

Decision Report:

Committee: Executive

Meeting Date: 1 April 2026

Key Decision: Yes



Somerset Council Carbon Baseline 2023/24

Chair of Committee: Councillor Bill Revans, Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Governance and Communications

Executive Member: Councillor Graham Oakes, Lead Member for Public Health, Environment and Climate Change

Local Members and Divisions affected: All Members

Executive Director: Chris Hall, Executive Director for Community, Place and Economy

Executive Summary

The five former Somerset Councils all declared Climate Emergencies in 2019 and collaborated to develop and adopt a Somerset Climate Strategy in 2020 which set an ambition for the Council(s) to decarbonise to become carbon neutral by 2030.

The Somerset Carbon Baseline report is presented to Executive for information and to report the tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) produced in the operation of all Council assets or created in the delivery of Somerset Council services in the vesting year 2023/24.

The total amount of carbon equates to **230,928 tCO₂e** between April 2023 and March 2024 across scopes 1,2 & 3 as shown in section 5 of this report.

This first Carbon Baseline for Somerset Council faced data challenges due to historic, inconsistent records from the former five councils and the loss of many original data owners. We are now establishing clear carbon reporting protocols, identifying data owners, and developing an improved system to ensure accurate and transparent emissions monitoring. Moving forwards, we will produce an annual carbon emissions report to track progress.

Recommendations

The Executive Committee is asked to **recognise and adopt** the Somerset Council Carbon Baseline 2023/24, and consider the recommendations proposed by Scrutiny.

Recommendations from Scrutiny

The Somerset Council Carbon Baseline was presented to the Scrutiny Committee - Climate & Place on the 23rd of October 2025. The report was well received by the Scrutiny Members who recognised the amount of work undertaken to generate the

Carbon Baseline but also requested that the quality and accuracy of data within the baseline be improved for ongoing reporting.

The Scrutiny Committee - Climate & Place recommend that the Executive agrees the following actions:

- That Somerset Council revise its 2030 carbon neutrality target, acknowledging that the timeline is no longer realistic given current progress and resource constraints.
- To note that the Climate Team will report to Scrutiny Committee in 12 months' time with a more refined and updated carbon emissions figure.

Reasons for Proposals

The reason for this proposal is that the newly established Carbon Baseline has highlighted the scale of our carbon footprint, and therefore, the magnitude and complexity of work required to reduce it.

With only four years remaining, meeting the 2030 carbon neutrality target will present a substantial challenge and will require considerable investment and resources.

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Main Report and Supporting Information

Background and Purpose of Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In 2019, Somerset County Council together with the four District Councils (Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West & Taunton, and South Somerset) all declared Climate Emergencies (Appendix 1) and agreed to collaborate in the development of a shared Climate Emergency Strategy which was published in November 2020. The strategy sets out the ambition to tackle the Climate Emergency and sets 3 key goals;
 - Goal 1: To decarbonise the Local Authority and wider public sector estates and reduce our carbon footprint.
 - Goal 2: To work towards making Somerset a carbon neutral County by 2030.
 - Goal 3: To have a Somerset which is prepared for, and resilient to, the impacts of Climate Change.
- 1.2. Following local government reorganisation, these councils merged to form a single Unitary Authority in April 2023. The Climate Strategy goals and ambitions transferred across to the new Somerset Council. Additionally, Somerset Council renewed its membership of the UK100, which recognises our responsibility to tackle the Climate Emergency, encourages us to take bold action towards Net Zero and sets a requirement for its members to calculate and report on carbon emissions annually.

2. Background

- 2.1. To achieve carbon targets, it is necessary to measure and monitor carbon emissions. This Carbon Baseline is a greenhouse inventory for the 2023/24 financial year, the vesting year of Somerset Council, and follows the Greenhouse Gas Protocol methodology, which is an internationally recognised standard. It has been prepared and validated in collaboration with Somerset Council's Climate Team and WSP, our professional services consultancy partner.
- 2.2. The former Somerset Councils have been monitoring Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions for many years and have implemented actions such as retrofitting and decarbonising buildings, installing solar PV Renewable Energy systems and transitioning Council fleets to electric vehicles.
- 2.3. The reorganisation into a Unitary Authority necessitated the establishment of a new carbon inventory that accurately reflects the new operational structure. The report quantifies Somerset Council's GHG emissions for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, providing a baseline for future emission reduction targets.

