible Data Resource Document. This should detail; all resources used across GC, identify the carbon calculation scope for each, frequency of reading, any analysis, location of meters and other essential information such as a narrative to approach taken. The document should be accessible, workable and be intuitive to ensure ease of use for someone new to the organisation or for audit purposes. This is essential for Green Level accreditation.

Additionally, consideration should be given to switching to a green electricity tariff. If this approach is adopted 'dual reporting' should be implemented to capture both market and location-based emissions.

It is also advised that consideration is given to the use of intensity metrics to account for organisational changes such as, increases or decreases in staff and office space. The intensity measure can be an absolute (kwh/ m3) or efficiency (m2 / per person per mile).

RECORDING

Baseline year is 2007/8 and there are 13 years of data. 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

A Green Level EMS requires all significant resources to be monitored, for GC this would include water, waste (internal), paper, printing inks, digital footprint, stationary, electrical items disposed of and value chain as a minimum. Over time resource management will increase as new government legislation comes into place (E.g. Defra's Resource Strategy and food waste). To prepare for this, a brief significant resources review would be a useful exercise to verify resources selected. This will ensure that data collection associated with resource management is a wider environmental sustainability activity and not just a carbon footprint focused one.

Currently, summary data is held in an excel spreadsheet this is acceptable however greater attention is needed on worksheet labelling and resource details such as clarifying metrics used, what each table or calculation is linked to and reporting on. The ideal is for the spreadsheet to be easily understandable to external eyes with medium knowledge. There are various options for improvement here and data available should be linked to the details of the resource document. Time should be spent exploring simple to read visualizations that convey information clearly and for this purpose this could include refining existing

spreadsheets (including tabs, cover sheets, graphical representations) or utilising platforms such as tableau to increase abilities in relation to analysis. This would also support bringing together various resource data from across the council and consideration should be given to this during this process.

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. For energy daily and weekly monitoring might be more appropriate for certain buildings or times of year. The creation of the resource data document will assist with an appropriate schedule for each resource and in adhering to best practice with the implementation of good resource monitoring processes. Where monitoring is mixed (from monthly to quarterly) the reasons for this should be stipulated in the resource management document discussed above.

Again, the use of a platform or increased analytical use of SystemsLink will help with regular monitoring so that progress against energy and waste targets can be tracked. Other resources can be monitored in excel or via online tools such as iiE SMARTCarbon.

Undertaking 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.

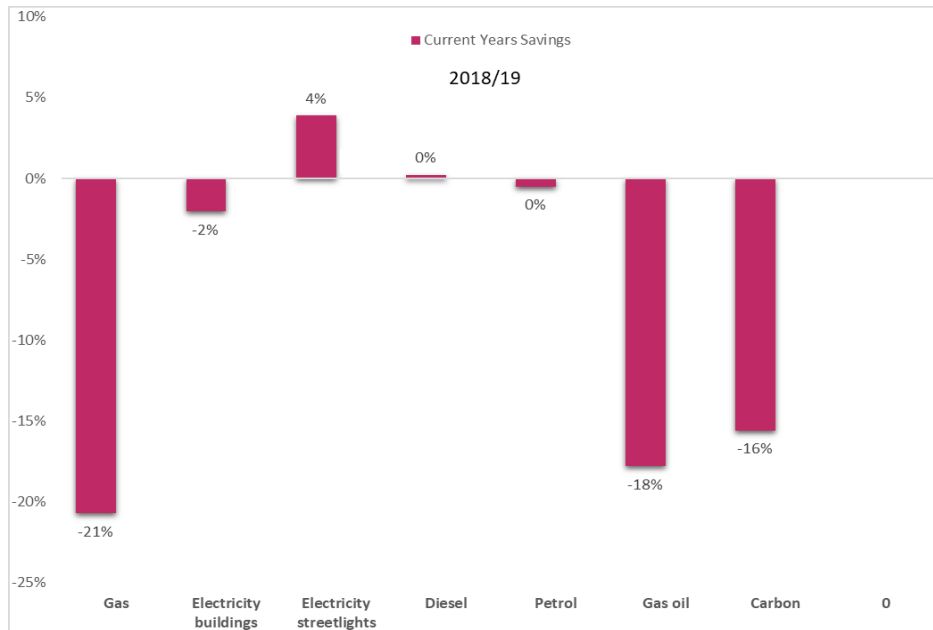
CURRENT YEARS PERFORMANCE

Complete year data for 2018/19 was available at the time of review, full year data for 2019/20 is now available (there is often a delay in receiving year end data as relates to frequency of review) and this report will be updated to reflect that following a meeting with energy manager.

