

Climate Emergency Motion: Explanatory Note

There are various terms used in respect of action to reduce the impact of climate change where some additional explanation might help.

Carbon Neutral/ Carbon Offsetting

Two commonly used terms are **Carbon Neutral** and **Carbon Offsetting**.

Carbon refers to Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), the main greenhouse gas, emitted by combustion in heating, power generation, vehicle engines and industrial processes. Both terms are based on the idea of calculating how much CO₂ is emitted by any particular activity and using that as a measure to calculate how much CO₂ we are responsible for. Once we have established that, our goal would be to remove as much CO₂ as we produce.

An organisation, business or individual is described as **carbon neutral** when it has taken action to remove as much carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as it put into it.

To reach this **carbon neutral** state, we can undertake to

- change how we operate so that we no longer produce the CO₂
- establish a means of removing an equivalent amount of CO₂
- seek to “offset” what we produce by funding an activity that removes an equal amount of CO₂ elsewhere (Carbon Offset)

or some combination of all three.

The final status of adding no extra CO₂ to the atmosphere through our actions is also referred to as having a **net Zero Carbon footprint**.

The overall goal of carbon neutrality is to achieve a net zero carbon footprint.

What are we aiming for in Waverley?

Our aim is to be carbon neutral by 2030. We will seek to achieve this by two main mechanisms:

- reducing the amount of carbon emissions as much as possible both directly through, for example, by stopping the burning of fossil fuels, eg through gas boilers and indirectly (by reducing the products we buy whose production results in significant carbon emissions);
- removing as much carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as we put into it.

The Action Plan

The Action Plan will comprise targets that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed).

The majority of the actions will include the following headings:

- Transport
- Buildings
- Waste, Re-use and Recycling
- Energy
- Procurement
- Influence
- Green Spaces
- Planning Policy

The first priority is to **reduce** carbon emissions. Where some carbon emissions are absolutely unavoidable, Waverley should assume direct responsibility for removing the quantity of carbon from the atmosphere as we have put into it. Carbon offsetting should be seen as a last resort as this represents an attempt to mitigate the carbon footprint for which the council is responsible by relying on others to improve their carbon footprint and is often unreliable.