

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>7 APRIL 2025</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL NET ZERO STRATEGY REVIEW</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>PAUL SMITH DECARBONISATION PROGRAMME MANAGER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>The purpose of this report is to seek views from Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 on the updated Bridgend County Borough Council Net Zero Strategy.</b></p> <p><b>The Strategy was adopted in January 2023. It was to be reviewed to ensure it reflects the progress made, and current financial and technological environments. This review has been completed and the draft updated strategy is presented as appendix 1.</b></p>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek views and comments from Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 on the updated Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Net Zero Strategy so that they can be incorporated into the final updated strategy.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 In October 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) produced a report on the state of global warming. The report identified that a continued warming of global temperatures will significantly increase the likelihood and resulting impact of floods, droughts and extreme heat. The report stated the importance of limiting global warming and a requirement for an unprecedented scale and speed of action.

- 2.2 In November 2018, the Councils of Bristol and Manchester were among the first to pass Motions that declared a 'Climate Emergency' and set ambitious targets aiming to be carbon neutral by 2030 and 2038 respectively to support efforts to limit global warming.
- 2.3 Welsh Government declared a Climate Emergency in April 2019. Following this the Welsh Government committed to achieving a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. In addition, there is a commitment to coordinating action to help other areas of the economy to make a decisive shift away from fossil fuels, involving academia, industry and the third sector.
- 2.4 Bridgend County Borough Council declared a climate emergency in June 2020 and established its Climate Change Response Programme. This contained a commitment to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030 across its operations, aligned with the Welsh Government ambition of achieving a Net Zero public sector by 2030. This Bridgend 2030 Net Zero Carbon Strategy ("Bridgend 2030 Strategy") was the initial strategic step in achieving this commitment.
- 2.5 The strategy lists eight commitments and six action plans aimed at reducing the BCBC's greenhouse gas emissions across buildings, transport, procurement, land use, and waste. It also describes the governance arrangements needed to support delivery of the action plans.
- 2.6 Delivery of Decarbonisation activity is driven by the Decarbonisation Programme Team. It should be noted that delivery of this work cuts across all areas of BCBC activity and must be factored into decision making in all service areas.
- 2.7 BCBC uses the Welsh Government Welsh public sector net zero reporting methodology (Public Sector Net Reporting Guide) to calculate emissions arising from its operations and to assess progress against the Net Zero Strategy. Annual emissions have been calculated since the 2019-20 financial year.
- 2.8 Under this methodology, emissions are grouped into those from buildings, supply chain (purchased goods and services), transport, and waste. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of BCBC emissions by category for all years reported.

