



Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Corporate Carbon Descent Plan: Year 4 and Interim Progress Report

23 October 2025



Table of Contents

Progress Report3

1. Property4

2. Key Contracts8

3. Procurement10

4. Transport11

5. Corporate Governance12

6. Communications14

7. External Funding and Lobbying16

Progress Report

The Corporate Carbon Descent Plan (CCDP) is a crucial strategic plan outlining the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's (TWBC) pathway to achieving its 2030 net zero target for both its operations and services. This update report highlights progress by TWBC in delivering against its CCDP Year 4 Action Plan.

TWBC Net Zero Pathway Review

TWBC is currently undergoing a review of its net zero approach and priorities. Progress against the council's net zero priorities continues alongside this review, with a formal and revised action plan to be developed upon completion.

As such, this progress report covers the interim period of 01/04/2024 – 01/09/2025.

Local Government Reorganisation

In December 2024, the Government published the English Devolution White Paper inviting councils to apply for priority status. Alongside devolution the Government plans to replace the current system of county councils and borough/district councils with unitary councils; a process called local government reorganisation (LGR).

Whilst timelines for Kent are not set in stone, we do not expect new unitary councils to be in place until April 2028, at which time TWBC will cease to exist. It will be for any new unitary to determine its approach to tackle climate change as an organisation. The Sustainability Team are conducting TWBC's net zero review with this in mind.

Consequently, this work has impacted the delivery of several actions from the year 4 action plan.

Rag Rating

Limited Progress	Partial Progress	Good Progress
4	9	19

1. Property

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
1.1	Decarbonisation Plans: Phase 1 Undertake a review of and develop decarbonisation plans for key TWBC buildings.	Phase 1a: Town Hall, Assembly Hall Theatre & The Amelia Scott. Phase 1b: Tunbridge Wells Leisure Centre, Putlands Leisure Centre & The Crematorium. Phase 1 will identify opportunities to decarbonise whilst providing initial costs to deliver required interventions.	Property services have been working to develop and understand decarbonisation opportunities across the council's highest emitting sites. There are several significant barriers to delivering decarbonisation measures to these sites. As such, work has focused on understanding how to overcome these barriers, whilst progressing to feasibility where appropriate. - Town Hall & Assembly Hall Theatre - o The town hall heating system currently serves the town hall, theatre as well as the police station (not a council site), through a combined single loop heating system, with the boilers located in the town hall. The system is over 100 years old, however, the boilers are under 10 years old which has prevented us from applying to recent Salix for decarbonisation grants. - o Currently, the arrangement is carbon intensive as the police station building is thermally inefficient and uses energy 24/7. To decarbonise the site, we must engage with the police to establish how they wish us to proceed. - o Talks with the police have confirmed that they have no intention to decouple from the network or move out of the site in the short term. Therefore, as per the lease agreement TWBC are required to provide heat to the site for the foreseeable future and until such time as TWBC are able to pay for the full upgrade or obtain a grant for the full works, little to nothing is likely to happen.

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			- The Amelia Scott - o Snagging issues persist, however there is a plan to close out issues. - o Following the completion of these works, focus can return to assessing the future of the building's heating system. - Tunbridge Wells Leisure Centre - o Next steps for the site including decarb are to be considered through the service re-commissioning process if that is possible given the current circumstances. - o Early supplier engagement was undertaken in Q4 of 2024 to gain market insights on achieving net zero for this site. - o Options for this site are currently being reviewed, prior to going to Cabinet for a decision. The ideal solution would be to have green clauses in any new lease. - Putlands Leisure Centre - o £1.223m of S106 funding has been approved to be spent to decarb the facility and this project is now underway. - o Paddock Wood Town Council and Fusion Leisure are supportive of the proposed improvement and decarbonisation works to the site. - Crematorium - o This item has been closed as the works to the crematorium are not likely to be scheduled until at least 2028, at which time TWBC will cease to exist.
1.2	Decarbonisation Plans: Phase 2 Review options and plans for all remaining TWBC buildings. Determine hierarchy, timeline, future plans and high-level costs for decarbonisation.	Phase 2 considers all remaining sites, identifying a hierarchy for decarbonisation considering planned maintenance, stock condition, available budgets, maintenance budgets, and determine a timeline for works.	Initial work was undertaken to identify a hierarchy of decarbonisation works for sites. However, following LGR and a subsequent review of TWBCs net zero pathway, this work is on hold until further clarity is provided regarding the replacement unitary council and TWBCs updated net zero pathway. The property team have produced a list of all buildings with operational gas boilers and their expected lifespan. As such, we have a clear idea of when boilers may need replacing. This helps determine sensible timelines for remove of gas as and when boilers reach end of life.

