

Cherwell District Council North Oxfordshire

Climate Action Plan Nov'24 – Apr'26

Introduction

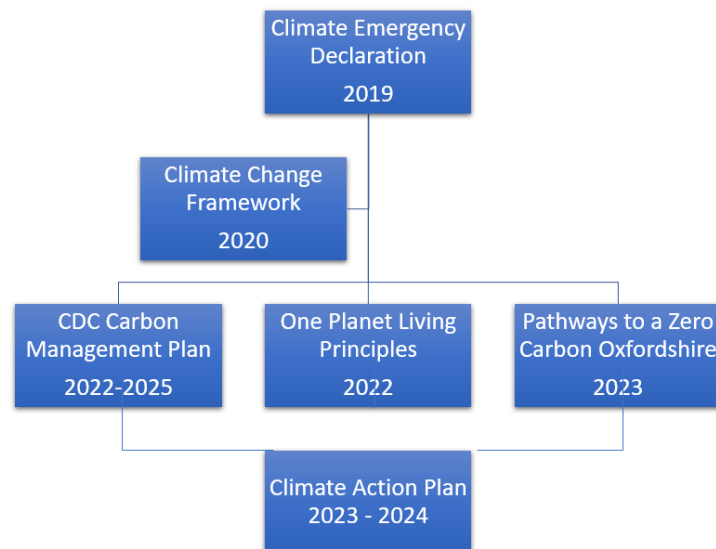
This plan was revised during the autumn of 2024, in close consultation with all services of Cherwell District Council and is authored by the Climate Action Team. It was built on the previous Climate Action Plan 2023-24 which was based upon Climate Change Framework 2020, which sets our ambitions for both the council and the wider district to become carbon net zero.

For clarification, this is an internal operational document which sets out how the council will deliver on the Climate Change Framework.

Additionally, the plan reflects several initiatives which are taking place across the county in which Cherwell District Council is a participant. Most significantly is the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO) report and plan, which has been endorsed by the Council. PaZCO is overseen by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, whose officer and councillor Environment groups have representation from Cherwell District Council.

This Climate Action Plan takes into account the following documents:

- CDC's Climate Action Plan 2023-24
- CDC's Climate Action Framework 2020
- CDC's Carbon Management Plan 2022
- Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan
- One Planet Living – Gap Analysis of CDC's Policies



The actions on the natural environment have been reviewed and supported by Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership, of which the Council is a member. The need to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain is becoming increasingly important and the Government's statutory requirement for qualifying development to achieve at least 10% net gain which has come into effect in November 2023. Biodiversity enhancement has a significant role to play in helping us with our climate change response.

Structure of the Action Plan

The Action Plan covers the activities needed over the next 18 months until April 2026, to reduce the emissions of both the council and the Cherwell district. Over 125 actions have been identified.

Following the introductory text, the actions are laid out in a table, the columns of which include:

- The specific goal
- The actions needed to achieve the goal
- The service area of the council which will provide most support

There are 17 goals, and the associated actions are categorised in two ways.

- Actions for the CDC
- Actions for the Cherwell District

Scope of the Action Plan

When looking at the emissions of any organisation, typically they are divided into 'scopes', in particular, Scopes 1, 2 and 3.

- Scope 1 – includes direct emissions from the burning of fuels, e.g. gas/petrol/diesel
- Scope 2 – includes indirect emissions from the generation of electricity
- Scope 3 – includes indirect emissions from an organisation's supply chain.

The target for CDC to be carbon net zero by 2030 relates only to Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, where the council has a strong degree of influence. Within the Action Plan, however, are actions which relate to our Scope 3 emissions, which need to be better understood in order to plan for reductions, e.g. by working closely with the supply chain.

Context

It is widely recognised that climate change is becoming the most pressing issue facing humankind. The serious impacts of climate change are already being seen across the world and the situation is unfortunately only going to deteriorate. The UK has to an extent avoided some of extreme weather events and other impacts associated with climate change, however the 40 degree heatwave experienced in 2022 gives an indication of what is likely to come in the very near future. We need to do all we can to minimise these impacts.

