

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Climate Change Advisory Board
Date: 8th April 2024
Reporting officer: Climate Action Delivery Manager (Corporate Services)
Subject: Climate Emergency UK Scorecard Report Update

Purpose and summary of report:

To present Members of the Climate Change Advisory Board with the score we obtained through the Climate Emergency UK Scorecard.

Recommendations:

This is an information-only report.

Key Implications:	
Item	Implications
Legal	N/A – this is an information-only report.
Finance and Value for Money	N/A – this is an information-only report.
Corporate Plan	One Council: a well-run and innovative authority, defined by its skilled and valued workforce, committed to developing its local social impact. Climate Action: as a socially responsible and carbon literate council, deliver on our corporate climate pledge for net zero by 2030.
Climate Change	Working towards the Scorecard gives us visibility of the work we are doing as a Council, and our commitment towards climate change and also helps us to know what more can be done in the future.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2021 Climate Emergency UK undertook, for the first time, an assessment of all UK councils' written climate action plans and created Climate Plan Scorecards for each authority. The assessment was based on climate action plans that were published online before 20 September 2021 (and written after 2015) and was conducted by a team of over 120 volunteers, trained and overseen by Climate Emergency UK.

- 1.2 Councils were contacted and given the right to reply and clarify any information on the assessment before they are published. However, for the 2022 assessment, Climate Emergency UK was not able to contact the correct officer, and the report was published without our input. However, we still scored 54% on the content of our published action plans alone.
- 1.3 This year Climate Emergency UK assessed all UK councils on the actions they have taken towards net zero rather than just their plans, which were the focus of the 2021 assessment. The Scorecard assessment consists of 84 questions across 7 different sections, created in consultation with over 90 different organisations and individuals. Each council was marked against these criteria and given a right to reply before the scores underwent a final audit. This work was completed between January and August 2023.
- 1.4 A summary of each section is set out below:
 - 1.4.1 **Buildings & Heating** - This section covers the main actions that councils can take to support both private rented and owned homes and socially renting households to reduce the emissions from their homes.
 - 1.4.2 **Transport** - This section covers the main enabling actions councils can take to reduce car use and encourage more sustainable transport within their area.
 - 1.4.3 **Planning & Land Use** - This section focuses primarily on how councils are using their planning powers, primarily through their Local Plans, to ensure low-emission new buildings and homes, as well as ensuring new developments are built to minimise their environmental impact. It also covers renewable energy generation and fossil fuel generation planning applications in the area.
 - 1.4.4 **Governance & Finance** - This section aims to understand to what extent climate action has been incorporated and embedded across the whole of the council in all its activities and services in its decision-making, forward planning and structures. This section also looks at how councils are raising funds for climate action and whether the councils' investments are sustainable or supporting high-carbon infrastructure and industries.
 - 1.4.5 **Biodiversity** - This section looks at what councils can do to protect and increase biodiversity in the area through their direct actions, the management of their green spaces, and biodiversity net gain requirements for developers.
 - 1.4.6 **Collaboration & Engagement** - This section addresses how councils can collaborate with others to improve their own climate action and to support others in the area to decarbonise. More than half of the emissions cuts needed to reach net zero rely on people and businesses taking up low-carbon solutions, and councils can work with those in their local area to enable those solutions.
 - 1.4.7 **Waste Reduction & Food** - This section looks at the influencing role councils can play in supporting sustainable food production on their land and in their schools, and circular economy initiatives locally.

- 1.5 Climate Emergency UK team marked each Council through
- volunteer research i.e., through the publicly available information on our website, press release, social media platforms, etc.
 - Freedom of Information (FOI) responses from councils
 - Use of national data
 - Or through a mixture of volunteer research and national data
- 1.6 The process of generating the final score involves four steps.
- Raw marks are converted into low, medium and high weighted marks.
 - Penalty marks are deducted where councils have received them.
 - Total weighted marks are added up and converted into an overall percentage score for each section.
 - The final score is created by adding up the overall section scores and applying the section weighting. For example, receiving a 50% score in Collaboration and engagement equals 5% of a council's overall score. This is because Collaboration and engagement is worth 10% of a council's overall score.

