**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q. What is climate change?**

**A.** The Earth's average temperature is about 15 degrees Celsius, and while there are natural fluctuations in the climate, scientific evidence shows that temperatures are now rising faster than at many other times. This is linked to greenhouse gases being emitted into the atmosphere, trapping more energy and increasing the temperature. [This video](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-24021772) is a very helpful explanation.

**Q. Why is it important to take action against climate change?**

**A.** Climate change matters. Our planet's climate is a complex system of land, sea, ice, wind and rain, and the Earth is warming at a faster rate than ever before, throwing this system out of balance.

In the south east of England, we expect climate change to lead to hotter, drier summers, warmer, wetter winters, higher sea levels and an increase in extreme events, such as heat-waves, droughts and flooding.

The effects of climate change will be wide and far reaching. There is likely to be water shortages at times and an increased risk of flooding from urban drainage overload, rivers and streams, and in coastal areas. Trees, plants and wildlife will also suffer from the effects of climate change, as their habitats change and weather patterns affect seasonal activities and food sources.

**Q. What is a greenhouse gas and what do you mean by carbon reduction?**

**A.** A greenhouse gas traps heat, preventing it from leaving the Earth’s atmosphere and passing into space. This has led to global warming, which in turn causes other aspects of the climate to change.

Carbon dioxide is the most common greenhouse gas, but there are others. Although these are emitted in much smaller quantities, they are more powerful than carbon dioxide so we must still account for them.

To stop climate change getting worse, we need to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases that we put into the atmosphere. So, organisations and governments set greenhouse gas reduction targets and estimate the amount of greenhouse gases produced by an activity. This is sometimes called a ‘footprint’.

As carbon dioxide is the main greenhouse gas, sometimes the word ‘carbon’ is used instead of greenhouse gas e.g. ‘carbon reduction target’ and ‘carbon footprint’. However, the numerical data in the Climate Emergency Action Plan sets out a deliberate distinction between carbon dioxide emissions and greenhouse gas emissions. Sometimes the figures given just cover carbon dioxide or CO2; sometimes they cover carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, in which case you will see a little ‘e’ at the end, for example: CO2e.

**Q: What is a Climate Emergency Detailed Action Plan?

A.** This plan is about climate change mitigation, which means reducing climate change by cutting greenhouse gas emissions. It outlines out how the council will reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions and sets out ways in which we can involve individuals and organisations of every kind to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the district. The plan does not cover climate change adaptation, which is about learning to live with the effects of climate change, for example adapting homes to cope with flooding.

**Q. Why has the council produced this plan?**

We know that climate change is something our residents, workers and visitors are very passionate about, and we are too. In our role as a district council, we are committed to taking whatever steps we reasonably can to address climate change within the work that we do, and to help others — from individuals to large organisations — to do their bit too.

**Q. How long does the plan last?**

**A.** The plan contains two targets for 2025. The short timescale means that actions cannot be put off. However, the plan needs to look beyond 2025 and how the district will contribute to meeting the government’s national target of the UK being net zero by 2050.

Net zero means that any emissions of greenhouse gases are balanced by schemes to remove an equivalent amount of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, such as planting trees or using technology like carbon capture and storage, which locks carbon dioxide away so it does not reach the atmosphere. You can read about the government’s net zero target [here.](https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/netzeroandthedifferentofficialmeasuresoftheuksgreenhousegasemissions/2019-07-24)