

Guildford Borough Council

Climate and Nature Strategy

Resilient Futures: Creating a Greener, Thriving, Sustainable Tomorrow

Foreword

In 2019, Guildford Borough Council formally acknowledged the climate crisis by declaring a Climate Emergency. Since then, the reality of climate change has become increasingly visible across our borough. Prolonged heatwaves, destructive fires affecting our heathlands, and a rise in flooding incidents are no longer exceptional events but growing challenges that affect our environment, infrastructure and daily lives. Climate projections for the UK show that these extreme weather events will intensify as global temperatures continue to rise.

The Council has a responsibility to lead by example. Our vision is for Guildford to be a place where environmental sustainability underpins prosperity and wellbeing — a borough that is net zero, climate-resilient and rich in nature, where people and wildlife can flourish together. To support this ambition, we have committed to cutting our own carbon emissions and to operating as a net zero council by 2030. This Climate and Nature Strategy sets out the practical steps we will take to meet that goal, ensuring our actions are both deliverable and provide long-term value for our communities, businesses, and natural assets.

The strategy establishes a co-ordinated approach across a range of key areas. These include sustainable transport, a thriving and resilient local economy, efficient and renewable energy systems, reducing waste and conserving resources, and improving neighbourhoods, green spaces and biodiversity. Together these actions form a comprehensive response to the climate and ecological challenges we face and reflect our responsibility to deliver on our strategy for current and future generations of Guildford Borough

While the impacts of climate change pose serious risks and profound implications for our communities, businesses, wildlife and countryside, they also present an opportunity to improve quality of life across the borough. The measures set out in this strategy will help deliver cleaner air, warmer and more energy-efficient buildings, reduced emissions, healthier neighbourhoods, and greater access to nature — all contributing to improved health and wellbeing for those who live and work in Guildford.

Looking ahead, this strategy has been designed to support long-term change. It aligns with the work of our collaboration partner Waverley Borough Council and provides a strong foundation for the transition to a new unitary authority.

We will continue to deliver and plan projects that enable the future West Surrey Council to achieve net zero emissions, working collaboratively with neighbouring

councils, local businesses, residents and community groups to turn ambition into action.

Through the delivery of this strategy, we are committing to decisive action today to build a resilient, sustainable and thriving future for the people of Guildford.

Angela Goodwin

Portfolio Holder, Environment and Sustainability

January 2026

Executive Summary

Guildford Borough Council is determined to reach net zero by 2030, taking decisive action to help tackle the climate emergency. Climate change awareness and understanding has been embedded into council decision making, and our Corporate Strategy has made Climate Change and carbon reduction a key priority. A dedicated Climate Change Board has been developed between the council and community partners to oversee our carbon reduction journey.

This Climate and Nature Strategy sets out our themed key objectives, the actions we will take to reduce our operational greenhouse gas emissions and the benefits that will be delivered for residents, businesses, communities and the natural environment.

Since our 2019/20 baseline year, the council has reduced its total organisational emissions of greenhouse gases by 18%. This has occurred across council operations with a focus on converting council owned buildings from gas to electric heating. This built on significant strides in the production of renewable energy from solar installations carried out before the baseline year.

We acknowledge that there is still a long way to go to reach our net zero target and are focusing on areas such as emissions from fleet vehicles, daily council operations and leisure facilities, that will deliver the most significant reductions. This will ensure resources are directed to the most impactful actions.

Introduction

Climate change refers to the long-term shift in global weather patterns driven by rising atmospheric temperatures, primarily caused by increasing concentrations of man-made greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

In the UK, we're already experiencing the effects of climate change. The last three years have all been in the UK's top five warmest on record¹. We're also experiencing more frequent and intense weather extremes, such as warmer and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers and an increased incidence of heatwaves, drought, flooding and wildfires.

In 2019, the UK government amended the 2008 Climate Change Act to set a more ambitious target of being carbon neutral by 2050. In July of that year, Guildford Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to becoming net zero by 2030 in order to play our part in reducing the risk of average global temperatures rising more than 1.5°C.

Climate change brings serious environmental, social, and economic challenges. In Guildford, impacts include biodiversity loss, woodland decline, food insecurity, and pressure on water supplies. It also drives up the cost of energy, goods, and services, while affecting the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of our residents, businesses, and communities.

This is the second strategy document since 2019 aimed at carbon management, energy efficiency and sustainability. It updates our 2022 Climate Change Strategy and the accompanying Climate Change Action Plan (2020-2030) to refocus our objectives, report on our progress and broaden our vision to include the natural environment.

The Climate and Nature Strategy recognises the importance of our greenspaces and how nature performs an important role in our response to climate change. We aim to develop a co-ordinated plan for nature recovery, restoration and protection across the borough, whilst planning for and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Our vision

“Working together for a greener Guildford: a sustainable, net zero, and climate-resilient borough where communities and biodiversity flourish side by side.”

