



DRAFT  
WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL  
CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

2020 - 2030

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## Foreword

West Sussex County Council acknowledged the threat posed to the county and its residents by climate change in April 2019 when at Full Council we debated a motion on climate change and noted the climate urgency. This was not for us a new commitment, but rather reinforced and built on our efforts to reduce our impact on the environment. Our efforts include, for example, working hard to reduce our carbon emissions (now reduced by 52% since 2010/11) and investing in significant renewable energy. This strategy is a renewal of, and further develops, our work.

For this strategy to have the maximum impact possible, we haven't focused on narrow specific issues. There would simply be too many to list. Instead, we have provided a framework which shapes and influences every part of our business. By applying the five key commitments across all areas of our business when planning, delivering all our services, shaping future policy and operations, we can fully integrate our ambitions on climate change into the full breadth of the business of the council.

We want to be clear about what is within our ability to deliver, and what isn't. The strategy does not commit us to targets beyond our ability to deliver. It acknowledges and sets out how we can lead by example, how we can enable others to do things differently, and how we can seek to inspire others to work with us. We are rarely able to require and insist that business and communities change, and neither do we think it would be appropriate for us to do so. We prefer to take a collaborative and facilitative approach, seeking to engage and influence others by sharing our experiences and knowledge. We know there are others better placed to lead on some of the environmental issues facing our communities.

We recognise the need for urgency on this issue, and how now, as never before, we have an opportunity to change and reset with climate change at the heart of the decisions we take for our organisation and our communities. With this in mind, we have accelerated the timeline for this strategy so that we can align and integrate the commitments and use this unmissable opportunity presented by the recovery planning from Covid.

This strategy is not a starting point, but nor is it definitive and comprehensive in defining all future action. The actions will naturally evolve, as we learn more about the best ways to address the identified challenges. What the strategy does do, is set the parameters for our future work and ensure that Climate Change is core to our business, and the communities we serve, now and in the future.

Signed by

Becky Shaw, Chief Executive

Paul Marshall, Leader of the County Council

Deborah Urquhart, Cabinet Member for the Environment

July 2020

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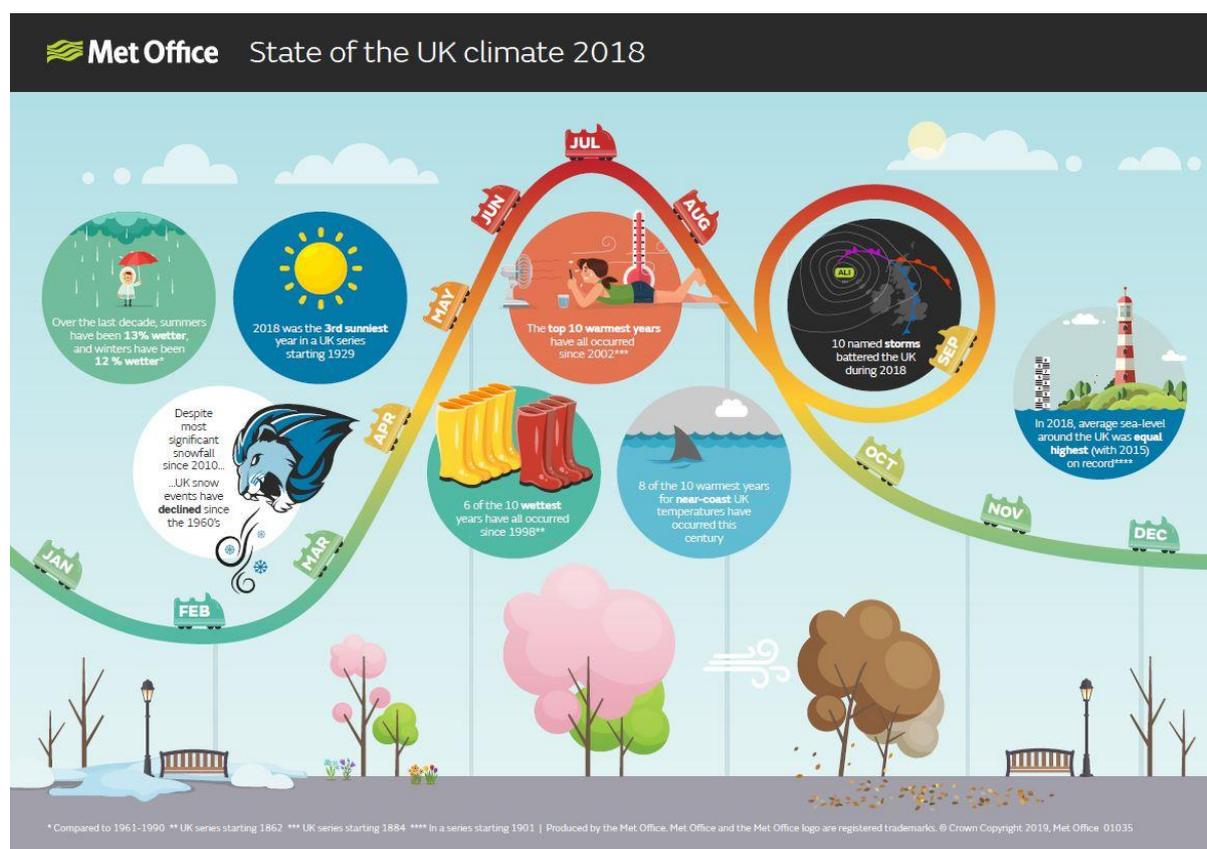
## Our vision

