



**Woking Climate Change Strategy**  
A Vision for a Net Zero Borough  
*August 2024*



a Appendix 1



## Contents

1.	Introduction.....	3
2.	Working towards a Net Zero Woking .....	5
3.	How we're tackling climate change locally .....	6
4.	Theme: Woking Borough Council's Journey to Net Zero .....	7
5.	Theme: Energy.....	9
6.	Theme: Waste.....	11
7.	Theme: Water.....	13
8.	Theme: Transport .....	15
9.	Theme: Economy, Business and Supply Chains .....	17
10.	Theme: The Natural Environment .....	19
11.	Theme: The Built Environment.....	21
12.	Conclusion .....	23

## 1. Introduction

Climate change affects every aspect of our lives from the weather we experience to the food we eat. It is vital that actions are taken by all sectors of the community now so that future generations are not disadvantaged, and we can continue to protect the earth from the impact of human activity.

Woking Borough Council is currently facing financial difficulties which has limited the capacity for work that is non-statutory. Under the Climate Change Act 2008, local government is not required to monitor or report on statutory climate change targets. It does however set the legally binding target for central government to be net zero by 2050 across all sectors.

As a local authority the Council plays an important role in supporting climate action on a local-scale and communicating with groups on the need to take action and reduce their impact on the environment. Although there is no statutory duty, the Council must still demonstrate within its strategic plans a consideration for the wider impact of climate change. Therefore, within our statutory services we will continue to factor in climate change and promote sustainable practice as outlined within our objectives below.

The following activities offer a snapshot of what the Council has done to progress the climate change agenda:

- The Council's biodiversity and green infrastructure strategy and guidance – Natural Woking – was adopted in 2016;
- In July 2019, the Council declared a climate and ecological emergency pledging to become net zero by 2030 across its own estate and operations, and by 2050 (or sooner) across the wider Borough;
- A Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was adopted in February 2020 setting out a range of priority actions in furtherance of the declaration;
- May 2022 saw the new political administration confirm climate change within its top three priorities;
- The Council's Woking for All corporate strategy (adopted in 2022) includes a core 'greener communities' theme, acknowledging the commitment to climate change action by the local authority and in its role as a key influencer and enabler for engagement by others;

## Key Actions:

In order to progress our net zero ambitions, the strategy proposes key actions to reduce our environmental footprint at both the corporate and Borough level, as follows:

- Optimising energy efficiency and decarbonising energy supplies;
- Promoting and facilitating positive sustainable behaviours for the benefit of our environment and communities;
- Conserving resources by continuing to move away from unsustainable consumption and waste generation;
- Support the continuing transition to sustainable modes of transport away from fossil fuel powered vehicles;
- Balancing growth and prosperity with sustainable development and habitat conservation.

## 2. Working towards a Net Zero Woking

This strategy sets out our priorities across the following eight themes:

- ❖ Woking Borough Council's Journey to Net Zero
- ❖ Energy
- ❖ Waste
- ❖ Water
- ❖ Transport
- ❖ Economy, Business and Supply Chains
- ❖ The Natural Environment
- ❖ The Built Environment

In alignment with the national target for all sectors of the economy to be net zero by 2050<sup>1</sup>, these chapters are designed to engage with all communities within Woking by providing actions for them to consider as we all look towards achieving net zero. So, whether you work, live or are visitors to the Borough, ultimately, we can all help to achieve our shared goals to the benefit of the earth.

### Guiding Principles:

Beyond our net zero objectives are a set of guiding principles for the future of our Borough which were agreed in our previous strategy and remain relevant now. For the benefit of all, we want a Borough:

- ...that protects and enhances its high-quality natural environment;
- ...where resources are used wisely, and biodiversity is conserved;
- ...that has a built environment that is developed sustainably, which meets local needs and enables the local economy to prosper; **and**
- ...that recognises, prepares and adapts to the socio-economic; environment and demographic changes that the future will bring.

---

<sup>1</sup> DESNZ and DBEIS. (2023) [Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener](#).

### 3. How we're tackling climate change locally

This strategy reaffirms our commitments to hold climate change at the heart of our activities. The nature of our earlier declaration and continuing work is such that many activities are cross-service and involve inter-departmental working. All Council activities and services have an important part to play in reducing its overall climate impact. The need for cross-service collaboration is vital and fundamental to achieve our goals.