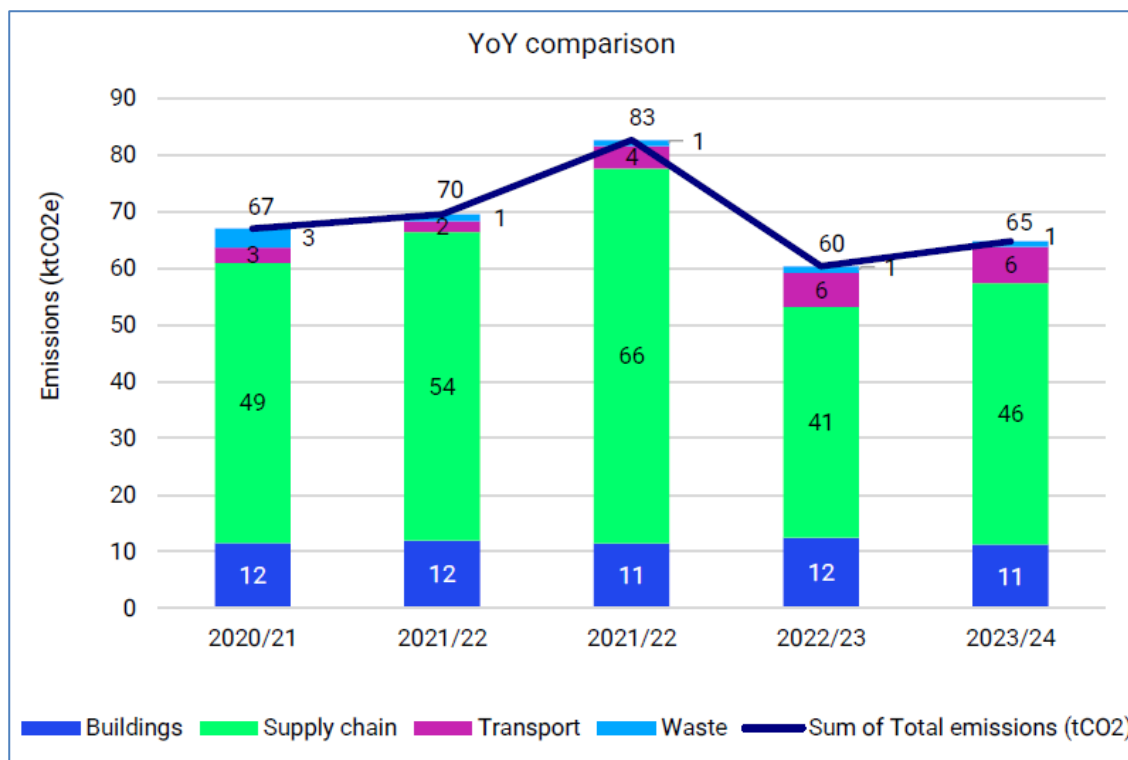


Figure 1 Year on year comparison of BCBC emissions

2.9 In the latest BCBC emissions report covering 2023-24, supply chain accounts for 71% of the total carbon footprint (Figure 2). This is a consistent trend across local authorities and many other public sector bodies. Actions to reduce this category of emissions are mostly not in the direct control of BCBC, and are long-term, so much of the Decarbonisation Programme activity has been targeted at other categories of emissions where BCBC has a high degree of control and can quickly implement positive changes. This is in line with the pathway described in the 2030 strategy.

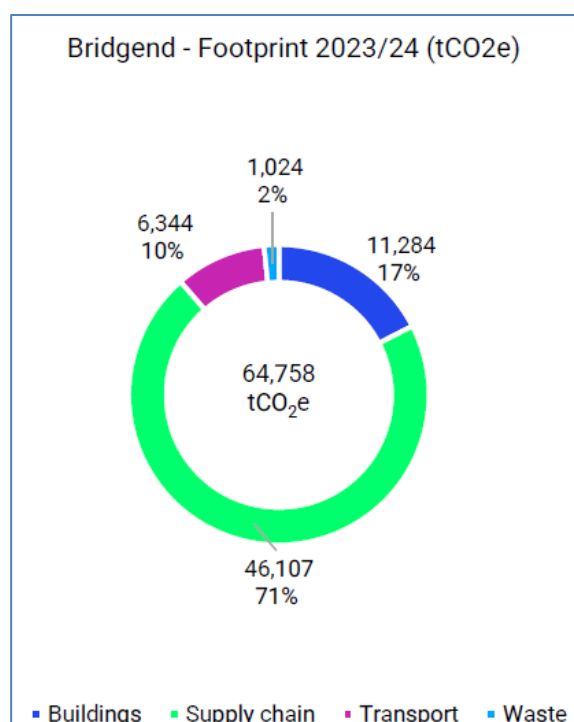


Figure 2 BCBC emissions by category

- 2.10 Interpretation of emissions is complicated by significant changes in building use between 2020 and 2023 due to the pandemic, and by changing emissions factors used to calculate grid electricity emissions. Since 2021-22 actual consumption of gas has reduced by 12% and electricity by 8%.