*“In 2030, West Sussex County Council is carbon neutral and climate resilient, using our limited resources wisely. West Sussex County Council has enabled positive actions and behaviours across our county to mitigate and adapt to climate change”.*

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## Introduction

Climate Change is one of the biggest challenges we will ever face in our county. The 2018 report from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that without substantial efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions over the next decade we are likely to face severe, widespread, and irreversible impacts on societies. Human activity has already led to 1°C of global warming from pre-industrial levels, which is resulting in damaging impacts on lives, infrastructure and ecosystems already being felt by communities across West Sussex. The State of the UK Climate 2018 report shows us the national picture:



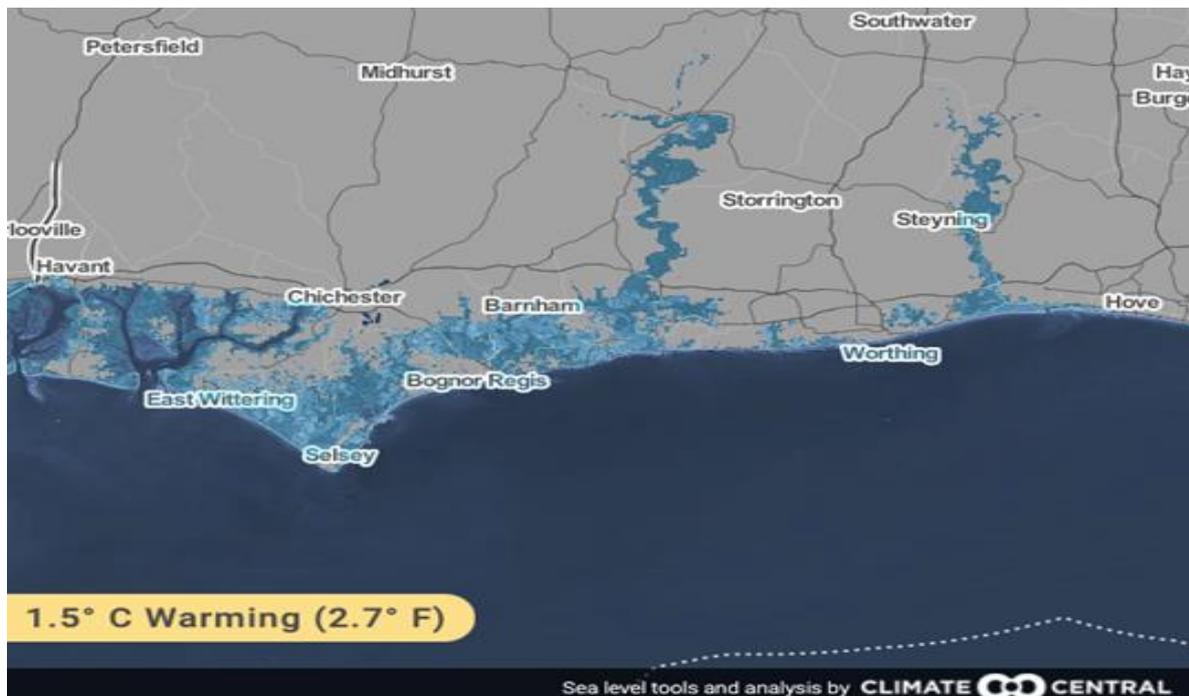
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Without action the impacts we are seeing are predicted to get more extreme.