Many activities and projects continue to be made possible through working together with key stakeholders, commercial partners and volunteer organisations to meet our shared environmental goals. These activities are key to achieving net zero both across the council estate and Borough wide. Our continuing collaboration with organisations such as ThamesWey, Action Surrey, Woking Environment Action, Woking Chamber, Surrey Heathland Partnership and Surrey Wildlife Trust (amongst others) is highlighted throughout this strategy.

There are clear synergies between the Council's own climate commitments and those of our neighbouring districts and Boroughs; and Surrey County Council's own Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Programme. The Council will continue to collaborate with these key stakeholders through partnership working in order to contribute towards wider county-level ambitions to reduce our carbon footprint.

It is important to note that our ability to engage with partners will be driven through the delivery of our statutory services. This means that we will consider climate change where there is opportunity to do so. Within the objectives outlined below the strategy will reference the need to engage with partners where we must consider sustainable practice through our services.

#### 4. Theme: Woking Borough Council's Journey to Net Zero

The Woking for All Strategy (2022 – 2027) sets out strategic objectives for our staff, residents, partners and businesses to follow. These objectives centre on four overarching themes including 'Greener communities' which presents outcomes focused on the delivery of sustainable communities across the economy, living standards and leadership. This cements our drive as a Council to support Woking residents and businesses to be greener and more sustainable.

National economic challenges and the cost-of-living crisis means that our residents and businesses are experiencing additional pressures which can diminish intentions to go greener and live more sustainably. Although the Council is working with less resources, the commitment to our climate change objectives within this strategy remain a priority and will be monitored/reported on as services are reviewed and a new local plan is developed.

Our circumstances require us to maximise delivery against our climate ambitions via externally funded opportunities and, as reiterated throughout this document, partnership working will be vitally important moving forward.

Climate change is not an isolated challenge but a global issue that has the potential to damage the earth beyond repair unless we all act collaboratively as communities to install change. The goal is that the objectives set out below, and under each theme, will enable us to do this and meet the national target of net zero across the Borough by 2050.

##### **Objectives:**

##### **4.1. Continue to embed climate change in WBC organisational procedures, governance, policies, and decision-making.**

It is important that staff at the Council recognise the significant influence climate change has on the lives of residents. Through reviewing our internal procedures, we can identify and address where training is needed, or guidance must be strengthened to reaffirm the objectives of this strategy.

##### **4.2. Ensure that the emerging revisions to the Council's procurement policies accounts for the climate impact of all our contracts and services.**

This feeds into the Council's ongoing review of services including the way we procure work from other suppliers. Through this strategy and service redesign we will focus our procedures on increasing efficiency and reducing risk from climate related factors.

##### **4.3. Consider how we will meet net zero by 2050 (or sooner).**

Reporting and monitoring on our climate change progress will allow the Council to identify where services may be failing to consider the impact of climate change. These results will be formalised within reports such as the annual monitoring strategy which reports on the success of our adopted local plan policies.

**4.4. Continue to lobby to national government for changes in policy and funding.**

Councils play an important role, on behalf of the local population, in advocating to central government for higher national standards. We will liaise with our partners and collate strong responses to changes proposed by government which weaken considerations for climate change.

**4.5. Continue to communicate on climate change to our staff and councillors.**

We will organise carbon and climate literacy training for staff and councillors to improve conceptions around climate change and instil the principles and benefits of net zero in the workplace and at home.

**4.6. Work with community groups and local stakeholders to identify opportunities for green volunteering.**

Climate change cannot be addressed by the Council alone, we need every sector within society to consider their impact on the earth and take action to mitigate and adapt. The Council will work in partnership to take action and lead their communities towards a more sustainable future. These might be community-based energy projects which enable communities to generate, use, own and save on their own energy usage.

**4.7. Work with partners such as the Surrey Local Resilience Forum to strengthen our preparedness, resilience and collective response to disaster and emergency management in the face of a changing climate.**

Climate change impacts us in the present, but it also poses a significant risk for the future. The Council has a duty to plan ahead for any risk imposed by climate change in order to safeguard the future of those living or working in Woking. It is key that Council services are able to consider and identify the impact of climate change and how that may affect service delivery.



