

Report Title:	Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan Update		
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	18 th March 2026
Report of:	Climate Change Team	Cabinet Portfolio	Environment and Corporate Services
Cabinet Lead Member	Councillor Lythgoe	Wards Affected	Borough-wide
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency
Integrated Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
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Valley Plan Priorities	Thriving Local Economy: This involves securing new inward investment, creating a sustainable economy, matching local skills with future job opportunities, and supporting town centres as unique destinations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	High Quality Environment: This includes having a "clean and green" local environment, reducing the borough's carbon footprint, improving waste and recycling rates, and delivering new homes with a good mix of housing tenures.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Healthy & Proud Communities: This priority focuses on improving the health and physical/mental wellbeing of residents, reducing health inequalities, ensuring access to better leisure facilities and health services, and fostering a sense of pride in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Effective & Efficient Council: The aim is to provide good quality and responsive services, embrace new technology, be a financially sustainable council with a commercial outlook, and ensure sound governance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan were agreed in July 2020 and work has progressed over the past five years to deliver the agreed actions.
- 1.2 The Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) was updated in 2024 and approved by Council in March 2025.
- 1.3 The preliminary CCAP was revised to ensure that proposed actions are clear Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) actions that are informed by latest evidence and feedback from senior officers across all service areas of the Council.
- 1.4 Over the past year, the Council has secured **£1.5m** in external funding to support delivery of the Climate Change Strategy. Since 2020, operational emissions have reduced by **36.74%**. Current projects are expected to generate annual energy cost savings in excess of **£73,744** and carbon savings of **226.86 tCO₂e** per annum.
- 1.5 Alongside this, the Council has delivered the innovative Net Zero Terrace Streets programme, achieved improved borough wide air quality performance, and progressed significant tree planting and biodiversity gain.

1.6 This report provides an update on the activities and initiatives undertaken by the Council this past year to implement the four policy themes detailed in the Council's Climate Change Strategy and deliver the updated CCAP.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Cabinet notes the progress in year five of the Climate Change Strategy, including:

- a 36.74% reduction in operational emissions since 2020
- £1.5m secured in external decarbonisation funding
- delivery of the innovative Net Zero Terrace Streets programme
- improved borough-wide air quality performance
- significant tree planting and biodiversity gain

3. BACKGROUND & REASON FOR THE DECISION

3.1 In September 2019, Rossendale Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency and set out its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan covering the following four policy themes:

- Efficient Energy Consumption
- Sustainable Transport
- Waste and the Wider Environment
- Working together in Partnership

3.2 The Strategy and Action Plan were approved in July 2020. The Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) was later revised in 2024 and formally approved by Council in 2025.

3.3 The Council is taking a wide range of direct actions in the past five years, set out in the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan, which will contribute to reducing emissions in Rossendale and help to deliver the vision for Council operations to be net zero carbon by 2030.

3.4 Years one to four have shown significant progress in establishing the Council's pathway towards a net zero carbon position by 2030 and have delivered notable reductions in the Council's carbon footprint. Details are set out in the annual updates for Years 1 to 4, included as Appendices 1 to 4.

3.5 The ten year plan was always designed to be a marathon, not a sprint and year five has seen considerable progress in planning and developing measures to future proof Council owned assets, and to ensure that any carbon and energy saving initiatives provide value for money, measurable and sustainable reductions in our carbon output.

3.6 In the first half of the Climate Change Action Plan's life, we have been focusing on decarbonising the Council's operations and services as much as possible. As we move into the second-half of the plan, we shall be focusing more on the wider aspiration of creating a Net Zero Carbon Valley by working with households, businesses, schools and community groups to deliver this shared goal.

3.7 The implementation of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan is intended to contribute towards addressing the Climate Emergency declared in 2019, aligning with the strategic

priorities in the Corporate Plan 2021–2025, and supporting progress towards the Council’s stated net zero ambition for 2030.

4. CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN – DELIVERY AND PROGRESS UPDATE

4.1 The priority actions document (**Appendix 5**) highlights key projects delivered or progressing within the 2025/26 financial year.

4.2 Emissions reporting

Council operational emissions

4.2.1 Rossendale Borough Council has collected scope 1 and 2 emissions data for its operations since 2019. Scope 1 emissions are the direct greenhouse gas emissions that are owned and controlled by the council, specifically those from the council’s transport fleet and the heating of buildings. Scope 2 emissions are the indirect greenhouse gas emissions that result from the generation of purchased energy, specifically electricity. Greenhouse gas emissions are reported as carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e), which refers to the impact of different greenhouse gases in terms of the amount of CO₂ that would have the same warming effect.

4.2.2 Council operational emissions have reduced by **36.74%** between 2020 and 2025, falling from **2,010.84 tCO₂e to 1,272.13 tCO₂e**. This represents a significant reduction over a five year period and reflects the impact of energy efficiency measures and low carbon interventions implemented across Council operations.

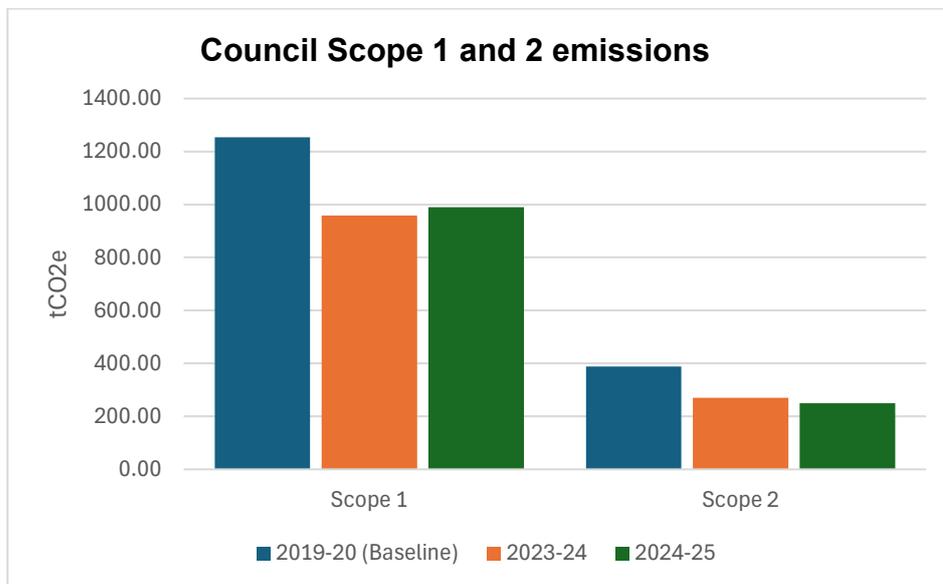


Figure 1 Rossendale Borough Council scope 1 and 2 emissions

4.2.3 Figure 1 presents the Council’s emissions data across scopes. Scope 1 and 2 emissions remain well below the 2019/20 baseline, demonstrating sustained progress in reducing operational carbon emissions.

4.2.4 Scope 2 emissions continue to decrease year-on-year, reflecting grid decarbonisation and the impact of energy efficiency measures. Overall, the trend confirms continued progress in reducing operational emissions, with Scope 2 showing the most consistent decline. Delivery of planned decarbonisation projects is expected to reinforce this trajectory and enable further reductions in the next reporting period.

4.2.5 Scope 3 emissions are the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from upstream and downstream activities such as purchased goods and services and leased assets. These emissions are hard to quantify and activities are underway in the council to report on them annually.

4.2.6 A comprehensive report on the Council's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is scheduled for publication by summer.

Territorial emissions

4.2.7 The borough-wide greenhouse gas emissions data shows an overall downward trend since 2019, indicating gradual progress in reducing emissions across Rossendale.