### **3. Current situation**

- 3.1 The Strategy has been reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose, reflects current UK and Welsh Government policy, latest technologies and regulation, and commercial / financial options. This will provide assurance that the actions within the strategy are being delivered in the most efficient way. The review included:

- A review of the suitability of the existing action plans, governance arrangements, and alignment with current Welsh Government policy.
- An update of the emissions modelling and trajectory to 2030 incorporating outputs from completed annual emissions reports.
- Recommendations for modifications to governance arrangements and action plans, simplifying/rationalising where possible, for continued delivery.
- An appraisal of potential options for offsetting residual emissions in 2030.
- Estimated cost for delivery of actions and achievement of net zero by 2030

- 3.2 The full review report can be seen at **Appendix 1** and the outcomes of the review are summarised below.

#### **3.3 Governance**

Oversight of strategy delivery is by the Decarbonisation Programme Board which is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment. The current strategy assigns each activity stream a 'Carbon Lead' to ensure that every area is represented across the organisation. These are individual officers who will review progress against existing action plans and report back to the Programme Board. This has proven to be difficult in practice largely because of a lack of capacity and difficulty coordinating Carbon Lead areas that span across multiple service areas e.g. Transport, Land Use.

The reviewed strategy proposes that the individual carbon leads are replaced by Communities of Practice (CoP), which are formal groups made up of officers that are actively involved in delivering elements of the strategy, with a Terms of Reference, Chair and rolling agenda. Members will be practitioners so will be in positions where they are able to enact change and share knowledge across the organisation which should lead to more effective delivery of actions. The proposed governance structure is shown in Figure 3.

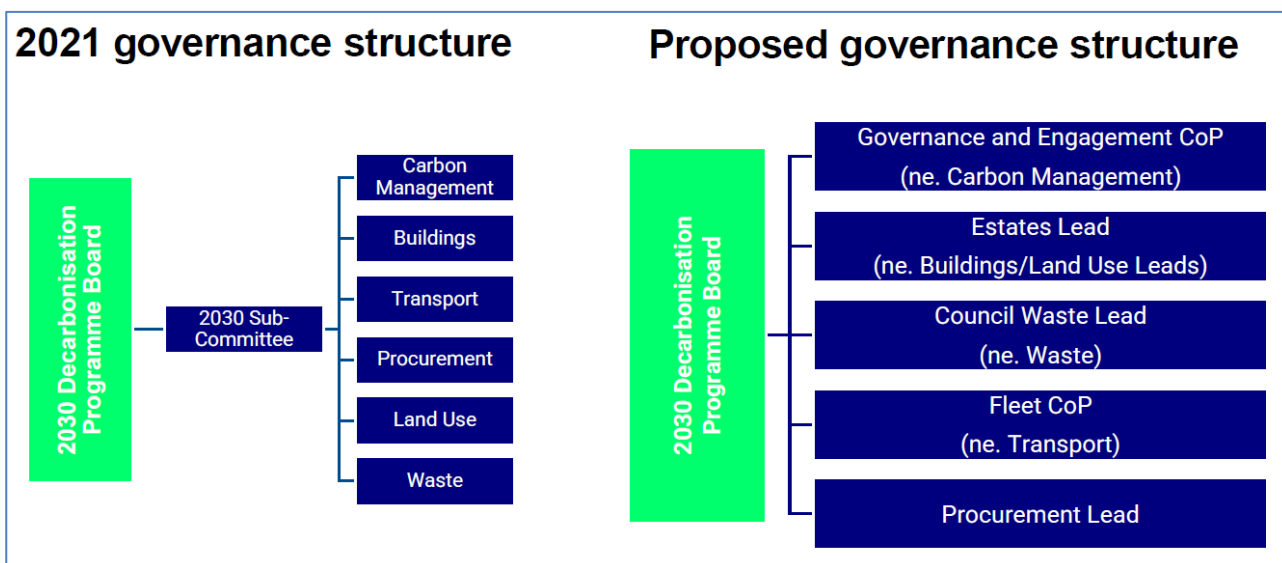


Figure 3 Proposed changes to governance structure

### 3.4 Action plans

The actions set in the original strategy to achieve net zero by 2030 were reviewed to remove those actions that have been achieved, revise or clarify action descriptions so that they are more deliverable, and move actions under appropriate Communities of Practice. The biggest changes relate to waste actions where the Welsh Government Workplace Recycling Regulations in place from April 2024 removed the need for some specific actions.

