

# Harlow Council Carbon Reduction Plan

## ‘Next Steps to Net Zero’

July 2021

V3

### Executive Summary

[to be drafted after discussion at the Cabinet Policy Development Working Group on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021]

- SUMMARY OF WORK TO DATE
- TARGETS FOR 2021 – 2026
- TARGET FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF NET ZERO

### Background and context

#### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 In 2010 the Council participated in the Carbon Trust’s Local Authority Carbon Management Programme which provided the Council with relevant support and guidance on carbon reduction. A team of Officers within the Council were involved in the Programme which created the Council’s first Carbon Management Plan in 2011 and resulted in a number of actions being implemented across a spectrum of Council activities and set a target of reducing operational carbon emissions by 25% by 2015/16. By 2014/15 this target had already been achieved. A further Carbon Management Plan, set in 2015, set out the Council’s strategy for its carbon reduction over the following five year period.

1.1.2 In July 2019 a Full Council meeting passed a motion declaring a climate change emergency. The motion stated that

*“This Council believes that climate change is one of the most significant threats facing the world. One of the largest factors contributing to climate change is man-made emissions, especially those relating to the use of non-sustainable power sources. This Council recognises that action must be taken quickly in order to prevent climate change from causing irreversible damage to the planet. It also recognises the numerous social benefits which are brought about by reducing*

*greenhouse gas emissions such as better air quality. This Council believes it is still possible to restore a safe climate and therefore declares a climate emergency”*

The declaration included two overarching principles to

- i) Aim to reduce Harlow’s net carbon emissions as far as possible;*
- ii) Reduce the Council’s carbon footprint at a greater rate than it is already committed to doing so.*

**It is now proposed that these principles are replaced by an unambiguous target of Harlow Council, as an organisation, achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by XXXX – (to be discussed at Cabinet Policy Development Working Group).**

1.1.3A draft initial strategy was approved by Cabinet Overview Working Group in August 2019; this identified three main work streams: Property, Environment and Community Leadership. The below actions were completed in the 2019/20 financial year:

- Creation of a program of new tree and hedgerow planting across the town, planting 5,100 trees in 2019/20.
- A commitment from HTS to move towards the introduction of an electric vehicle fleet.
- Reaffirmation of its commitment to the Garden Town development’s principles of sustainable development and transport, as set out in the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town vision statement at the Cabinet meeting of March 2019.
- Eliminated the use of single use plastics in line with the government ban across all public council buildings in October 2020, ahead of the national implementation date of April 2021.

## **1.2 What is climate change mitigation/adaptation?**

1.2.1 In order to reduce the effects of Climate Change, actions are split into two categories, those that minimize the effects of climate change (mitigation) and those that help the environment, and those who live in it, to cope with the changes Climate Change brings (adaptation).

1.2.2 The Councils’ Climate Change Emergency declaration initially focused upon the mitigation of climate change through reduction of emissions within the District and the carbon footprint of the Council’s own operations. The impact of Climate Change on the local environment is not yet widely evident, however we will look to identify and monitor the effects that Climate Change is already having on the District, for example through extreme hot and cold weather events, localized flooding or water shortages. Through early monitoring, the adaptations required to the natural and built environment will be fully understood and enacted in good time.

### 1.3 What is the UK position?

- 1.3.1 In June 2019 Parliament set in law a commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050. This is quantified as a reduction of at least 100% on the carbon emission levels of 1990. In order to meet this target the UK government is taking a broad approach which includes carbon budgeting, investment in green skills and jobs and engaging citizens to identify and prioritise actions to achieve net zero.
- 1.3.2 Under the Climate Change Act 2008 (the 2008 Act), the Government must set five-yearly carbon budgets, twelve years in advance, from 2008 to 2050. A carbon budget places a restriction on the total amount of greenhouse gases the UK can emit over a 5-year period. The UK is the first country to set legally binding carbon budgets. In 2011 the first 'Carbon Plan' was issued which sets out how the government will meet the carbon budgets set from 2008-2027. The plan includes actions to achieve low carbon buildings, transport, industry, energy generation as well as actions relating to land use and waste reduction.
- 1.3.3 The UK Government has also set up a Green Investment Bank and has made available several tranches of funding designed to boost green jobs and skills. The Council is able to make use of a number of these funding schemes, including the Public Sector De-carbonisation Scheme and electric vehicle charging point grants.
- 1.3.4 A citizen's assembly (Climate Assembly UK) was formed in 2020 and produced a report entitled *The Path to Net Zero*. The report shows how a representative sample of the population believe the UK should meet its net zero emissions commitment with detailed recommendations across ten areas including: how we travel; what we eat and how we use the land; what we buy; heat and energy use in the home; how we generate our electricity; and greenhouse gas removals. Parliament will use the report to support its work on scrutinising the Government's climate change policy and progress on the target.