Graph 1 below shows the savings made against the previous year 2017/18. This demonstrates strong performance of reduction across all identified key resources. 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 and oil use over this period (2018/19, 21% and 18% respectively) resulting in an overall carbon reduction of 16%. 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 2018/19 versus the previous year

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

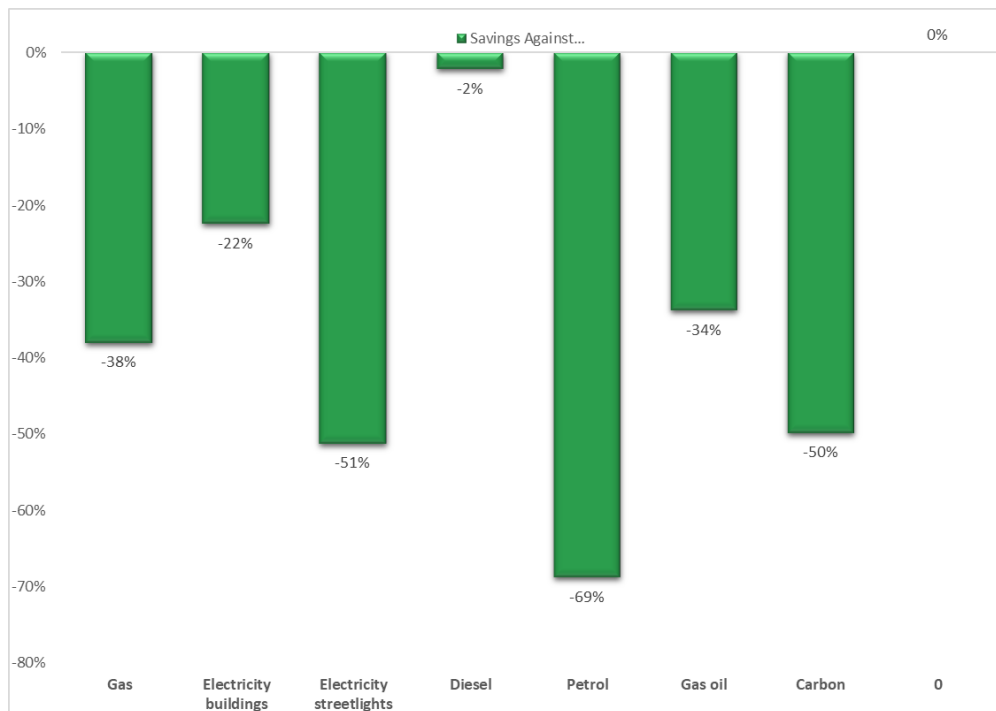
GC has made excellent performance overall against the baseline year 2007/8. Reductions of 51% and 69% respectively for electricity streetlighting and petrol are notable. Significant reductions in gas and electricity use year on year demonstrate well-planned and implemented energy efficiency projects.

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.

Future performance will be influenced by decisions made now on building standards and capital projects already committed to. These decisions already made have fixed/ locked in additional carbon into future emissions. Thought should therefore be given to identifying and quantifying these emissions and ensuring 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 2018/19 versus baseline year 2007/08

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement the recommendations from the Carbon Review
 - a. Review resources managed and create a Resource Management Document
 - b. Refine data recording and analysis process
2. Plan to switch to a green provider to give a market signal and commence dual reporting
3. Set annual targets for each key resource used
4. Update progress made from 2014/15 to 2020 in a summary document with case studies to assist with monitoring journey/project direction
5. 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

GC declared a Climate Emergency 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. The first year has involved considerable research, stakeholder and community engagement to develop a Carbon Management Plan that is right for Gateshead Council and the borough. Unfortunately, but to be expected, Covid19 has disrupted the progress of some of this work.