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
	Align and embed this work with the Asset Management Plan.		
1.3	Decarbonisation Plans: Phase 3 Support and review Rivington Hark & Knight Frank's development of a separate decarbonisation and action plan for the Royal Victoria Place, where required.	Phase 3 will determine the interventions and costs associated with decarbonising the Royal Victoria Place. Delivery of this specific decarbonisation plan will be kept separate from the CCDP and will be led by Rivington Hark and Knight Frank.	TWBC was awarded £55,800 from the Government's Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund, to fund a heat decarbonisation plan for the Royal Victoria Place Shopping Centre. The plan was delivered in early 2025 and will be fed into the redevelopment proposals for the site.
1.4	Decarbonisation Works: Implement decarbonisation works to key phase 1 sites, and other relevant assets where necessary.	Deliver works to sites following the completion and agreement of decarbonisation plans.	Decarbonisation works delivered: - Crescent Road Temporary Accommodation Properties: - o ASHPs installed. - o Double and Secondary Glazing Installed. - o Fully insulated. - o Future proofed for Solar PV. - Neville Cricket Pavillion: - o Gas removed from site, with electric boiler installed.
1.5	Energy Generation: Phase 1 Investigate the potential to develop and own large scale energy generating opportunities as a means of contributing towards TWBCs net zero target.	Phase 1a: High-level financial and carbon modelling. <i>Complete.</i> Phase 1b: Development and delivery of options.	- Asset Options Review: - o The corporate property manager received agreement from the portfolio holder for environment and sustainability to commission LASER to review asset options for a circa 25MW solar PV site. - o A UKIB report was produced outlining borrowing options and site availability. - o The portfolio holder agreed it not to proceed further with this work. - Local Land Options:

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
	Specifically, through directly decarbonising the electricity we use, whilst managing future costs.	To reduce emissions associated with our electricity consumption.	○ An opportunity is being assessed on local land to Tunbridge Wells that may be suitable for Solar PV, Tree planting or a combination of both. ○ Conversations with KCC have been held on the options, with the proposals being formally put forwards. ○ We expect an indication of KCCs position in November 2025.
1.6	Energy Generation: Phase 2 Assess the commercial opportunities to use Solar Panels on existing TWBC buildings and car parks.	Review the cost and impact of increasing solar panels on existing TWBC owned buildings and car parks.	LASER were engaged to undertake site analysis, confirm payback periods and private wire options in terms of output matching consumption. Feasibility, concept, and financial modelling was returned for Town Hall, Putlands Sports and Leisure Centre, RVP Car Park, and the Weald Sports Centre at a cost of £15k. - Royal Victoria Place ○ Agreement was given to pursue RVP as the most suitable option, given the good business case, the direct wire, and the amount of electricity it can produce. ○ Investment options have been developed and presented PAOP in November 2024. ○ Agreement was given to proceed with the Solar Canopy option. ○ The Property team were successful in receiving a £75k IRS grant to help fund the solar designs. ○ Works are at RIBA stage 3 and likely to be delivered by mid-2026.
1.7	Leased buildings: Investigate options to incorporate sustainability requirements and reporting into our future lease agreements.	Review options to require lease agreements to include carbon reduction performance / requirements that align with our 2030 corporate net zero target.	The action is on hold until TWBCs Net Zero Pathway review is complete.
1.8	Crematorium Sustainability Review:	Identify short term actions to reduce single-use materials and	This action has been deprioritised, as the Sustainability Team do not have appropriate capacity to deliver.

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
	Investigate small intermediary options to improve the general sustainability of the crematorium and service delivery.	improve general sustainability of the service operation.	

2.Key Contracts

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
2.1	Household Recycling & Waste Collection: Phase 1	Undertake early supplier engagement to gain market insights on achieving net zero.	Early market engagement was undertaken in September 2024.
2.2	Household Recycling & Waste Collection: Phase 2 Monitor the use of HVO fuel within the existing collection fleet, collaborating with the contractor to collect feedback. Establish plans, and budget implications for increased HVO fuel use as an interim	Monitor the performance of HVO fuel use in our waste fleet. Produce a report detailing next steps on HVO utilisation for achieving decarbonisation goals. This will be a key piece of work to decarbonise one of our highest emitting contracts.	In delivering this project, several significant barriers presented themselves, with regards to the placement of a dedicated HVO tank. Due to surface water discharging into a stream, there is the need to install a drainage interceptor alongside a double bunded tank to mitigate against any potential runoff. A contractor was appointed to develop designs for the taken and drainage solution. Designs were returned in August 2025 and will be considered before being taken forwards. Through the waste recommissioning process, consideration will be given to this design and HVO proposals from prospective bidders.

