

**INVESTORS
IN THE
ENVIRONMENT**



ACCREDITATION REPORT

Gateshead Council

July 2022



Executive Summary

The Investors in the Environment (iE) accreditation consists of organisations working toward high-level criteria and targets, followed by an official auditing process. The objective of this report is to identify how **Gateshead Council** is performing against agreed targets and environmental performance.

By qualifying for the accreditation, **Gateshead Council** are demonstrating their organisation's commitment to minimising its environmental impact and helping to set the standard for the environment.

Investors in the Environment is pleased to announce that **Gateshead Council** has achieved the **Silver level** accreditation with a score of **70%**.



Highlights

The team at Gateshead Council have maintained a good EMS and have excelled at developing innovative carbon saving energy projects. Overall, Gateshead Council is expected to progress to Green level next year. One of the main reasons for reissuing Silver accreditation during this audit is the Council is embedding systems developed for the EMS and is developing new ways of working due to the Covid 19 pandemic. There is further work to be done to show the impact of activities underway and those planned. The implementation of the SmartCarbon Platform for monitoring and reporting the councils carbon footprint is a positive move and although has affected figures for this year, it is using best practice methods and is commended. The integration of the new software, the re-baselining of the council data and the addition of monitoring indicators has led to an increased carbon footprint figure. However, if compared to previous data monitoring techniques the carbon footprint continues to reduce. The figures using the new software platform should show a decrease for 2022/23. Highlights include:

- Use of the SmartCarbon platform to capture and present the Councils carbon footprint using Greenhouse Gas Protocol methodology
- Carbon footprint recording and reporting methodology is robust and easy to understand. A move to increase the reporting boundaries to include more Scope 3 is to be commended

Electricity Buildings



Electricity Street Lights



Gas



Petrol



Gas Oil



- Excellent communications and engagement across the Council with the implementation of mandatory climate reality training for all staff and an array of environmental projects and initiatives to raise awareness.
- Ground-breaking energy projects to decrease the use of fossil fuels, including:
 - 6MW Mine Water Heat Pump, the largest in the UK
 - Solar Farm
 - Extension of heat networks
 - LED Streetlighting
- Borough wide renewable heat studies – in its Zero Carbon Heat Strategy, the Council has identified 5 more potential heat networks covering over 10,000 Council homes, and associate community buildings, to displace a further 120 GWH/yr. of gas use if developed.
- Excellent use of a Climate Champion network in all service areas
- A commitment to a 17% tree coverage of the borough by 2050, with a role out of tree planting activities and support of the North East Community Forest
- Implementation of Ward action plans that will sit under the Climate Strategy, with community and local actions integrated

About the audit

The Investors in the Environment annual audit consists of an assessment of five key areas of an organisations Environmental Management System (EMS). These areas include:

- Environmental Policy
- Resource management, monitoring and analysis
- Progress against targets
- Action Planning including social / environmental projects
- Communication

The scope of this audit includes a review of the EMS of the organisation's main operations, and suggestions have been made regarding future opportunities and risk to the organisation's environmental practices. Gateshead Council has a good EMS, tailored to the specific target areas of the council and available resources. Excellent analysis and understanding of the opportunities continue to be a strength of the green champion and the work shown in evidence in the EMS.

The audit included examination of documentation evidence and interview with key personnel on **6 July 2022, 11th July** and **9 September 2022**.

See Appendix A for detail on audit scoring criteria and scores.

Evidence submitted included:

- Climate Emergency Action Plan – Audit Review 2022
- SmartCarbon Report
- Gateshead Council Climate Strategy
- Gateshead Council Carbon Reduction Forum
- Highway Asset Management Plan
- Cabinet Report Climate Update April 22
- Interviews and pre-audit review with Council Sustainability Team, Waste Team and Highways Team.