Guildford Borough Council is committed to taking a leading role in addressing climate change. Our vision is to achieve net zero carbon emissions from our own operations by 2030, including emissions from the gas and electricity used in our buildings and the fuel used by council-owned vehicles (Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions).

¹ Met Office 'State of the Climate 2024' report: [State of the UK Climate - Met Office](#)

We will work to reduce emissions we can influence but do not directly control, such as those from contractor vehicles and energy use at leased sites (relevant Scope 3 emissions), working with our partners to drive meaningful and lasting change.

The commitment to reach net zero by 2030 is a core Corporate Strategy priority under “*A More Sustainable Borough*”.

We’ll cut emissions by:

- Improving energy efficiency in council buildings and services
- Switching to cleaner fuels for our fleet
- Installing renewable technologies like solar panels and heat pumps

We’ll also:

- Promote biodiversity and support sustainable homes, businesses, and transport
- Empower residents and businesses to become sustainable with advice, resources, grants, and community partnerships

By delivering on our commitments, we’ll also unlock co-benefits that improve public health and wellbeing, enhance biodiversity and protect our natural spaces, drive economic growth and green jobs, strengthen energy security and reduce inequality. These actions will help us achieve our wider strategic priorities:

- **A more sustainable borough:** We’ll deliver council services in a way that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, improves air quality and tackles waste. By increasing recycling and protecting our countryside and biodiversity, we’ll create cleaner, greener spaces for everyone to enjoy.
- **A more prosperous borough:** By supporting local businesses to cut their carbon footprint and embrace green technologies, we’ll position Guildford as a hub for sustainable enterprise, creating new jobs, attracting investment and building a thriving green economy.
- **A more inclusive borough:** We’ll make it easier for everyone to choose sustainable travel by improving walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure, while maintaining our parks and green spaces as places for health and wellbeing. Energy-efficient homes will help reduce fuel poverty and ensure vulnerable residents aren’t left behind.
- **Decent and affordable homes:** New homes will be built to high sustainability standards, incorporating renewable energy technologies. We’ll also upgrade

existing council homes to improve insulation and ventilation, cutting energy bills and creating healthier, more comfortable living environments.

- **A resilient and well-managed council:** By investing in renewable energy and decarbonising our buildings, we'll protect services from rising energy costs, reduce financial risk and ensure we're prepared for the impacts of climate change, delivering long-term value for our communities.

Our objectives

Our objectives are organised into 5 key themes:

1. **Sustainable Transport** to make travel safer, greener, and fairer for everyone by prioritising walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport.
2. **Local Economy** to build strong local economies by helping businesses grow, adapt, and thrive through smart partnerships, sustainable practices, and strategic investment.
3. **Energy** covers modernising our energy systems to be more efficient, cleaner, smarter, and more secure. In doing this we will cut costs, boost renewables, and ensure reliable power for homes, businesses, and communities.
4. **Waste and Resources** is about making the most of what we have, cutting waste, boosting reuse and recycling, and building cleaner, more efficient and resourceful communities.
5. **Neighbourhoods and Greenspaces** are safe, green, and welcoming places with good homes, strong services, and public spaces that help communities feel connected, proud, and resilient.

These five themes form the foundation of our Climate Action Plan, turning ambition into practical steps.

Together, they address the key drivers of emissions and resilience by improving transport, modernising energy systems, supporting a sustainable local economy, reducing waste, and enhancing neighbourhoods and greenspaces. The outcomes we aim to achieve within each theme, and the actions we will take to deliver them, are set out below under 'Taking action to achieve our goals'. By integrating these objectives, the plan delivers a comprehensive approach that not only cuts carbon but also strengthens communities, protects nature, and promotes long-term prosperity for Guildford.

The current picture

“We’re the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation that can do something about it” - Governor Jay Inslee, Washington State, USA

The past decade has been the warmest on record. Even if all human-caused emissions stopped today, some additional warming would still be unavoidable. The extent of future warming will depend on the actions taken now. In Surrey, the heat wave of 2022 saw record summer temperatures close to 40°C and 2025 saw a record of 4 heatwaves over the summer

UK Climate Projections² predict hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters with more intense rainfall events in Surrey, leading to increased risk of flooding. Guildford has a long history of flooding, particularly from the River Wey. The town has been affected by floods for almost 100 years, and the Environment Agency is currently working on an expanded flood prevention scheme to mitigate these risks. The scheme aims to save homes and businesses from rising waters and open up previously unusable town-centre land for new housing.

The drier, hotter summers are creating increased risk to nature, property and health from wildfires such as those north of Guildford at Whitmoor Common in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 and most recently south of Guildford in July and August 2025.



Photo: Fire crews responding to a wildfire on agricultural land south of Guildford.

Acting now allows us to limit future damage, protect our communities through building resilience, and reduce long-term costs. We also see climate action as an

² [UK Climate Projections \(UKCP18\) - Met Office](#)

opportunity. By investing in cleaner growth, innovation, and resilience, we can create new jobs, strengthen our local economy, and ensure a healthier environment for future generations.