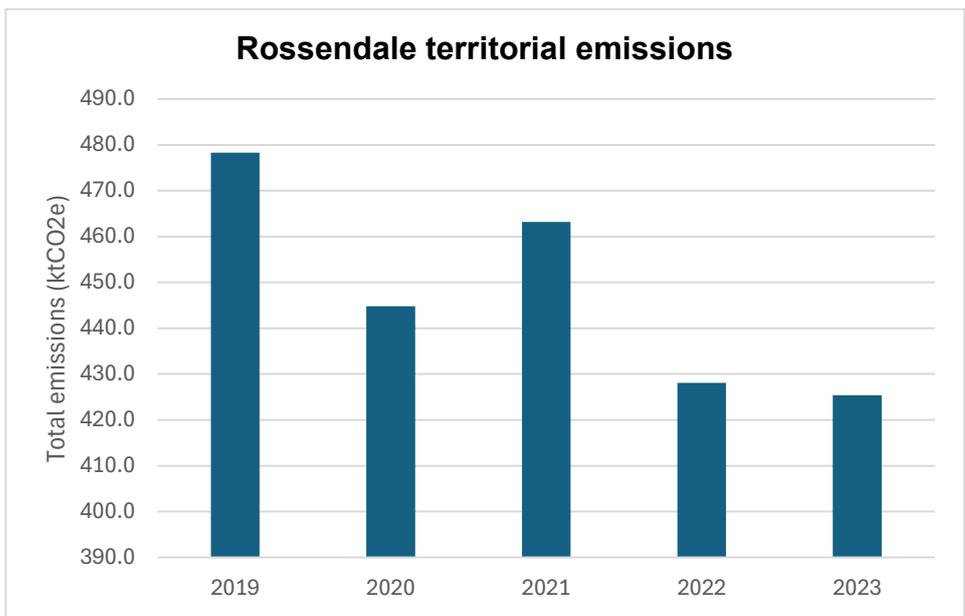


Figure 2 Rossendale Borough territorial emissions from 2019 to 2023

4.2.8 As indicated in Figure 2, total emissions decreased from approximately 478 ktCO₂e in 2019 to around 425 ktCO₂e in 2023, representing a reduction of roughly 11% over the period.

4.2.9 While emissions fell notably in 2020, there was a temporary increase in 2021. This fluctuation is consistent with national patterns, where emissions rebounded following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, increased travel and economic activity resuming after lockdown periods. As such, the 2021 rise is widely understood to reflect post pandemic recovery effects rather than a reversal of longer-term decarbonisation progress.

4.2.10 From 2021 onwards, emissions resumed a downward trajectory, with 2022 and 2023 showing continued reductions. The trend suggests that while year to year variation can occur due to external factors, the longer term direction of travel is downward. Continued local climate action, alongside national decarbonisation policies, will be important in sustaining and accelerating this progress toward net zero.

Air quality

4.2.11 The Council continues to review air quality data alongside the borough's identified air quality hotspot locations including Grane Road, as well as additional sites at Haslingden, Bacup

Road, Rawtenstall and Waterfoot. This helps ensure that improvements are consistent across all areas of concern and that targeted interventions can be applied where required.

4.2.12 Our air quality monitoring station recorded a significant improvement in air quality last year. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels fell below national objectives for the first time since monitoring began, with 2024-25 results showing concentrations below 40 micrograms per cubic metre. This represents a significant milestone, given the well-established health impacts associated with nitrogen dioxide, including respiratory and cardiovascular disease, as well as emerging evidence of links to neurological conditions.

4.2.13 The reduction is attributed to a combination of factors, including increased uptake of electric vehicles and the sustained promotion of active travel across the borough. The Annual Status Report has now been published, formally reflecting the improved air quality position across the borough.

