

Climate Change Action Plan Review Appendix 1

Progress and recommended revisions

Summary

This document describes the progress of CBC in meeting carbon reduction targets after the first year of Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) delivery. It discusses progress and limitations, and then proposes changes to the CCAP for discussion. These are:

- Minor modifications to two existing actions under the CCAP (5 and 15)
- Addition of six new actions:
 - Action 40. Review CCAP and prioritise actions.
 - Action 41. Training and development
 - Action 42. CBC Capacity building
 - Action 43. Carbon accounting framework
 - Action 44. Climate neutral council report
 - Action 45. Climate neutral borough report

Introduction

This document represents an attempt to assess the progress of CBC in meeting our targets after the first year of CCAP delivery. It includes: a critical appraisal of current progress, a discussion of limitations, and a proposal for future development given changes in the wider environmental and political landscape.

This document includes:

1. A brief review of the current situation in delivery of the CCAP and CBC's climate change ambitions
2. An assessment of the weaknesses or omissions in current activity and delivery
3. A series of recommendations for modification of the plan, additional work, and principles to inform future activity.

The programme of development outlined here is primarily inward looking. This is deliberate. As part of the long-term development of the council's actions on climate change the programme seeks to define clear institutional goals and milestones for

assessing the performance of council activity and directing limited resources to the greatest effect. It would be very easy to overlook the need for organisational evolution in facing climate change. It would also be very easy to utilise the climate change officer's time and council resources in a diffuse, disorganised way and prioritise activity over impact. In investing time and resources into foundational requirements, such as carbon accounting and staff training, at this stage the recommended actions seek to multiply our ability to address climate change in the future while monitoring the real-world impact.

Current situation

Targets

The need for a full programme of activities to mitigate climate change in Chesterfield Borough has been recognised. This is reflected in the council's commitment to become a climate neutral organisation by 2030, and as a borough by 2050. In the absence of clear guidance from central government, Chesterfield Borough Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and went on to develop an action plan to steer council activities - which was adopted in February 2020.

The climate change action plan (CCAP) incorporates a range of thirty-nine actions developed in consultation with partners and stakeholders which were intended as a first step on the journey to climate neutrality. Each of the actions within the CCAP has a deadline attached; although these are primarily to show the rate of activity against expected progress milestones rather than being linked to targets relating to emissions reduction.

Progress

Progress has not been uniform across the actions from the CCAP – among other factors, the Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on council activities. Of the thirty-nine actions, thirteen have been successfully established, eight have been adversely impacted by the pandemic or other events, and a further eighteen are expected to be delivered as specified as shown in Figure 1 below.