Suggested Steps for Improvement

EMS



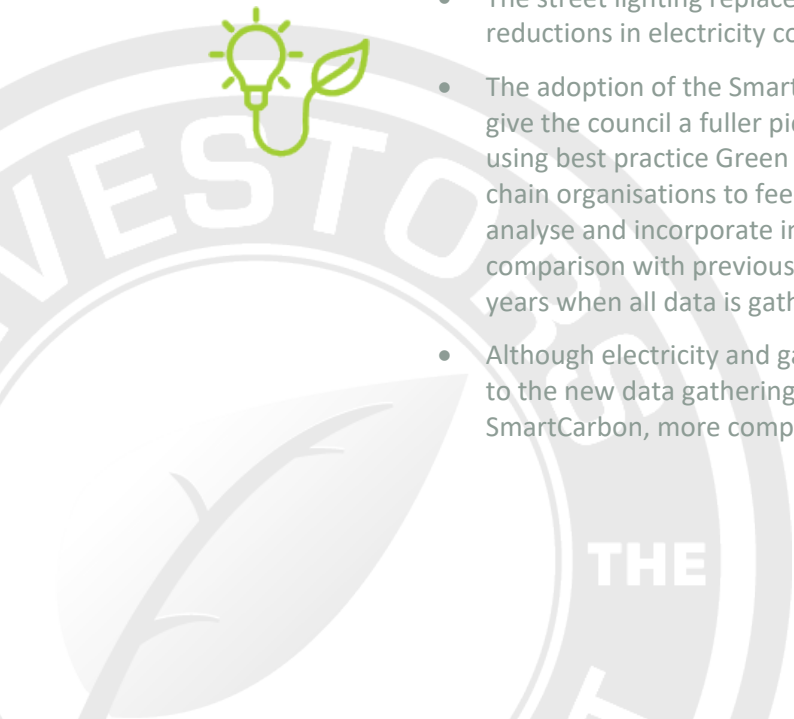
- The Council's environmental policy states that the Council will be net zero by 2030 with no mention of the Council's target of 100% green energy by 2030. This is not in line with the targets set as part of the climate emergency and those set out in the Council's Climate Strategy. It is important that the policy sets the direction for the organisation and makes it clear to all stakeholders the targets set, and the actions required to achieve them. A review of the environmental policy is required in the short term.
- It is good practice to state in your environmental policy that you are committed to adhere to and exceed all relevant environmental legislation and regulation. This should be included in the reviewed environmental policy
- There is no clearly identified person or department with direct responsibility for the implementation of the policy. Although the council's approach is that all stakeholders within the council must take appropriate action across all areas of council activity, we recommend considering a named individual with overall responsibility
- The policy is not easily available or accessible to the general public on the council website
- Regular reviews of policies will ensure the Council takes account of any changes in legislation or other factors
- There is little opportunity after a staff induction for staff to be reminded of the Council's environmental policy. Further work is required with HR.
- Overall, results from last year's audits were acted upon and implemented across all service areas. More work is required on setting SMART targets for each service area that will allow the Council to meet its carbon targets
- Look to develop targets and clear action plans for each resource, as well as service areas, and project how they will meet the Council's longer term targets. A focus on each resource can help identify reductions opportunities and high use areas that require more attention



- Develop operational procedures, such as alert systems, to ensure data collected is regularly reviewed and any anomalies are investigated
- Ensure that all the data the Council is collecting has the capacity to be acted on and managed
- The Council does not currently have a resource document detailing resources being measured, measurement techniques or frequency. This would also offer an opportunity to identify all resources used by the council and whether they are being effectively managed. This can also lead to the identification of environmental impacts within the organisation and how they can be minimised
- There is currently no action plan around resources. The action plans are all department/service focused. There are many benefits to having action plans around each resource specifically and would be a recommendation of this audit. There is an action plan for each service area with actions, timescales and responsible members of staff.
- Consider monitoring resources for individual buildings. This will be a great way to demonstrate the effectiveness of any interventions and investments
- It is recommended and is a requirement for Green accreditation that meters are read on a monthly basis. Unless there is adequate reason not to
- Consider tackling waste inputs through procurement by identifying items of high waste potential and engaging staff and suppliers on eliminating some waste streams and reducing others