4.3 Efficient Energy Consumption

Decarbonising Council Assets

4.3.1 Emissions from energy use in our buildings account for over 50% of the Council's operational greenhouse gas emissions. The Council has therefore prioritised identifying appropriate alternatives to fossil fuel heating systems, improving energy efficiency across its buildings and increasing on site renewable energy generation.

4.3.2 To support this work, funding totalling £1.4m has been secured from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Phase 4), the Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund (Phase 5) and the Swimming Pool Support Fund in the past year. This funding has enabled the completion of several projects and the progression of others currently underway to reduce the carbon footprint of the Council's corporate estate. Measures include the removal of gas heating systems and the installation of energy efficiency improvements such as LED lighting, insulation, and solar PV where appropriate.

4.3.3 Heat decarbonisation studies provide a pipeline of opportunities ensuring we are ready for the next wave of investments and grant opportunities. Supported by the public sector Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) Phase 5, the Council has developed a Building Heat Decarbonisation Plan (BHDP) that gives a detailed profile of the Council estate including the required recommendations to decarbonise each building, reducing the carbon footprint and total energy usage. We are actively building on our successful approach to securing funding and will continue to use the reports to apply for grants (such as the Swimming Pool Support Fund) to bolster our decarbonisation programme.

4.3.4 Our biggest project to decarbonise council buildings is the decarbonisation project at Marl Pits Leisure Centre. This building our largest energy consumer, needing a substantial amount of power to keep the pool and gym running. A detailed programme is underway and there have already been some successes. Supported by the Swimming Pool Support Fund, phase one of the project focused on installing new pool covers and replacing the gas fired air handling unit with a new low-carbon heat pump ready air handling unit with a heat recovery system. Phase two of the project will use Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Phase 4) funding to replace the existing gas fired heating system with heat pumps, upgrade the lighting to LED and expand the solar PV capacity. The first stage of phase two which involved completing the detailed designs for the decarbonisation works is complete and the procurement process is ongoing to appoint a contractor to complete final stage of phase two

from April 2026. The overall scheme is estimated to reduce the Council's operational emissions by approximately 210 tCO₂e and save more than £50k in energy costs per annum.

4.3.5 As part of a wider building decarbonisation project, low-carbon and energy efficiency measures have been planned or undertaken across several Rossendale Borough Council buildings:

- Works have been completed to replace existing lighting with high efficiency LED systems at Haslingden Sports Centre, The Whitaker, Bacup Library, The Ashcroft and Maden Rec Changing Rooms in Bacup. This project is expected to reduce the council's annual operational emissions by 31.60 tCO₂e and provide an estimated cost savings of £13,403.64 per annum.
- The Building Energy Management System at Futures Park has been upgraded which will enable the facilities team to efficiently monitor and regulate the building's heating system and this is expected to significantly improve energy efficiency in the building and reduce running costs.
- Insulation and window upgrades have been installed at the A, B & D Centre in Bacup to improve energy efficiency.

Renewable Energy

4.3.6 Solar system efficiency upgrades to repair and optimise existing solar installations at Marl Pits Leisure Centre and Futures Park have now been completed. These works have improved system performance at both sites and are expected to deliver energy cost savings for the Council.

4.3.7 Proposals for a 100 kW solar PV installation at the Adrenaline Centre have been approved by Cabinet, with works expected to be completed in the 2026–27 financial year.

4.3.8 A feasibility study is currently underway to assess the viability of developing a solar farm at the Cribden Hill site near the Haslingden tip. The site was identified as having renewable energy potential through the Council's Asset Review.

Community Decarbonisation

Net Zero Terrace Streets Project

4.3.9 Working in partnership with Rossendale Valley Energy (RVE) and a specialist consortium, the Net Zero Terrace Streets programme is a place-based approach to decarbonising older terraced housing at street and neighbourhood scale. With around 14,000 terraced homes representing over 40% of Rossendale's total housing stock, this property type is critical to achieving local carbon reduction ambitions and addressing fuel poverty.

