

28 NOVEMBER 2023

## CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS ASSESSMENT 2022/23

### Purpose of the report:

This is the second progress assessment to be done since Surrey declared a climate emergency in 2019 and the Climate Change Delivery Plan (the Delivery Plan) was published in 2021. It sets out the achievements we have made in supporting residents and businesses to reduce their emissions as well as the progress made to date on the Council's 2030 target. It also recommends areas of focus in the coming year to ensure that the plan has the greatest impact.

### Introduction:

1. It has been two years since the publication of the Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan 2021-2025 [1] which set out to save between 1.2 and 2.4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide by 2025, in line with Surrey's Climate Change Strategy [2]. Local Authorities, working with partners, seek to play a key role in supporting net-zero carbon across Surrey by 2050 and more stretching targets within our organisations alongside action from residents, businesses and national government.
2. Annex 1 sets out the interim findings of the climate change assessment which will be developed into two full reports for Cabinet (1) Surrey County Council's 2030 net-zero progress 2022-23 and (2) Greener Futures Climate Change Progress Report 2022-23 (the county's progress against its 2050 net zero target).

### 2030 Surrey County Council progress report

3. In respect of its 2030 target for being a net zero authority, Surrey County Council has reduced carbon by 1kt through estate rationalisation and 6kt from carbon reduction measures. It has also delivered £2.5M of annual bill savings, nearly £5M of additional funding and 0.3MW of solar power.
4. Key successes have included: (1) the streetlighting LED replacement programme; (2) the retrofit of buildings with PV, low carbon heating and

insulation; (3) the implementation of a sustainable procurement policy; and (4) the carbon literacy training pilot.

5. With a 34% reduction in emissions achieved since 2019, Surrey County Council is on track to meet net zero targets, although it should be noted that given the scale of the task that remains, there is considerable further action and scaling up of existing projects required and planned. This includes acceleration of solar PV, incorporation of building retrofit into the asset management plans, fleet decarbonisation and support for staff to reduce emissions in homes and through their service provision on behalf of the Council. In addition, there is further action being taken to support staff using public transport and providing better active travel facilities at the Council's offices and hubs.
6. For the Council's 2030 corporate net-zero target, key areas of focus for next year include (1) fast-tracking solar PV on schools and leased buildings to help pay for retrofit (2) continuing to bid for PSDS government capital funding and aligning retrofit with the developing Asset Strategy; (3) a focus on staff travel and fleet policy; (4) a continuation and scale up of carbon literacy; (5) investigation of support for staff to make improvements in their homes and lifestyles; (6) increased measurement of wider carbon emissions that are not part of the 2030 target (scope 3 emissions). All of the above will continue to be assessed in the context of current government funding, and included in future lobbying as appropriate.

## **2050 progress report**

7. The Delivery Plan has significantly increased climate action across Surrey since the net-zero targets were set in 2019. This includes the treatment of 1,350 fuel poor homes, installation of 15,800 PV panels through the solar together scheme, 0.5M sustainable journeys logged onto the betterpoints app, 217 businesses with low carbon grants, 800 schools with green careers advice and many more.
8. When added together, the benefits of the projects have been considerable. Since the net-zero targets were set, the plan has resulted in 20kt tonnes of carbon savings, £63M worth of grants and private sector funding, 8M bill savings and 10MW solar PV installed.
9. However, when that good progress is mapped against the scale of the challenge, it is all too apparent how much more needs to be done if the county is to meet its 2050 target. Emissions have increased since last year, largely due to emissions from transport, which despite some progress and considerable investment in modal shift, has been driven by the bounce back in pre-Covid transport patterns –.

10. As was made clear from the publication of the Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan, the 2050 net zero target for Surrey – and indeed all areas across the country for that matter – is critically dependent on a step change in national policy and investment in decarbonisation. With further announcements made by the Government in mid September to step down certain national policy actions in relation to climate change such as a five year delay to the ban on the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles, it is clear that a significant gap in national decision making, policy and funding for appropriate action has resulted in all nine report sections showing a shortfall in what needs to be done and put in place that could lead to the Surrey 2050 target going off track next year. If communities, residents and businesses are to make the progress that is needed, then it is critical that Government addresses these gaps at a national level.
11. Through the Plan, Surrey’s Local Authorities are playing a key role in helping to create the environment in which communities can make more sustainable choices, but their action is limited by national government policy, limited finances and resources, and powers available for them to act. Where action needed is outside local authority control, a strong joint lobbying strategy is being developed with district colleagues and partners focusing on those areas where there is a real need for strong national intervention and support.
12. This lobbying will be a key focus for the Delivery Plan for the next year, given the importance of driving meaningful national action. In addition, and in line with the Delivery Plan, other key areas of focus for next year include: (1) a continuation engagement and projects with strong impact; (2) more support to inform and finance decarbonisation of energy in homes, schools and businesses; (3) positioning to help businesses to take up the substantial market opportunity that the green economy brings; (4) a scale up of renewables, active travel and EV infrastructure where feasible and supported; (5) putting in place critical prevention measures to protect residents and biodiversity from the impacts of climate change (6) lobbying for faster change from Government and others.

|                     |
|---------------------|
| <b>Conclusions:</b> |
|---------------------|

13. Surrey County Council and Surrey’s Districts and Boroughs remain strongly committed to delivering on net zero and are taking action to further this end. There have been some significant partnership achievements as evidenced in the report, and Surrey will continue to innovate and leverage in as much investment as possible from its own resources and Government, partners, residents and businesses.

14. Working with multi agency partners, across boundaries and sectors and with our own suppliers, Surrey will continue to use action on climate change and environment to deliver multiple benefits for the most vulnerable of residents, adjusting policies to ensure value for money and that no one is left behind.
15. With this commitment, at Surrey County Council, there is a fair degree of confidence that delivery on 2030 net zero targets is achievable, though funding support will need to be kept under review.
16. However, without significant, consistent and sustained policy change at the national level, including a clear mandate with resources for local authorities to act, achieving net zero by 2050 and reaping all the benefits for our residents, including the most vulnerable, remains extremely challenging to meet.
17. The Council, alongside the Greener Futures Reference Group and with its local authority partners has already committed to work in a cross party manor to step up lobbying efforts alongside other key partners and residents to galvanise a clear programme of asks and offers in the hope that this county, along with others can meaningfully influence the Government's policy agenda in this critical area.

#### **Recommendations:**

18. That CEH Select Committee recommends that Cabinet note the findings and approve the key areas of focus for next year t and the approach to the evident shortfalls as set out in the conclusions.

#### **Next steps:**

19. The full report will go to Cabinet in November, and if agreed, will be published on the SCC website. An annual assessment will take place every year up to the end of the Climate Change Delivery Plan in 2025/6.

---

#### **Report contact**

Cat Halter, Climate Change Strategic Lead

#### **Contact details**

Cat.halter@surreycc.gov.uk; Tel: 07414526808

#### **background papers**

Annex 1 - 2030 And 2050 Climate Change Assessments Draft Findings

## Sources

[1] Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan 2021-2025, SCC 2021:  
<https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/commonplace-customer-assets/surreysgreenerfuture/Final%20Climate%20Change%20Delivery%20Plan%20Full%20Document%202022.pdf>

[2] Surrey's Climate Change Strategy 2020, SCC 2020:  
<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/community/climate-change/what-are-we-doing/climate-change-strategy/2020>

This page is intentionally left blank