Documentation prior to declaring a Climate Emergency included carbon commitments and targets. In Gateshead's Community Strategy, Vision 2030, targets were identified to reduce energy and carbon emissions. The Gateshead Strategic Partnership also adopted a Climate Change Strategy in March 2010, to deliver these targets, and the Council Plan 2012-2017 identifies "Reducing Carbon Emissions" as one of Gateshead's Strategic Needs, to be addressed through the Green Gateshead Strategic Intervention.

In addition to this, the Council also has its own Carbon Management Plan, adopted in March 2009. This aimed to cut Council carbon emissions by 35% from a baseline of 33,198 carbon emissions tonnes per annum. This included CO₂ emissions from buildings and business miles specifically, including the Council's vehicle fleet.

GC has also maintained its commitment over the years to action through several public declarations on its aspirations to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions including;

- Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change
- Eurocities Declaration on Climate Change
- EU Covenant of Mayors.

The relevance and commitment to these declarations should be reviewed and process reported on accordingly.

Targets have been achieved in line with pre-Climate Emergency documentation and GCs focus is now on developing and implementing the actions to take it to Net Zero by 2030. To support this 2021 SMART targets are to be set to ensure reduction in all key resource use and overall improvement of environmental efficiency. The percentage difference of the current year against the previous year, if different to the baseline year for each resource is to be calculated remembering targets like resources can be normalised to account for a change in organisational operations.

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. Review relevance and commitment to public declarations and report on progress
2. Set SMART targets for all monitored resources including clear targets to achieve net zero emissions
3. Report quarterly against progress
4. Agree universal resource use of services and work with services to set service targets for those resources

SECTION 4: ACTION PLAN

The Energy Team's action plan is mainly focused on project delivery to create energy efficiency savings and carbon emission reductions and the Carbon Management Plan. This approach has been correct for standalone carbon management work however for a systems change approach that ensures collective responsibility to carbon reduction and environmental sustainability to be successful a wider action plan is required.

The action plan should cover all key resources and include actions for:

1. Development of an Environmental Sustainability Policy, wider policy revisions and evidence of successful implementation
2. The delivery of good resource management including data and the use of resources
3. Council operations Waste Management Plan and Travel Plan delivery
4. Environmental impact reduction across all directorates and services
5. Carbon footprinting calculation and environmental performance and reporting
6. Communications and engagement
7. Monitoring and reporting by ensuring all actions are SMART

This review involved interviews across all services, resulting in a comprehensive list of actions service leads felt were achievable and could be delivered to increase awareness, for staff contribution to the green agenda and to reduce carbon emissions and environmental impact. It is recommended that these are reviewed and considered for inclusion in the new EMS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement points 1 – 7 above

2. Include actions suggested by GC service leads

WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN

GC has a robust Waste Management Plan for domestic waste although out of the scope of this review it is worth noting in this report. Through the Joint Municipal Waste Management Partnership, Gateshead together with South Tyneside and Sunderland aim to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill sites every year and increase recycling. This has been supported by some ambitious targets for increasing recycling.

GC has increased its (domestic) recycling target to 50% of all rubbish by 2020 (from 35%). However, even with such ambitious recycling targets there will still be around 165,000 tonnes of household rubbish remaining for the council to be deal with. Non-recycled rubbish is sent to the Energy-from-Waste (EfW) facility on Teesside. The facility uses a high-tech burning process to convert the waste into electricity for the National Grid. The management of domestic waste is currently defined as out of scope and not relevant to this review however the good progress made to increase recycling and work strategically to better manger waste across 3 councils needs acknowledgment.

The Government's Resource and Waste Strategy for England is anticipated in 2021 and so it makes sense to wait for the details before updating the 2007 Municipal Waste Strategy. This strategy will set out how we will preserve material resources by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy in England and be a significant change from existing strategies.

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.

There has been good waste reduction work delivered by other teams. For example, the catering team have included procurement specifications for reduce or no Single Use Plastics (SUPs).

Yet, waste generated from council operations is unknown as it is collected alongside other waste collections. Therefore, steps should be taken for the council to develop a full understanding of its operational waste process, costs and areas for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Action 2 and 3 are likely to be dependent on a greater percentage of staff returning to work.