NZTS is designed not simply as a technical retrofit scheme, but as a complete delivery model that integrates optimised fabric improvements, suitable low carbon heating infrastructure, smart local energy integration, community engagement, governance structures, financing mechanisms and an investable consumer proposition which avoids upfront costs.

4.3.10 Through Innovate UK's Net Zero Living programme, NZTS was awarded £2.5m in 2024 and a further £150k in 2025 to deliver live demonstrator activity in Rossendale, build the enabling tools and methodology, and assess scalability across Rossendale, Rochdale and Bridgend.

4.3.11 The demonstrator phase has now delivered three completed and tenanted homes in Rossendale. These homes incorporate fabric upgrades and shared ground source heating infrastructure alongside monitoring systems that are collecting real time data on temperature, humidity, indoor air quality, performance and running costs. This evidence is building a live performance dataset to inform the next phase of scale up and to demonstrate the household experience of the model.

4.3.12 Beyond the physical properties, the project has delivered:

- An end-to-end delivery pathway tested in live, occupied terraced streets, including procurement, contracting, permissions, highways coordination and resident engagement
- A techno-economic model testing the affordability and no upfront cost approach
- A structured step by step methodology and enabling tools to support replication by other local authorities and community organisations
- The establishment of Looped Energy Communities CIC as the national body overseeing the wider NZTS model

Building on demonstrator delivery, the Council and its partners are now refining the commercial, governance and delivery arrangements required to enable a wider roll out in Rossendale. Work is underway to identify potential street clusters, develop the investment model and continue resident engagement to support future phases. This ensures that the programme moves beyond pilot homes towards a scalable, street based retrofit pathway for the Borough.

Through this work Rossendale continues to position itself as a leading local authority in developing practical, scalable solutions for the decarbonisation of terraced housing.

Community Support Programmes

4.3.13 Delivery of national grant schemes and offers has been progressed through partnership. The Council continues to work with Cosy homes Lancashire, Rhea projects and Homewise to administer the ECO4-Flex scheme, Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) and Warm Homes Local Grant through which people living in fuel poverty may access energy performance upgrades to their homes. Between January 2025 and January 2026, 103 projects had been completed.

4.3.14 The Council continues to work with Rossendale Valley Energy to deliver energy advice to residents in the borough. Originally funded through the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero's Local Energy Advice Demonstrator, the programme has since secured funding via Ofgem's Energy Redress Scheme to maintain and extend this provision.

4.4 Sustainable Transport

4.4.1 The Council continues to progress its fleet decarbonisation programme, transitioning fossil fuel-powered vans and small vehicles to electric vehicles (EVs) where feasible. Diesel-powered trucks, including refuse collection vehicles, are being transitioned to hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) where electrification is not currently viable. This approach has contributed to a sustained reduction in transport emissions over the past three years, with a 67% reduction in Council operational transport emissions in 2023 compared with the 2019 baseline year.

4.4.2 The Climate Change Team is currently developing an EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy to ensure the Council delivers the right chargers, in the right locations, at the right time, in a fair and cost-effective manner. Data from Council-owned EV chargers already installed show a consistent increase in utilisation, reflecting growing EV uptake across the borough over the past five years. The strategy will form the basis for further EV charging infrastructure expansion across the borough over the next five years.

4.4.3 Officers are also working with Lancashire County Council to deliver an EV charging infrastructure project funded through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) scheme, aimed at addressing the needs of residents without access to off street parking or home charging. The project is currently at the procurement stage, and Lancashire County Council estimates that over 100 EV charge points could be installed across the borough as part of this initiative.

4.5 Waste and the Wider Environment

Recycling

4.5.1 Over the past year, Rossendale Borough Council has continued to deliver reliable waste and recycling services while preparing for significant future improvements. This consistent performance provides a strong foundation for the next phase of service enhancements that will support the Council's climate and environmental ambitions. The Council is also building on the success of the *Check Before You Chuck* campaign, maintaining resident engagement to encourage correct recycling and reduce contamination.

