Contents

Foreword by Emily O'Brien, Cabinet member for climate, nature and food systems

Welcome to our Nature and Climate Strategy 2024. This document is a refresh of the strategy developed after we declared a climate emergency in 2019 which committed the Council to be net zero by 2030. It builds upon the amazing work that we have seen happen throughout the district over the last five years whilst re-focusing and prioritising our action as we get closer to 2030.

A lot has happened since 2019. We are still feeling the economic and social impacts of the COVID pandemic, yet the district pulled together in its response and the Council, at pace, changed its working practices and the services offered to reflect the immediate need of our local communities. We are still in the cost-of-living crisis that affects so many families and local businesses and supporting the most vulnerable forms the core of the Council's work. This recent experience has highlighted how well the Council, and our partner organisations can adapt and work together to solve problems - just what we need to tackle the climate and nature emergencies.

It's often those same most vulnerable people who are worst affected by the impacts of climate change, whether that's rising food prices or flooding, which is why I am committed to making sure that this plan is about a 'just transition' that benefits everyone. And as we set out below, we are seeing increasing impacts from climate breakdown, and ever more pessimistic predictions from

scientists which make action more important than ever. To really understand the impact of our heating climate, I find it helpful to think about the distance that nature needs to move North to adapt to the current rate of change.

The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has suggested that climate change is causing climate zones across the northern hemisphere to move northwards. Rewilding Britain has estimated that 'British climate zones are moving northwards at up to 5 km a year, a rate hundreds of times faster than species recolonisation after the last ice age.' If we applied that figure locally, in just four years our local plants and animals would have to move from Newhaven to Chailey to enjoy the same climatic conditions as they have currently. Since trees can take hundreds of years to grow, and roads, railways and built-up areas can block animal migration, it's no wonder that so many species are in trouble and that Rewilding Britian has stated that 'climate heating is now increasingly recognised as the greatest future threat to our biodiversity'.

These are the reasons I want to prioritise action on adapting the district to climate change, as well as doing our part to address the problem, and to the separate but linked nature emergency. I want to address clear key areas of public concern such as air and water quality, support more resilient and sustainable local food systems, and hold our water companies to account over sewage discharge. And I want people from all walks of life to be able to enjoy and care for our wonderful local nature and green spaces.

Introduction

Almost 5 years on from our Declarations of the Climate and Ecological Emergencies, Lewes District Council is leading on Local Government climate action. As such our core vision from our previous 2021 strategy for supporting and enabling climate action work across the district remains unchanged. Much has changed around us however, and many of our previous actions and aspirations have been achieved, so we have chosen to refresh and update our climate change strategy and action plan as we rapidly approach the midpoint of our pledge to become net zero carbon by 2030.

Much work has been completed over the last few years, some key achievements since 2021 are:

2021 Action Area	Achievements
Energy & the built environment	• Completed innovative research into how to decarbonise our social homes • Using our Roadmap approach, awarded £4.1m to retrofit insulation to 267 council homes which could reduce residents' energy use by up to 20%. • Supported installation of 249 solar installations during 2023 through the 'Solar Together' scheme saving nearly 237 tonnes CO_2 per year. This built on the earlier scheme in 21/22 when 161 installations were completed. • Housing tenants have had increased access to information on carbon reducing behaviours.
Sustainable travel and air quality	• Installation of 86 publicly accessible electric vehicle charge points. • Enabled two car club cars to convert from petrol to electric saving 5.5 tonnes CO_2 per year

	• Enabled cycle training and bike loans for children through Ouse Valley Climate Action • Obtained grants for e-cargo bikes, and worked closely with OVESCO to set up the Get Bikery initiative – that enables zero carbon last mile deliveries https://getbikery.org/
Reducing emissions from waste	• Introduction of 6 electric food waste vehicles. • Delivered 53 community waste and recycling workshops. • 1000 Cheeky wipes vouchers issued for reusable nappies, wipes and sanitary products. • Replaced diesel fuel with HVO- Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil- saving up to 90% CO2 • Provided regular communications on reduce, reuse, recycle behaviour change.
Biodiversity	• Increase in biodiversity through 6.8-hectare Cockshut chalk stream restoration and wetland project. • Enabled nature recovery of chalk downland through the Changing Chalk project. • Implemented beneficial pollinator and biodiversity practices on council land. • Supported community climate action through Ouse Valley Climate Action and Climate Hubs.
Food and Agriculture	• Developed a community growing guide and policy for community growing on Housing managed land. Enabled three community growing spaces on council land. • Supported the strategic development of Lewes District Food Partnership. • Contributed to Sustainable Food Places Bronze award for the district.
Circular economy & community wealth	• The Council has increased its share of spend on local suppliers which can help to shorten supply chains and reduce CO2 emissions. The council has almost doubled its local spend from £5.3 million to nearly £10 million over the last financial year. • Developed a Sustainable Procurement Policy to improve the environmental sustainability of the council's spending on goods and services. • Developed our working relationship with local businesses focussed on sustainability such as Boutique Modern, delivering local housing using modular construction with lower CO2 emissions than traditional building methods. • Encouraged social entrepreneurialism through our Lewes District Start-up Program with 155 one to one mentoring sessions and 14 group workshops to support local people setting up small businesses.

Water	• Enabled natural flood prevention measures through Sussex Flow Initiative, and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS). • 4 council motions on water quality and holding Southern Water to account, who have now agreed to spend nearly £10 million on areas we highlighted. • Declared (via council motion) an urgent need for Ocean Recovery through The Motion for the Ocean.

Our revised strategic vision and goals for the district are set out on the following pages and are backed up by our detailed action plan. However, the council is responsible for less than 1% of carbon in the district and there's a growing need to tackle the parallel nature crisis, with the UK being one of the most depleted countries in the world. We can only tackle the climate and nature emergencies by working with our residents and with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors across the district. This is the whole district's plan not just the Council's.

This strategic document aims to bring together our Council's aspirations but also the work of so many others throughout the district so we can monitor our progress towards net zero carbon by 2030 and report on the wonderful projects that get delivered. To that end the council engaged with our many partners in early 2024 to gain comments and feedback. This document and action plan is the result of that engagement and discussion.

We recognise that the Climate and Ecological Emergencies are intertwined and that key to delivery of our climate action ambitions is the need to embed these within everything the council does. As well the Lewes District Biodiversity Strategy, published in 2021, this strategy reflects our Corporate Plan 'Re-imagining Lewes District: Delivering the Vision 2024-2028' and its commitments across 5 key areas, within which actions to address the climate and nature emergency can be seen throughout:

1. **Delivering high quality, responsive services to local people**
2. **Supporting local people through challenging times**
3. **Providing leadership in tackling the climate and nature emergencies**
4. **Creating sustainable community wealth**
5. **Building genuinely affordable homes**

Tackling the climate crisis and nature emergencies is central to all our activities. As one of the most nature depleted countries in the world [1] we are committed to supporting measures to help arrest biodiversity losses, restore habitats, reduce pollution and work for climate resilience to promote healthy and thriving communities.

However, we understand that the transition to a low carbon, productive and ecologically sustainable district is not an easy one and that just as those most vulnerable in our communities are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, these are the same groups least able to engage with our strategy and our projects.