Our responsibility is clear: reducing emissions today safeguards our community tomorrow.

We've chosen to lead by committing to become net zero by 2030. While our own operations account for approximately 1% of the borough's emissions³, we know real change depends on collaboration. That's why we'll work in partnership with central government, businesses, community groups and residents, aligning efforts, sharing resources and enabling sustainable choices, to achieve carbon neutrality across Guildford by 2050.

Total emissions from council operations in 2024/5 were 7,061 tCO₂e. That is equivalent to the annual emissions from 4,302 petrol cars. This figure covers direct emissions from council operations (Scope 1), indirect emissions from energy purchases (Scope 2) and emissions related to contractor operations and supplier value chains (Scope 3). Figure 1 shows a breakdown of these emissions across council operations.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Guildford Brough Council operations, 2024/25

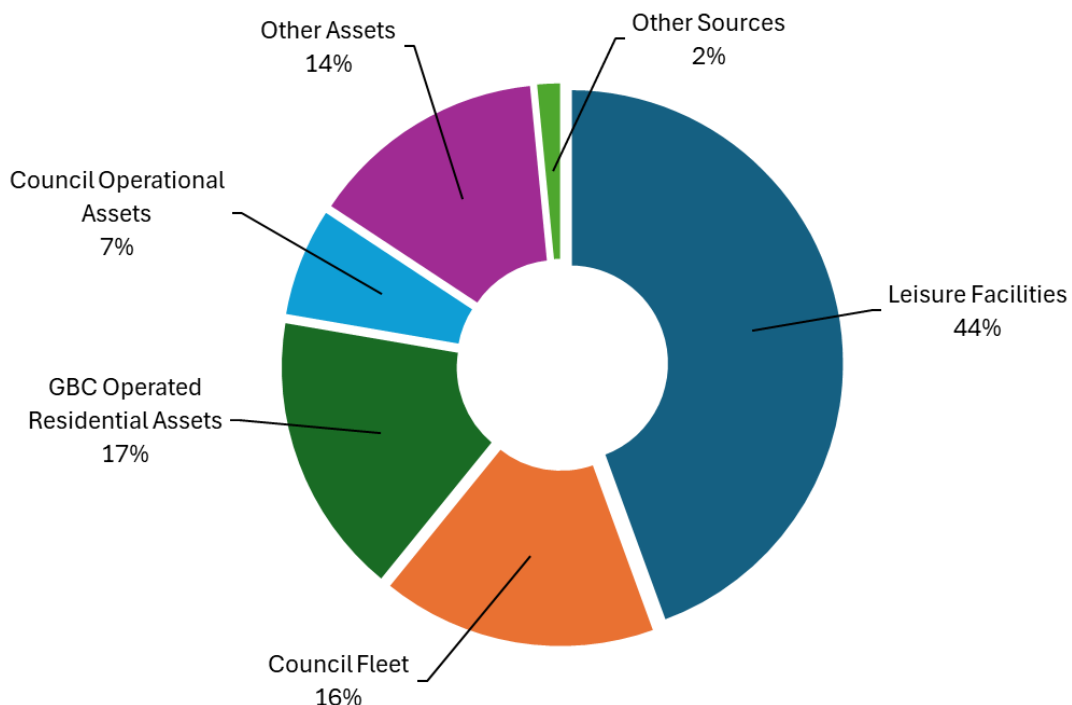


Figure 1. Breakdown of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from council operations.

³ [UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics, 2005 to 2023 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics-2005-to-2023)

^[1] [UK Climate Projections \(UKCP18\) - Met Office](#)

^[2] [UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics, 2005 to 2023 - GOV.UK](#)

Progress so far

Since declaring a Climate Emergency, the Council has made real progress towards its goal of reaching net zero.

A Climate Change Board is now in place to guide this work, bringing together councillors, the University of Surrey, Surrey County Council and local environmental organisations to work collaboratively on climate action across the borough.

We now have a clear picture of the Council's carbon emissions, based on a 2019/20 starting point, and a plan showing how emissions need to reduce by 2030. Figure 2 shows the Council's carbon emissions each year and the progress made since the baseline year. Emissions were much lower in 2020/21 due to Covid-19 lockdowns, when many council buildings, including leisure facilities, were closed. Overall, emissions from council operations have fallen by 18% since 2019/20.

This progress is supported by the Climate Change Action Plan, which sets out the actions the Council will take to reduce emissions further, guide investment, and ensure climate action is part of everyday decision-making.