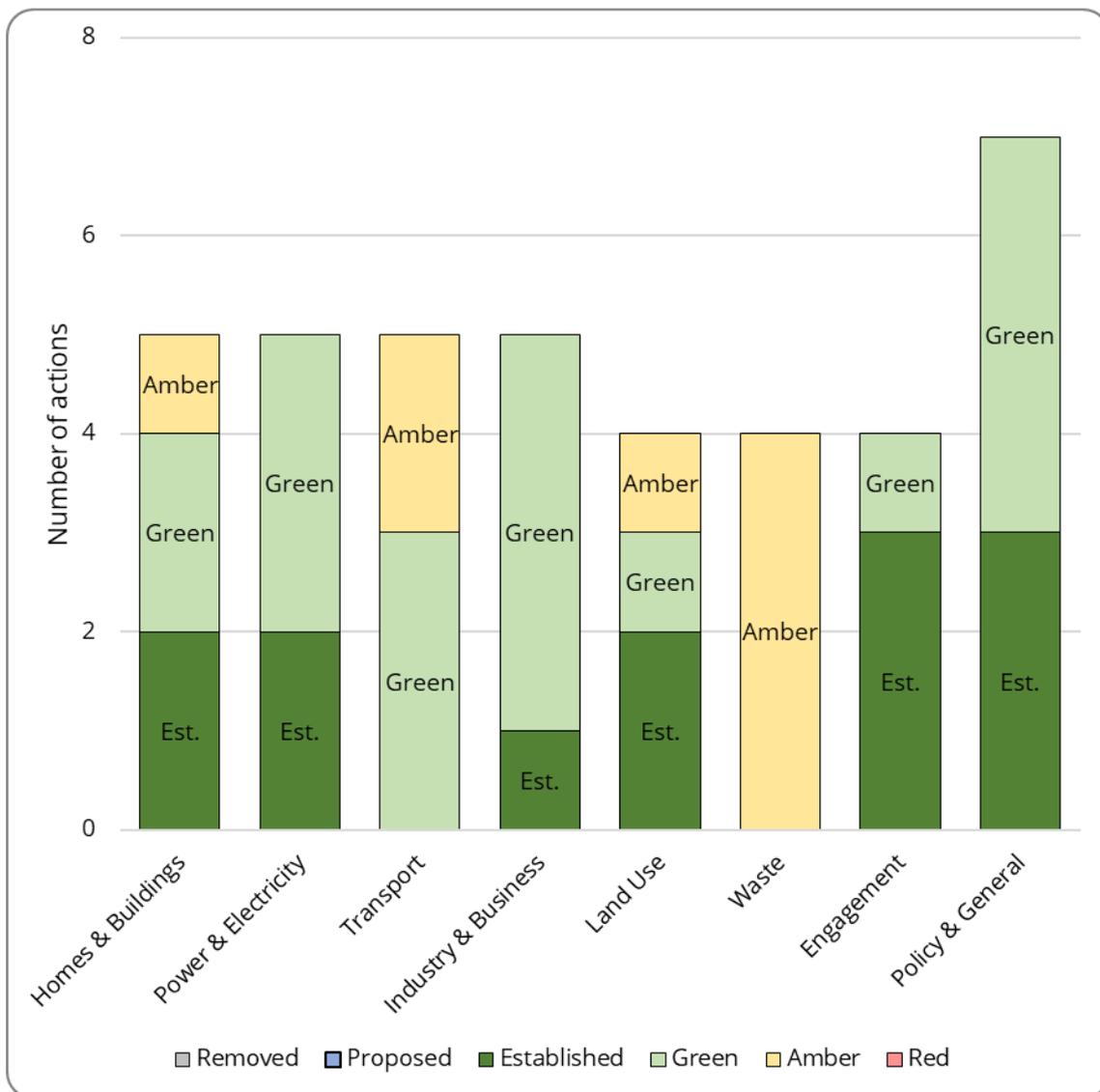


Figure 1. Chesterfield Borough Council CCAP delivery as of May 2021.

It is important to recognise that the activities specified in the CCAP do not necessarily represent progress towards climate neutrality, they include several actions targeted at more general environmental objectives, and actions are predicated on influence of other organisations (primarily the county council and central government) or on measures which are not within the remit of CBC.

The target for internal climate neutrality is 2030, which means that CBC has around eight and a half years to transform firmly entrenched business practices and address any shortfalls or barriers that may occur during that time.

Lessons learned to date

One year into implementation of the CCAP, several issues surrounding the actions are apparent:

1. The actions do not all carry equal weight in terms of climate impact. They represent a wide range of priorities and activities which are working on similar agendas; however, they are not prioritised as such.
2. The actions do not all carry equal weight in terms of work required. For example, action 8: switching energy supply to renewables (projected cost £10k) is a relatively short task when compared with action 1: invest in improving the thermal / energy efficiency of social housing stock (projected cost £13.7M). Both actions carry equal weight in the CCAP.
3. There seems to be confusion about which activities will have a demonstrable climate impact, and which are wider sustainability / environmental / social goals.
4. The actions are not monitored in terms of impact. While teams and officers can measure activity – number of trees planted, meetings attended, properties insulated, etc. there is no framework for recording the impact of these activities on the climate. Many of the actions are positive and address other council goals, but their effectiveness at hitting climate goals is less well understood and not always measured.
5. Some teams have reported lack of capacity, or uncertainty of whether the actions are achievable due in part to the challenges emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic. Others have proposed alternative activities to achieve outcomes.