[1] State of Nature 2023: https://stateofnature.org.uk/

Our corporate priorities and plan support a just transition by keeping wealth local and enabling a local green economy, working with partners to facilitate green skills training, and by detailing how we will engage and work with our communities.

Meaningful nature-based solutions, the appropriate use of low carbon technology, practical adaptation measures, thoughtful policy design and community engagement, and high-level political and policy influencing, through direct lobbying and through our national networks, will move us closer to achieving a just transition.

We're committed as a Council to doing all we can to reduce the impact of climate change on the district and those most vulnerable, by reducing emissions and are committed to working with residents, businesses, stakeholders and partners to adapt our district to the impacts we are already experiencing and that are predicted to worsen in the years to come, such as overheating, flooding and drought through our emergency planning and risk management processes. Often tackling nature loss can help us both reduce emissions by absorbing carbon and help adapt us to a changing climate- whether through tree planting, wetlands, or species-rich grassland – whilst helping reverse catastrophic nature loss, and improving our health and wellbeing, all at the same time. As such it is incredibly important the council does what it can to help deal with both the climate and nature emergency concurrently and uses its influence and strategic view to enable work outside of its direct control. Working together we can improve the future for our local communities and play a part in helping our planet.

A **just transition** means ensuring that no one is left behind or pushed behind in the transition to low carbon and environmentally sustainable economies and societies. It means cutting CO_2 emissions but it's also about a better, fairer place to live. It means tackling our leaky homes, so they are efficient and warm with lower bills. It means everyone having access to nature and green spaces. And it means ensuring everyone benefits from our community wealth approach creating better paid local green jobs.

1. The Vision

The Council will have worked with partners and the community to enable a just and equitable transition to a low carbon district which recognises and plans for the impacts of climate change and is benefiting from joined up and restored natural habitats and green spaces.

The council provides leadership and acts as enabler to support neighbourhood, district and regional climate and nature action.

Working together locally

The Council is only directly responsible for 0.3% of carbon emissions. We can only achieve our vision and strategic goals effectively by understanding all the aspects the Council can directly act on, and those that we can only deliver by working with others in public, private and voluntary sectors across the district.

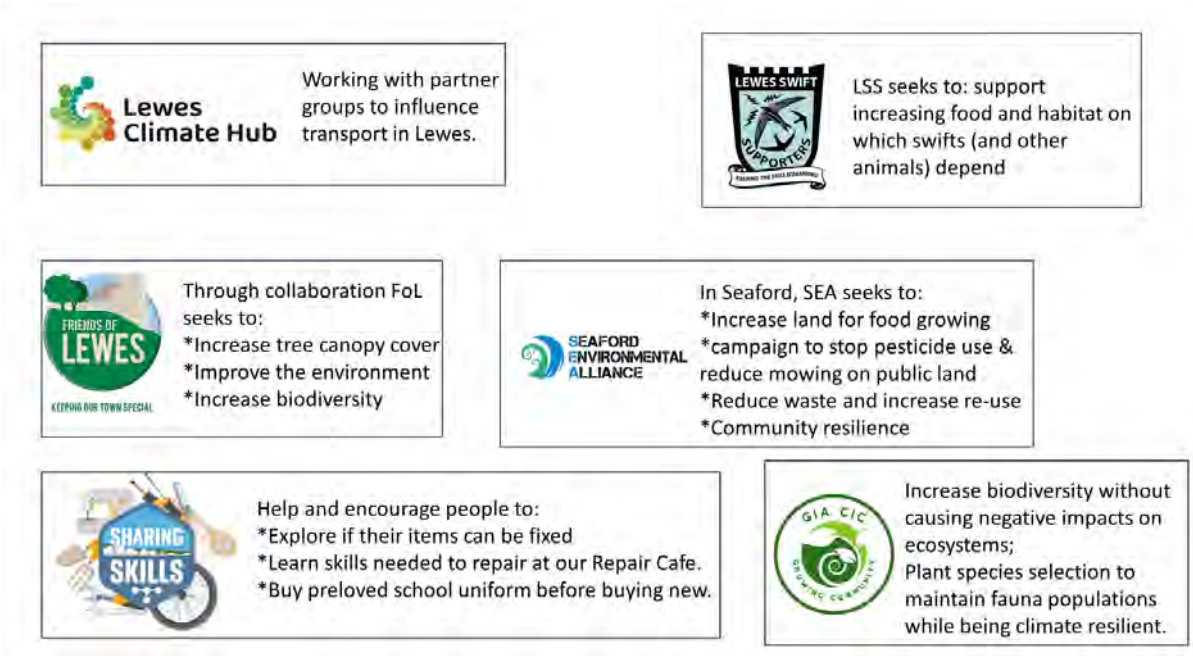
The district is home to a multitude of individuals, volunteers, organisations, charities, schools, Community Interest Companies, and businesses that are committed to sustainability goals such as lowering carbon emissions, reducing pollution, improving the natural environment, reducing poverty, promoting community cohesion and more. We are also lucky enough to be close to two world leading universities in the fields of sustainability, environment policy and engineering solutions.

For the whole district to become net zero carbon it must be a joint effort.

The Council has set out how it will work with local people and partners within the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028. It commits the Council to putting residents first in decision-making; being open and transparent; having a collaborative culture; taking a preventative approach to addressing local issues and concerns; and ensuring equality and diversity principles are core to all we do.

Based on recent feedback we have received from our partners the council intends to support organisations already working within schools/colleges and the school-based groups that already exist to ensure that the district's young people are engaged and involved with climate and nature action.

Some of our partners are shown below, some have provided us with some of their own climate & nature goals which we outline below:



HAMSEY PARISH COUNCIL

HPC supports:
*Fields in Cooksbridge as a site for BNG and included in the Nature Recovery Strategy.
*Reduction of traffic fumes at Cooksbridge Level Crossing

Love Our Ouse.
*Realising the Rights Charter for the Ouse

OUSE VALLEY CLIMATE ACTION

*Improved connectivity for wildlife habitat in urban and rural environments.
*Supporting community growing projects

3VA Wealden Eastbourne Lewes District

*Understand and promote the impacts of Climate Change on our communities.

CommonCause

GROWING CONCERNS

HAVENS COMMUNITY HUB

LEWES DISTRICT FOOD PARTNERSHIP

*Champion a Good Food Culture for Lewes District
*Foster young peoples connection with food
*Develop a more dignified approach to community food support

Get Bikery

Enable the setting up a community ecargo bike scheme for Lewes District for hire and delivery by 2025.

Climate Emergency Policy

Seaford Town Council

OVESCO
OUSE VALLEY ENERGY SERVICES COMPANY

- 100% biodiversity net gain for projects implementing ground mount solar PV.
- Develop a renewable energy project, which allows for co benefits of energy generation and sustainable food production in a changing climate.
- Climate and energy champion to encourage home owners to reduce their consumption of pure water in their homes.

Lewes Town Council

*Integrated movement strategy in partnership with other organisations.
*Landport Bottom management plan.

Cycle Lewes:
*Lewes is a town where everyone can move around safely, easily and enjoyably by bike.*Reducing car use to improve air quality and improve physical and mental health.