Current climate action is aimed at minimising the rise in global temperatures to no more than 1.5 degrees, as scientific modelling suggests that beyond that figure, the world is likely to experience severe climate disruptions that could exacerbate hunger, conflict and drought worldwide. Despite global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to support the 1.5 degree target, the significant reductions in emissions which are needed, are unfortunately not being achieved. It is, nevertheless, critical that the UK continues to do everything possible to achieve its own target of becoming carbon net zero by 2050 and CDC has an important supporting role to play.

The council's climate change work is unique in that it has some level of impact across almost every service. In areas such as healthy place-shaping and economic regeneration, climate change sits at core of the strategic thinking. This Action Plan recognises however, that there is still work to be done in helping to embed climate change into how the council functions, for example in strengthening governance arrangements.

CDC has previously declared its commitment to taking climate action, through its Climate Emergency announcement in 2019, the production of the Climate Change Framework 2020 (our climate change strategy) and the Corporate Business Plan 2023-2024, in which environmental sustainability is one of the four key priorities.

This Action Plan strengthens further CDC's commitment to tackling climate change, in setting out a wide range of over 120 actions which support emissions reductions for both the council and the district. Whilst some of the actions are currently aspirational, many are also planned and budgeted for, ensuring that they will take place. This is a reflection of much of the proactive work that CDC is already doing across its functions.

Benefits of action

The benefits of taking climate action go well beyond improving our resilience to climate change and reducing our emissions. Responding to climate change helps to make CDC a more financially resilient organisation, as we generate more of our own energy and reduce the demand for energy by making our buildings more energy efficient.

Taking climate action for the district, helps to improve the lives of residents, for example, through creating greener and cleaner public spaces, making homes warmer in the winter and easier to heat and reducing the amount of waste people generate and therefore that needs to be processed by our waste team.

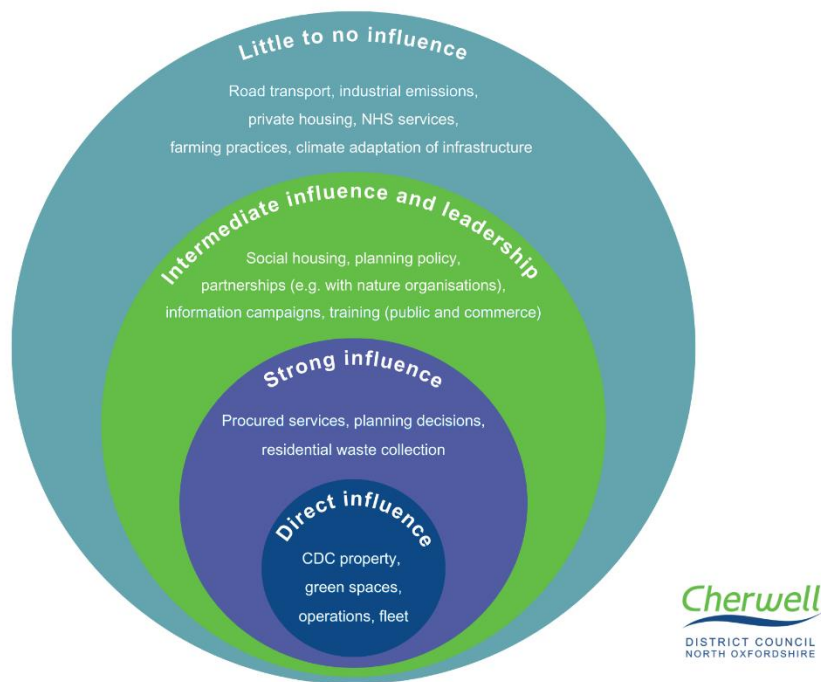
There are many more benefits to residents from taking climate action, and this is a further justification for why sustainability needs to remain a key corporate priority and why it needs to be firmly embedded across our strategic thinking and operations.