Wider developments

Political environment

It is likely that central government will follow the example of the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament and set a reporting requirement for council emissions. This has recently been recommended to them by the Climate Change Committee.

The environment generally, and climate change specifically is virtually certain to become more prominent in the coming months. The next COP summit is being held in Glasgow in November and many public sector bodies, ENGOs and lobbying groups will be using the event to highlight their activity and to further their objectives. Central government is likely to be publicising activity to date and setting ambitious goals to demonstrate that they are taking the issue seriously to give weight to their negotiating position.

These expected developments are likely to have a significant impact on our reporting requirements and goals as they take place.

Funding

It appears likely that substantial sums of money will be released by central government to meet national-level climate objectives. There are also a range of private and third sector organisations with objectives to improve their climate change performance,

which may take the form of partnership working, investments, or in-kind support for green projects and infrastructure. This represents a significant opportunity for the borough, both in our ability to manage our emissions, and through enhancement of existing programmes to address wider environmental and socioeconomic goals.

Savings

Nearly all the goods and services which we buy have some form of GHG emission associated with them; this means that most council emissions are correlated with expenditure. The magnitude of the emission per pound varies (if we buy low carbon alternatives for example) but some form of emission still exists whenever money is spent. This means that, in many cases, a reduction in emissions also results in a reduction in cost. The only major exception to this rule is when our spending prevents an alternative, higher cost scenario from arising.

Covid-19

In a post-Covid environment many teams and individuals within the council have been stretched, our ability to deliver ongoing services has been tested, and in many cases simply maintaining standards has required all available resources. CBC has constrained financial resources, and limited staff capacity to engage with new opportunities, this has been exacerbated by the effort required to handle Covid

What does this mean?

Our ambitions to reach carbon neutrality by 2030 will require significant changes to our working practices and infrastructure.

As we get closer to our targets, more rapid action is likely to be necessary. In addition to this, we expect that reporting requirements to become stricter and more focussed over time as climate change activities continue to increase in urgency.

The CCAP is supporting our ambitions to reduce emissions but reporting and monitoring capacity could be improved to identify our strengths, weaknesses, or progress against our goals in relation to climate change.

Constraints exist on CBC's ability to implement climate change mitigation projects on the scale required. While large funding opportunities are available, our ability to engage with them and draw down financial resources is not sufficient in all areas.

Proposal

Given the situation as outlined above, and the recent release of a guidance document by the Climate Change Committee¹ there are several activities which would improve the council's ability to manage our goals, obligations, and aspirations for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

¹ *Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget*. Available from <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget>

We need to

1. Understand that the regulatory and political framework, and opportunities surrounding climate change activities are changeable, and that we need to be prepared to meet new challenges.
2. Monitor and measure our emissions, and prioritise the most significant sources of GHGs
3. Review our actions against our goals and identify areas which need greater support to meet targets.
4. Identify a route for decarbonisation both for the organisation, and for the wider borough

On this basis, changes are proposed for the implementation of the CCAP. These include some minor changes to existing actions, and the addition of six new items to better equip the council to manage our climate change obligations in the future.

Most of the actions outlined here are not expected to require modification to the climate change budget, however several them do involve changes to the activities of council officers which may have workload implications for the teams concerned. The only proposed action which is believed to possibly have financial implications beyond the climate change budget, is the development of a carbon accounting framework (CBC to identify a portfolio of potential climate change mitigation and adaptation projects in outline / draft form to support external funding bids.

Action 43). The cost associated with this action depends entirely on the mechanism chosen for delivery.

The revised actions represent changes to a wide range of internal council activities, and as such are likely to require support and interventions from senior officers or elected members to implement.

Amendments to existing CCAP actions

Two actions have been identified within the plan which would benefit from minor changes as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Proposed modification to existing CCAP actions.

Action	Existing text	Revised text	Rationale
5	CBC to refresh its asset management strategy to focus on its operational	CBC to refresh its asset management strategy to focus on <i>reducing the</i>	Focusses the action more tightly on activity to handle climate change without

	premises to be fuelled by clean technology.	<i>greenhouse gas emissions from its operational premises.</i>	requiring a definition of "clean technology".
15	CBC to raise with DCC and neighbouring districts and boroughs options regarding local bus service regulation.	CBC to engage with DCC and neighbouring districts <i>to work on improving sustainable transport networks.</i>	While bus services remain a key element within this action, including wider sustainable transport networks allows work to be carried out supporting other greener transport activities.