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
	decarbonisation method through to 2031.		
2.3	Household Recycling & Waste Collection: Phase 3 Investigate specification options for the service, post 2027 whilst reviewing and embedding decarbonisation opportunities where possible in the interim.	Undertake early market engagement. Determine next steps for our subsequent service cycle, including how further decarbonisation interventions can be incorporated and scaled up to the 2031 service. This will be a key piece of work to decarbonise one of our highest emitting contracts.	The procurement process has now started to retender the waste contract. High level elements of specification were approved in March 2025, reported to CHE CAB and Cabinet. A detailed specification has been developed as part of the ITT and procurement process. TWBC is now working through the appropriate procurement phases.
2.4	Grounds Maintenance: Investigate specification options for the next Grounds Maintenance service from 2027, whilst reviewing and embedding interim decarbonisation opportunities.	Undertake early market engagement. Review possibility of moving to full electrification of grounds maintenance vehicles and equipment. Establish and implement wider sustainable maintenance practices.	Early market engagement was undertaken in September 2024, with options appraisals undertaken between September 2024 and May 2025. TWBC is proceeding with the Direct Award and are having ongoing conversations regarding the use of electric handheld tools and electric vehicles.
2.5	Leisure Centre Management: Investigate specification options for the next Leisure Management service from 2027, whilst	Undertake early market engagement to investigate options for decarbonising the delivery of leisure services. Findings will be built into the next service, where feasible.	Early market engagement was undertaken in September 2024, with options appraisals subsequently undertaken. Options are still under review for the leisure centres. However, there is the opportunity to proceed with Putlands using its allocated S106 funding (as referenced in action 1.1).

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	reviewing and embedding interim decarbonisation opportunities.	This will be a key piece of work to decarbonise one of our highest emitting services.	

3.Procurement

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
3.1	Sustainable Procurement Policy: Update the policy where required and determine long term implementation actions and aims.	A review of the impact of policy in terms of carbon reduction measures introduced in each new contract and review options to develop further.	Initial conversations have been had about sustainability requirements as part of the procurement process. Our policy already includes sustainability, alongside specific sustainability questionnaires. Work in this area was delayed until after the new regulations came into force. This work will be picked back up in Q4 2025 and will align with the update to TWBCs Procurement Strategy.
3.2	Climate Emergency Impact Assessment: Update the CEIA to provide clearer guidance and requirements to officers.	A review of the impact and use of the CEIA, alongside a simplified and shortened process for officers.	Updates to the CEIA have started, with a wider piece of work regarding the effectiveness of this approach and potential alternative options has now also started.

4.Transport

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
4.1	Fleet Vehicles: Review timeline, cost, and feasibility of changing our remaining ICE fleet vehicles to electric vehicles.	Review of existing internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and the available options and timeline for decarbonisation.	Informal conversation held regarding existing vehicle fleet, with emissions from remaining vehicles calculated. Rough costs produced for replacing like for like vehicles.
4.2	Staff EV Charging: Review options to provide staff only EV charging points in Council car parks.	Review of staff EV charging provision, alongside opportunities to provide capacity for staff-only charging.	Action not progressed.
4.3	Business Travel: Assessment of most common method of transport and identification of opportunities to influence transport modes.	Lead to identification of interventions to reduce 'hard to tackle' emissions.	Options identified. Proposal received from Co-Wheels for a dedicated TWBC pool vehicle. There is no funding available in the Sustainability budget to cover. Proposal will be raised with the portfolio holder in September 2025.

5. Corporate Governance

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
5.1	Emissions Reporting: Phase 1: Complete the 2022/23 and 2023/24 emissions reporting and re-baselining exercise. Phase 2: Continue annual emissions reporting. Phase 3: Produce a scoped-out Net Zero pathway to 2030.	This will provide us with up to date data and will influence future action plans. This work will also allow for progress monitoring.	- Phase 1: Complete the 2022/23 and 2023/24 - o Emissions reports completed and available on the TWBC Climate Action Website: https://twbccclimateaction.co.uk/what-were-doing/reducingthecouncilsemissions/ - Phase 2: Continue annual emissions reporting. - o Future emissions reporting approach proposed to align to ISO 14064-1 for future reports. - o 2024/25 calculations complete to this standard. - o Report to cabinet due October 2025 seeking approval to proceed with formal verification. - Phase 3: Produce an updated scoped-out Net Zero pathway. - o Proposal to align to IWA42 Net Zero Targets standard. - o Report to cabinet due October 2025 seeking approval to proceed with formal verification.
5.2	Borough Climate Change Strategy: Production and delivery of a borough wide climate change strategy, incorporating resident consultation.	This work demonstrates our commitment to supporting carbon reduction across the borough. This work will highlight our approach to tackling decarbonisation across the borough, in partnership with residents, businesses, anchor institutions and community groups.	Borough Climate Change Strategy adopted in July 2025. Strategy is available on the TWBC Climate Action Website: Climate Strategy - TWBC Climate Action