In 2018 the UK Met Office published their **climate projections for the next century**<sup>1</sup> based on different rates of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. The high emission scenario demonstrated what this means for us nationally:

- Summer temperatures could be up to 5.4°C hotter by 2070
- Average summer rainfall could decrease by up to 47 per cent by 2070, while there could be up to 35 per cent more precipitation in winter. This pattern may lead to more regular drought and likely water restrictions
- There will be an increase in the frequency and intensity of storms.
- The changing patterns in precipitation and storms in our county makes us particularly vulnerable to an increased year-round risk of more frequent river, surface and coastal flooding
- Sea levels could rise. In West Sussex where many of our communities are coastal, or near tidal rivers, this could be significant.

The map below shows the likely impact from sea level rise on our communities through just a 1.5 degree warming in 2100. There are particularly significant impacts for the Adur and Arun Valleys and coastal zones.



Source: <https://choices.climatecentral.org/#10/50.8671/-0.5843?compare=temperatures&carbon-end-yr=2100&scenario-a=warming-4&scenario-b=warming-1.5>

Impacts are already, and will be, felt by all areas of society, but deepest by the most vulnerable.

As a result, we need to both reduce carbon (greenhouse gas) emissions in order to mitigate the cause of climate change, but also make changes to our infrastructure, built environment, social systems,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/approach/collaboration/ukcp/index>

economy and natural environment (adapt) to make us prepared and ready to deal with the different climatic conditions which we know we will see (resilient).

## The strategy

The strategy is aligned with our ambitious target to be carbon neutral by 2030. This work contributes to the wider national commitment to be carbon neutral by 2050 and to strengthen the UK's preparedness for climate change.

This strategy sets out our commitments to achieve this vision. It gives everyone working at, and with, the County Council a very clear indication of our priorities for the next ten years, to realise the short and long-term benefits for our organisation and for our communities. It's uniquely challenging, and if fully embraced, will deliver unique benefits and opportunities.

### This strategy is:

- A clear statement of our commitments which will be integrated into all aspects of the work we do, deliver and enable
- A starting point for action – it will evolve as we learn
- A framework for other County Council strategies and policies to reflect. Commitments that should sit within the strategies and policies of other parts of the business are not included
- For all our officers and elected Members, to guide them to make the right decisions and choices at the right time.
- a high-level approach to take us to 2030

### This strategy does not:

- Make promises or commitments on behalf of partner organisations
- Address all the factors affecting climate change in West Sussex
- Solve climate change on its own

## Long term sustainable thinking

Integral to achieving this is the need to think sustainably. We need to consider the actions we take now and how they will affect generations in the future.

We need to be mindful of how we use limited natural resources. We need to use them wisely to deliver the critical changes we need to see, without inadvertently creating an additional problem for future generations to manage and solve. For example, we don't want to re-create the problem we are now seeing with plastic. Thinking sustainably also requires us to solve these problems in a way that supports the economy as without a thriving and prosperous economy we cannot hope to fund or deliver the changes we need to see.

The Climate Change Act 2008 is the UK's long-term framework for tackling Climate Change. The Act aims to facilitate the UK's transition to a low-carbon economy by 2050. In 2019 the Government amended the goals within this Act and committed the UK to achieving "net zero" greenhouse gases by 2050. A number of national policies and initiatives have been introduced to help meet targets. These are detailed in Appendix 1.

## Benefits

Although we need to do our best to prevent, and prepare for, the negative impacts of climate change, if we choose to embrace the challenge climate change poses, there is the opportunity for our organisation and our communities to reap many potentially far reaching and transformative benefits:

- **Increased health and wellbeing** – Our health is inextricably linked to the health of our planet and immediate environments. By addressing the climate change agenda, we cannot fail to consider the risk it poses to population health. However, what’s good for us is also good for the planet. For example, with fewer cars on the roads, and more opportunities to walk or cycle communities may see cleaner air, reduced noise pollution and experience improved health and wellbeing. There is also the potential for more direct impacts. Taking action to reduce the impacts that we see from climate change will help to ensure fewer heat related deaths and less likelihood of diseases that thrive in warmer conditions.
- **Improved air quality** – Reducing carbon emissions from transport will require us to think differently about how we interact and travel. Reducing transport by petrol and diesel vehicles will not only contribute to carbon reductions but will also reduce the amount of harmful nitrogen oxide emissions, the main source of which is vehicle emissions.
- **A protected natural environment and supported biodiversity** - Over half our county is designated as national park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). A changing climate threatens the natural environment and all the benefits we currently enjoy. Reducing the impacts we see will help to protect the natural environment and support biodiversity. By making choices about how we take action to achieve this, for example by choosing nature-based solutions, can also help to enhance our local environment and deliver a much larger benefit than carbon saving alone.
- **A greater and greener local economy** – Businesses across our County will be able to have the competitive advantage by leading the way to a new, greener, economic model, providing new secure skilled local jobs for residents.
- **Reduced bills** – While increased energy efficiency has the potential to reduce overall energy used and save money, achieving carbon neutral can be more expensive than current business as usual. However, the adverse financial impact of climate change far outweighs the additional costs of being carbon neutral. The benefits of acting will be felt beyond saving money and energy but are not easily measured in the same way and can be difficult to quantify.
- **Energy security** – moving to more local renewable energy sources instead of fossil fuels would mean that we would be less reliant on imported oil and gas, and therefore less vulnerable to increasing oil prices.

Embracing the opportunities of a changing climate means the County Council can:

- **Achieve strategic objectives** – in most cases, ensuring projects, plans and processes reduce carbon and are resilient to climate change strengthens the ability to achieve their original objectives over the long-term, helping local authorities achieve a wide range of other plans and ambitions.
- **Reduced financial costs** – studies show that adaptation action is generally cheaper, and more effective over time, than the costs incurred responding to the impacts over time. For example,

our street lighting project (which will deliver a 61% decrease on current energy use with the planned conversion of 64,000 street lights to LED over the next 6 years) will cost £26.5million during a 25-year loan: but the total reduction in electricity and maintenance costs will save the council £90.1million over the same period.

- **Reduce impacts on service demand and delivery** – adapting to climate change means that we can continue performing as our climate continues to change, with no breaks in service delivery.

## A need for leadership

Addressing challenges of this scale should not be under-estimated and will require radical transformation in how we work and live. The response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has shown us that as a society we can swiftly adapt to an unexpected situation. We found ourselves adopting unexpected new behaviours and ways of working. This resilience and adaptability are great strengths. Climate Change is not unexpected, and our response, whilst remaining urgent, should be measured to enable longer term benefits/planning, while still demonstrating the strengths we know we have.

Like others, we don't know all the answers, and this strategy will evolve as we learn. But much of the knowledge and solutions are already available – we need the will, the courage and the leadership to implement them.

We need to be clear about what we can do, guide our officers and Members in delivering the long lasting and radical change needed, and identify how we enable our communities to secure long term wide-ranging benefits. That is the purpose of this far-reaching Strategy: arguably the most important strategy we have ever written.

The County Council recognises we have a critical and unique leadership role in responding to these opportunities.

## Our opportunities

As a County Council, our direct role and responsibilities mean that we have **three opportunities to act to deliver our vision**:

**1. We can take the lead by making positive changes to our own assets, operations and contracts**

We are clear we want to show **leadership** by ‘getting our own house in order’ and show what is possible to change and achieve ourselves. We will know we’re doing the things expected of us, can celebrate our successes and similarly challenge others.

However, while that will seem very challenging for our organisation, the reality is that our own activity is only a small part of the impact of the wider County activity. The really significant opportunities lie in what we can **enable**, and we have a unique ability to do this across the County.

**2. We can enable our communities, suppliers and partnerships to live and work in different ways by making decisions, setting policies and strategies and spending our budgets in ways that create and unlock opportunities for all of us.**

The County Council has an unparalleled opportunity to enable West Sussex communities to live and work differently. This will challenge us as an organisation, to be radical and in some cases fundamentally transform our thinking, creating policies and making use of resources with climate change in mind, as well as delivering and procuring services differently.

To achieve our vision, our contribution as a County Council alone is not nearly enough. Everyone we work with, and for, needs to take action to respond to climate change. Some are already there. Others are interested but aren’t sure what they need to do. While another group aren’t yet aware of what they should do or the benefits they may see. Therefore, we will:

**3. Use our influence to engage with others to make changes beyond what we control.**

We want everyone in our communities to have the opportunity to move to, and benefit from, a low carbon and adapted way of living. The opportunities extend beyond the reach of the County Councils operation and remit, and we want to work as effectively as we can to influence as best we can.