### Harlow's principles and targets

- 2.1 Harlow's baseline for carbon emissions was 2700 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. The Council's previous Carbon Reduction Strategy (2016-21) set a target of reducing this by 25%. By March 2021, carbon emissions had reduced to 1634 tonnes – a reduction of 39%.
- 2.2 The Council will set a target to reach net zero emissions from its own activities of XXXX
- 2.3 For the Carbon Reduction Plan of 2021-26 a target of a further 15% reduction is suggested. The roll out of LED lighting across Council buildings and the introduction of photo-voltaic cells to generate electricity will help to

achieve this. Many of the 'quick wins' in carbon reduction have already been secured and further reductions will require substantial investments. The main contributor to this will be a move away from gas fired boilers and into sustainable sources of energy.

- 2.4 As part of this process the Council is participating in the CDP Cities Climate Change Reporting programme from 2021. Disclosing environmental data through this process allows the Council to evaluate current performance, specifically in relation to adaptation, benchmarking performance against peers and identifying areas of opportunity. The first results from this programme will be available in the autumn of 2021.
- 2.5 Identifying carbon reduction projects in terms of payback period is a successfully adopted approach for the Council. The Council's Environment Reserve was established as an 'Invest to Save' fund for energy efficiency projects. The use of an earmarked reserve enables a clear overview of the savings being achieved and ensures that they are fed back into the Fund to enable delivery of future projects.
- 2.6 There are a number of climate change mitigation and adaptation actions that have been identified under the key areas of Property, Environment and Transport and Community Leadership. By focusing on both mitigation and adaptation the Council is seeking to reduce the impact of day to day living on the environment beyond that caused by greenhouse gas emissions.
- 2.7 Later this financial year a broader report will be brought forward which will set out a more detailed Climate Change Strategy. This strategy document will outline how the Council, through use of its own powers and through partnership working with others, will achieve a broader reduction in carbon emissions across the town beyond what the Council can achieve as an organisation. This will include use of the Council's planning policies such as a revamped Design Guide, the HGGT Sustainability Guide as well as use of environmental enforcement powers. It will also include details of measures to improve household recycling across the town. Broader environmental measures will also be identified such as encouraging the take up of electric vehicles through increasing charge points, an increase in tree planting and a focus on increasing the use of forms of sustainable transport. Consideration will also be given to how Harlow Council can move from achieving Net Zero to delivering Negative Zero emissions.

## **Actions – mitigation and adaptation**

- 3.1 The Council recognizes that it has a role to play both in its own right and in partnership with others to implement actions and support initiatives that will achieve its overriding principles. It is proud of the work already being done with key partners and will look to build upon these as it moves to its net zero emissions target:

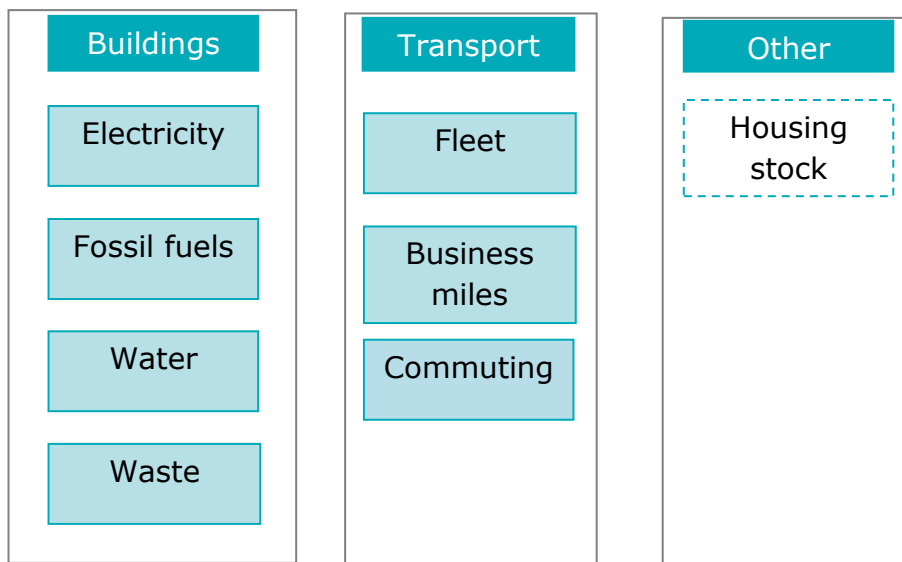
- Harlow and Gilston Garden Town: In June 2021 Harlow Council reaffirmed its commitment to the Garden Town development's principles of sustainable development through adoption of the HGGT Sustainability Guide. This has now been adopted as a material consideration for planning applications across the town and sets clear standards for sustainability in new housing and commercial developments.
- Harlow Innovation Park: the first two buildings on the Innovation Park, Nexus and Arise were both designed to BREEAM 'Excellent' standard.
- HTS have set out a commitment to transfer its vehicle fleet to a fully electric one as soon as the range of vehicles required is available on the market