## 5. Theme: Energy

Energy use is the largest contributor to our Borough's carbon footprint across the industrial, commercial, public and domestic sectors. Combined, electricity and gas use equate to almost 58% of the total footprint<sup>2</sup>. We rely on energy to heat, power and light our homes and businesses. Although renewables now contribute in large part to the UK's energy supply mix ([circa 60%](#)), we do still have a dependence on fossil fuels, particularly on gas for heating. In order to support local and national net zero goals, we need to support the transition to a fossil fuel free energy model. We can do this by reducing energy demand; investing in energy efficiency; electrifying heating and cooling; and continuing to support and invest in renewable energy generation. By making changes to how we use energy we can all make a difference to the sustainability and carbon footprint of the Borough.

### Objectives:

#### 5.1. Assess the Council's performance across all departments against achieving a carbon neutral position.

Climate change is considered a golden thread which runs through the Council's activities. In meeting the national target of net zero by 2050 we will continue to ensure our services identify opportunities for carbon reduction and monitor output through our regulatory services and through the development of new local plan policies.

#### 5.2. Optimise and improve the energy performance of Council owned properties (commercial and housing).

Through funding and other schemes we will continue to reduce the climate impact of all Council owned buildings through planned retrofit and maintenance (i.e., improving average EPC rating). Where buildings are not connected to the Town Centre decentralised energy network we will ensure they only operate on a renewable electricity tariff.

#### 5.3. Support and facilitate the decarbonisation of our energy networks in line with ThamesWey Business Plan objectives.

We will continue to work with Thameswey to support investment in local renewable energy sources and comply with the national target to decarbonise the grid by 2035<sup>3</sup>. The energy centre plays a key role for the Council in ensuring development provides more cost-effective and sustainable energy. Current local plan policy supports investment into the DENs across Woking and outlines requirements for developers to connect or be connection ready if in proximity<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> Source: [UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics \(ktCO<sub>2</sub>e\)](#) – published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) 30 June 2022

<sup>3</sup> BEIS. (2023) [Plans unveiled to decarbonise UK power system by 2035](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Climate Change SPD - Woking 2027](#)

**5.4. Support local residents and businesses to reduce their energy use and signpost to the advice provided by Action Surrey to enable everyone to make energy and water savings.**

Through our partnership working with Action Surrey we will advocate for residents to receive energy advice and grant funding to reduce fuel poverty.

## 6. Theme: Waste

Reduce, reuse, recycle – the old adage still rings true. Reducing the amount of waste we all produce is one of the most effective ways of reducing emissions. We can all rethink our approach to waste. Many of the items we throw away have not reached the end of their useful life. Landfill sites are fast filling up, and combined with the resulting greenhouse gases they create, the way we treat waste needs to be re-evaluated. Furthermore, local projected population growth and additional homes will result in increased pressure to local waste collection and disposal services magnifying the environmental impacts. Now, more than ever, its important we all look to reduce our waste and recycle in the right places to avoid contamination.

### Objections:

**6.1. Reduce the amount of waste generated by the Council across its own estate and operations.**

Through training initiatives, the Council will encourage all staff to consider how they can reduce waste while working and at home.

**6.2. Raise awareness on the principles of waste reduction through behaviour change initiatives for staff and by identifying waste streams.**

We will identify waste streams across the Council estate to establish where they can be reduced. For example, recycling office equipment, improving recycling facilities in leased properties, and advocating for tenants to follow the waste hierarchy. We will also promote local waste and recycling schemes to reduce consumption; reduce household residual waste and increase recycling rates.

**6.3. Communicate advice and support to local businesses and residents on reducing waste and enhancing recycling through partnerships such as Woking Chamber of Commerce.**

We will encourage use of reuse and preloved schemes and shops such as the Woking Community Furniture Project, Repair Cafe, charity outlets, Freegle, Vinted and others.

**6.4. Demonstrate our commitment to resources management and waste prevention through corporate actions and procurement processes.**

The Council's review of current procurement and management processes provides an opportunity to embed sustainability within the Council's operations.

**6.5. Continue to provide advice on waste management to owners and operators of food premises as part of routine inspections conducted by Environmental Health Food Officers.**

Safeguarding the health and wellbeing of those in Woking remains a priority of the Council and we will continue to perform our statutory duties to protect the health of the environment.

**6.6. Continue to enforce penalties on those who commit waste crimes, such as littering and fly tipping.**

The Council maintains a duty to protect the natural environment from the damage caused by waste when not disposed of correctly and is committed to ensuring those guilty of waste crimes are penalised.