COMMUNITY ENERGY SOUTH

[PLEASE NOTE THERE MAY BE MORE LOGOS TO ADD – THESE WILL BE ADDED POST APPROVAL, DURING FINAL FORMATTING PRIOR TO PUBLICATION]

2. Why our strategy needs to evolve

The reasons we need a strategy, set out in 2021, have not changed. In fact, recent reports by both the UK Climate Change Committee and the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have indicated that national policy lacks urgency, funding is inadequate, and a lack of clear policy is failing to deliver adequate carbon reductions.
Update reports by the IPCC have concluded that climate change impacts are being felt on a greater scale than anticipated and that nature is being lost at an alarming rate.
Our conviction remains to act now and at pace, making the best use of all the council's resources, as required by our declarations of both the climate and the ecological emergency. We want to contribute to limiting global heating, reduce the impacts of a changing climate, to adapt and manage the risks to service provision, local communities, the natural environment, infrastructure and businesses whilst taking advantage of the multitude of positive opportunities that the changes we need to make will offer us. We want to deliver nature-based solutions and interventions that will see benefits such as carbon storage, flood alleviation, increased biodiversity and improved human well-being and community cohesion.
The council has a key role to play as a community leader and through the services we provide but we cannot do it alone.
The strategy aims to act as a pathway firstly directing us towards the net zero target, secondly bringing together the amazing work going on in our communities and ensuring a joint approach, and thirdly, building resilience so we can adapt to our changing climate.

Adapting to our changing climate

The district must become resilient to the effects of climate change, for example by preventing homes from overheating and responding to increased rainfall, flooding and coastal erosion.
We can determine the key impacts that will affect the district by referring to the UK Climate Predictions2018 (UKCP18)UK Climate Predictions). Regular reports are produced by the Met Office and will be referred to on an ongoing basis as we risk assess the council and climate-proof our services.
General climate change trends projected over UK land for the 21st century in UKCP18 are broadly consistent with earlier projections (UKCP09) showing an increased chance of warmer, drier winters and hotter, wetter summers along with an increase in the frequency and intensity of extremes. The winter rain is crucial for replenishing our aquifers from which we get our drinking water, we are therefore at increased risk of drought[2].

In 2021 we referred to the 'State of the UK Climate 2019' report. This has since been updated with a the State of the UK Climate 2022.
The report's key highlights stated that 2022 was a year of extremes and was a record warm year for the UK, made more likely by climate change. The UK received 6% below average rainfall but saw a slight increase in heavy rainfall events. Sea level has risen by 18.5 cm since the 1900s, and the report noted that 60% of this rise has occurred over the past 30 years. 2022 saw an extended spring and autumn season with trees holding onto their leaves between 7 to 16 days longer than average. Temperature extremes are changing much faster than average.
Locally:

- Flooding in some areas such as Newhaven and Barcombe is becoming more of an issue as winters become wetter, and rainfall events become more extreme. Rain falls on already saturated ground causing drainage systems to become overwhelmed, flooding roads,

[2] Lewes Climate Change Study https://planningpolicyconsult.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/gf2.ti/-/1568674/187919877.1/PDF/-/Lewes%20Climate%20Change%20Study.pdf

pavements and property and exacerbating problems with sewage systems. There is a continuing threat to Lewes from the River Ouse, as we experienced in 2000. More rainfall, and development, has contributed to increased number of sewage discharges in our rivers and the sea, and our council has committed to holding Southern Water and South East Water to account.

- A warming climate is causing rising sea levels which in turn contributes to increased coastal erosion, particularly affecting our communities in Peacehaven, Newhaven and Seaford but also affecting visitors attracted to our beautiful coastline. Huge cliff falls occurred early in 2024 demonstrating this ever-present danger.

The Policy Framework

All local authority work is guided by national legislation and policy. The overarching legislation for our climate work is the Climate Change Act which commits the UK government to reduce emissions to Net Zero by 2050. This legislation was informed by the Paris Agreement which seeks to keep global temperature rises to well below 1.5° C. National work and progress on the Act is regularly reviewed and challenged by the Climate Change Committee.

Some actions we take as a council to tackle the climate and nature emergencies are mandatory and required by law, for example changes to waste collections enacted through The Environment Act 2021, whilst other documents such as the Clean Growth Strategy, The Energy White Paper and Gear Change, set a national strategic direction or provide guidance and recommendations. National policy and strategy is then focused down to the regional strategic direction provided by organisations and bodies such as Transport for the South-East, Local Economic Partnerships, Greater Brighton, Team East Sussex and East Sussex County Council amongst others.

The Biodiversity Duty was originally contained in the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. This referred to having to 'have regard to' biodiversity in carrying out our functions. The Environment Act 2021 has strengthened this, as follows:

Public authorities who operate in England must now consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This is the strengthened 'biodiversity duty', introduced by the Environment Act 2021.

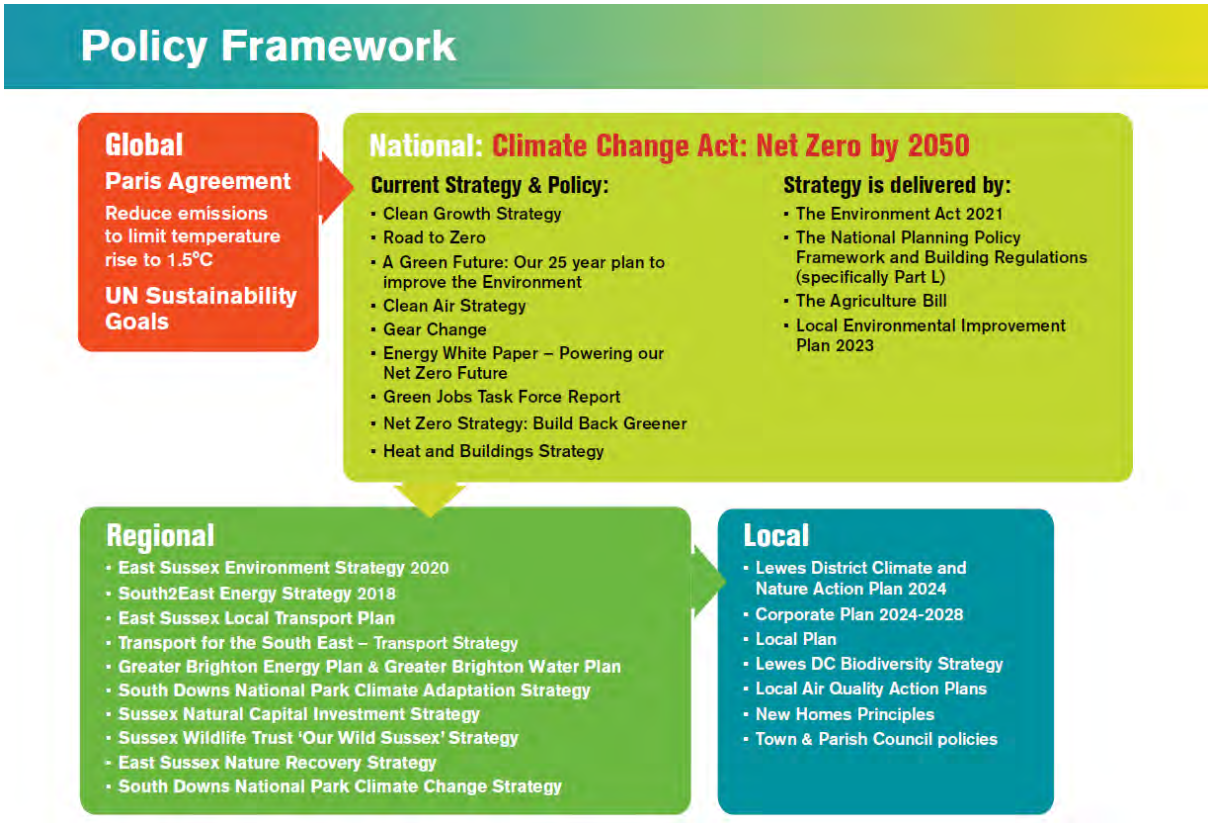
This means that, as a public authority, you must:

- Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.
- Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives.