New CCAP actions

To address the gaps identified above, and deal with expected changes in council obligations, six additional actions are proposed for the CCAP:

- Action 40. Review CCAP and prioritise actions.
- Action 41. Training and development
- Action 42. CBC Capacity building
- Action 43. Carbon accounting framework
- Action 44. Climate neutral council report
- Action 45. Climate neutral borough report

These are outlined below:

Action 40. Review CCAP and prioritise actions.

While most of the items on the CCAP are useful and may result in climate change mitigation this impact is variable and several actions exist which are likely to have very limited impact on the climate.

As shown in Figure 2, total borough emissions are overwhelmingly from static energy use (primarily heating and electricity) and transportation (mostly road-based). Actions prioritising emissions from waste, industrial processes, and land use have a lower impact proportionally, even though they may be desirable for other environmental, social, or economic reasons.

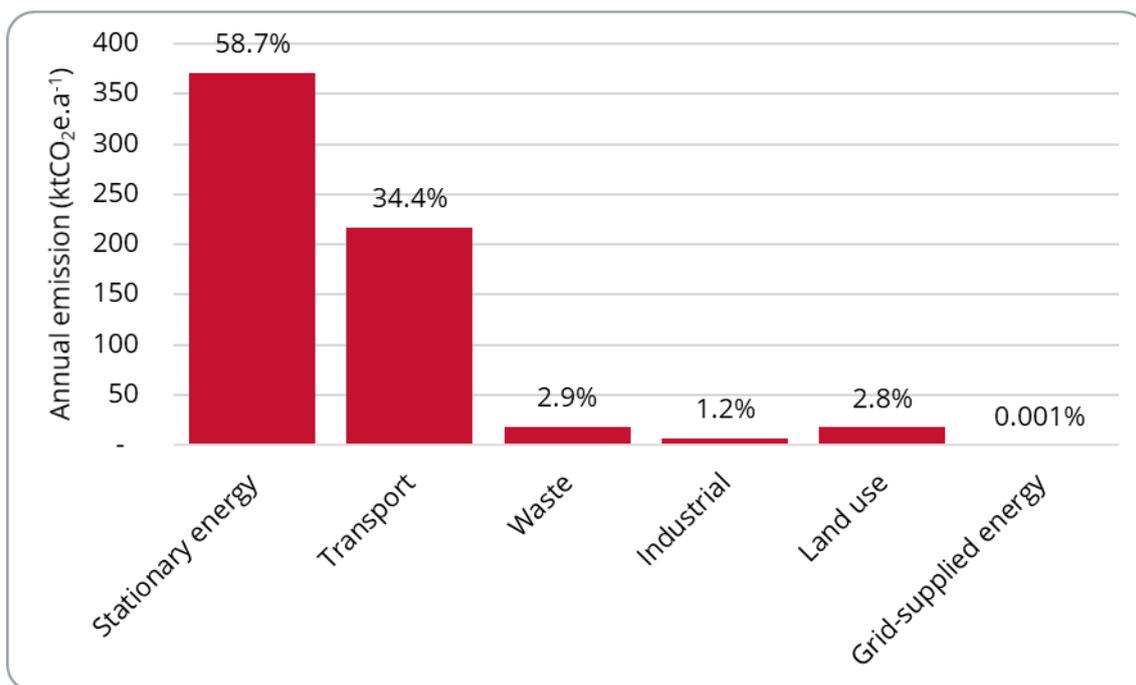


Figure 2. Chesterfield whole borough annual emissions inventory 2018. Data from the ScatterCities tool²

These actions, as well as activities to support social, economic, and other environmental benefits (such as biodiversity) are important and should remain part of wider council policy and delivery, but should not be allowed to absorb resources through this delivery pathway which are disproportionate to their climate impact.