Influencing emission reductions

It is important that the council understands and uses effectively, its ability to influence emissions reductions and also to recognise where this is strong and where this is more limited. This allows for the most effective use of resources and for an on-going focus on the most important areas of activity.

The area where the council has the strongest influence is over its corporate estate and fleet vehicles, the Council's two biggest sources of emissions. In addition to policy making to help reduce emissions (e.g. through our Local Plan) we can also have a positive impact through our decision-making and operations e.g. through how we provide our Planning, Enforcement, and Waste Collection services and by management of the parks and open spaces we control.

The diagram below provides a visual representation of the council's influence on greenhouse gas emissions reductions.



Progress on climate action

Since 2008/2009, the baseline year for CDC's emissions when they were at 6,804 tonnes of CO₂e, there has been a reduction almost every year since then, with emissions in 2021/2022 at 3988. CDC's emissions are recorded annually in a Greenhouse Gas Report, which looks in detail at our energy use across our estate and operations.

Figures for the district are generated from national government data which is disaggregated down to each local authority area and shows that since 2005, Cherwell's emissions have fallen from 1.6 million t/CO₂ to 1.1 million t/CO₂. Much of that reduction, however, is due to the decarbonisation of the national electricity grid, from which further reductions are expected as the grid makes even greater use of renewable sources for the production of electricity.

In 2021, CDC received a grant of almost £6million from the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), leading to significant investments in our leisure centres including heat pumps. This is expected to make an import reduction in our annual emissions. Other corporate sites have received investments too, and further work is planned to expand the amount of Solar PV across the corporate estate.

Work has also begun on decarbonising our fleet, through the purchase of several EVs with more expected to arrive before the end of 2024-2025 financial year. Funding is being identified to build a strong businesses case for decarbonising the fleet and presenting various pathways to achieving this by 2030.

Across other areas of the council, climate action is being included, for example in expenditure under the Shared Prosperity Fund, the emerging Local Plan, Banbury Vision 2050 and in the process of healthy place-shaping.

Delivering emissions reductions

The biggest reductions to the council's emissions will come from focussing on the leisure centres, the fleet and the remainder of the corporate estate, respectively. Some of the most important actions in the Plan, will not themselves reduce emissions, but are essential steps in leading to the large emissions we need to see. For example, undertaking an energy audit on a building and identifying appropriate energy efficiency measures is the first step in decarbonising, before identifying and targeting funding sources accordingly.

This Plan contains a wide range of actions across many areas of both council activity and district activities, and if implemented will lead to falls in greenhouse gas emissions.

The funding of climate action will come from a range of sources, reflecting the wide range of areas where action is needed. Government grants, such as the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), will continue to be a critical source of funding to support the energy efficiency of our buildings. The LEVI scheme (Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure) will support the expansion of the county's charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. CDC will have to bear some costs, e.g. providing match funding for PSDS, initiating consultancy studies to inform our decision-making, e.g. the best buildings for optimising arrays of Solar PV.

The picture of funding for climate action is complex and is still emerging, with future models still needing to be investigated and better understood, e.g. municipal bonds. The council will however, continue to be proactive in seeking as many sources of funding as possible to support our climate change ambitions.

Glossary

Biodiversity Net Gain – a net improvement to an area's biodiversity, following a new development, e.g. housing

Carbon Net Zero – when all available steps have been taken to reduce emissions and off-setting is required for residual emissions which cannot be prevented

Carbon Neutral – when an organisation balances its emissions by off-setting the equivalent amount. In theory, this allows an organisation to continue using producing greenhouse gas emissions and to make no reduction.

CO₂e – carbon dioxide equivalent

Greenhouse gases – the gases that are produced from the burning of fossil fuels and other industrial and agricultural activities and which have a warming effect upon the climate, e.g. carbon dioxide

Off-setting – the process of balancing out greenhouse gas emissions, either through the production of renewable energy or through nature-based solutions.