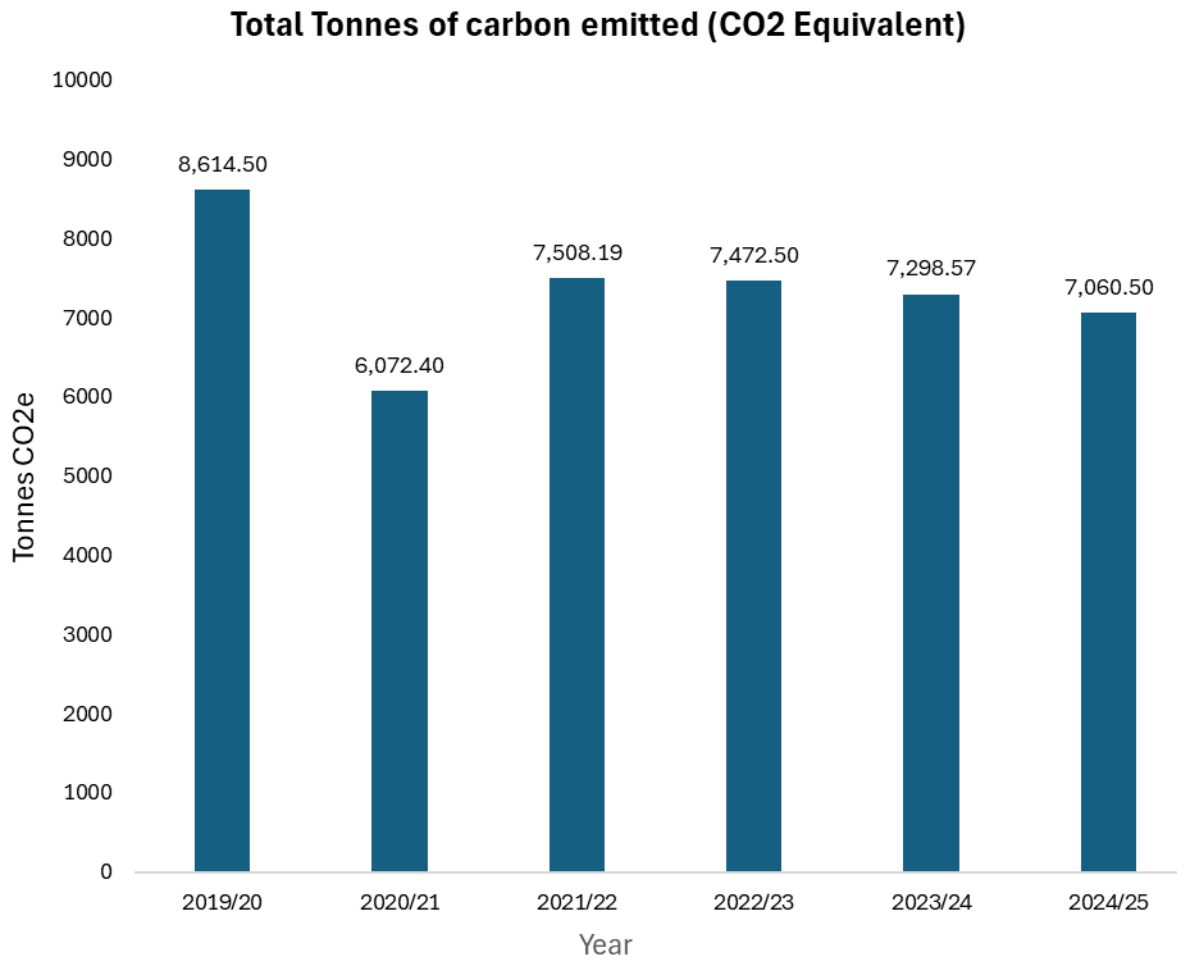


Figure 2. Total annual amount of carbon dioxide emitted from council operations.

Taking action to achieve our goals

The following section sets out the outcomes we wish to achieve within each of our five key themes, the actions we will take and the benefits of those actions. There are a significant number of actions that we aim to complete by 2027, when the new unitary authority takes over, along with longer-term projects that will continue through to 2030 and beyond. We will continue to progress the initial stages of longer-term projects so that they can be handed over to the new West Surrey unitary authority for delivery.

Sustainable Transport

Sustainable Transport is about creating safe, reliable, and accessible ways for people to move around that support both individual wellbeing and the long-term strength of our communities. It aims to make walking, wheeling, cycling, and public transport easier and safer, reduces congestion and air pollution, and ensures that travel is affordable and fair for everyone.

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
Speeding up the move to more sustainable vehicle fuel use	<p>We offer EV charging across 9 of the council's car parks.</p> <p>There are over 190 vehicles and diesel-powered equipment that the council own and maintain</p>	We will expand electric vehicle infrastructure and gradually transition our operational fleet to low-emission, energy-efficient vehicles through a phased rollout by 2034/35.	Reducing petrol and diesel use keeps more wealth in the local economy, cuts the council's greenhouse gas emissions, and removes tailpipe pollution for cleaner air and better health. It also helps residents and businesses shift toward cleaner, more sustainable mobility.
More people choosing walking, cycling, and greener travel	Recent studies show that there is significant potential to improve footways and footpaths by widening and	We will improve walking, cycling and public transport by working with Surrey County	Expanding safe cycle infrastructure on key routes offers a great opportunity to encourage active travel and