Complying with the biodiversity duty - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

This document and plan sets out a range of actions, projects and programmes that we will undertake, with our partners, to meet the requirements of the strengthened biodiversity duty. Our progress will be monitored and reported in line with our obligations under the Environment Act 2021, as described in section 3, below.

The policy framework is summarised in the graphic below – click through the links to find out more about each item – this isn't a comprehensive list but provides insight into major pieces of policy and how they link to our climate change and sustainability strategy.



The district and council emissions baseline

The baseline data used to compile the original Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2021 remains core to the development of a strategic action areas and our pathways to net zero.
For the purposes of this document this data remains unchanged, however there will be a full update on emissions and the pathway to net zero later this year as part of our annual update report in November 2024.
Previous years emissions reports are linked here: 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 .

3.Monitoring our progress

The strategy will continue to be reported on annually. The annual report will contain the following as a minimum:

- general update on changes to policy and strategy
- council carbon emissions for the past financial year
- council carbon emission trend analysis
- district carbon emissions (figures from Department of Energy Security and Net Zero) reported two years in arrears
- district carbon emissions trend analysis
- progress on action plan with RAG (Red/Amber/Green) status

- progress against targets and reporting of annual performance indicators
- case studies

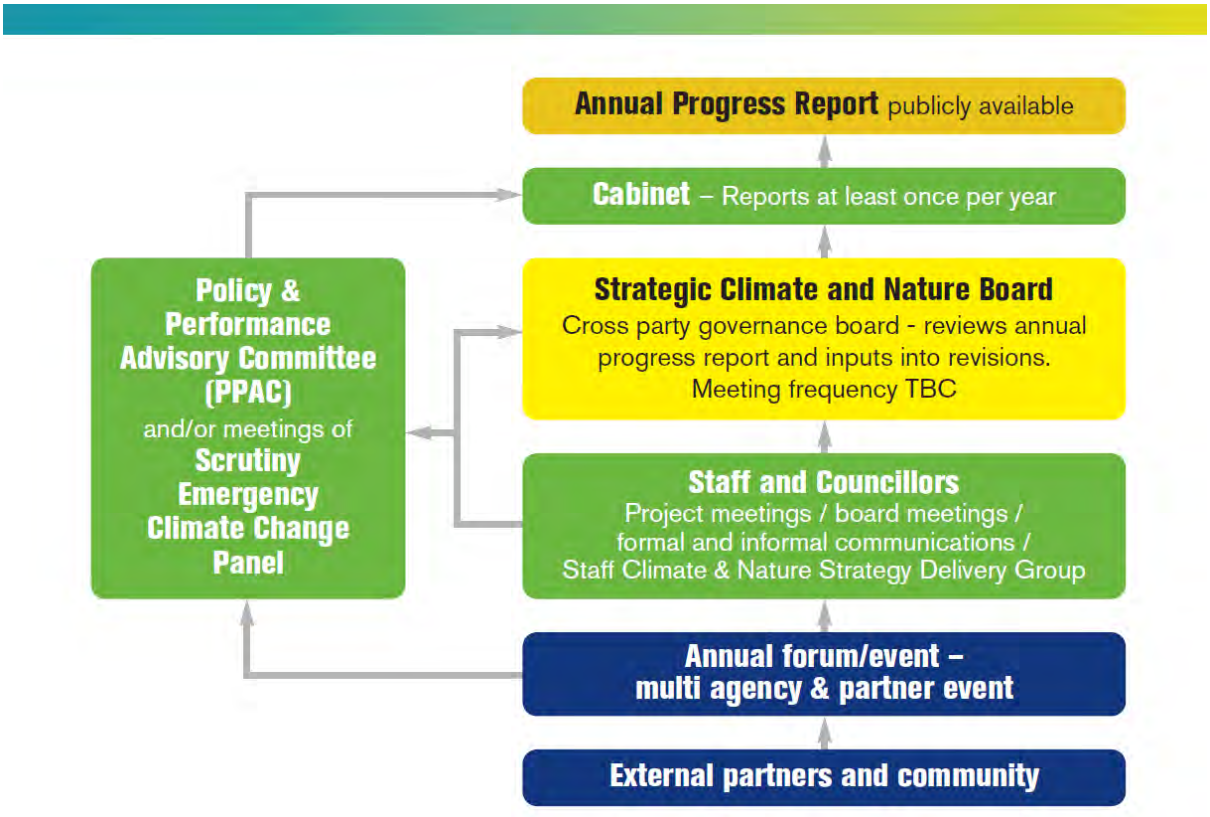
The council has set up a new Strategic Climate and Nature Board (SCNB). This is a cross-party board setup to advise on climate and nature activities within the council.
The purpose of this board is to ensure that the overarching goals of delivering sustainable solutions alongside adaptation measures is achieved across the range of the council's work. In particular, the board will enable the considerable capital allocations in this area to be provided with a thorough oversight.

In addition to the SCNB the cross-party Scrutiny Emergency Climate Change Panel will meet annually to review and feed into the annual report and the strategy and action plan update.

We will also hold an annual event where our partners and young people will be invited to get involved in networking and sharing opportunities and questions with each other and the council. The council will share its carbon emissions data and partners can share case studies for inclusion in the annual report along with providing feedback on actions and targets.

2024 will see the relaunch of the staff Climate & Nature Strategy Delivery Group that will meet at least bi-annually to monitor and discuss the delivery of the strategy and receive carbon emission updates. This will consist of key officers working on delivering projects that contribute to our net zero and nature recovery aims ensuring focus is retained on climate and nature across all services.

A summary diagram of the new structure and information flow is below:



Performance and progress monitoring

The council will monitor 3 core aims through its corporate performance framework – these are outlined in the table below.

Core Aim	Measured by	Frequency
1. Net zero council by 2030	Corporate carbon footprint-scope 1 & 2	Annual (1 year in arrears)
2. At least 30% of the district is well managed for nature and protected by 2030	Developing a means of measurement – to be reported in the annual reports beginning in November 2024	Annual
3. The wider district is becoming resilient to climate change and district emissions are reducing	Department for Energy Security & Net Zero UK Local Authority Greenhouse Gas Emissions National Statistics	Annual (NB Govt. information is provided 2 years in arrears)

In addition, each action area has its own objectives for 2030 with accompanying targets, some of these may be long term 2030 targets, others may be shorter term milestone targets, but all targets and objectives are directly linked to actions within the action plan. Please view the action plan to see the linkages.

Progress against action area objectives and targets will be reported annually through the annual update.

Performance indicators that relate to council activity have also been developed, these will also be reported in the annual update.

All objectives, targets, milestones and indicators will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure they are fit for purpose.