ENERGY

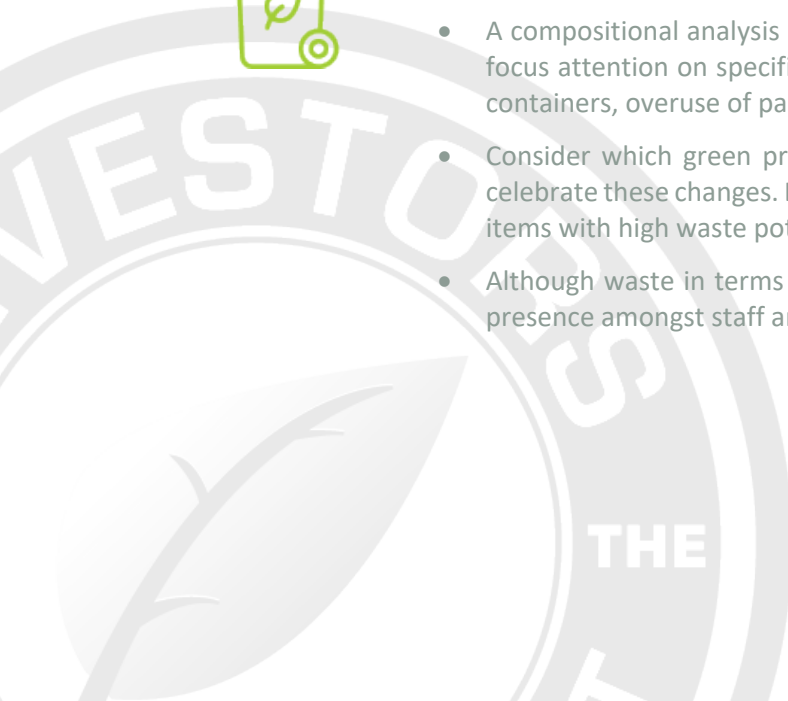
- Continue the roll out of energy projects that reduce the use of fossil fuels and increase efficiencies.
- Continue to identify funding opportunities to invest in energy efficiency and renewables projects
- The street lighting replacement has been a success and continues to show reductions in electricity consumption, due to the LED roll out.
- The adoption of the SmartCarbon platform is to be commended and will give the council a fuller picture of their carbon footprint going forward using best practice Green House Gas protocols. It will also enable supply chain organisations to feed in their data so that scope 3 data is easier to analyse and incorporate in to the council footprint. It does, however, make comparison with previous years data difficult, this will be rectified in future years when all data is gathered using the same methodology.
- Although electricity and gas appear to have shown an increase, this is due to the new data gathering and reporting methodology change through SmartCarbon, more comparable data will be available during 2022/23.



- Particular attention should be paid to the petrol use, this has increased by significantly during 2021/22. This will have a marked effect on the council's carbon budget going forward. The reasons given for this increase is the return to 'normal' services post covid and more employees returning to the office and commencing business travel. It's imperative for the council to meet its carbon reduction targets that it looks to address business travel options and increase the use of sustainable travel options and the uptake of electric vehicles.
- Ensure that any new white goods purchased have the highest energy rating and engagement procurement leads to ensure purchases include energy efficiency as a priority
- Encourage staff to adopt energy conscious behaviours – such as not overfilling the kettle, which is a notoriously energy intensive behaviour that may happen thousands of times a year, turning off unused appliances and lights, taking stairs rather than lifts and using manual rather than automatic-open doors where buildings have them

WASTE

- The council has no formal waste management systems in place for council produced waste. The Joint Municipal Waste Strategy covers the management of waste across households within the borough. There are recycling facilities installed at the Civic Centre, but no measurements take place to measure the effectiveness or use.
- Conduct annual waste audits to establish baselines for the amounts and composition of waste within the Council. Use findings to focus on the waste hierarchy by eliminating waste, reducing, recycling and as a last resort disposal. Without this waste data it will be difficult to measure the effectiveness of any initiatives employed
- A compositional analysis of the Council's waste will offer an opportunity to focus attention on specific areas, such as food packaging, single use drinks containers, overuse of paper, food waste etc
- Consider which green products may be selected to make quick wins and celebrate these changes. Link findings with purchasing decisions to eliminate items with high waste potential.
- Although waste in terms of impact on carbon is small, it has a very visible presence amongst staff and can be used as a communication tool.