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
	<p>enhancing their condition, creating safer and more accessible routes for pedestrians.</p> <p>A Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) has been developed by GBC and SCC.</p> <p>A new shared Beryl e-bike scheme has been introduced in Guildford, delivered in partnership with the University of Surrey and Surrey County Council.</p>	<p>Council to make sure new developments support safe, convenient travel. This includes major route improvements, better connections, and exploring the expansion of the Beryl e-bike scheme between 2026 and 2030, alongside longer-term plans to create a joined-up cycle network and improved local streets.</p>	<p>make busy roads more welcoming for cyclists.</p> <p>These efforts will lead to reduced transport emissions, healthier lifestyles, and lower travel costs, while supporting the objectives of our Air Quality Strategy, and reducing microplastic pollution.</p>
<p>Public transport that supports communities across the borough</p>	<p>Our community service uses electric minibuses, providing dial-a-ride transport for eligible residents to shops, medical appointments and our Activity Hub at The Hive.</p> <p>The SCC funded the Surrey Connect Digital Demand</p>	<p>We will support the development of and promote community dial-a-ride and Digital Demand Responsive Transport services, maintain the community minibus, and work with Surrey’s transport authorities on a new Bus Service Improvement Plan</p>	<p>Public transport supports active travel and improves health and wellbeing, while reducing car use keeps more money in the local economy, cuts congestion, improves access to local high streets, and lowers air, noise, and microplastic pollution.</p>

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
	Response Travel service currently covers communities across the western side of the town and borough.	and Enhanced Partnership model. By 2030, we will also review the Bus Service Improvement Plan and future franchising as part of the new unitary and strategic authority.	

Case Study

Greener Travel for Guildford: Beryl e-Bikes

What we did

Beryl e-bikes are a new shared mobility scheme introduced in Guildford through a partnership between Surrey County Council, the University of Surrey, and Guildford Borough Council.

The scheme launched on 18 September 2024, linking the University with the town centre. In the first year of operation, there were over 200 bikes in circulation, across a network of 35 bays, with plans to expand the scheme to connect outer areas like Jacobs Well, Merrow, and Shalford.

Why

Transport accounts for 51% of carbon emissions in Guildford. The initiative aims to provide a sustainable alternative to car travel. By offering a convenient, cost-effective, and low-carbon travel option, the scheme supports the Council's climate emergency goals and encourages residents and students to adopt greener travel habits.

Benefits

By replacing some car journeys, local greenhouse gas emissions and air, noise and microplastic pollutants will be reduced with residents benefitting from improved air quality, cleaner streets and less congested, safer, roads. In the first year since the scheme was launched, Guildford's Beryl e-bikes have made over 120,000 journeys, saving over 7.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

Beryl e-bikes are convenient to use, and cycling is a good form of exercise, benefitting both health and wellbeing.



Photo: Beryl e-Bikes parked on Stoke Road, Guildford.

Local Economy

This key theme is about supporting strong local and resilient economies by helping businesses to grow, adapt to the effects of climate change and succeed. It means managing contracts and partnerships effectively, creating the right conditions for investment, and ensuring that local enterprises can withstand challenges and seize new opportunities. This builds stability, prosperity, and long-term economic strength for communities.

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
<p>Working together on climate action and getting ready for local council reorganisation</p>	<p>Guildford and Waverley have been aligning their climate goals, and this collaboration has now expanded to include all the Councils that will form the West Surrey Unitary authority.</p> <p>Guildford Borough Council works closely with Surrey County Council to strengthen climate action, with SCC represented on the Climate Change Board.</p> <p>We also work with the University of Surrey, drawing on their expertise to provide advice, information, and support for projects and research studies.</p>	<p>We will work with councils, partners, and stakeholders to deliver our climate goals through a consistent, resilient approach to sustainability during Local Government Reorganisation, embedding environmental responsibility across all our work by 2027.</p>	<p>Coordinated climate action across our councils and partners will create a consistent, efficient, and resilient approach to sustainability during LGR, helping us make faster progress on shared climate goals and ensuring environmental responsibility is embedded across West Surrey for the benefit of all residents.</p>

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
Supporting Low-Carbon Business Growth in Guildford	Implemented sustainability requirements across all procurement tenders to drive Guildford Borough Council's journey toward net-zero, alongside robust Social Value criteria designed to strengthen communities and create meaningful opportunities for local residents.	<p>We will help Guildford's businesses cut carbon emissions by 2030 by promoting sustainable practices, improving contractor accountability, and using digital tools to boost efficiency, supporting local climate goals and a thriving green economy.</p> <p>We will explore the feasibility of adopting a Green Mark accreditation scheme to encourage local business to reduce their carbon footprint.</p>	Supporting low-carbon business growth in Guildford will help local businesses reduce emissions, lower operating costs, improve efficiency through digital tools, strengthen accountability, and contribute to local climate goals while creating new opportunities in a thriving green economy.
Strengthening Climate Skills and Clear Emissions Reporting	Guildford Borough Council produces an annual Greenhouse Gas Report that details the sources and levels of carbon emissions across our operations. Sustainability considerations are embedded in all decision papers, ensuring decision-makers have the information they need to assess environmental impacts. Additionally, we	<p>We will build climate awareness, knowledge, and skills among staff and communities by 2030 through clear communication and staff training.</p> <p>We will improve how we measure and report emissions by introducing standardised reporting across council</p>	Strengthening climate skills and transparent emissions reporting will help staff and residents make informed, climate-conscious choices. Accountability, through clearer data, will ensure that progress toward local climate goals is visible, effective, and guided by reliable evidence.