We acknowledge that some areas of our plan are still evolving, and we cannot yet precisely define actions or measure performance in all areas we would like to. For example, our role around food resilience is a new but vital aspiration which we will need to develop as part of delivery. Actions and targets in some areas are still being developed, knowledge and best practice changes over time and Officers respond proactively and positively whenever unexpected opportunities arise. As such, all aspects of this strategy will remain under review

4. The strategic action areas

The council has previously set out seven action areas to provide a framework for the action plan and focus our efforts on reducing emissions and improving climate resilience.

We have updated these sections as part of the strategy refresh and have added a new area we have called ‘Sustainable Council’. This action area will include strategic or cross cutting actions which affect how we operate as a council. Examples including changing our processes, decision making and training.

Each action area below describes the challenges that we face within Lewes District. We provide our high-level aims and targets. Each target has a reference number; you will find this reference number

included on relevant actions within the action plan. [NB. ALL REFERENCE NUMBERS WILL BE ADDED ONCE STRATEGY HAS BEEN APPROVED BY PPAC AND CABINET]

Sustainable Council

The Challenge

This is a new action area for 2024. While delivering the previous action plan we found that many things we needed to do internally within the council to change our processes and in particular our decision-making processes did not fit into our action areas and as such were not reported or monitored. We have therefore created the 'Sustainable Council' theme where actions that do not sit comfortably within one theme, or are fundamental and cross-cutting, can be placed.

The council has a range of statutory functions that can have both positive and potentially negative effects on the environment and the community. The provision of these services are at risk unless we are aware of the impacts of climate change and have adapted our services. We can minimise potential negative impacts by thoroughly risk assessing our decisions and noting those most critical on our corporate risk register.

We procure products and outsource services that can potentially shift our carbon emissions out of our direct control. We must seek to work out what these are and how we can best use our spending power to not only reduce carbon emissions but also encourage local businesses, increase social value and support our community wealth building agenda.

Through the 'Sustainable Council' theme we will seek to provide visible leadership, address the risks posed by climate change to our services, improve our decision-making processes, better determine our scope 3 emissions and seek to reduce them through a sustainable procurement policy.

Our objectives, targets and milestones to meet the challenges:

Objectives:

- To meet Core Aim 1: Net zero and climate resilient council by 2030
- The Council provides visible leadership on climate action.
- Council services are prepared for and resilient to climate change impacts.
- Climate change and impact on nature is embedded in all council decision-making.
- Community Wealth principles are embedded within council processes (including procurement and use of assets)

Council Targets (Tx) and Milestones (MSx):

Council ref.	Detail	Completion date	Action number
TBC	Publish Procurement Strategy	August 2024	TBC
TBC	New decision-making process determined and rolled out	March 2025	TBC
TBC	Assess and determine key climate risks	August 2025	TBC
TBC	Develop adaptation strategies for key council buildings and land	December 2025	TBC
TBC	Deliver a revised approach to measuring & reporting Scope 3 emissions	November 2025	TBC

Performance Measures:

Council Annual Performance Measure	Methodology
Annual corporate carbon emissions scope 1, scope 2 and scope 3	Scope 1 & 2 & 3 data collected, and calculation performed using DESNZ Greenhouse Gas Emission Factors for relevant year
Number of staff who have undertaken the online climate awareness training course.	Recorded via online training portal
Progress on Climate & Nature Action Plan	All actions to be scored annually using a RAG rating (red, amber, green) according to progress- a summary will then be provided for each action area.

Energy and the built environment

The Challenge

When we talk about energy and the built environment, we are talking about the fuels used to heat and power all the buildings we use in our district. We are talking about our homes, our places of work, the places we shop and the places we go to socialise or keep fit. We are mainly talking about electricity and gas consumption although other non-renewable fuels including oil, wood, and LPG, are also a factor, particularly in areas which are not connected to mains gas.

The council only has direct control over a very small proportion of the buildings in the district so much of the action carried out to decarbonise and adapt our buildings is done through enabling action, such as facilitating access for homeowners to grants or bulk purchasing schemes, planning policy, and acting in a strategic capacity where the council works with partnership agencies to investigate options such as large scale heat networks.

In Lewes District approximately 35% of the district's emissions come from over 44,000 domestic properties, second only slightly to transport, and it is estimated that around 80% of buildings[3] that will be occupied in 2050 already exist. Decarbonising the housing stock is therefore a major priority.

11% of domestic property is social rented, and either owned by the council or by a private registered provider, 72% are owner occupied (including mortgaged and shared ownership) and 17% are private rented (as of 2021). Around 2,000 homes are empty.[4]

Around 7,000 homes[5] (or 16% of the total housing stock) in the district are classified as 'off-grid' meaning they are not connected to mains gas- these homes rely on electricity and dirty carbon intensive fuels such as LPG and oil which can also be expensive and volatile in price. Many of these homes are in rural places and as such tend to be older and less energy-efficient making them difficult or expensive to retrofit with new technology.

There are also over 2000 commercial and industrial properties of which half were built prior to 1940[1].

Decarbonising and funding the decarbonisation of the district's buildings, and indeed the council's own domestic and non-domestic buildings, is a major challenge and we must also adapt them to the new climate we expect to have. We must prevent overheating and prevent flooding, two issues that we are already experiencing more frequently. We must act on our existing stock and future proof new buildings and infrastructure.

Emissions from domestic, commercial, and public buildings have reduced by around 5% percent since 2018[6], predominantly due to the decarbonisation of the electricity grid.

The council has seen a reduction in emissions from its own buildings of around 32% for electricity and around 8% from gas since 2018 (gas and electricity it purchases that supply its non-domestic assets and communal housing supplies).

Our objectives, targets and milestones to meet the challenges:

Objectives:

- The district's emissions from buildings and construction have reduced
- Reduced emissions from council assets
- The district produces more green energy
- Residents, in particular those most vulnerable, can access advice, funding and practical sustainability measures
- Community Energy initiatives have been enabled and delivered

[3] UKGBC
[4] East Sussex in Figures
[5] Subnational estimates of domestic properties not on the gas grid, Great Britain 2022
[6] Local Authority territorial greenhouse gas emissions estimates 2005 to 2021

Council Targets (Tx) and Milestones (MSx):

Council target ref.	Target detail	Completion date	Action number
TBC	80% reduction in council scope 1 & 2 carbon emissions (on 2018/19 baseline)	2030	TBC
TBC	50% reduction in council energy consumption (on 2018/19 baseline)	2030	TBC
TBC	Homes in the district (all tenures) have an average EPC rating of 'B'	2030	TBC
TBC	All Council homes to attain a minimum of EPC C by 2030, beginning with the retrofit of 267 council homes to reach minimum EPC C by 2025	2030 with 2025 milestone	TBC
TBC	Adoption of "New Homes Principles" for all new council housing	2024	TBC
TBC	Install solar PV at Seahaven Swim & Fitness Centre and estimate carbon saving	2025	TBC
TBC	Electrification of the councils' waste and recycling depot (through removal of mains gas) in Newhaven	2026	TBC
TBC	Enable a retrofit loan scheme and invest at least £750,000	2024	TBC
TBC	Support community partners to deliver energy advice to at least 2000 residents between 2023 to 2025	2025	TBC
TBC	Double local green energy capacity (on 2018 baseline)	2026	TBC

Performance Measures:

Council Annual Performance Measure	Methodology
Annual corporate carbon emissions scope 1, scope 2	Scope 1 & 2 data collected and determined using DESNZ Greenhouse Gas Emission Factors for relevant year
Carbon emissions from domestic dwellings	DESNZ Local and regional CO2 emissions dataset (data is annually updated 2 years in arrears)
Green energy generation capacity	Renewable energy statistics- Renewable energy by Local Authority dataset- latest update
Average SAP (and EPC) rating of LDC housing stock	Housing asset database
Average EPC rating of district housing stock	Most recent available download of EPC register
Progress on Climate & Nature Action Plan	All actions to be scored using a RAG rating (red, amber, green) according to progress- a summary will then be provided for each action area.