TRANSPORT



- The council does not currently have a formal travel policy or plan. Covid has changed the way of working significantly and has delayed work across this area. A staff survey is planned that will formalise the new way of working across the authority. A council travel policy should be produced to set a clear message to all stakeholders of how the council expects employees to review their travel choices using the travel hierarchy
- There are many initiatives in the pipeline that will help drive up sustainable travel choices. Including: Increase Cycle Lockers, upgrade of shower facilities, working with public transport providers to offer travel discounts that meet the needs of new working patterns, Dr Bike offering free bike servicing to staff, travel passed for members and staff, pool car provision and looking to extend this to other sites to increase take up. By feeding these initiatives into a formal travel plan and implementing effective monitoring systems it will allow the council to establish which initiatives are effective. This is an important element of the councils EMS, given that petrol use has increased significantly in a 12-month period.
- Plans are in place for the programme to extend from just business travel to staff commuting and Highways maintenance. The Council is reviewing all travel impacts across the board. This is a welcome addition and will help to feed in to the Scope 3 data and should be part of the formal travel plan
- Consider engaging staff 'travel champions' to ensure the facilities available are fit for purpose, access points are safe, and further understand how to encourage uptake of active or low carbon transport options.

MATERIAL AND PURCHASING



- Look to include paper (no of reams) in the resources measured for the next audit.
- Be sure to communicate what you've changed and why – staff appreciate seeing progress, even for small swaps! Other green group members should be engaged on communicating 'small' swaps, which across the purchasing of a local authority can have a big impact.
- This area will become more important to the EMS as the council extends its carbon footprint to include more Scope 3 emissions and supply chain data. The council has started this process and is looking to add further scope 3 in the future. Thought should be given now to how this data will be collected and the influence the council can have on reducing supply chain emissions.

BIODIVERSITY, GREEN SPACE AND WELLBEING



- Continue with the tree planting and increasing biodiversity on Council owned property projects. Perhaps integrate these initiatives with staff volunteering projects, tree planting days etc.
- Carry out biodiversity action plans on council owned land and park land to ensure increased biodiversity is achieved. Consider engagement with local

stakeholders and voluntary groups to support wider involvement in the community.

- Consider carrying out a wellbeing project in the new year, perhaps integrating mindfulness practice with outdoor green spaces, where possible. This should be focused on staff participation, in particular.

WATER



- High water users across the council's portfolio should be identified and engaged. Focus on public places with large toilet blocks and leisure centres are key priority areas.
- Look to increase the frequency of meter readings where possible and have systems and checks in place to identify any leakages as soon as possible.

COMMUNICATION AND STAFF ENGAGEMENT



- Make use of the iiE communication resources, including the social media graphics that will help communicate Silver achievement.
- Apply for an iiE Award 2022 to showcase the councils' achievements particularly in the energy projects, such as the Mine Water project
- Look at ways to demonstrate the effectiveness of the staff training and awareness raising activities, how has it made a difference?
- Consider ways of increasing communication to the Councils supply chain on how they have a role to play in help the Council to meet its carbon ambitions
- Encourage staff to calculate their own carbon footprint to raise awareness about what they can do at home. Try using a non-technical calculator such as WWF's calculator <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/> and ask the team to share their results and ideas
- Collate case studies from each service to showcase what they have done to reduce Carbon and environmental impacts
- Consider in greater depth how the carbon agenda and sustainability work the Council is undertaking is linking with the Thrive programme to have greater impact for both.



CARBON FOOTPRINT



- Review the carbon targets set by the council and align all policies and communications to state the same targets.
- The new carbon reporting techniques and methodologies will affect the carbon data in the short term. These should be addressed next year. However, close monitoring of carbon data and projections will be key to meeting the councils carbon targets.
- Continue to integrate scope 3 measurements in the carbon footprinting exercise
- Look at the impact Gateshead Council's supply chain has on the council's scope 3 footprint, (Newcastle NHS Trust have calculated that their supply chain is approx. 60% of their footprint). Identify partners along the council's value chain that contribute potentially significant amounts of GHGs. What influence can the council have in reducing the environmental impacts of these organisations?
- Look further at the carbon implications of working from home and hybrid working, these working practices are often more carbon intensive.



