

The Green Agenda – Background and Context

The LGA Member Workbook on acting on climate change outlines that addressing our green agenda is vital not only because it's the right thing to do, but also because of the implications for our residents, the local economy and the Council as an organisation.

Councils can play a significant role in realising the benefits and opportunities of climate action in local areas by taking on a leadership role, offering vision and direction to residents and identifying tangible things that we can all do to make a difference.

Our local context

Chorley has a strong environmental position with 71.8% of land designated as green belt and over 300 hectares of countryside. Total carbon emissions are higher than the national average when measured by tonnage per person which could be due to proximity to the motorway network, however mortality attributed to poor air quality was better than all England average when last recorded in 2016. Household recycling rates have improved in recent years with Chorley's at 42.7% for 17/18.

The national picture

'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' outlines central government's green agenda and how it will work towards a greener, healthier, more sustainable future for the next generation.

The key areas of focus are the following:

- Using and managing land sustainably
- Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes
- Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing
- Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste
- Securing clean, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans
- Protecting and improving the global environment

The Clean Growth Strategy sets out how we as country will continue to grow while cutting greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring that an affordable energy supply for business and consumers is at the heart of the Industrial Strategy.

The key areas of focus are the following:

- Improving Business and Industry Efficiency and Supporting Clean Growth
- Improving Our Homes
- Accelerating the Shift to Low Carbon Transport
- Delivering Clean, Smart, Flexible Power
- Enhancing the Benefits and Value of Our Natural Resources

The Clean Air Strategy Sets out how central government will tackle all sources of air pollution, making our air healthier to breathe, protecting nature and boosting the economy.

The key focus areas are the following:

- Protecting the nation's health and environment
- Securing clean growth and innovation
- Action to reduce emissions from transport, home, industry and farming

What are we already doing?

The council is already proactively supporting the green agenda in a wide variety of ways with a selection of examples provided below:

- Sustainable transport – Neighbourhood officers use electric vehicles and the council has also recently installed vehicle charging points on Market Street as well as additional bike storage in the town centre. For staff, the council offers a cycle to work scheme and a subsidised rail season ticket to encourage reduced car usage.
- Policy and strategy – Our joint procurement strategy includes a priority and action to support sustainable products and services. For developments and housing we have a design guide outlining best practice for sustainability, efficiency, surface water and energy. An air quality strategy is in development to set out council objectives for air quality management. The Council undertakes an Integrated Impact Assessment on all key policies and strategies, which includes consideration of sustainability.
- Staff – We offer subsidised rail passes for staff and a 'Cycle to Work' scheme. We've also implemented WorkSmart and upgraded our ICT systems meaning that it is now much easier for staff to work remotely as part of an agile working culture, reducing the amount of car travel.
- Council buildings – Extensive work has been undertaken in recent years to install energy efficient lighting in all buildings. The Town Hall roof also has solar panels installed. We're working to reduce single-use plastic and at a recent event used biodegradable knives and forks!
- Project and service delivery – We continuously look for ways to deliver our services in a more sustainable way, for example recent proposals to create wildflower meadows and wildlife corridors. We're also delivering community projects such as MySpace, an initiative supporting young people to improve their mental health by taking part in environmentally focussed activities.

What are others doing?

Examples of activity in other areas, ranging in cost and scale include:

Cardiff City Council has used the Re-fit Framework supported by the Government and the Local Government Association and used by some local authorities to reduce energy use in own estate and add renewable energy by using an Energy Performance Contracting approach to deliver guaranteed energy efficiency improvements and energy production for their own estate.

Hackney Council has rolled out an initiative called 'School Streets' which is a ban on traffic outside schools around pick up and drop off times in an attempt to improve air quality. They have rolled out a School Streets toolkit for other councils to assist them in the process of introducing a similar policy.

Sheffield City Council has recently committed to only buying green electricity which it says will not cost much more than its existing source. They made a significant change to the current procurement of its energy supply and will now purchase electricity generated solely by renewable sources.

Haringey Council borough wide 20mph speed limit on council-maintained roads to improve air quality and cleaner transport.

What could we do next?

- Look at how the council can lead this agenda within communities by identifying real and tangible actions that will encourage residents to change their behaviour.
- Consider how we incorporate environmental sustainability as part of our decision making so that its part of everything we do.
- Identify specific actions that the council as an organisation could take to demonstrate its commitment through its own assets e.g. staff and buildings.
- Consider the resource implications in terms of knowledge, skills and capacity to achieve our green objectives.

There Council's corporate strategy for 2019 (to be approved in November) is likely to incorporate a unifying green theme and a corporate project to progress the councils' green agenda. This could include the development of a 'green pledge' to set out our commitments.