1. Develop and implement a Councils Operations Management Plan
2. Undertake a series of site waste audits to understand more about the type and volume of operational waste
3. Monitor and set targets for operational waste

TRAVEL AND FLEET PLAN

GC has clear travel and parking plans.

The Travel Strategy had a 15-year timeline to roll out and measures that were largely based on staff travel surveys. The plan focuses on implementing the Travel Hierarchy and encourages staff to use sustainable transport when needing to travel between sites or to meetings. A variety of incentives exist:

- Schemes to buy reduced rate travel passes
- Cycle to work schemes
- Electric bikes
- Pool cars
- Sustainable route planning advice

Additionally, information on sustainable transport options is available on the intranet and in weekly bulletins. Route optimiser software is used for efficient route selection and reducing emissions, with the last manual route reviews in 2016 for grass cutting and 2018 for cleaning. Operational vehicles also have Lightfoot fitted to monitor driver efficiency and produce driver feedback reports.

While operational vehicle purchase is determined by need through a business case, other criteria favour the allocation of an appropriate and low emission vehicle. The current price difference between a petrol and electric vehicles (EV) means small petrol engines still tend to be the first option however consideration to broader measures specifically, lifecycle costs could change this as GC spends in the region of £1million a year on fuel.

GC has led much of the region's public sector work on alternative vehicles, trialling and funding vehicles and demonstrating its commitment to sustainable transport. The existing strategy demonstrating modest EV plans however, it is anticipated that EVs will feature strongly in the strategy moving forward. The switch to EV is also limited by technology and this will influence the speed of switch to alternative fuel vehicles. A funded EV infrastructure plan is therefore needed for both operational and community EV needs particularly as current depots are not suitable for a large EV fleet and upgrades would be required.

GCs current travel plan is due to be updated and a new travel survey will support the identification of which measures to implement. The travel team intend to work with the Climate Emergency Team to add in carbon and sustainability questions to this survey.

Some work also needs to be carried out to optimise the use of pool cars. Approximately 2 years ago the service had funding for driver efficiency, and this is something the team think could be brought in again for those who missed the first scheme or where a request is made.

There has been good work undertaken to switch much of the grounds maintenance team to electric equipment specifically for vehicles such as mowers, strimmers and hedgecutters. The environmental and health and safety benefits have been noted and include less noise pollution and less vibration for users.

PARKING PLAN

GC has recently introduced charges to its busiest sites such as the Civic Centre. Although staff can for a fee apply for permits, there is a waiting list. Some sites continue to have free parking if it will encourage economic activity, however.

There are significant challenges to overcome in this area. Economic need still takes precedent and so tension and policy issues exist. If the Travel Hierarchy were implemented/ enforced many of these issues would be resolved. Limited resourcing also creates obstacles. If the service area had more resource it could do more with respect to communications, incentives, increasing sustainable travel and transition to alternative fuel vehicles. Travel is a major contributor of carbon emissions therefore allocating adequate funding to speed transitions to EV and sustainable travel should be considered a priority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enforce travel hierarchy across decision making and services
2. Undertake a new travel survey that includes climate emergency and sustainability questions
3. Extend incentives to encourage the uptake of sustainable travel modes
4. Increase electric bikes and EV pool cars
5. Create and secure funding for an alternative fuel transition plan
6. 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 a useful measure of your business's environmental performance.

A corporate carbon footprint describes the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions released by an organisation. Greenhouse gases are those gases which contribute to climate change. The main 6 as described in the Kyoto Protocol are: Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), Methane (CH₄), Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), Nitrous Oxide (N₂O), Perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF₆) known as Fluorinated greenhouse gases (F gases), although additional gases can be reported if desired.

F gases are important as they are more potent than carbon with some of the gases having a global warming effect with some up to 23 000 times greater than carbon dioxide (CO₂), making reporting and reduction of these gases essential to the Climate Emergency.

The term “carbon” is often used loosely as a general abbreviation for greenhouse gases. However, it is important to recognise whether it is being used simply as an abbreviation for carbon dioxide (CO₂) or as a reference to carbon dioxide equivalence (CO₂e) which includes all 6 gases listed above.