In order to apply resources intelligently, an assessment is needed to identify and prioritise the actions in terms of the impact specifically on climate change.

The financial cost to CBC of this reprioritisation is expected to be small as it represents a re-evaluation of internal delivery.

CBC to re-evaluate CCAP actions 1-39 and prioritise them by estimated magnitude of climate change mitigation /adaptation impact.

Action 41. Training and development

To effectively prioritise and implement climate change policies, officers and elected members need a good general understanding of the effects of climate change, the degree / urgency of action needed, potential opportunities and existing best practice. This activity has already been started under the “Engagement and communications” action of the action plan (CCAP:29). We are in the process of organising “carbon literacy”³ training for 20 elected members and exploring the feasibility of developing an

² ScatterCities Project, run by Anthesis Group: <https://scattercities.com/data/inventory>

³ The Carbon Literacy Project, run by The Carbon Literacy Trust: <https://carbonliteracy.com/>

internal training programme for other elected members and CBC officers. The costs associated with this programme are not large and are partly covered by our ongoing membership of the Local Authorities Energy Partnership; however, senior support for the programme will be important to encourage uptake. An outline proposal for delivery is included in Appendix 3: Draft Carbon Literacy Programme

CBC to implement a programme of training to provide elected members and officers with the knowledge and understanding necessary to meet CBC's climate goals.

Action 42. CBC Capacity building

There are two clear barriers to more effective and extensive climate change action by the council; these are finances and officer time. Funding and support for climate change projects is available from a range of sources, this allows us to address the financial implications of action and contract-in expertise - which reduces the requirement for officer time. It is important to recognise that funding deadlines are often very tight and instructing / managing third party contractors also carries a resource overhead.

In order to access wider support, we need to develop a pipeline of potential projects to address climate change that can be expanded to take advantage of additional resources as they become available. This will require us to:

1. Identify a portfolio of possible projects which align with our climate change ambitions and other goals
2. Be aware of new resourcing opportunities
3. Be prepared to draw up formal funding bids with little warning.
4. Effectively manage new projects if the bids are successful

To develop a portfolio of early-stage draft ideas, CBC should develop a multi-disciplinary working group to identify and assess potential projects. These members of staff will also act as climate champions within their directorates to identify the opportunities, benefits and costs of the projects, gather feedback and suggestions from within their teams, and to help disseminate further information about climate change

Financial costs are not necessarily large depending on team configuration, and existing workload. This action is specifically designed to identify sources of funding and as such should result in a net increase in council budgets for climate change related activity. While support for this activity can be provided to some extent by the Climate Change Officer, delivery of this action will require expertise and experience in a range of different fields, and this will require the engagement of a cross section of council staff.

CBC to identify a portfolio of potential climate change mitigation and adaptation projects in outline / draft form to support external funding bids.

Action 43. Carbon accounting framework

At present, CBC is not recording all the data necessary to calculate carbon emissions as an organisation. This reduces our effectiveness at reporting to government, prioritising actions, communicating successes, and justifying policy decisions. It also prevents us from identifying areas where a reduction in GHG emissions would also result in a reduction in financial cost.

Software solutions exist to facilitate this kind of data collection and management. These vary from simple database / dashboard systems with very basic assumptions about emissions, to complex data analyses based on financial data and sophisticated models. Aside from the obvious financial cost of implementing this kind of analysis there can be significant resourcing implications for integration with existing IT systems, and data input.

In the expectation that reporting of carbon emissions will become mandatory in the near-term, CBC should work to identify a cost and resource effective solution which is compatible with our existing practices and data management. This system should allow reporting of CBC emissions, as well as allowing more detailed analysis of the main sources of emissions within the council's control.

CBC to explore options for monitoring greenhouse gas emissions with a view to implementing a data recording and analysis structure from the beginning of the financial year 22/23.

Action 44. Climate neutral council report

CBC currently has a limited understanding of our current emission profile, the efficacy of our actions to date, and the steps we need to take to reduce this to zero by 2030.