**6.7. Commit to implement the government's Resources and Waste Strategy, SEP 2025 Strategy and Surrey's Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.**

The Council will work collaboratively with the Surrey Environment Partnership (SEP) to progress the 2025 targets and through our contracts with Joint Waste Solutions/SEP ensure alignment with our shared net zero goals. We will also remain committed to lobby the government to increase the availability of recycling streams for residents and businesses.

## 7. Theme: Water

The objective(s) of this theme looks at water as a precious resource to conserve and protect, particularly in terms of its efficient use and availability. It also considers water in the context of climate adaptation and the consequences of drought and flooding. With the predicted rise in extreme weather events so will our need to adapt to increases in intensity and frequency of local flood events and extreme heat.

We can all change our approach to water to use it more efficiently and better protect ourselves from water scarcity and flooding. Population growth and increased demand on utilities and infrastructure, combined with the effects of climate change will cause increasing pressure on this already precious resource affecting future water availability. Likewise, our ageing buildings and infrastructure that were designed for a cooler climate and less extremes highlight the need for greater adaptation and resilience.

### Objectives:

#### **7.1. Establish monitoring and targets for reduced water consumption in Council owned buildings.**

In order to demonstrate progress, we will ensure outputs are recorded and monitored. Ensuring the Council makes efficient use of water resource is a priority which will be addressed and enforced across the whole organisation and through training initiatives.

#### **7.2. Continue to work in partnership with others to improve the water quality and ecology of watercourses, water channels, tributaries, and their associated habitats in the Borough.**

Several of the main water channels<sup>5</sup> are designated special protections which ensure any potential harm is mitigated or avoided. Through our relationships with statutory bodies (e.g., the Environment Agency) we will endeavour to monitor and facilitate their conservation and improvement.

#### **7.3. Continue to monitor and update planning policy to ensure all types of development implement utilise water efficient devices which reduce water demand and introduce water recycling measures.**

Guidance will continue to be updated to align with national policy and building regulations to ensure that properties within the Borough are performing efficiently and make best use of water.

#### **7.4. Continue to work with partners to implement flood risk management and alleviation activities to mitigate against flood risk and reduce the impact of flooding on the natural and built environment across the Borough.**

---

<sup>5</sup> (i.e., the River Wey, Hoe Stream, the Basingstoke Canal, River Bourne and The Wey Navigation)

Climate change increases flood risk and the Council will continue to promote opportunities to reduce risk and protect the natural and built environment against potential flooding.

- 7.5. Support the incorporation of drought tolerant planting in public and green spaces to reduce watering requirements where appropriate.**  
Through planning guidance, the Council will advocate for all development to mitigate against surface water flooding and drought through the inclusion of suitable planning and green features.

## 8. Theme: Transport

As a largely fossil fuel-based sector, transport is a major contributor to air pollution and generates a variety of emissions that have a detrimental impact on the climate, our health and our environment. Transport accounts for almost a third of Woking Borough's carbon footprint (source Local Authority territorial greenhouse gas emissions estimates 2020 (kt CO<sub>2</sub>e), BEIS, published June 2022).

Decarbonising transport offers a fundamental way to cut carbon emissions. Other linked pollutants include nitrous oxides and particulate matter which can severely impact air quality and are linked to health concerns and respiratory diseases. Poor air quality can also adversely affect our wildlife and habitats.

Whether you live here, work here or are a visitor, we want getting around in Woking to be easy while also contributing to and maintaining a cleaner, greener Borough. We hope that walking, cycling and public transport will be the first choice for short trips. Not only does this benefit local air quality and carbon emissions, but there are clear health and well-being advantages of "active travel". We can make positive changes to the sustainability of the Borough by adopting greener modes of transport.

### Objectives:

**8.1. Continue to work with partners to provide an integrated transport system that connects communities to local services and promotes healthy and sustainable transport methods.**

To enable Woking to develop sustainably it is vital that transport services respond to the needs of our residents and the services they use. For instance, we will facilitate and promote links between health partners and local agencies to enable health and wellbeing benefits through initiatives such as active travel GP prescribing.

**8.2. Continue to promote and encourage all modes of sustainable transport and active travel amongst those working and living in Woking.**

Active travel has wider reached benefits including improving the health and wellbeing of the public. It is important that the Council continues to signpost to best practice and supports the implementation/management of recreational spaces (e.g., secure bike storage). To do this we will continue to improve and expand the existing cycle network with our partners and increase the number of local cycle journeys made in the Borough.