### 3.2 **Property** and Staff Contributions

The Council's own estate has been subject of two Carbon Management Plans since 2011, the first achieving a reduction of 25% on a 2008 baseline, the second a further 25% on a 2014 baseline. A number of significant investments have been made in buildings services, alongside behavioral changes and a move to using electricity generated from 100% renewable sources.

When considering carbon emissions from its own estate, the Council takes into consideration those areas which it can measure, and affect the levels of change required to reduce carbon emissions. The diagram below shows this scope of emissions

**Harlow Council Scope of Emissions**

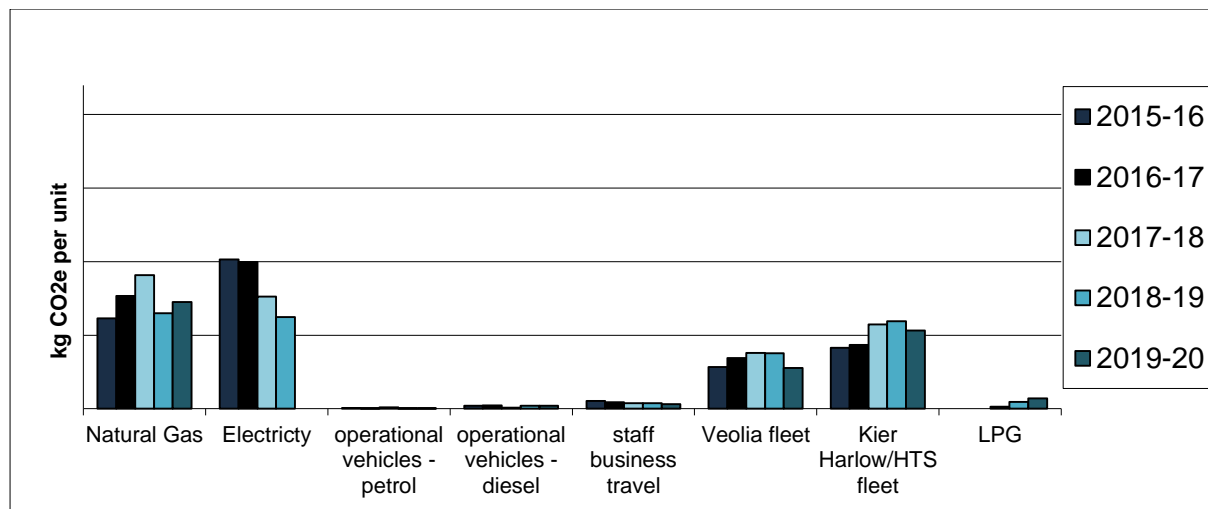


The Council's Housing stock is considered within two year HECA reports which address the energy portion of the carbon footprint of the housing stock, and the associated issue of fuel poverty. So as not to double count carbon these emissions are reported separately..

Good data management allows effective measurement and quantification of the benefits of any given project. Data collection for the Council’s carbon footprint follows the methodology used since 2011, allowing robust comparison of reduction across previous years actions, and future plans to follow. Data for energy and water usage is provided on a monthly basis through the Council’s suppliers, with gas and electric data provided electronically. Data for waste collection is supplied on request from the Council’s waste contractor and transport data is collated through the Human Resources service at the Council, Kier Harlow and our waste contract partners.

Through the work of the Staff Travel Group, Council employees are being encouraged to shift to sustainable modes of transport such as cycling and walking. However, this only forms a small element of the Council’s transport related emissions. Achieving significant reductions in transport emissions will require cooperation from the Council’s partners and contractors in how they procure and manage their fleet, including HTS Ltd. Every partner or contractor of the Council is encouraged to collate quarterly data on their own carbon emissions and set targets for reduction, thereby contributing to the overall Council target to reduce emissions

A comparison of the Council’s Co2e emissions for the past 5 years is shown below:



Previous Carbon Management Plans have demonstrated the value at stake in terms of carbon and cost if no action is taken; this ‘Business As Usual’, (BAU) scenario shows the effect on the Councils own operations if the Council chooses to take no action in relation to reducing its CO2 emissions. It has become clear since the last Carbon Management Plan was written however that the Value at Stake for Harlow is part of a much bigger global value at stake in terms of the global carbon reduction targets set through the Paris Agreement in 2015. A future Climate Change Strategy will seek to address this.