Nature-based solutions - an approach to reducing greenhouse gases by using nature to absorb emissions, e.g. through planting trees or restoring peatlands.

Climate Action Plan

The Action Plan is based on upon 17 goals which support the council's and the district's ambitions to become carbon net zero.

Cherwell District Council Goals	
1.	Reduce emissions from Cherwell DC buildings to net zero by 2030
2.	Reduce emissions from Cherwell DC fleet to net zero by 2030
3.	Reduce emissions from staff behaviour to net zero by 2030
4.	Reduce emissions from Cherwell DC's procurement
5.	Reduce emissions from CDC's Landscape Contract to net zero by 2030
6.	Other aspects of CDC's activities
7.	Targets date for achieving carbon net zero
Cherwell District Goals	
8.	Ensure emerging Local Plan is compatible with Cherwell becoming net zero carbon
9.	Support emission reductions from transport
10.	Support emission reductions from housing
11.	Support emission reductions from businesses
12.	Enhance the district's natural capital to support carbon off-setting and biodiversity enhancement
13.	Decarbonising the district's energy
14.	Waste
15.	Support OCC's work on adaptation
16.	Partnership working
17.	Governance, monitoring, and communication

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	Action	Supporting Area(s)
1	Reduce emissions from Cherwell DC buildings to net zero by 2030	
1.01	Continue to include low-carbon measures when carrying out routine buildings improvements.	Property
1.02	Agree approach to decarbonising the corporate estate, including a phased plan.	Property
1.03	Upgrade existing supply to Thorpe Lane Depot to allow charging of EV RCVs.	Property
1.04	Install solar PV car ports at Kidlington and Spiceball Leisure Centres.	Property
1.05	Additional Solar PV at Community Centres.	Property
1.06	Carry out investment-grade energy audit at Stratfield Brake Pavilion	Climate Change
1.07	Procurement and project delivery of the solar projects for BLC	Leisure
1.08	Delivering a plan to ensure the EPC performance of buildings is in line with our 2030 target.	Property
1.09	Removal of radiant gas heaters at Thorpe Lane Depot.	Property
1.10	Optimise and integrate the building mgmt systems (BMS) to support with the recently installed energy efficiency measures in CDC's buildings	Leisure/Property
1.11	Submit an application to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.	Climate Change
1.12	Work with the GSE Net Zero Energy Hub to support heat decarbonisation in corporate buildings	Climate Change
1.13	Produce a design for the new fleet depot at Graven Hill.	Environment Services
1.14	Any new buildings, e.g., leisure centres/Community centres, to be built to be as low carbon as financially viable.	All Services

1.15	Working with CDC procurement and legal to procure a tender package to appoint a technical adviser (company) to take energy usage reporting and suitable and sufficient tariffs forward also managing the AMRs and upcoming MOP contract in 2026.	Facilities
1.16	Carry out audit of buildings/car parks, to identify opportunities for additional energy generation.	Climate Change
1.17	Explore opportunities across council estate for reducing energy demand, e.g. LED lighting; air handling	Property
1.18	Searching suitable and sufficient products for new/old properties	Facilities
1.19	Changing cleaning chemicals	Facilities
1.20	Procuring suitable energy efficient products and services and adding clauses of sustainability in the contract and/or new tenders	Facilities
1.21	Procurement and project delivery of the solar projects for BLC	Leisure
1.22	Localised Service Plan Target of reducing 5% (absolute number) of electricity/Gas/water consumption usage for Leisure/Community Centres.	Leisure
2	Reduce emissions from Cherwell DC fleet to net zero by 2030	
2.01	Upgrade existing supply to Thorpe Lane Depot to allow charging of EV RCVs.	Property
2.02	Increase EV fleet to 25% by Jun’25	Fleet
2.03	Produce business case and pathways for decarbonising the fleet	Fleet
2.04	Continue to optimise routes for RCVs.	Fleet/Landscape
2.05	Continue to monitor the market for new technologies around HGVs.	Fleet
2.06	Awaiting the outcome of the Environment Act regarding waste collection and the potential need to expand the service.	Fleet
2.07	Explore other fuel types for the fleet	Waste Services
2.08	Minimize fuel consumption	Waste Services