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
	have introduced an Internal Carbon Price to highlight the carbon implications of our choices and drive more sustainable decision-making.	operations and publishing emissions data on the council website to strengthen accountability and demonstrate progress towards our climate goals.	

Case Study **Climate Change Board: Leading Guildford’s Net-Zero Journey**

What we did A Climate Change Board (CCB) was established to oversee the implementation of Guildford Borough Council’s Climate Change Action Plan and net-zero strategy. The Board is a cross-sector group, which brings together borough councillors, the University of Surrey, Surrey County Council, and local environmental organisations.

Why The Board ensures accountability, drives collaboration, monitors progress and keeps the council focused on its 2030 net-zero goal, despite financial and operational challenges.

Benefits To date, the Climate Change Board has supported an 18% reduction in Guildford Borough Council’s greenhouse gas emissions since 2019. It drives momentum and has been instrumental in embedding climate considerations across council operations, including integrating sustainability into the Council’s corporate priorities.



Photo: Guildford Mayor’s Coat of Arms

Energy

The Energy theme is about modernising the borough’s energy systems, so they are cleaner, smarter, and more reliable. It focuses on increasing access to affordable energy, expanding renewable generation, and supporting innovation that keeps households, businesses, and services running smoothly. A secure and forward-looking energy system could protect people from rising costs and ensures resilience for the future.

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
<p>Improved Operational Efficiency and Financial Sustainability</p>	<p>The efficiency and energy use of our fleet of vehicles, plant, and building stock are under review.</p>	<p>We will identify efficiency savings and help the environment by using energy more efficiently in our buildings, such as leisure centres and housing.</p> <p>We will introduce efficient technologies such as improving insulation in Council buildings, replacing gas boilers, introducing Air Source Heat Pumps, and rooftop solar where suitable.</p>	<p>Good quality housing reduces energy bills for residents and provides improvements to health, wellbeing and biodiversity.</p> <p>Increasing efficiency within the operational assets will support financial growth and sustainability.</p> <p>This will lower energy bills, reduce carbon emissions, and move us closer to climate goals.</p>
<p>A reliable local energy system that expands green energy and empowers communities to reach net zero.</p>	<p>Through our website and social media, we actively promote Surrey County Council managed domestic and commercial energy grants.</p>	<p>We will identify local renewable energy opportunities, such as solar and wind, to guide targeted investment in appropriate technologies and support</p>	<p>Effective strategic planning and development management.</p> <p>Local, open, participative government.</p>

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
		resilient, community-led energy systems. These schemes and grants will be promoted on our website to increase participation within our communities.	

Case Study Energy Efficiency Improvements: Guildford Spectrum Leisure Complex

What we did With the help of the government’s Swimming Pool Support Fund, we were able to purchase and install pool covers for each of the swimming pools at Guildford Spectrum leisure centre: the 25-metre competition pool, teaching pool and diving pool.

Air-Powered showers were also installed within the Spectrum’s pool changing areas to reduce water consumption, whilst upgrading the showers to provide visitors with a powerful, pleasant shower experience.

Why Pool covers are highly effective in reducing water evaporation, which is a major source of water and energy loss, and act as insulation, trapping heat within the water.

The water efficient showers use around 55% less water than a standard shower, significantly reducing water consumption and energy costs.

Benefits The swimming pools are more cost effective to run because the pool covers act to reduce the water and energy bills for filling and heating the pools. They also help to maintain the chemical balance of the treated water in the pool by reducing exposure to sunlight and air, which can



degrade pool chemicals. This means less frequent chemical applications, further lowering running costs.

Water and energy bills have also been reduced by installing the Air-Powered showers.

All these measures help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Photo: Pool covers stored on their roller systems [photo courtesy of Freedom Leisure].

Waste and Resources

The Waste and Resources theme focuses on shifting from a 'throw-away' culture to one where we make the most of what we have. It means reducing waste, improving recycling, and finding new uses for materials that might otherwise be lost. By treating waste as a valuable resource, we cut costs, create opportunities, and build communities that are cleaner, more efficient, and more resourceful.