4.5.2 A major step forward is the planned introduction of weekly household food waste collections from 2026 under national recycling reforms. As food waste forms a significant proportion of household rubbish, separate collection and treatment through processes such as anaerobic digestion will increase recycling rates and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is expected to deliver a meaningful uplift in recycling performance while enabling residents to play a direct role in climate action.

4.5.3 The new low-carbon waste transfer station will further improve environmental performance by reducing transport distances, lowering vehicle emissions and improving operational efficiency.

Circular Economy

4.5.4 The Council is strengthening its approach to the circular economy, recognising its role in reducing carbon emissions, minimising waste and supporting local communities. Officers are progressing the development of a Rossendale circular economy network to bring together community groups, businesses and institutions to collaborate on initiatives that keep materials in use for longer. Planned activities include repair cafés, clothes-swapping and tool-sharing schemes, helping to reduce waste while building community resilience.

4.5.5 The climate change team has engaged with several organisations already delivering circular economy activities in the borough, including Storehouse (furniture redistribution), Haslingden and Whitworth Men's Sheds (repair cafés and repair sessions), Stubblelee Community Greenhouses, Groundwork Rossendale and the Beacon Dementia Group. Engagement is ongoing, with joint initiatives planned to commence later this year.

Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

- 4.5.6 The planning and climate change team are working on potential opportunities to create in borough biodiversity enhancement and off site BNG provision in the borough at Staghills Wood, grassland near the Halo in Haslingden, and Cribden Moor. These sites were highlighted as having potential to deliver meaningful biodiversity improvements while also addressing the current reliance on out of borough solutions.
- 4.5.7 The Council is working constructively with developers to ensure that planned growth is accompanied by measurable biodiversity enhancements, thereby supporting sustainable development and strengthened Biodiversity Net Gain outcomes.
- 4.5.8 The Council published its first Biodiversity Considerations Report in January 2024. A further statutory report, setting out what actions have been taken in response to the biodiversity duty, will be published by end of March 2026.
- 4.5.9 Rossendale Borough Council has contributed local data and officer input to the Lancashire Local Nature Recovery Strategy which has been prepared by Lancashire County Council. The strategy which maps existing important habitats across the county and identifies priorities and opportunities for future nature recovery has been approved by Lancashire County Council Cabinet and was published on 16th January 2026. The LNRS is a material consideration for plan making and planning decisions, including its role in shaping Biodiversity Net Gain outcomes.

Tree Planting

- 4.5.10 The Council has continued to build on the Rossendale Forest initiative, which successfully planted 16,000 trees between 2022 and 2024 and established a strong foundation for long-term woodland creation in the borough. Tree planting remains a key nature-based solution within the Council's climate response.
- 4.5.11 Over the past year, a total of 10,834 trees have been planted across the borough, including 1,550 trees delivered directly through Rossendale Borough Council projects, covering approximately 3,329 m² of land. Planting has focused on a diverse mix of native and fruit-bearing species, including quickthorn, rowan, hazel, oak, silver birch, goat willow and alder, alongside orchard varieties such as apple, pear and plum. These species support biodiversity, strengthen ecosystem resilience, enhance landscape character and provide long-term carbon sequestration.
- 4.5.12 This sustained approach delivers multiple benefits, including habitat enhancement, natural flood management and protection of communities from flash flooding, improved air quality and positive community wellbeing outcomes, reinforcing the borough's commitment to a greener and more climate resilient future.

4.6 Working Together in Partnership

- 4.6.1 Three meetings of the Officer and Lead Member Climate Action and Biodiversity Group were held in the past year. These meetings provide a forum for officers and lead members to review progress, share updates and engage with ongoing climate action activities. They also enable member and officer input into key strategies and plans and help identify practical opportunities to reduce the Council's environmental impact, including within office operations.