We recognise there will be others who are better placed to lead and guide people to doing things very differently. We also recognise that it is easy to focus on the ‘sustainability and environmental’ groups, but by exploring wider partnerships there is potential to reach different audiences and have a wider impact.

Our immediate priorities will be in leading and enabling, but we will work with communities to understand how we can best contribute and influence their choices, to secure the significant changes we all need to see.

## County Council Commitments

We have identified five key commitments which we will apply across all areas of our business when planning, delivering our services and operations

### We will mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing carbon emissions

- a. We will be a net carbon zero organisation by 2030
  - i. We will reduce the County Council's overall energy consumption
  - ii. We will reduce the County Council's demand for fossil fuel-based energy
  - iii. We will contribute to a greener grid
- b. We will reduce the carbon associated with road-based transport
  - i. We will use technological solutions to avoid the need for travel
  - ii. We will prioritise sustainable transport options
  - iii. We will reduce the impact of any remaining road travel.
- c. We will increase the amount of renewable energy used and generated in West Sussex.

### We will adapt and be resilient to a changing climate

- a. We will be an adapted and resilient organisation.
- b. We will plan for the financial impacts of climate change
  - i. We will prioritise solutions to adapt and protect where most needed, to reduce the risks for the most vulnerable in our communities.
- c. We will adapt and build resilience to extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and flood
- d. We will explore and bring forward natural capital solutions to address the impacts of climate change.
  - i. We will take positive action to sequester carbon in the natural environment.
  - ii. We will prioritise natural flood solutions to protect people and property.
  - iii. We will increase access to nature.
- e. We will increase opportunities to achieve biodiversity net gain

### We will source and use resources sustainably

One impact of climate change is to make resources harder to come by. Further, there is a hidden carbon cost in everything we do. We need to use our limited natural resources wisely and demanding less from the environment.

- a. We will use resources efficiently and economically
- b. We will take a whole-life approach to our product selection and purchasing.
- c. We will procure and source our resources responsibly.

## We will support and grow our local green economy

A vibrant and strong green economy will be essential to help transition to a lower carbon economy.

- a. We will promote green tourism
- b. We will take advantage of natural capital investment funding when available
- c. We will encourage sustainable businesses
  - i. We will enable sustainable business growth
  - ii. We will support green innovation amongst business
- d. We will enable green skills development

## We will transform how we work

Achieving our ambitious vision and delivering on our commitments requires us to radically transform how we deliver our services, and influence the lives of, communities across the County. We need to reimagine how we manage our assets, design and procure our services and how our staff carry out their work. We need to make sure that our staff have the knowledge and skills they need to deliver this, but we also need to hold ourselves and others to account along the way. We need to recognise the power of others and of working together to extend beyond our own operation and remit. Therefore

- a. We will equip our staff with the skills, tools and support to deliver our commitments through every aspect of their work
- b. We will create a culture of shared responsibility and ownership across our organisation
- c. We will ensure all our decision-making processes visibly take into consideration our ambitious County Council commitments on tackling climate change.
- d. We will lobby for change in national policy where our current statutory obligations do not allow us to match our ambition.
- e. We will challenge and support others to follow our example
- f. We will work in partnership to find innovative solutions and collaborative ways of working to tackle climate change.

By placing these agreed ways of working at the heart of our organisation, we will be well placed to deliver on our ambitious commitments.

The commitments are carefully worded and unambiguous, to ensure that they are relevant and applicable across our entire organisation.

## Governance

Establishing a robust governance framework to ensure the delivery of this ambitious work is critical.

To move to a position where this work is fully integrated in all aspects of our work, and considered business as usual, requires ownership and commitment across the whole organisation and particularly at the most senior level. Recognising this, we will establish a Climate Change Board, chaired by the Executive Director for Place. Its role will be to:

- establish the initial work programme needed
- identify and secure resources,
- oversee delivery against the commitments set out in this strategy,
- hold the organisation to account,
- and ensure progress is being made at the pace we want and need,

This will ensure delivery is embedded across the organisation. A critical challenge for the Board will be to meet the ambitious mandate set by Members while acknowledging what officers are able to progress with current resources.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment has Climate Change in her Portfolio. The established Climate Change Advisory Group will continue to report to the Cabinet Member for the Environment, and act as a critical friend of the County Council in steering the direction of the delivery of the Strategy and reviewing progress.