## ACTION PLAN

### PROPERTY

Property			
Short Term Actions 2021-2023			
Action	Timescales and status	Performance measurement/monitoring	Mitigation/adaptation
Installing photovoltaic panels on all public council buildings within the next two years.	Completion 2022 – work underway		
Installing LED lighting in Civic Centre, Latton Bush Centre and Leah Manning Centre	Completion 2022 – work underway		
Re-include 100% renewable energy as part of energy supply contracts renewal for electricity			
ECC bulk energy buy			
LAD GHG Green Homes grant			
Food miles - Local suppliers for sandwich run, meeting refreshments, LMC day guest service, Civic dinner,			
Develop plan and targets for HTS (H&R) renewable/efficiency standards.			
Regeneration Plans for Town centre – inclusion of green infrastructure, renewables, carbon			

neutral buildings			
Medium Term Actions 2024-2026			
Action	Timescales and status	Performance measurement/monitoring	Mitigation/adaptation
LED streetlights – incl. County			
Better Homes in Housing Strategy?			
Fuel poverty Strategy?			
Solar roof field (commercial)			
Boiler upgrades			
Offset carbon emissions from gas consumption			
Develop plan for all new Council housing building to be Carbon neutral			
Long Term Actions 2027 onwards			
Action	Timescales and status	Performance measurement/monitoring	Mitigation/adaptation
Develop plan for retrofitting the fabric of existing Council housing stock to be energy efficient			
Long term Housing strategies around energy efficiency – services and renewables (District heating – move from gas?)			



### 3.3 Environment and Transport

The current and future actions within the Environment and Transport work stream are as below

<b>Environment and Transport</b>			
Short Term Actions 2021-2023			
Action	Timescales and status	Performance measurement/monitoring	Mitigation/adaptation
Devise further tree planting strategies and set planting targets for the medium to long term.	November 2021		Adaptation
Installing electric car charging points across all council car parks within the next three years			Mitigation
Promoting the installation of electric car charging points in residential areas			
Develop and implement a Staff Travel plan to increase use of sustainable transport			
Complete EST fleet report for Harlow fleet			
Planning Policy development – Development of new Harlow Design Guide	December 2022		
Medium Term Actions 2024-2026			
Action	Timescales and status	Performance measurement/monitoring	Mitigation/adaptation
TROs – no idling			
Promote the development of Electric Vehicle charging forecourts			

Installation of water fountains in public places that reduces the use of single use plastic water bottles.			
Develop a plan for HTS (Property & Environment) Ltd to switch over to electric power vehicles, plant and machinery – including vehicle to grid			
Require the use/installation of SuDs on all large new builds in line with Planning Policy			
Long Term Actions 2027 onwards			
Action	Timescales and status	Performance measurement/monitoring	Mitigation/adaptation
Development of new high quality public transport system as part of HGGT Sustainable Transport Corridor network			
Develop plan for HTS to source battery technology for its electric vehicles from companies who ensure environmentally friendly lithium mining techniques			
Harlow Council to consider procuring own electric vehicle car pool fleet for staff to use for work purposes			

### 3.4 Community leadership

The current and future actions within the Community Leadership work stream are as below

<b>Community Leadership</b>			
Short Term Actions 2021-2023			
Action	Timescales and status	Performance measurement/monitoring	Mitigation/adaptation
Actively promote schemes to encourage children to walk to school such as the Walking Bus initiative and School Streets.			
Increase the levels of cycling and walking as methods of transportation through upgrades to the cycling network and promotional activity			
Actively work with local stakeholders to reduce the use of single use plastics/single use items			
Actively work with stakeholders and the public to promote the message of reducing waste			
Work with community groups to promote and assist in tree planting schemes			
Develop plan for the Council's procurement policies to include a requirement for contractors to meet emissions targets.			

Medium Term Actions 2024-2026			
Action	Timescales and status	Performance measurement/monitoring	Mitigation/adaptation
Promotion of any schemes/funding and signposting for grants/advice			
Promote allotments			
Long Term Actions 2027 onwards			
Action	Timescales and status	Performance measurement/monitoring	Mitigation/adaptation