**8.3. Promote and expand usage of the electric charging infrastructure in Woking.**

The Council remains committed towards working with partners to deliver electric vehicle (EV) charging points in publicly owned locations and expanding EV charging infrastructure.

**8.4. Continue to monitor air quality throughout the Borough, reporting annually to DEFRA and declaring Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) where necessary.**

This enables the Council to ensure compliance with Air Quality Local Government Objectives, and where these are not met, identify actions to reduce pollution to safe levels.



## 9. Theme: Economy, Business and Supply Chains

A prospering community is one of the key themes behind the Council's Woking for All Strategy. The ambition is a Borough of opportunity benefitting from new technology; a strong and sustainable economy; and a destination with a strong case for infrastructure investment.

Commerce and industry accounts for 32% of Woking Borough's carbon footprint (source Local Authority territorial greenhouse gas emissions estimates 2020 (kt CO<sub>2</sub>e), BEIS, published June 2022).

This theme looks at how local companies can incorporate sustainability into their business. Reducing energy and water consumption; enhancing waste and recycling initiatives; promoting sustainable travel; incorporating sustainable procurement practices; and adapting to climate change can all make a positive difference – not only to the sustainability objectives for the Borough, but also economically for a business.

Our aim is to create a dynamic Borough that is a hub for business growth but one that also helps local businesses to play their part in contributing to a sustainable Woking and the transition to a net zero economy.

### Objectives:

**9.1. Communicate information on grant funding and resources (i.e., carbon reduction. Energy efficiency) to local businesses (i.e., SMEs) and the community.**

We will signpost to advice and opportunities for local businesses to support them on the journey to become net zero.

**9.2. Deliver actions within the Council's own Digital Strategy to support improved sustainability across services.**

The Digital Strategy<sup>6</sup> sets out several areas to improve performance efficiency across the Council's operations and more widely across the Borough's digital infrastructure. The outcomes of that strategy will continue to be considered adjacent to our net zero objectives.

**9.3. Promote sustainability good practice amongst local businesses and signposting to support networks in line with the objectives of the Economic Development Action Plan.**

We will work with our partners, networks and working groups to ensure businesses are supported to make sustainable decisions and reduce their carbon emissions.

**9.4. Install software to proactively manage corporate energy consumption and identify measures for improved efficiency.**

---

<sup>6</sup> [Digital Strategy 2022 to 2025 | Woking Borough Council](#)

This feeds into the review of the Council's services which currently provides an opportunity to reduce waste, identify inefficiencies and improve the overall performance on our digital platforms.

**9.5. Ensure our emergency and business continuity plans address climate adaptation and projected local impacts and risks.**

Net zero ambitions will be front and centre so that any areas of risk are identified appropriately, and local businesses can continue to operate safely and sustainably in the long-term.

## 10. Theme: The Natural Environment

This chapter promotes and celebrates our diverse countryside and urban environments. We want to enhance accessibility to our natural habitats and wildlife, where appropriate, and promote the benefits that enjoying the great outdoors can bring including to our own health and well-being. We also recognise the need for ensuring biodiversity security and protection so that future generations can benefit and the importance of working in partnership to achieve these aims. Woking Borough Council is committed to supporting our local flora and fauna and the diverse environments these call home. Protecting biodiversity is one of our key objectives – playing our part locally to help reverse its global decline and address climate change.

### Objectives:

**10.1. Work with partner organisations / groups to implement and support wildlife and species protection projects.**

Working collaboratively is key to ensuring we can efficiently address the significant decline in nature across the UK. It is important that we work together so that our goals are shared, and we can meet the needs of wildlife and people across Woking and the wider County area.

**10.2. Through the planning process ensure the enhancement and conservation of habitat and wildlife.**

Planning policy and guidance will continue to be updated to reflect changes in national guidance and best practice. The emerging local plan will consider the implications of biodiversity net gain for local policy. The Council will also address the new biodiversity duties and implement measures to ensure biodiversity is monitored and reported on efficiently. Additionally, through consultations with government and other authorities we will continue to advocate and raise awareness for the need for biodiversity conservation and enhancement.

**10.3. Promote the use of the Borough's green spaces for sport, recreation and social interaction and the benefits this can bring to health and well-being.**

To do this we will work with partners to protect our green spaces and habitats in the face of challenges brought about by climate change, drought, heat and flood tolerant planting.