Sustainable travel and air quality

The Challenge

Around 36% of the district's carbon emissions come from transport. 19% of the district's households do not own a car but around half of households own at least one car. We have a main line railway connecting the port town of Newhaven with the towns of Lewes and Seaford to enable travel to Europe and London, as well as the East-West coastal line but we also have a large rural area that is poorly served by public transport.

Fossil fuelled transport is inextricably linked to poor air quality in the public mindset as we can often see and smell it at the roadside, and we are becoming more and more aware of the health issues that can be caused. We know that airborne pollution is a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer, and affects the most vulnerable in society namely children, the elderly, and those with existing heart and lung conditions. Poor air quality also impacts plants and animals[7], with nitrogen and ammonia deposition causing changes to habitats by killing off some species and favouring others, and by altering their ecosystem function such as ability to store carbon (eg. Peatlands)[8].

The council however has very little direct ability to influence what gets driven on roads within our district and cannot directly improve or change roads, pavements or cycleways, because this is the responsibility of East Sussex County Council as highways authority. The council can, however, plan for change through planning policy and work with our very active and productive local community and action groups to develop community led ideas and projects for active and integrated travel. Some of these projects can be enabled on our own land, such as cycle parking in car parks or car clubs on our own developments, and some we must pass on to the county council where we act in a lobbying and facilitating role. We can directly do things like decarbonise our fleet vehicles and facilitate decarbonising wider transport through providing EV charging in our car parks.

Air quality is affected by many forms of airborne pollutants including nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, and tiny particulate matter (PM 2.5 and the larger PM 10) which includes smoke and fine dust. As diesel and petrol vehicles have become cleaner, roadside air quality has improved somewhat but these pollutants continue to be produced and are almost entirely man-made, coming from the burning of fossil fuels in our homes (for example gas boilers), industrial processes and generators, and mechanical processes such as demolition, brake and tyre wear (so EV's, for example, still contribute to poor air quality). Not all air pollutants, however, are greenhouse gases, and not all greenhouse gases are air pollutants. Carbon dioxide, for example is not considered to be an air pollutant but is a greenhouse gas. Making low and zero carbon choices can be beneficial for the quality of the air we all breathe by preventing the production of air pollutants. Our work on improving air quality can therefore be seen to be additionally supported by other action areas within this Nature and Climate Change Strategy - in particular energy and the built environment, through the decarbonisation of heat - whilst our work in the action area of biodiversity actively improves air quality by reducing particles in the air.

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[7] nadp.slh.wisc.edu/aqaw-2024/air-animals-and-plants/

[8] Effects of air pollution on natural ecosystems | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

The district has two air quality management areas because of high levels of certain pollutants in the urban areas of Lewes town and Newhaven and both will soon have action plans in place to help deal with this. The plans will cross-reference with the work contained within this strategy.

Our objectives, targets and milestones to meet the challenge:

Objectives:

- The council has a zero emission at tailpipe fleet
- Everyone has increased access to sustainable travel options and electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Air pollution is reduced to public health is improved

Council Targets (Tx) and Milestones (MSx):

Council ref.	Detail	Completion date	Action number
TBC	All council fleet to be zero carbon (at tailpipe)	2030	TBC
TBC	Deliver the statutory air quality action plans for Lewes and Newhaven	2024	TBC
TBC	Implement sustainable transport plans in new council housing developments	2024	TBC
TBC	New car club vehicles (including at least 1 EV) in coastal towns	2025	TBC
TBC	Expand our provision of publicly accessible electric vehicle charging into at least one more car park	2025	TBC
TBC	Decarbonise all small to medium sized fleet vehicles (non-waste and recycling fleet) by 2026	2024	TBC

Performance Measures:

Council Annual Performance Measure	Methodology
Carbon emissions from the councils fleet	Fuel consumption or mileage records
Carbon emissions from the districts transport	DESNZ Local and regional CO2 emissions dataset (data is annually updated 2 years in arrears)
Number of electric vehicle chargepoints active in the district	Council records and Zap Map

Biodiversity

The Challenge

Biological diversity or biodiversity is the diversity of life. It is the wealth of ecosystems, species, populations and genes on our planet, which underpin every part of our health and our livelihoods, and which are, ecologically, inextricably interrelated and interdependent. The definition of biodiversity includes the variability within and between species and within and between ecosystems and so also includes size of habitats and the quantity of plants and animals as well as the number of species. According to the Natural Capital Protocol, biodiversity is our…. '…life insurance, giving us food, fresh water and clean air, shelter and medicine, mitigating natural disasters, pests and diseases and contributing to regulating the climate. Biodiversity is our natural capital, delivering ecosystem services that underpin our economy.'[9]

Nature offers the potential to store and sequester carbon at a comparatively low cost with a wide range of natural capital enhancements for the investment. For example, engineered solutions can cost between four and ten times more per tonne of CO2 when compared to nature-based interventions. Nature also absorbs pollutants, enabling better air quality and improves peoples' health and well-being.

Biodiversity losses allied with climate change are deemed the most critical global environmental threat of our time. Current rates of species extinction are unparalleled with little dispute within the scientific communities that it is being driven by human activities, namely loss of habitats to urbanisation and agricultural intensification and sprawl. The UK context is set out in the State of Nature Report, 2023. The well-documented deterioration and loss of biodiversity jeopardises the environment at every level including climate regulation and the provision of ecosystem services on which all healthy and thriving communities depend. Quite simply put, life as we know it and all that we hold dear is at risk.

The need to better protect, restore, and increase biodiversity has come to prominence for many people recently due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with the essential need for access to nature, open spaces and wild landscapes for all. The pandemic has brought the subject of mental health and wellbeing more to the fore, with nature solutions – bigger, better and more joined up natural greenspaces, especially for those in more deprived or urban communities – paramount to healthy, thriving communities able to cope with such difficult times.

The Council of course will not be doing any of this work alone, not least because 56 % of our landscape falls within the South Downs National Park. Of the remaining 13,062 ha that are not within the national park around 9% is considered urban and 9% is private gardens, 14% is woodland, 9% grassland heathland and scrub and 1% is considered water habitat. By far the largest habitat is that of agricultural land being 56% of land-use.

Partnership working should be enabled by the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies which were introduced by the Environment Act (2021) and are seeking to expand, improve and connect places for wildlife across the country. East Sussex County Council is responsible for delivering this strategy by 2025 with the support of the Local Planning Authorities, and Lewes District Council is

[9]Natural Capital Committee 2020 Advice on using nature-based interventions to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879797/ncc-nature-basedinterventions

playing an active role. Sussex Wildlife Trust is another key partner working across East Sussex and its four reserves within the district. There are also many local community and volunteer groups dedicated to improving biodiversity and restoring our green spaces throughout the district and these are forming an important part of delivering work in many areas.