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

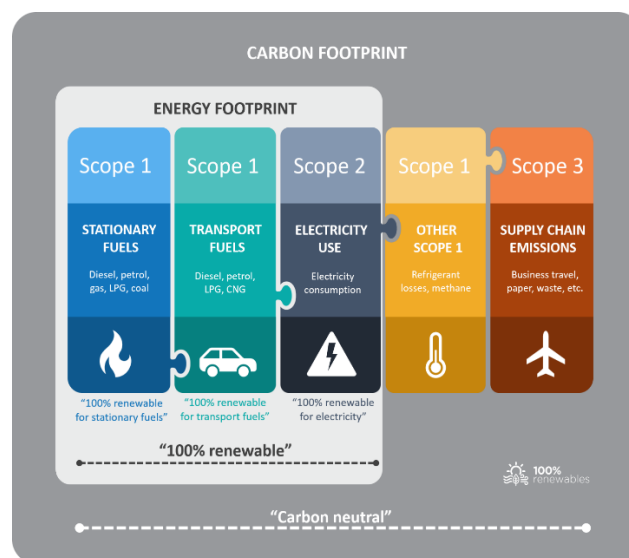
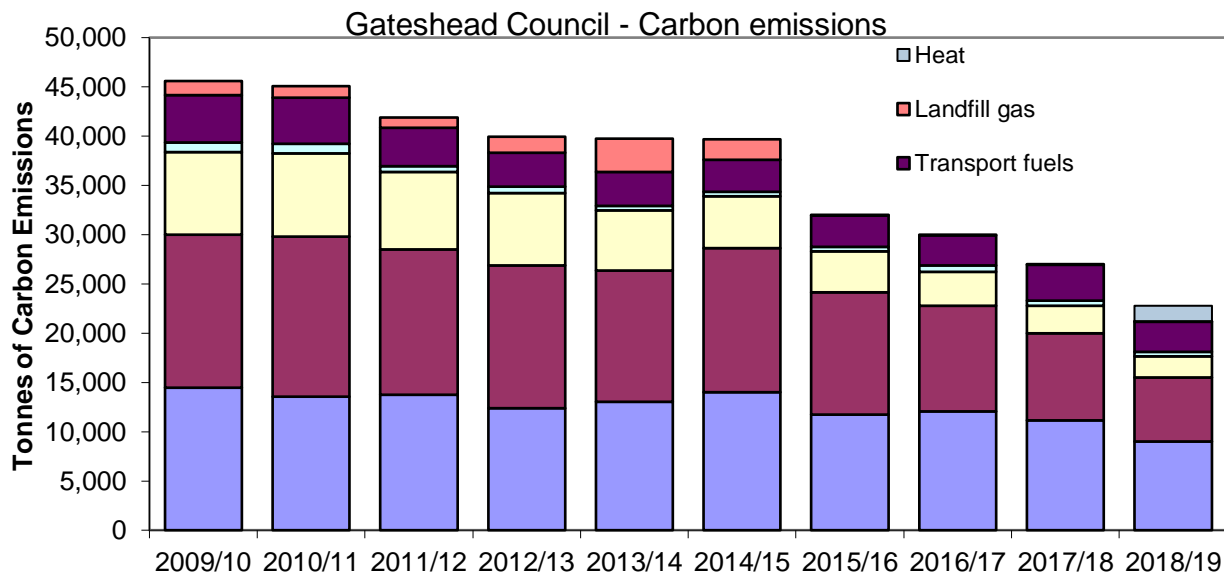


Image 1: Scope 1 covers direct emissions from owned or controlled sources. Scope 2 covers indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating and cooling consumed by the reporting company. Scope 3 includes all other indirect emissions that occur in a company's value chain.

GC has carbon calculations from 2007/8 for scope 1 and 2 emissions and have used Defra conversion factors in these calculations. GC has also previously reported to Government's Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme however this is now discontinued. Staff have demonstrated very good data and methodology knowledge, with a high degree of accuracy and completeness for both calculations. Some errors existed in the calculation spreadsheet, this have been highlighted in the Carbon Review report and should be rectified. The team have focused on delivering change and achieving targets in this area and this is commendable. However, reporting the journey and their work to reduce emissions to both internal and external stakeholders is equally as important, and time should be spent maintaining profile in this area. Particularly as this provides further support to resource carbon and sustainability work and provides evidence to respond to challenge.