**10.4. Ensure our services continue to fulfil our statutory duties to protect environmental health.**

This means continuing to monitor and review local air quality in line with Government based health standards, and penalising those who commit environmental crimes, such as fly tipping and the unlawful burning of waste. Additionally, we will work towards minimising pesticide use and consider non-chemical alternatives where cost effective.

**10.5. Continue to seek out opportunities for nature-based solutions (NBS) such as habitat conservation and creation to support our climate change and biodiversity goals.**

This is fundamental to our climate and ecological declaration and will be considered across all services provided by the Council. Planning will continue to advocate for the inclusion NBS across national guidance and policy.

## 11. Theme: The Built Environment

Where we live, work, shop and socialise plus the infrastructure and facilities that connect us. As stated in the UK Climate Change Committee’s 2021 Report to Parliament Progress in adapting to climate change, “The vast majority of people in England live in built-up areas, with about 92% of the population living in cities and towns. The built environment therefore has a strong influence on how climate change will impact upon people and communities”.

The UK has the oldest buildings stock in Europe and buildings (residential, public and commercial)<sup>7</sup> remain the UK’s second highest-emitting sector<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, how we manage and retrofit existing buildings to ensure they are safe and comfortable for people is also a priority of the Council and the objectives below reflect this.

We are living through a housing crisis and significant considerations should be given to new buildings that are developed alongside the infrastructure that is needed to support sustainable communities. There are several regulatory systems which are directly managed by the Council (namely planning and building control). As national policy and regulation look towards increasing the standard and efficiency of new buildings the Council will continue to ensure our objectives and services perform our duties under the Climate Change Act 2008 and demonstrate a commitment to mitigate and adapt against the effects of climate change.

### Objectives:

#### **11.1. Continue to work with landlords to improve the energy efficiency of private sector rented accommodation.**

As we look to improve the performance of residential properties across Woking and reduce fuel poverty, we will engage with landlords with our partners, and signpost to funding opportunities and guidance to improve building performance.

#### **11.2. Ensure emerging planning policy and guidance has regard to the need for energy efficiency and climate positive development.**

The Council is anticipating changes in national policy (e.g., Future Homes Standard, Heat Network Zoning), and as a new local plan emerges, these updates will be consolidated into local policy. We will continue to engage with government and our partners through consultation and push for higher efficiency standards that contribute towards achieving sustainable communities.

#### **11.3. Collaborate with Surrey County Council on its Surrey Adapt strategy and action plan to build resilient people, places and partnerships in the local area.**

---

<sup>7</sup> Surface transport was reported as the highest emitting sector ([Climate Change Committee, 2023](#))

<sup>8</sup> Around 40% of existing homes are reported to be built before 1944 ([MHCLG, 2023](#))

To ensure the wider implications of climate change are addressed, we will continue to feed into SCC's reporting of climate change, which consolidates the outputs from all local authorities within Surrey and provides a snapshot of progress so far.

**11.4. Enable and support buildings to adapt and mitigate against the challenges of climate change.**

The Council will support measures, such as urban greening and NBS, which have social, environmental, and economic benefits and promote sustainable development.

## 12. Conclusion

Our objectives are clear, from now we need to ensure climate change is factored into the decisions made by the Council and in how we deliver our statutory duties. This does not mean backtracking on our previous commitments but instead recognising that the circumstances of the Council have changed. To move forward this strategy cements our commitment to climate change and provides a stepping stone for further action.

Our commitment is longstanding, demonstrated by our early work on energy efficiency and climate change dating back to the late 1990s and early 2000s. This has been strengthened and reaffirmed in recent years by the pledges made through our climate and ecological emergency declaration, continuing local action and our steadfast political and corporate priorities.

However, the scale of the challenge requires that this momentum not only continues but accelerates in order to reach zero carbon in less than seven years. And for our wider Borough, we will need to rally support of the community to secure that area wide goal for the benefit of all.

This is set in the backdrop of huge financial and inflationary pressures facing households, businesses and of course, the public sector. However, what we know is that tackling climate change cannot be pitched head-to-head against other issues and shouldn't be a binary choice. The co-benefits of environmental action for the economy, for health and wellbeing and for the community are more pressing than ever.

There's no doubt that zero carbon will be challenging. However, we are in a strong position and clearer than ever what needs to be done to leverage much needed carbon reductions. Ongoing collaborative working plus the identification of vital external and innovative funding mechanisms will continue to be crucial to this agenda.

And by working together to make changes to the way we live and work, no matter how small, we can all make a positive difference.