3	Reduce emissions from staff behaviour to net zero by 2030	
3.01	Plan and begin delivery of a programme of Carbon Literacy training for staff.	HR
3.02	Consider the viability of e-bikes and e-cargo bikes for business journeys	Climate Change/Facilities
3.03	Review the success of EV pool car pilot project	Climate Change
3.04	Install EV charging points at council-owned sites to support the use of staff-owned EVs.	Property
3.05	Produce an evidence base for commuter miles in order to be able to address business mileage.	HR
3.06	Promote better use of recycling facilities in corporate buildings.	Facilities
4	Reduce emissions from Cherwell DC's procurement	
4.01	Annually track emissions from procurements with individual contractors via an annual report of CDC's scope 3 emissions	Procurement
4.02	Identify the suppliers/contractors with the highest emissions	Procurement
4.03	Produce outline 5-year plan for reducing Scope 3 emissions from Procurement	Procurement
5	Reduce emissions from CDC's Landscape Contract	
5.01	Consider if next contract can include the use of electric vehicles and machinery.	Environmental Services
6	Other aspects of CDC's activities	
6.01	Produce the 2023/2024 Greenhouse Gas Report	Climate Change
6.02	Support Cherwell DC's 'transformation' process, in identifying climate actions for Service Areas.	Climate Change
6.03	Second an additional member of staff to support climate change activity.	Climate Change

6.04	Produce a robust evidence base showing how Cherwell can become a carbon net zero district and CDC a carbon net organisation	Climate Change
6.05	Increase capacity of Cherwell DC to support its 2030 net zero target, as well as the ambition for the district to become carbon net zero.	Corporate Leadership Team
6.06	Climate actions to feature in all Business Plans	All Services/Leisure
6.07	Explore new funding mechanisms to support delivery of net zero actions	Climate Change
6.08	Identifying sources of funding to support CDC’s and Cherwell District’s Net Zero Pathways	Finance
7	Target dates for achieving carbon net zero	
7.01	Obtain clear data on possible net zero pathways for the Cherwell District and CDC	Climate Change
7.02	Agree a revised target date for net zero carbon for the district.	Climate Change
8	Ensure emerging Local Plan is compatible with Cherwell becoming net zero carbon	
8.01	Ensure the timely production of a deliverable Cherwell Local Plan, to strengthen our policies to respond to climate change	Planning
8.02	Ensure a suite of planning policies are included to support climate change mitigation and adaptation. For example: • Net zero development • Biodiversity Net Gain • Green Infrastructure • Low carbon and active travel Decentralised and renewable energy systems	Planning
8.03	Ensure national policy successes are reviewed, responded to, and where possible incorporated into the Local Plan	Planning
8.04	Support partnership working, e.g. Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP), utility providers, other local authorities, to engage proactively on common policies that support climate action.	Planning

8.05	Through planning policy, establish the viability of ensuring all houses in major new build developments are designed to at least meet the 2025 targets of the RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge	Planning
8.06	Understand the viability of incorporating into the Local Plan a requirement for developers to target industry standards regarding construction waste reduction, resource efficiency and circular economy principles.	Planning
8.07	Consider the principles of One Planet Living through the Local Plan process.	Planning
9	Support emission reductions from transport	
9.01	Work with OCC to implement LEVI funding to expand EV infrastructure in Cherwell	Climate Change
9.02	Support the development of local cycling and walking infrastructure plans	Leisure/Wellbeing
9.03	Continue to work closely with OCC as Local Highway Authority to support the improvement in the provision of public transport in Cherwell and active travel	Planning
9.04	Increase the number of people walking and cycling in conjunction with healthy place shaping principles	Leisure/Wellbeing
10	Support emission reductions from housing	
10.01	Promote energy efficiency opportunities, e.g. HUG/Heat Pump Ready Scheme/Cosy Homes Oxfordshire/LEAP/ECO4	Communications
10.02	Work to ensure the delivery of requisite infrastructure and affordable housing at NW Bicester whilst maintaining as many of the net zero carbon objectives as possible, linking with viability discussions.	Bicester & Planning Teams
10.03	Improve our understanding of the district’s housing stock so that we can prioritise funding	Housing
10.04	Understand with Registered Providers to establish what measures are being taken to increase energy efficiency of social housing.	Housing