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
5.3	Offsetting / Insetting Strategy: Develop a draft offsetting / insetting strategy to determine how TWBC should tackle its residual emissions to achieve Net Zero.	This strategy will determine our approach to tackling our expected residual emissions, which are simple too difficult to reduce. This is a widely accept element of achieving net zero.	Item requirement will be assessed following the completion of Emissions Reporting Phase 3.
5.4	Sustainable Building Maintenance Policy: Agree a policy determining minimum standards to implement for buildings requiring significant routine maintenance e.g., boiler replacement.	The development of such a policy provides officers with a clear steer on how we would like routine maintenance work to incorporate sustainability.	A policy has been drafted in collaboration with the Building and Property Manager. Next stage is to review policy as required and formally adopt.
5.5	Staff Commuting: Review TWBC policies, plans and opportunities related to staff travel.	Reviewing staff travel will provide us with information on way we can reduce emissions from staff commuting to and from work.	A staff commuting survey was conducted in April / May 2025. Options to reduce emissions from staff commuting were proposed as part of the staff pay and benefits review. Some of the proposed options are being taken forwards further.
5.6	Green Events Guide: Develop a green event guide to provide recommendations and minimum standards we would expect from	A review of our current event policy and subsequent identification of how we can improve the sustainability of these event, building up to 2030.	And initial draft has been developed based on best practise. Initial engagement with the relevant teams has now started, to refine and implement the guide into our event management process.

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
	internal and external events in the Borough.		
5.7	Graduate Climate Change Officer: Fill vacant graduate climate change officer role.	To provide vital capacity to deliver our CCDP action plan and borough climate change strategy.	Post was filled in April 2024.
5.8	Team Capacity: Complete a review of existing sustainability, property, and private sector housing capacity to deliver against our net zero target.	A review of capacity will be key to determining whether we can deliver the key work against our CCDP action plan and borough climate change strategy ambitions.	Team capacity has been reviewed with a high-level overview of costs requirements taken to management board as part of the Borough Climate Change Strategy cabinet report. JD's have been drafted and are awaiting grading. Next steps to be established in Q4 2025.

6. Communications

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
6.1	Climate Emergency Impact Assessment: Hold staff training about using the CEIA, alongside wider promotion and	Wider promotion of this requirement is important when embedding climate understanding into all areas of the council and the projects we deliver.	Updates to the CEIA have started, with a wider piece of work regarding the effectiveness of this approach and potential alternative options has now also started.

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
	communication of this requirement.		
6.2	External Climate Comms: Implement the climate comms plan alongside a wider review and update to external comms content, such as the TWBC Climate Action website.	Key to keeping residents and communities advised of the actions the council is taking and encourage their own carbon reduction activity.	The Sustainability and Comms team are continuing to develop and publish climate change specific comms, via TWBCs social media channels.
6.3	Internal Climate Comms: Review internal climate comms approaches and capacity. Implement staff training (such as carbon literacy) and awareness to increase understanding of how all areas of work impact climate change.	Key to keeping staff advised of the actions the council is taking and provide wider understanding on actions that all areas of the council take to reduce carbon emissions.	Capacity has limited the ability to review the workstream. However, the Sustainability Team is now promoting its work on Viva Engage, offering carbon literacy training to staff and with the help from KCC published an introduction to climate change e-learning course.

7.External Funding and Lobbying

Ref	Activity Description	Outline	Year 3 Progress Update
7.1	Grants: Continued review and application for decarbonisation Grant opportunities.	Potential Grant funding for decarbonisation projects from PSDS, LCSF, SPSF, ACE, NLHF and Museum sources.	£55,800 was received from the Low Carbon Skills Fund for an RVP heat decarbonisation plan. £10,000 was received from the IRS grant, to support with the RVP solar canopies design. Future rounds of the government PSDS and LCSF have been cancelled. It looks unlikely that there will be any future significant decarbonisation grant funding made available to councils in the short term.
7.2	Lobbying: Continue to lobby government on critical issues and barriers to decarbonisation delivery.	Using our voice to make it clear to government the key barriers we face, and the wider support needed. For example, lobbying for clear funding timelines, improved funding scheme design and opportunities.	Lobbying was initially proposed to respond to the inadequate PSDS Round 4. However, this has stalled following the cancellation of PSDS. The council has renewed its membership with UK100, this time as an ally, due to the introduction of a subscription.