The current carbon review process identified GCs reporting boundary to be an Operational Control boundary, this is reporting on all environmental impacts over which GC has full authority to introduce and implement operating policies.



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

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement reporting to the Green House Gas Protocol
2. Create a detailed Carbon Footprint methodology that is accessible and note source of conversion factors
3. Develop a narrative confirming GCs boundary
4. Report on Fluorinated gases
5. Develop a clear narrative confirming scopes and associated resources
6. Create a reporting methodology detailing how, the frequency and to who
7. GC could report kWhs from self-generated renewables in the narrative (as tCO₂e avoided)

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

There are many examples of good practice across GC services with the efforts of the energy, catering, cleaning, and IT teams standing out. Environmental benefits were not always the driver but were certainly recognised at decision making stage and once changes were implemented. Examples include, local food suppliers, red tractor and organic food policies, chemical free floor cleaning machines and moving data centres.

Undertaking projects that benefit people and the environment is a core activity of councils and so many examples of good work go unreported. A selection of projects that demonstrate GC going that extra mile include:

- Council has committed to 250 ha of new woodland as part of net zero commitment

- Fairtrade town since 2007
- Recycle week events
- Strong volunteer programme including Countryside Ranger scheme
- Green champions
- No balloon release policy (extend to lanterns too)
- World Mental Health day events
- Better Health at Work Awards

Despite good efforts, in the UK and indeed globally, we are experiencing a world that is warming faster than at any time in history and is coinciding with an equally devastating ecological decline or ecological crisis. In order to make a whole organisation contribution to reversing both trends low environmental impact strategic decision-making and ways of working should become GC's priority. The challenge is aligning all services to this and championing the art of the possible for environmental enhancement with all stakeholders' service leaders and decision makers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As we are fast approaching Climate Emergency tipping points every kilo of carbon matters and collectively, small actions make a difference. The type of actions to carry out are varied with recommendations for 2021 being:

1. Use all existing levers to implement/ enforce carbon reduction activities such as travel and waste hierarchies and commitment to sustainable development in vision documents
2. Report clearly on carbon and environmental impact (quantify) and implications in council reports (Cabinet, SPG, CMT and other decision-making groups)
3. Ensure Environmental and Sustainability Policy is seen by services as a guide as to how they can take steps in service design and delivery to reduce carbon and environmental impacts
4. Liaise with directorate and service leads to undertake key policy, strategy and operations review to impact agree inclusion of Climate Emergency and environmental impact reduction measures.
5. Each year collate at least one case study or significant project from each service to showcase what the service has done to reduce carbon and environmental impact
6. Implement a digital footprint minimisation strategy developed in collaboration with the IT to reduce carbon and environmental impact

SECTION 5 – COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Since declaring a Climate Emergency GC has made a conscious effort to engage widely on the strategy and actions needed to live within its and the boroughs carbon budget. This is to be commended and should set the standard for future engagement work.

By committing to undertake Investors in the Environment GC is showing its intentions to integrate low carbon and environmental practices into strategic decisions and operations. Ensuring this work become a green thread running through the organisation and value chain.

There is the capacity and talent within GC for strong communications and engagement as demonstrated by an array of projects the council has communicate its involvement in. Projects such as GC's Thrive agenda, Better Health at Work and economic development progress have been promoted through a mixture of reports, newsletters and print and digital media articles.

Unfortunately, there was limited evidence of a specific low carbon and environmental (green) communications and engagement strategy. A green communications strategy is important for 3 reasons; firstly, it ensures ambitions, objectives, projects and successes are known and shared with stakeholders. Secondly, a strong green communications and engagement plan provides an excellent evidence base for

dealing with questions, challenge and audits and thirdly, it provides a historic snapshot of GC’s efforts at a given point in time. Implementing a strategy of this nature should be a priority.

GC Thrives 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. Reports to strategic and decision-making groups to go beyond considering carbon and environmental impact thought describing, quantifying and always applying relevant hierarchies

REVIEW RESULTS

The figures below are a baseline of where GC is now and give an indication of areas to focus on for 2021. A score of 70% is to be commended.

GC is strongest in Resource Management use and with a series of general minor modifications and focusing on reporting to Green House Gas standard outstanding is achievable.