## Funding

We recognise that resourcing the commitments in the strategy, through specific programmes and projects to be identified in the associated Action Plan, will require significant funding beyond what we may currently have available to us. We will look to integrate full lifecycle environmental costs into our business planning and decision-making processes to fully understand the immediate and the longer-term costs of our choices. While choosing to do things differently, and early enough, may prove beneficial, additional funding will still need to be sought. Funding will need to come from a range of different sources, and there are a number of new finance models for us to explore, for example, Green Bonds and community Public Bonds.

Any financial implications must be considered in the light of the ongoing difficult financial circumstances facing this and all councils, exacerbated by the impact of covid-19 on the Council's budget and the wider economy.

## Measuring and reporting progress

It is important to track and measure whether we are meeting our Commitments in order to deliver our Vision. We need to know whether what we are doing is having an impact on reducing our carbon and adapting to climate change. We would further like to know whether the actions we are taking are having a wider impact on our services and the communities we serve. We will track whether the action we have taken and the investment we have made has made the crucial difference we, and others, want.

We have identified specific actions to help us deliver the Commitments, and these are in a separate Delivery Plan. For each action there will be a named Senior Officer who is responsible for ensuring progress is made on delivering that action. As the Delivery Plan progresses, we will propose specific

targets. Where it is more difficult to identify a specific target, or it is not easily quantified, a measure of progress will be used instead, or a qualitative statement applied.

We will publish a summary of progress annually.

We will identify the most appropriate ways to share progress with our communities.

## Appendix 1: Current National Policy Environment

- **The Carbon Plan 2011** identifies the emission reductions needed in five key areas of the economy; buildings; transport; industry; electricity; and agriculture to meet targets.
- **The Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA)** The UK Government is required under the 2008 Climate Change Act to publish a CCRA every five years (the next one is due in 2022). The Act stipulates that the Government must assess 'the risks for the United Kingdom from the current and predicted impacts of climate change'.
- **The Clean Growth Strategy 2017** outlines the plan to grow the national income while cutting greenhouse emissions.
- **The 25 Year Environment Plan** published in 2018, sets comprehensive goals and targets to improve the UK's air and water quality and protect threatened plants, trees and wildlife species.
- **The Resource and Waste Strategy 2018** outlines the actions the UK will take to minimise waste, promote resource efficiency and move towards a circular economy.
- **The Clean Air Strategy 2019** demonstrates how the national government will tackle all sources of air pollution and boost the economy.

## Appendix 2: Glossary

### **Climate change mitigation**

Mitigation refers to efforts to reduce or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases - limiting the magnitude of future climate change.

It may also encompass attempts to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

(Mitigation can encompass a range of actions and will require us to use new technologies, clean energy sources, change people's behaviour, or make older technology more energy efficient.)

### **Climate change adaptation**

Adaptation refers to the to the actions taken to manage the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

### **Climate change resilience**

Resilience refers to the ability to the state of, a community for example, to cope and recover from the impacts of climate change.

### **Carbon neutral**

Carbon neutral refers to a position where all possible carbon emissions have been removed or avoided, and any remaining carbon emissions are being either captured, or removed safely from the

atmosphere, known as carbon offsetting.

### **Natural capital**

Natural capital can be described as the way elements of nature; e.g. woodlands, rivers, soils and seas, offer value to people, society and the economy in various ways. The stocks of natural capital (referred to as natural capital assets) include all ecosystems on land and at sea.

### **Carbon sequestration**

Carbon sequestration is the removal and storage of carbon from the atmosphere.

## [Appendix 3: Supporting Council policies and strategies](#)

This strategy does not duplicate existing Council commitments. All elements of our work have the potential to be impacted by, and contribute to, a changing climate. Some have more opportunity than others to make a significant contribution to the changes we seek, or to incorporate the commitments into a revised version, and are included here for reference. (This is not an exhaustive list).

- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- IT Strategy
- People Strategy
- Energy Strategy
- Electric Vehicle Strategy
- Breathing Better Strategy
- What If? Programme
- Walking and Cycling Strategy
- Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Integrated Risk Management Plan
- Land Management Plans
- Asset Strategy
- Procurement Strategy and Social Values Framework
- Pollination Action Plan
- West Sussex Building Design Guides
- Bus Strategy
- Sussex Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Investment Strategy (this is not a WSCC strategy but one that we have endorsed through our membership of the LNP)