APPENDIX A

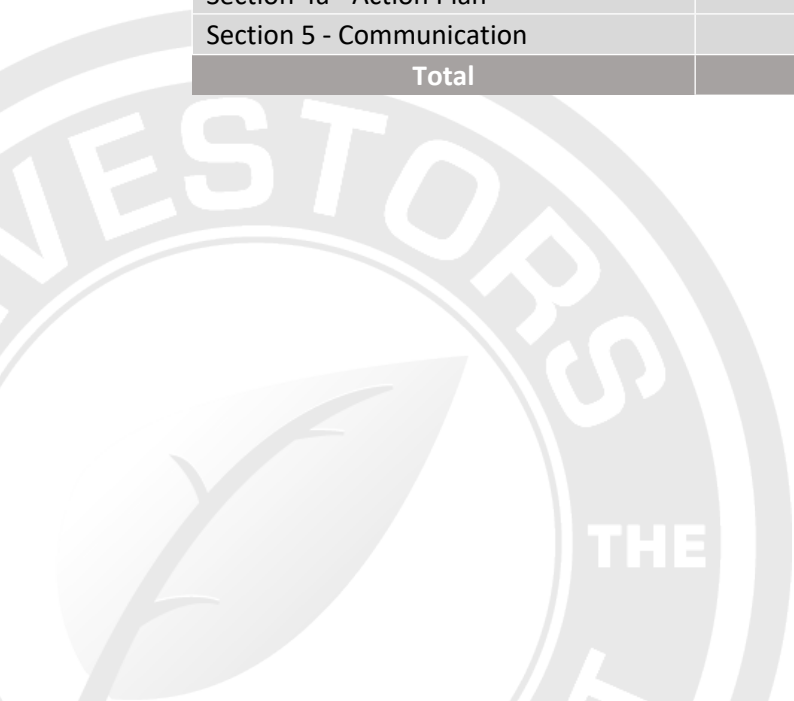
AUDIT SCORING

The business audit sheet includes detail on all areas with commentary on why they were scored as they were. Each section of the iiE Audit Sheet is scored as follows. See audit sheet for full scoring information.

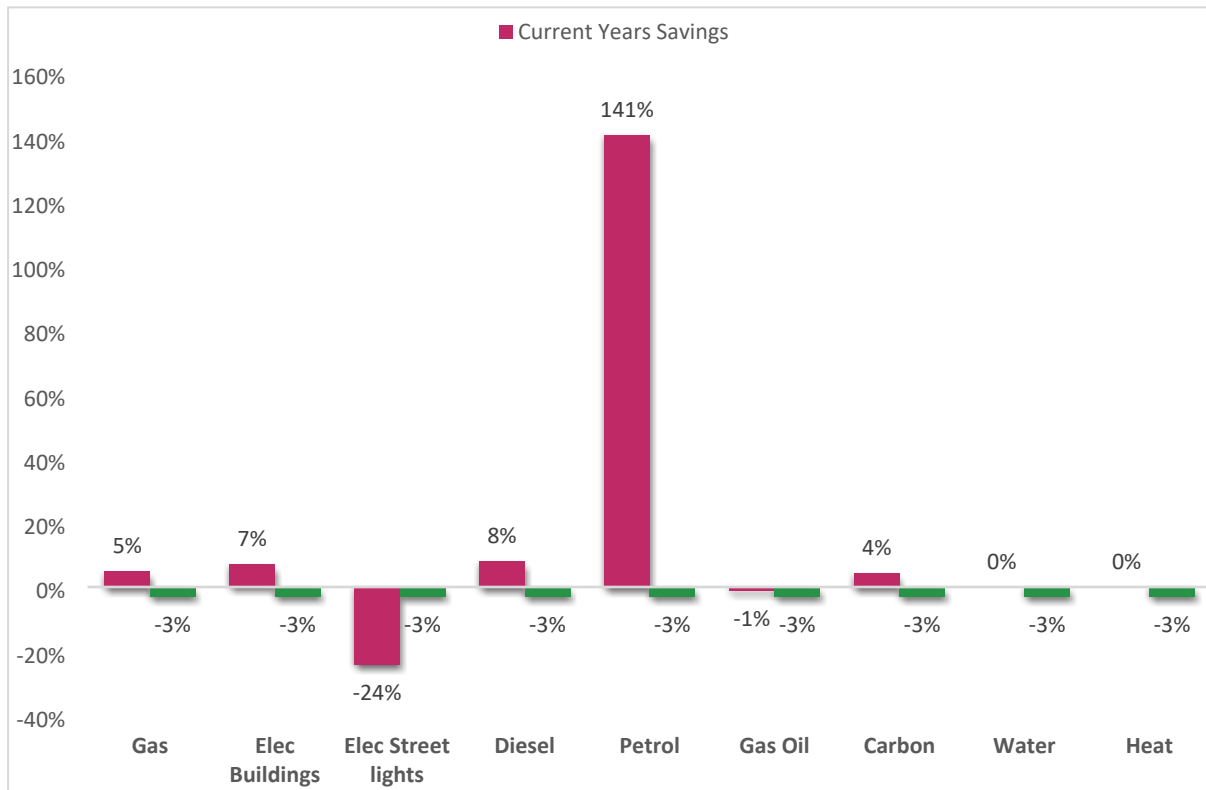
Fail	0 Points: A failing score means that this criterion has not been met nor is any progress demonstrated.
Action Needed	1 point: Action is needed to improve and should be considered in alignment with the auditor's comments and an appropriate timeline. These will be discussed during quarterly support 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.