10.05	Engagement with retrofit market to better understand capacity and capability	Economic Growth
10.06	Understanding the property in the private sector: people living in various housing/taking stock of energy efficient housing	Housing
10.07	Offer home improvement loan scheme through a third party but enabled by CDC.	Housing
11	Support emission reductions from businesses	
11.01	Sustainable Construction Skills & Supply Chains – enable pipeline of skills and labour through apprenticeships/training opportunities, related to skills and training plans in s106 planning conditions and increasing social value of contracts through future pledge to the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership.	Economic Growth
11.02	Support businesses to Decarbonise and Improve the Natural Environment	Economic Growth
11.03	Support industry decarbonisation by promoting the switch from burning gas and other fuels to burning sustainable alternatives such as green hydrogen through new Local Plan policies.	Planning Policy
11.04	Cherwell-focussed business forum/network – consider the role of Greentech in drawing resources into Cherwell to support businesses to reduce emissions.	Economic Growth
11.05	Sustainable Business Award - Continue to support (through the Cherwell Business Awards 2024) to showcase business best practice and innovation in all sectors.	Economic Growth
11.06	Green Skills - Provision of free Retrofit Construction Skills courses	Economic Growth
11.07	Facilitate completion of business carbon emissions assessments and/or carbon reduction plans	Economic Growth
12	Enhance the district’s natural capital to support carbon off-setting and biodiversity enhancement	

12.01	Consider the feasibility of a planning policy to achieve 20% Biodiversity Net Gain from new development	Planning
12.02	Work with the Local Nature Partnership to explore the establishment of an Oxfordshire-based carbon offsetting scheme, potentially aligned to Oxford City's Area-Based In-setting approach.	Climate Change
12.03	Produce a management plan for Longford Park to reduce regular mowing activities, improve biodiversity and engage with the community	Environment Services
12.04	Enhancement of Banbury Country Park, Longford Park, Burnehyll Woodland and Graven Hill to support biodiversity and carbon sequestration	Environment Services
12.05	Support key biodiversity partners and local communities to protect, manage and enhance habitats which have biodiversity value and carbon removal/storage functions.	Environment Services
12.06	Support and promote wellbeing initiatives that encourage residents to look after their natural environment, connect them with nature and improve access to local green spaces.	Wellbeing/Biodiversity/Communities
12.07	Develop a comprehensive tree/forest strategy in order to increase tree planting rates within the district and ensure long-term maintenance/stewardship of forests/woodlands	Environment Services
12.08	Supporting the county-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy process which is being led by Oxfordshire County Council with the support of the Local Nature Partnership.	Environment Services
12.09	Support emergence and facilitation of farmer clusters, boosting their key role in delivery of landscape-scale natural capital enhancement.	Environment Services
12.10	Explore with neighbouring planning authorities, the extent to which the Local Nature Recovery Strategy can be incorporated into the Local Plan and related decision-making processes.	Planning
12.11	Enable Planning and Communities officers to integrate elements of Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework into the new Local Plan and other delivery plans.	Planning/Wellbeing
12.12	Increase the amount of natural capital in Cherwell through additional habitat creation, especially in urban areas.	Environment Services