Our Core Aim 2 - At least 30% of the district is well managed for nature and protected by 2030- is based on a national and regional target being used the Sussex Wildlife Trust. We are currently working out how this will be reported at the local level and achieving it will be subject to resources being found. Our ambition is present, but we acknowledge the challenge we have to meet our aim.

The council can, to an extent, impact biodiversity in the planning process through the Biodiversity Duty, also introduced by the Environment Act, and it will do this through its new Local Plan policies, which will impact the areas outside the National Park boundary. It is our intention that the new Local Plan will ensure all major developments achieve at least 20% Biodiversity Net Gain as part of a broader approach to biodiversity and nature restoration.

This strategy, the objectives below and the associated action plan, represent our intentions under the Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act) to meet our statutory obligations.

Our objectives, targets and milestones to meet the challenges:

Objectives:

- Restored, resilient and joined up nature network
- UNESCO Biosphere designation is retained, and the area extended
- Meet the requirements of the Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act)

Council Targets (Tx) and Milestones (MSx):

Council ref.	Target detail	Completion date	Action number
TBC	All major development achieving at least 20% biodiversity net gain	2030	TBC
TBC	At least 2 high profile water or nature-based restoration projects progressed	2025	TBC
TBC	30% of LDC green spaces to be under active management for biodiversity by 2026	2026	TBC

Performance Measures:

Council Annual Performance Measure	Methodology
% split of biodiversity net gain delivered (through the planning system): a) on-site within new developments; b) off-site locally and c) through the national credit system.	Council records
% CO2e sequestered by land	DESNZ Local and regional CO2 emissions dataset (data is annually updated 2 years in arrears)
Number of sites under active management for biodiversity	Council records and partner records
Quantity of trees/hedgerows planted	Council records and partner records
Number of practical conservation/volunteering activities supported by the council	Council records
Continued support provided to tree-planting partners such as Lewes Arboretum and Trees For Seaford.	Council records

Sustainable Food Systems

The Challenge

What we eat, and how our food is produced, affects our health but also the environment. Food needs to be grown, reared, and processed, packaged, transported, distributed, prepared, consumed, and sometimes disposed of and each of these steps creates greenhouse gases. About a third of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions are linked to food[10]. The largest proportion of food related greenhouses gasses come from agriculture and land use such as methane from cattle, nitrous oxide from fertilizers, and carbon dioxide from deforestation to create farmland. Smaller amounts are caused by refrigeration and transportation, industrial processing, and the management of food waste. Animal based foods, especially red meat and dairy products and farmed shrimp, have the highest greenhouse gas emissions, compared to plant-based foods which generally use less energy, land and water and produce less greenhouse gases, but this is complex with local pasture grazed livestock having a much lower carbon footprint than imported factory farmed meat and dairy. Because of the large areas of land livestock farming often requires for grazing as well as for growing animal feed, it is the leading cause of ecosystem destruction, and carries an enormous carbon sequestration and biodiversity 'opportunity cost,' indicating the sacrificed opportunities for more sustainable uses of land. Once again though the issue is complex, and impacts vary depending on the production method, for example, intensive versus regenerative or organic.

Reducing emissions requires changes at all stages of the food system, from producers to consumers.

Climate change affects crop and livestock production through extreme weather events, reduced availability of ground and surface water, changes in soil quality and exposure to contaminants[11].

[10] https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/food

[11] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/659ff76ee96df5000df844c3/HECC-report-2023-chapter-9-food-supply.pdf

Food security will be increasingly affected by projected future climate change, plummeting pollinating insect numbers associated with wider biodiversity loss, and geopolitical crises. This will impact consumers through higher food prices, with low-income consumers being particularly at risk. The nutritional value of crops is predicted to be reduced by an increase in CO_2. Pests and diseases will change, affecting production negatively. Fruit and vegetable production is vulnerable to climate change and a decline in yields are projected under higher temperatures[12]. Nearly half of the UK's food is imported from overseas, with greater importation rates of fruit and vegetables (78%), and the proportion of our foods that come from climate-vulnerable countries is increasing.

A shift to healthy and sustainable diets is an opportunity to reduce GHG emissions from food systems and improve the health and well-being of our residents. Consumers can make an impact by choosing diets higher in plant-based foods; buying more locally and sustainably produced food and wasting less.

Changes to farm practices have additional human health benefits such as reduced pesticide contamination of drinking water and maintaining the effectiveness of antibiotics used in medicine by preventing resistance developing via routine livestock use.

Reducing food waste can lower greenhouse gas emissions and improve food security. Global food loss and waste amount to 25–30% of total food produced. In the UK food waste from all sectors is around 10.7 million tonnes. This equates to a value of over £22 billion a year. The greenhouse gas emissions from household food waste alone totals 18 million tonnes.

The council's food waste collection service has low contamination rates which means we can compost the food waste creating quality organic matter for soil health. The council is also committed to preventing waste in the first place, in line with the food waste hierarchy. The council is committed to working with community organisations and industry partners to reduce food waste, improve food resilience and promote sustainable food systems. The council supports the use of council land for community growing schemes and the planting of community orchards where suitable. Our objectives, targets and milestones to meet the challenges:

Objectives:

- We have increased sustainable food production
- We have a strategic food systems approach across the district
- We have enabled food resilience

[12] https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/chapter-5/

Council Targets (Tx) and Milestones (MSx):

Council target ref.	Target detail	Completion date	Action number
TBC	Deliver at least one sustainable food system project e.g. Capturing the Value of the Catch- This is a relevant target in 2 action areas	2026	TBC
TBC	Work with Lewes District Food Partnership to achieve Sustainable Food Places Silver award by 2026	2026	TBC

Performance Measures:

Council Annual Performance Measure	Methodology
Number of orchard trees or other edible planting annually	Council & Partner records
Amount of food waste collected annually	Waste Data Flow records

Reducing Waste and Litter

The challenge

As more rubbish is being generated it is having a devastating effect on our environment. If rubbish isn't reduced, reused, or recycled, it is taken for disposal. All waste that is disposed of, regardless of the method of disposal, contributes to air pollution, water and soil contamination, impacting on health and ultimately climate change by the release of methane and carbon dioxide. Disposal of rubbish should be considered as a last resort, and finding ways to prevent and reduce our waste and recycling is critical.[13] WRAP reports that around a third of all plastic packaging put on the global market annually leaks from collection systems, polluting the environment. And at least eight million tonnes of plastics leak into the ocean each year.[14] Likewise, the effects of littering have detrimental effects on not just land, but also oceans, rivers, streams, and wildlife, and human health.

Reducing waste and litter in the district is a key corporate priority and the council seeks to achieve waste reduction by encouraging a Reduce Reuse Recycle approach that is collaborative with the community. We are committed to maintaining a high-quality local environment through our waste service, community engagement and the use of appropriate enforcement. It should be noted that the council is only the waste collection authority, so we carry out the kerbside collections through Environment First, but we do not have the responsibility for its disposal, this is the responsibility of East Sussex County Council.