Action plan work achieved 78%. Across GC polices and actions to deliver lower impact projects exists the development of a more comprehensive EMS will consolidate these actions and increase the engagement and responsibility of other services to achieve net zero.

There is work to do on broadening the target setting approach. A score of 61% was achieved as targets have focused largely on carbon footprinting or cost reduction rather than reducing usage across a greater number of resources which would achieve the former and later. The use of clear targets will help with widening the responsibility for emissions reduction and extending responsibilities for environmental impact.

| Summary Results | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-----------------|------------|
| | 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% |

OBSERVATIONS

Councils are complex organisations that must be able to respond quickly to changing government policy, local population needs and manage crisis. They are to be congratulated in their ability to generally deploy resources effectively to tackle the challenges that arise. For this reason GC is well placed to rise to the Climate Emergency challenge and make the necessary decisions to drive decarbonisation and increase the role of nature in carbon sequestration and as an economic stimulus to a green transition and growth.

Carbon emissions and management is not a standalone activity. Much like single use plastics, carbon and the associated climate emergency have helped to focus minds, but both are a result of people, communities, businesses and organisations acting in environmentally unsustainable ways. Increasing environmental sustainable practices as an important tool to reduce carbon emissions needs to become central to the work of all directorates and this is how GC can use its influence and purchasing power to nudge change across its value chain.

GC owns a share of Newcastle International Airport. It is currently identified as out of boundary emissions, which is adequate for reporting purposes. The fact that the airport operations are planning to become net zero does not detract from the emissions produced by flights, although it may be noted that the airport's Net Zero plan commits to working with airlines to minimise emissions through the use of the most efficient aircraft, and supporting sustainable aviation. Despite the efficiency of aviation increasing other factors are in play. The trails left by planes in the sky have a more damaging effect on the climate than all the carbon dioxide ever emitted from their engines, the tracks – called contrails – linger in the sky as ice clouds and trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere. Jet fuel also emits somewhat more carbon dioxide per gallon, and its global warming impacts are greater than from ground-level emissions. Meaning that air travel has a significant impact on global warming. The Council should therefore consider opportunities to encourage accelerated change in the transition to net zero emissions from Newcastle International Airport, including its scope 3 emissions.

Perception by some that most green actions cost money and are complicated needs to be challenged. Being a greener organisation is largely about operational efficiency, applying the levers already available (such as hierarchies and legislation) and working upstream for benefits to be realised across a lifecycle and by the future generations. This type of prevention agenda is something GC is familiar with particularly within the field of Public Health and so should be easily achievable. Of course, investment and both revenue and capital green spend are required to implement the technical solutions to reduce emissions and environmental impact. However, these solutions should not be viewed differently, considered less important or more difficult to fund than current carbon intensive priorities.

OBSERVATIONS

- Highly motivated and enthusiastic Climate Emergency team
- Staff that recognise the importance of this agenda and want to do more
- Openness to creative thinking
- There is a concern about a disconnect between Climate Emergency declaration and ability to deliver using current policy (enforcement)
- There is a need to show strong leadership and messaging that clarifies why now is the time for climate action
- Tensions to resolve between economic plans and carbon emissions
- Business as usual is not an option and details are needed about what a Green Recovery/ Transition looks like and what it will change for GC and its communities
- An impactful communications and engagement strategy are needed to enable strategic and operational changes to reduce GC's carbon and environmental impacts

NEXT STEPS

There is evidence of excellent work to reduce emissions across the estate by the Energy Team which gives GC a strong base to work from to achieve net zero. As the targets become more challenging, emissions reduction is not something the Energy Team can do alone and ensuring reducing environmental impact is the responsibility of all is essential particularly if value chain emissions are to be reduced. To achieve Green Level GC should consider prioritising the following steps:

1. Adopt Green House Gas Protocol reporting
2. Review and update Environment and Sustainability policy
3. Compile a more comprehensive Environmental Management System
4. Implement robust climate emergency and environmental sustainability staff knowledge and training
5. Implement remaining recommendations (i.e. those not in this list) within 12 months
6. Act on the observations noted in this report
7. Develop iiE case studies

The next audit or review depending on the Covid situation will be on 1st Sept 2021 with a pre-audit/ review 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.