2. Our preparations, weightage and final scoring

- 2.1 We informed the climate change working groups about the scorecard and shared the questionnaire with them in December 2022.
- 2.2 We evaluated the criteria ourselves using the questionnaire and responses from our colleagues, and we also advised the three working groups to keep any evidence available so it can be shared with the CE UK team as needed.
- 2.3 CE UK team made 6 FOI requests in January 2023 and we replied to them with the information they requested.
- 2.4 Following that, during the "Right to Reply" phase, we were given access to their online assessment site, where we could view our marks, express agreement or disagreement with the scoring they had assigned and offer supporting documentation for any disagreements.
- 2.5 We provided further evidence for 32 questions out of which evidence for 15 questions were considered.

3. Climate Action Scorecard

- 3.1 The below table shows the weightage and the final score we received for each section.

Sections	Weightage	Final Score
Buildings & Heating	25%	40%
Planning & Land Use	25%	25%
Governance & Finance	15%	46%
Biodiversity	10%	10%
Collaboration & Engagement	10%	45%
Waste Reduction & Food	10%	31%
Transport	5%	15%

- 3.2 Gravesham Borough Council obtained **32%** which is above the average district score, i.e., 29% and we stand in **4th position** in the Kent and Medway region as shown in Appendix One. It also provides scores achieved by other Kent districts alongside the highest-scoring district, i.e., Lancaster City Council with a total score of 61%.
- 3.3 Only 41 of the UK's 388 local and combined authorities scored above 50% in the nine-month exercise, with the average score being just 32%.
- 3.4 We received a penalty mark of (-0.8) in the Transport category for exceeding NO2 and PM 2.5 levels in a significant proportion of neighbourhoods in the council's area as per World Health Organisation (WHO) air pollution guidelines.
- 3.5 For a comprehensive list of questions, scores, and action plans for each question in each area, please see Appendix Two. Most of the actions are part of the delivery plan and where the council was unable to score, those actions are in discussion with the Climate Change working groups to include in the delivery plan if it's doable.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Climate Emergency UK have claimed that Scorecards published for the majority of local authorities show they are "underperforming" when it comes to action on climate change, to which the LGA responded as below:

Darren Rodwell, environment spokesperson for the Local Government Association, said: *"As leaders of their communities, local government has a fundamental role to play in tackling climate change. Net zero is a complex transition, bringing very unique and interconnected challenges and opportunities to every place. We don't support league tables as they often paint a two-dimensional picture of the context that councils are working within, and unfairly compare councils with different challenges. Councils are already leading the way in transitioning to net zero and are ambitious to do more. Government needs to empower local climate action that can hit targets, mobilise support, and deliver on the evidence showing local approaches can save hundreds of billions."*

- 4.2 These scorecards are an essential tool for councils and campaigners alike to show them what is possible for local climate action but it doesn't necessarily demonstrate that a Council is underperforming.
- 4.3 Councils can incorporate more action items to reach net zero ambition by using these scorecards to assess their strategies and project implementation.

5. Appendices

- 4.1 Appendix One: Scorecard Analysis – Kent Authorities
- 4.2 Appendix Two: Questions, Scores and POA

6. Background Documents

- 6.1 The following background reference source was used:

<https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/>

Lead Officer: Saida Shaikh, Climate Action Delivery Manager

Email: Saida.shaikh@gravesham.gov.uk

Secondary Implications	
Risk Assessment	N/A – this is an information-only report.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	<p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner’s Office website via the above links.</p> <p>No</p>
	<p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p> <p>N/A</p>
	<p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p> <p>N/A</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer.</p> <p>No</p>
	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer.</p> <p>No</p>
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Crime and Disorder	N/A – this is an information-only report.
Digital and website implications	N/A – this is an information-only report.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	N/A – this is an information-only report.