Results

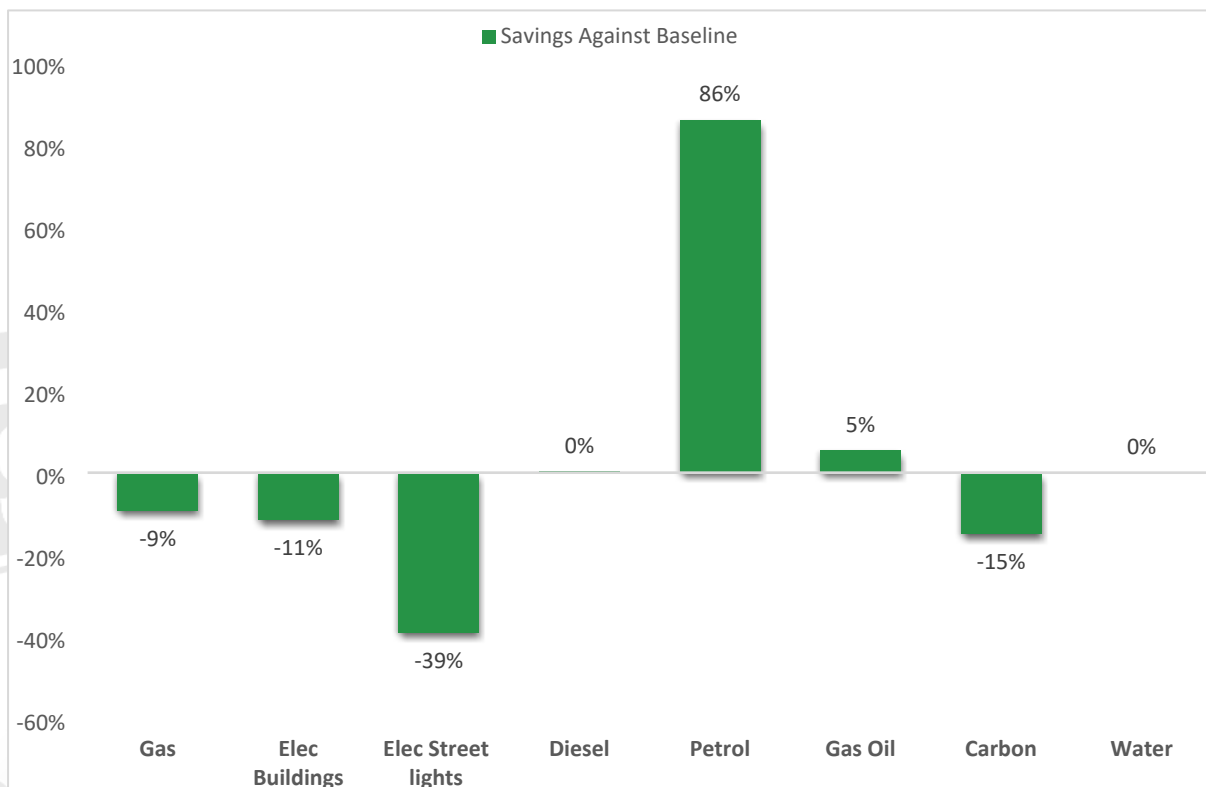
Summary Results			
Section	Score	Available Score	Percentage
Section 1 - Environmental Policy	14	21	67%
Section 2a - Measuring Resource Use	9	14	64%
Section 3 – Targets	14	21	67%
Section 4a - Action Plan	29	39	74%
Section 5 - Communication	5	6	83%
Total	71	101	70%



Year on year performance



Baseline Year Performance



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