12.13	Aim to increase the biodiversity value of our Local Wildlife Sites, by increasing frequency of monitoring and provision of improved management guidance.	Environment Services
12.14	Endorse and support delivery of the Oxfordshire Nature Finance Strategy, including exploring the potential role of the council in the establishment of an Oxfordshire Environment Fund.	Environment Services
12.15	Work with partners to ensure availability of sufficient biodiversity net gain offset sites in Cherwell to ensure that the maximum biodiversity and carbon capture value of this policy is retained within the district. That this is targeted at priority nature recovery areas as defined by the draft Nature Recovery Network and the forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy.	Planning
12.16	Support Bernwood Otmore Ray, as a key landscape recovery project in the District	Environment Services
13	Decarbonising the district's energy	
13.01	Complete a Techno-Feasibility Study on a Banbury Heat Network	Climate Change/Banbury
13.02	Participate in a county-wide Local Area Energy Plan process	Climate Change
13.03	Support officers working on development at NW Bicester around the provision of low-carbon energy sources.	Climate Change
13.04	Co-ordinate and liaise with the energy study, looking at renewable energy for NW Bicester	Bicester Team
13.05	Support opportunities for community-owned renewable energy schemes	Climate Change
14	Waste	
14.01	Increase rates of domestic recycling (currently c.55%) in line with the Oxfordshire Waste Strategy, which is aiming for 70%	Waste Services
14.02	Support the work of the Cherwell Food Action Waste Group	Waste Services/Wellbeing
14.03	Work with internal/external partners and others to minimise waste arisings from domestic and commercial sources	Waste Services

14.04	Reduce recycling contamination	Waste Services
14.05	Measure and analyse CO2 from collected waste	Waste Services
14.06	Reduce annual tonnage of general waste collected	Waste Services
15	Support OCC’s work on adaptation	
15.01	Understand the threats to CDC’s estate, assets and operations from climate change	Climate Change
15.02	Identify areas for action for CDC	Climate Change
15.03	Understand the threats to Cherwell from climate change, e.g. public health; the local economy	Climate Change
15.04	Enhancing the green spaces in Banbury town centre	Banbury
16	Partnership working	
16.01	Support Banbury Master Planning to ensure sustainability is at the heart of the process	Climate Change/Banbury
16.02	Continue with partnership working as a key approach to delivering carbon reductions across the district.	Climate Change
16.03	Support the implementation of the Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map	Climate Change
16.04	Support the work of the Local Nature Partnership’s <i>Natural Capital</i> group	Climate Change
16.05	Continue to liaise and work closely with other local authorities across Oxfordshire	Climate Change
16.06	Explore opportunities for closer collaboration with neighbouring authorities around resident communication	Climate Change
16.07	Support community groups and parish councils in best practice and advice	Climate Change
16.08	Work with OCC to develop circularity strategy; Increase Circular waste economy	Waste Services
16.09	Support Kidlington Area Strategy Development to incorporate sustainable development actions	Kidlington
17	Governance, monitoring, and communication	

17.01	Report annually to the Executive on climate change progress	Climate Change
17.02	Report twice a year to the Corporate Leadership Team on climate change progress	Climate Change
17.03	Report twice a year to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on climate change progress	Climate Change
17.04	All reports that go to Executive and Corporate Leadership Team to continue to include an Environmental Impact section.	Climate Change
17.05	Review existing arrangements for delivering climate change activity, to ensure more effective and closer working between officers across CDC	Climate Change
17.06	Meet regularly with the Climate Change Working Group to review and discuss climate action activities	Climate Change
17.07	Review overall progress of Action Plan and prepare a new one for the next 12 months	Climate Change
17.08	Provide emissions data to OCC	Property, Leisure, HR, Fleet, Climate Change
17.09	Monitor how much waste is being processed through closed loop recycling	Waste Services
17.10	Climate Action, recurring social media messages 2024 – 2025	Communications
17.11	Identify activities being delivered by council service areas and the council's partners in the district which aim to reduce emissions and increase biodiversity and work to promote them where appropriate to help make them as effective as possible.	Communications