A report should be commissioned to include:

- A review of CBC activities and estimates of their relative climate impact (linking to action 43 if possible)
- A detailed proposal for reducing the impacts of these activities to zero by 2030, including interim targets and possible mechanisms / technologies (linking to action 42)
- An analysis of CBC strategy and policy documents with respect to climate impact, and an assessment of potential conflicts which require resolution.

This report would then inform future decision making within the council, the development of future CCAP activities, and influence ongoing strategy development.

The financial cost of such a report is likely to be substantial, however the risks of acting in an incoherent manner on climate are extremely large. Savings have been identified within the existing climate change budget, and it is proposed that a

proportion of these be redirected to this action and CBC to commission a “pathway to a climate neutral council” report

Action 45 below.

CBC to commission a “pathway to a climate neutral council” report

Action 45. Climate neutral borough report

Direct emissions from CBC activities are believed to be a relatively small proportion of emissions borough-wide, but the council does have a wider role in leading, promoting, and supporting the transition of the borough to a climate neutral space.

Significant progress has already been made in reducing emissions compared to the widely used 1990 baseline, however most of these savings are as a result of national grid decarbonisation and “exporting” emissions outside the national boundary. Significant changes to lifestyles, infrastructure, and business practice will be required to get the rest of the way.

Governance functions which would be significant to this process are not all carried out by CBC - coming from both higher and lower tiers of government. Another (more extensive) range of activities by members of the public fall outside CBC’s direct control. Given these significant constraints, a report should be commissioned to provide an assessment of the changes which would need to occur within the borough to reach climate neutrality by 2050. This should include:

- An assessment of the main sources of climate impacts within the borough and their relative importance.
- A detailed proposal for reducing the impacts of these activities to zero by 2050, including interim targets and possible mechanisms / technologies.
- A breakdown of how CBC could / should aim to influence other tiers of government and the wider public to reach these goals.
- A series of key recommended actions for CBC to take with a timeline for action and an indication of cost.
- An analysis of the opportunities to the borough in terms of green economic growth
- A mapping exercise of key partner organisations, and opportunities for collaboration

As described above, the financial cost of such a report is likely to be substantial, however the risks of acting in an incoherent manner on climate are very large. Savings

of have been identified within the existing climate change budget, and it is proposed that a proportion of these be redirected to this action and Action 44 above.

CBC to commission a “pathway to a climate neutral borough” report

Overarching principles

The proposal outlined here is informed by a number of key principles. These have been adopted in order to compensate for existing constraints within CBC’s climate change response and are intended to apply across the new and existing activities within the CCAP. They also ensure that existing programmes incorporate recommendations made in the recent *Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget* report by the Climate Change Committee⁴ as described in Appendix 2.

Evidence based decisions and focussed action

There is a lack of evidence on the relative impacts and urgency of different actions that the council could take, and we have limited resources and time in which to act. As such, interventions and activities within the council need to be carefully targeted to ensure that resources and time are used efficiently. Although uncertainties remain and all future decisions take place to some extent with incomplete information; activities need to be adopted with a clear understanding of the rationale behind the decision and how it relates to the council’s climate objectives. This principle is most clearly adopted in actions 40 (CCAP prioritisation) 43 (carbon accounting) 44, and 45 (the climate neutral reports).

Collaborative delivery

CBC is not able to address the task of reducing the borough’s climate impact alone, and neither is the climate change officer able to reduce CBC’s impact without widespread cooperation and support from within the organisation. Actions 41 (training) 42 (capacity building) and 43 (carbon accounting) are designed to expand the level of collaboration and coordination between different elements within the council primarily through the development of a climate champions programme.

Flexibility

Climate change has moved up the agenda rapidly, and significant changes will need to take place at pace if CBC is to meet its commitments. Funding opportunities are available, as are a huge range of potential overlaps and synergies between climate change projects and other environmental, social, and economic goals. A core aim of these proposals is to improve the council’s ability to react to new information and opportunities – by clearly defining a strategic direction of travel (actions 44, and 45: the

⁴ *Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget*. Available from <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget>

climate neutral reports) the core priorities (actions 40:CCAP prioritisation and 43: carbon accounting) and improving our internal capabilities in depth (actions 41:training and 42: capacity development)