### 3.5 Emissions and cost modelling

The emissions model originally developed for BCBC's 2021 Net Zero Strategy has been updated to reflect actual emissions from 2021 to 2024 and to incorporate the revised actions identified during the strategy review. The updated model quantifies the emissions reductions associated with the proposed decarbonisation actions and outlines the projected emissions pathway to 2030. This helps to estimate the gap to target (i.e. the remaining carbon emissions). Based on this, a high-level offsetting analysis was carried out to explore potential options for addressing residual emissions. Alongside the emissions modelling, there is an estimate of the costs of the proposed decarbonisation actions to provide an understanding of the investment required to progress the strategy.

## 4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

## **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

- 5.1 Long term – Tackling climate Change through mitigation is a long term activity and often across several generations to enact the behaviour change required to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Integration – activities identified in this report promotes a shift towards sustainable practices and demonstrates our commitment to innovation and environmental stewardship, inspiring others to adopt similar initiatives. This holistic approach ensures that our project supports multiple well-being goals and aligns with the objectives of other public bodies.

Involvement – Engaging stakeholders with an interest in achieving activities identified in this report promotes action on climate change and demonstrates leadership to businesses, local community groups, environmental organisations, and council members.

Collaboration - Internally, we collaborate with various departments within the council to ensure alignment with broader sustainability goals and to secure necessary resources. Externally, we partner with suppliers and other public sector organisations to enhance our outreach efforts and share best practices. These partnerships enable us to pool resources, expertise, and networks, ensuring a comprehensive approach to promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices. By working together, we can more effectively address the well-being goals of reducing carbon emissions.

Prevention – Activities identified in this report should over the longer term reduce our negative impact on greenhouse gas emissions. This has a direct impact on the wellbeing of future generations so they have at least the same quality of life as we do now.

## **6. Climate Change Implications**

- 6.1 The Strategy is directly linked to climate change mitigation through the decarbonisation of the activities of Bridgend County Borough Council.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

- 7.1 No safeguarding or Corporate Parent implications associated with this report in line with the risks identified in the Safeguarding Policy.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 The draft strategy estimates the cost to achieve net zero to be approximately £59,200,000.
- 8.2 Grant funding has been, and will continue to be, an important mechanism to deliver actions that progress the decarbonisation of BCBC operations. Since 2021 BCBC has been awarded grants from Welsh Government and the Shared Prosperity Fund of £1.42m for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, £1.1m for low carbon

heating systems and solar PV, and a £204k interest free loan for LED lighting and solar PV with battery storage.

- 8.3 In addition to the grant funded infrastructure improvements, the Decarbonisation Programme team has initiated a range of 'no regret' actions that have low cost and high impact. Programmes to improve building insulation and replace lighting with LED fittings have been ongoing since 2023. Replacing all lighting with LED and improving lighting controls at the Civic Offices is conservatively estimated to have reduced annual electricity consumption by 23,000kWh. All BCBC sites (schools, offices, depots etc) have been visited so the building management systems can be optimised to minimise energy use.
- 8.4 In 2025-26 there is a capital allocation of £150,000 to support the Council with match funding for climate response grant bids. The cost of incorporating net zero in major builds, e.g. new schools, is built into each individual scheme's capital budget. This is supported by a revenue budget used to employ the Decarbonisation Programme Manager and Decarbonisation Programme Officer.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 It is recommended that Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 consider and provide comment on this report.

**Background documents:** None