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
Increased Public Engagement in Sustainable Waste Processes	A communications strategy for waste was produced in 2024 and is updated annually.	We will strengthen public understanding of waste issues, encouraging responsible daily disposal habits that increase recycling, reduce contamination, and build long-term support for environmental sustainability across the Borough.	Reduced landfill use and carbon emissions from waste. Increased support for a circular economy, improving efficiency and sustainability.
Strengthened Local Food Supply and Pollution Reduction	Our commercial services encourage recycling at events in the borough, providing food waste collection. Collected commercial waste is also weighed and categorised to encourage recycling and food waste separation. Locally produced soil improver contracts are currently controlled by Surrey County Council.	We will help build fair, sustainable local food systems by supporting local food growers and businesses, promoting affordable healthy food, and reducing food waste and pollution across the food system.	Effective strategic planning and development management. Supporting a strong, resilient local economy. Improvements to health, wellbeing and biodiversity
Accelerated Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency	Guildford achieved a 56.4% recycling rate in November 2025. Waste collections include furniture, green waste and	We will reduce waste sent to landfill and incineration by promoting reuse, repair and recycling, and by supporting businesses to reduce waste	This will help local industries use resources more efficiently and support a healthier environment and community. This will cut pollution, create local economic opportunities

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
	food waste, small electricals, Bulky items, and textiles. The Hive runs a monthly repair cafe for residents to have items repaired.	and use materials more efficiently.	in the circular economy, and improve health and wellbeing for our communities.

Case Study Expansion of Residential Food Waste Recycling Service

What we did

In collaboration with Surrey Environment Partnership, we expanded our food waste collection and recycling service to 1,641 flats in the borough who were without the service. The properties included large blocks of flats, supported living sites and smaller properties with communal bin stores.

Properties received new 140 litre food waste bins in their communal bin stores and residents received indoor caddies, liners, and information leaflets to help them recycle their food waste and use the new service effectively. Communal bins were clearly labelled, with information on what can and can't be put in the bins.

After the service had been rolled out, bins were weighed over a monitoring period to calculate how much food waste was being captured for recycling.

Why

To expand the food waste collection service across the borough, to encourage residents to use it and to remove barriers such as lack of bins at communal properties.



Photo: Indoor food waste caddy with label, liners and leaflet.

To remove food waste from the residual waste stream and increase recycling rates. It is estimated that over 34% of household waste from flats is food waste that could be captured for recycling.

Benefits

By reducing the amount of food waste going into the residual waste stream we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with the disposal of residual waste and reduce waste disposal costs.

Food waste collected for recycling is sent to an anaerobic digestion facility, where the process produces biogas. This is used to generate electricity and a leftover material called digestate which can be used as an agricultural fertiliser.



Photo: Outdoor communal 140L bin with label.

Neighbourhoods and Greenspaces

Across the borough, our neighbourhoods and green spaces should be safe, welcoming, and vibrant places where people want to live, work, and spend time. They bring together good homes, quality public spaces, strong local services, and opportunities for everyone. Helping people feel connected, supported, and proud of where they live can empower neighbourhoods to make more informed environmental and healthy choices.

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
Empowered and Climate-Ready Communities	GBC Launched a Climate Change website in January 2026 which will act as a central hub for climate-related information, helping residents	The website will be updated frequently with new and relevant data and allowing communities and partners understand and support	Greater community resilience and cohesion linked to responsive local government actions.

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
	<p>and communities understand climate change, how to reduce their carbon footprint, and connect with Climate Action organisations.</p> <p>Guildford Borough Council has supported and promoted sustainability focused community groups through the Guildford Green Day and Cleaner Air Day annual events.</p>	<p>climate action so they can participate fully in sustainable discussions and decisions and stay resilient to future climate challenges.</p>	
<p>Targeted Support for Vulnerable Groups</p>	<p>Our Community Services provide a network of support services to vulnerable communities across the borough. The Hive community centre provides a safe space with family and dementia friendly facilities, connected across the borough via a fleet of electric community transport minibuses. The Hive also provides mental health and disability awareness training.</p>	<p>We will use good data to guide decisions so vulnerable people are protected, services stay strong, and everyone can adapt fairly to climate impacts.</p>	<p>The most vulnerable are protected Communities can withstand and recover from climate impacts Infrastructure remains reliable Adaptation benefits everyone—not just those with the most resources</p>

Outcome	The current picture	What we will do	What are the benefits
Climate-Conscious Education and Learning Environments	Surrey County Council leads on early years to secondary school education, for instance running the Eco-schools award programme ⁴ .	We will help schools and institutions teach and practice climate awareness by 2030, following Local Government Reorganisation, so students and staff can support a resilient, sustainable future.	Strong environmental literacy will promote sustainable habits that extend beyond the classroom. A sense of shared responsibility for protecting ecosystems.
Greener Built Environments and Healthier Communities	Guildford Borough currently has 3 statutory Air Quality Management Areas and keeps new development proposals under review in line with the Air Quality Strategy. The Local Plan (planning policy) is in the early stages of being updated.	We will ensure that new buildings and places are designed to protect the climate, support nature, and help communities live healthier, low-carbon lives.	Mitigation of, and adaption to, climate change. Improved biodiversity, ecological health, soil, water and air quality.
Informed Emissions Reduction and Net-Zero Progress	Annual council emissions auditing and official DESNZ statistics provide council and borough-wide carbon emission for each council service and community sector.	We will identify where emissions come from by 2040 so we can cut carbon more effectively, track progress to net zero, and improve comfort and affordability for residents.	A focus on the most efficient, cost-effective and fastest actions. Reduced fuel poverty and healthier homes for residents across the borough.