- 4.6.2 The Climate Change Team actively participates in the Lancashire Climate Officers Group and the Lancashire Climate Action Network meetings and associated programmes. These forums bring together officers, experts and stakeholders from across Lancashire to collaborate on climate related work and share learning. Participation provides opportunities to contribute to and help shape regional climate initiatives, ensuring alignment with wider county priorities and maximising opportunities for collaborative action.
- 4.6.3 The Council continues to work closely with regional and local partners to deliver net zero projects and climate action across the borough. Key partners include Rossendale Valley Energy, Lancashire County Council, Blackpool Council, Cosy Homes Lancashire, the North West Net Zero Hub, the Local Government Association, Lancashire Women, Homewise Energy Saving Trust, City of Trees and Newground Together. Through these partnerships, the Council supports the delivery of energy advice, warm home assistance, nature recovery and tree planting initiatives, helping to reduce emissions while providing wider social and environmental benefits.
- 4.6.4 The Climate Change Team has attended a range of local and regional programmes over the past year, including the Greater Manchester Retrofit Expo, the LGC Net Zero 2025 conference, and other sector events and webinars. Through participation in both in-person and online events, the team has engaged with over 500 stakeholders nationally, helping to share learning, build partnerships and keep the Council informed of best practice and emerging opportunities in climate action.

Carbon Literacy Training

- 4.6.5 5 members of council staff from key departments including economic development, planning, operations and facilities completed the ISEP Pathways to Net Zero Course and have gained carbon literacy accreditation after passing the required exams. The Climate Change Programme Officer also completed the ISEP Foundation Certificate in Sustainability & Environmental Management. The final stage of carbon literacy training this financial year will be for members of the corporate management team. These courses have created the foundation for the Climate Change Team to deliver carbon literacy training to council staff in 2026/27 financial year.

Awards and Recognition

- 4.6.6 The Council was shortlisted at the Regen Green Energy Awards last year, and its partners Electricity North West and Rossendale Valley Energy won the Electrical Industry Awards in recognition of the Council-led Net Zero Terrace Streets project, which is pioneering innovative solutions to decarbonise terraced homes across the country.

5. RISK

- 5.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- A risk register has been developed for the strategy as part of the Council's programme management process and these risks are monitored regularly. A public commitment has been made by the Council to do what it can locally to tackle climate change. This report limits the risk of not delivering on that commitment by putting the resources in place to ensure delivery. This report identifies ways in which the risk of non-delivery can be mitigated.

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS (FINANCE)

6.1 Council approved a £1m capital Carbon Reduction Fund in February 2021, phased over 4 years commencing in 2021/22 to be spent on Decarbonising RBC assets. The remainder of the fund will be allocated to support the delivery of the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. Where appropriate, reports will be developed to support this allocation of funds.

7. MONITORING OFFICER COMMENTS (LEGAL)

7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. Each project will be subject to its own considerations on a case-by-case basis.

7.2 All of the projects/activities included in the CCAP which are underway, have had their legal implications assessed. Future planned activities will need to have their legal implications considered at the relevant stages, as appropriate.

8. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

8.1 No adverse impacts have been identified. The actions within this update are expected to deliver positive environmental and community benefits. Impact assessments will be undertaken where necessary as projects progress.

9. POLICY/STRATEGY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan priorities and national net zero policy direction.

10. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This update report does not give rise to any immediate local government reorganisation implications. The climate change activities outlined are consistent with national policy direction and established local authority priorities.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Document	Place of Inspection
Appendix 1. Annual Report year 1	Annual Report year 1
Appendix 2. Annual Report year 2	Annual Report year 2
Appendix 3. Annual Report year 3	Annual Report year 3
Appendix 4. Annual Report year 4	Annual Report year 4
Appendix 5. Priority actions 2025/26	Council Offices