The district currently recycles around 40% of its household waste. This includes things sent for reuse, recycling and composting. Residents can find out what can be recycled via the online A to Z of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

[13] https://www.recycle-more.co.uk/
[14] https://www.wrap.ngo/

Government is targeting 55% of waste to be recycled by 2025 but this is challenging. Plastic use is on the rise and recycling it is not easy, nor can it be done forever, as over time the quality reduces. We need to reduce waste production in general which will involve action by government, producers, suppliers and everyone who buys anything. As consumers we need to make conscious decisions to not buy goods in lots of packaging and then to repair and re-use items wherever we can. We have become a throw away nation and this is a difficult mindset to change.

Of Lewes district's waste, typically 42% is recycled (26% is dry recycling, 16% composted) 0% is sent to landfill and 58% used for energy from waste.

From the perspective of total waste collected over the past five years, overall waste collected by the council has dropped. This is reflected both nationally and across East Sussex and attributed to several factors, for example:

- Drier summers having a downward impact on garden waste levels.
- The cost-of-living crisis influencing householder behaviours.
- Other diversions from waste e.g. batteries back to shops, increased use of online second-hand selling sites and the promotion of reusable products like nappies.

From an environmental impact point of view, the drop in waste is seen as a positive and is the first stage of the waste hierarchy Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Less consumption and less waste disposed of reduces negative environmental impacts.
The act of waste collection and disposal is also very energy intensive. The council has produced a Fleet Replacement Strategy to reduce emissions from collections, including the introduction of electric food waste collection vehicles, however if we collect less then we will use less fuel, we potentially need fewer vehicles and as result would produce less pollution and fewer carbon emissions.

Litter is a key local concern, especially plastic waste. It is unsightly, unhygienic and can quickly accumulate in certain areas. It can take years to degrade, emitting greenhouse gases as it does so, and causes direct harm to wildlife and habitats, including waterways so it is directly linked to the health of our environment.
The council will create opportunities to reduce littering and fly tipping and improve the public realm in collaboration with local and national partners, supporting their campaigns (e.g. on disposable vapes) and through our own 'Educate Remind Enforce' campaign and will continue to support local waste reduction and litter picking initiatives.

Our objectives, targets and milestones to meet the challenges:

Objectives:

- Reduced waste
- Increased recycling rates
- Improved public realm
- Reuse and repair projects are encouraged

Council Targets (Tx) and Milestones (MSx):

Council ref.	Detail	Completion date	Action number
TBC	Reduce waste from council offices by 50%	2030	TBC
TBC	Recycling rate increase to 55% (national target)	2025	TBC

Performance Measures:

Council Annual Performance Measure	Methodology
Amount of waste collected in the district	Waste Data Flow records
Amount of waste recycled in the district	Waste Data Flow records
Amount of waste collected from offices	Council records- method TBC 2024

Water, Rivers and Seas

The Challenge

This action area covers the full spectrum of water use impacts within the district. It covers water consumption as well as flooding from rivers, surface water and the sea, water quality and coastal erosion. It is intrinsically linked to our biodiversity work and actions.

The health of our water resources directly impacts on all of us as individuals as well as the habitats that border these resources. They have the capacity for carbon sequestration, can provide sustainable resources to enable economic regeneration, provide publicly accessible spaces for recreation and well-being and provide a focal point for our tourism industry.

20% of the district is a medium to high risk of flooding while at the same time the entire south-east is classified as being under serious water stress. We are therefore looking to not only reduce consumption to protect our chalk aquifer resource but also deal with water when we have too much of it. As a result of climate change, we expect to see warmer summers (which drives higher water consumption) while milder and drier winters will make it harder keep aquifers and reservoirs supplied with drinking water. Stormier and more extreme weather in general means we are likely to experience more flooding.

Sewage discharges continue to be a problem for both the River Ouse and our shoreline.

The council, with other agencies and landowners, works to understand the risk posed by a changing coast and in partnership seeks to manage and mitigate the risks along the coast stretching from Saltdean in the west to Cuckmere in the east, some 14.5km of shoreline. LDC has defences at East Saltdean and Peacehaven designed to reduce the erosion of those cliffs in accordance with the Beachy Head to Selsey Bill shoreline management plan.

All our work within this action area is complex and involves multiple agencies and partners. To achieve well managed and protected waterways and coastal areas that benefit residents, as well as the natural environment, partnership working is essential.

Our objectives, targets and milestones to meet the challenges:

Objectives:

We will work with stakeholder communities, landowners and others to:

- Seek to manage the risk posed by a changing coast
- Seek to support communities to be resilient to flooding
- Seek to manage waterways and improve water quality
- Advocate to preserve our water resources

Council Targets (Tx) and Milestones (MSx):

Council ref.	Detail	Completion date	Action number
	Natural Flood Management:		
TBC	Deliver 3 partnership projects, winter 2024/25, to hold water and help reduce flood risk	2025	TBC
TBC	Deliver a programme of work through our partners for the medium term 2025 – 2028 to -help reduce flood risk -improve drought resilience -provide natural mechanisms for improving water quality, and -provide blue/green corridors for nature recovery	2028	TBC
	Sea Defences:		
TBC	Survey 3 km sea defences in spring every year	Annually	TBC
TBC	Undertake necessary repairs in late summer / autumn as required by above	Annually	TBC

Performance Measures:

Council Annual Performance Measure	Methodology
Number of natural flood management projects delivered through our collaborative partnership approach	Council & Partner records
Continue to monitor manage and repair our sea defences in accordance with the shoreline management plan	Council records

Community Wealth and Wellbeing

The Challenge

The council has an important role in supporting those in most need in society. Since the pandemic, and the economic challenges that followed it nationally, we have been working hard in particular to support people experiencing hardship due to the cost-of-living crisis. This work will continue, especially whilst the national economic situation continues to be difficult. We are taking a holistic approach to this, working across all departments in the council.

Community wealth building is one part of this approach which seeks to build resilience in the local economy.

For the last 4 years the council has embraced a community wealth building (CWB) approach to its work, and it is crucial for a just transition to occur. CWB is about ensuring that local people and the local economy are placed at the centre of how the council operates, and how we work with our partners, to retain more wealth and opportunity for the benefit of local people. Locally we have taken the approach which also puts sustainability at the core.

For many years local authorities have procured services based on lowest cost. Very little thought was given to environmental consequences of decisions and contracts were often let to large corporations who could reduce costs through economies of scale, without regard to local socio-economic and sustainability co-benefits that could be achieved through smarter spending policies and decisions. The concept of community wealth building seeks to change that.

The council has worked with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to develop a programme of work that acknowledges that the economy and the environment are intrinsically linked and takes account of the role that anchor institutions can play to ensure a just transition to a low carbon district. As an anchor institution the council can use its spending power and influence to drive investment into the local economy enabling a green economic recovery and local job creation and retention. This action area links with many of the other areas within the strategy through things such as decarbonisation of housing and creation of community investment vehicles.

Our objectives, targets and milestones to meet the challenges:

Council Targets (Tx) and Milestones (MSx):

Council ref.	Detail	Completion date	Action number
TBC	Increase in proportion of procurement spend going to local companies	Annual	TBC
TBC	Increase in social value achieved through council contracts	Annual	TBC
TBC	Deliver at least one sustainable food system (Capturing the Value of the Catch) – This is a relevant target in 2 action areas	2026	

Performance Measures:

Council Annual Performance Measure	Methodology
Improvement in Thriving Places Index Score	*www.thrivingplacesindex.org/*

Part 4. The Action Plan

[Insert action plan]