⁴ [Eco-schools - Surrey County Council](#)

Case Study **Guildford Green Day 2025**

What we did

Guildford Green Day is an annual community event hosted by Guildford Borough Council to promote climate action and sustainable living. It was held in support of The Great Big Green Week, which is the UK's largest celebration of community action aimed at addressing climate change.

On 8 June, the Council delivered a free, family-friendly event featuring eco workshops, plant-based market stalls, recycled bike sales, tree giveaways, and interactive activities for all ages. A range of environmental and community groups were in attendance to provide information on the work they do and encourage members of the public to get involved.

Why

The event raised awareness of climate issues, supported the Council's 2030 carbon-neutral goal, and empowered residents to take simple, impactful steps toward a greener Guildford.

Benefits

Eco-workshops taught practical skills for sustainable living, such as food and garden waste composting, or provided information from experts in the field, such as home renewable energy.

Recycled bike sales stop valuable materials from being discarded, give refurbished bikes a new life, and provide affordable bikes to the community, encouraging a healthy and active form of transport.

By making sustainable lifestyle choices, residents can help to reduce waste, increase the uptake of renewable energy technology and benefit from cheaper electricity bills, improved local air quality and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.



Photo: Cllr Sallie Barker with the Guildford wobble at Guildford Green Day 2024.

Case Study Creation of a New Nature Reserve: Tyting Farm

What we did

Tyting Farm is an area of downland on the outskirts of Guildford within the Surrey Hills National Landscape. The 40-hectare site has been designated as a nature reserve which, combined with the adjoining Chantry Woods, provides access to over 100 hectares of high-quality green space for the local community.

Our Parks and Countryside team are working to restore chalk grassland, remove invasive species, plant trees, maintain hedgerows and increase biodiversity.

More than a mile of pathways has been created with new links to popular walking routes nearby. New signage guides visitors along scenic walks, highlighting key features and the importance of the site for wildlife.

Why

The restoration work at Tyting Farm is part of our commitment to becoming a more sustainable and environmentally responsible borough. It supports our net zero by 2030 ambition, as biodiverse ecosystems act as carbon sinks, absorbing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Targeted grazing with GPS technology reduces fencing and improves biodiversity by controlling dominant plants and creating niche habitats for insects and wildflowers. Animal manure also provides a habitat for many invertebrates.



Photo: GBC Parks and Countryside team with new signage at Tyting Farm.

Benefits

The new nature reserve provides access to the countryside for visitors and health and wellbeing benefits associated with exercising outdoors and being in nature.

We are working in collaboration with specialists and local conservation groups to create new habitats for notable and protected species including bats, barn owls, woodland birds and insects including the rare Small Blue butterfly.

Improved biodiversity promotes ecological health and resilience, which in turn improves soil, water and air quality, crop pollination, provides protection from soil erosion and helps to mitigate the effects of climate change, such as heatwaves and flood events.



Photo: Grazing cow on heathland.

Looking to the future

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Surrey will be the most significant reform in over 50 years. The government has confirmed a shift from the current two-tier system of 11 district and borough councils plus the county council. From May 2027, these councils will be replaced by two new unitary authorities: West Surrey and East Surrey. Alongside this, a new Strategic Authority will be established as part of wider devolution plans, giving Surrey greater powers over key regional priorities.

Guildford and Waverley borough councils will become part of West Surrey unitary authority, along with Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath and Woking. The new unitary authority will continue to provide services that the district and borough councils currently deliver for residents, businesses and communities, such as waste collection, planning, council housing, leisure centres and parks and countryside, as well as those currently provided by Surrey County Council. The strategic authority will be responsible for strategic services including transport and infrastructure, economic development and regeneration.

One of the benefits of a new unitary authority is that it will allow better planning and co-ordination of schemes that will span across the unitary authority area, such as sustainable transport schemes, energy efficient district heat networks or habitat-led nature recovery strategies.

Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils already work in collaboration together. We are committed to our goal of net zero by 2030 and will continue to deliver projects that will reduce our operational greenhouse gas emissions, before considering carbon offsetting. There are a significant number of actions in our Action Plan that we aim to complete by 2027, when the new unitary authority takes over, along with longer-term projects that will continue through to 2030 and beyond. We will continue to progress the initial stages of longer-term projects so that they can be handed over to the new West Surrey unitary authority for delivery.

For further information on our Climate and Nature Action Plan, Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reports or Local Government Reorganisation, please visit our website: www.guildford.gov.uk