3. Context

- 3.1. Carbon emissions are broken down into scopes, categorising activities based on the type and level of control the organisation has over them. This Carbon Baseline includes emissions from all three scopes:
 - Scope 1: Direct emissions arising from sources that are owned or controlled by Somerset Council.
 - Scope 2: Indirect emissions arising from the consumption of grid supplied electricity by Somerset Council.
 - Scope 3: All other indirect emission sources that occur in Somerset Council's value chain, both upstream and downstream. Scope 3 is broken down into 15 unique categories (as defined within the Greenhouse Gas Protocol).
- 3.2. Greenhouse gas emissions are calculated and reported in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e), which accounts for the global warming potentials of individual greenhouse gases and combines them into a singular unit for ease of comparison.
- 3.3. Using the descriptions shown in Table 1 (Appendix 2), a scoping exercise determined which GHG Protocol emission categories were relevant to Somerset Council's operations. This allowed emission categories to be scoped 'in' or 'out' depending on their material impact and the availability of data. **Figure 1** provides an overview of the emission sources included and excluded from this assessment.

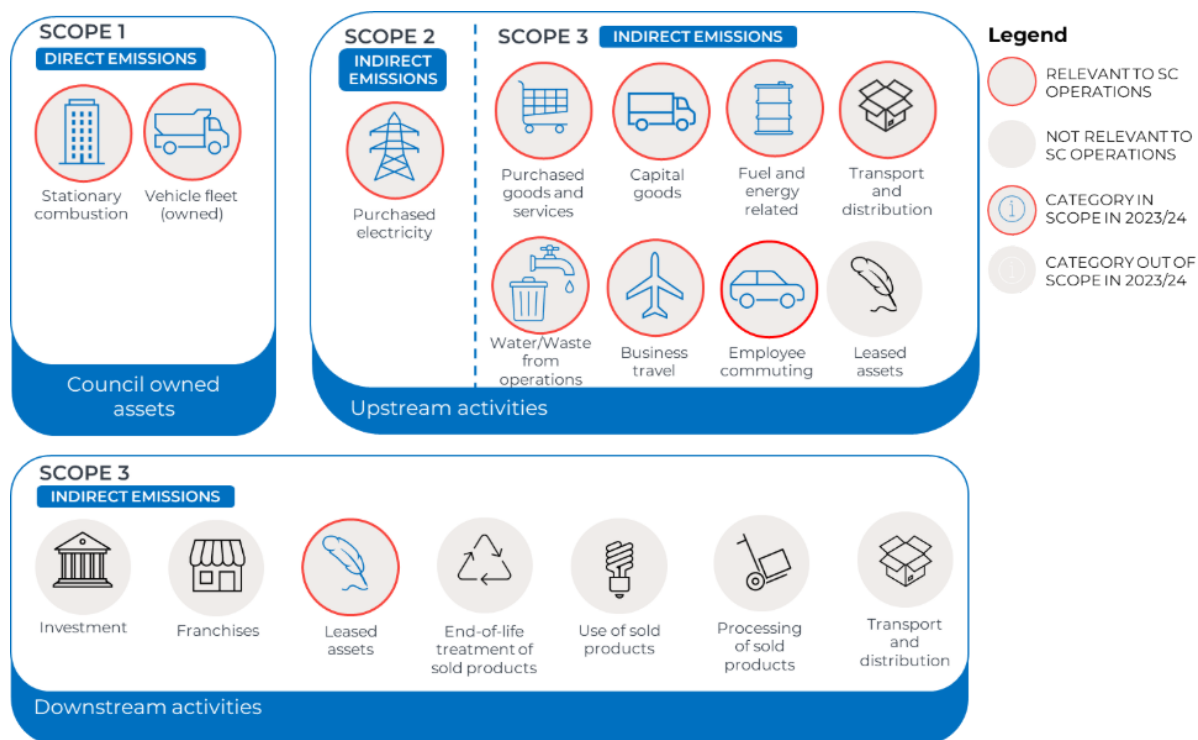


Figure 1: Somerset Council's Carbon Inventory Emissions Boundary.
Source: WSP Modified from GHG Protocol Corporate Standard

4. Data Quality and Availability

- 4.1. The quality and availability of the data needed to capture and record the Somerset Council Baseline created significant challenges. It took several months to identify and extract the relevant data from various service areas, which was further complicated by many of the data owners having left the organisation since vesting day, and the ongoing local government reorganisation.
- 4.2. The data was often in multiple formats and had to be collated from five different sources as many systems had not merged from the former councils. Some sources of activity data were readily available and of high quality for Somerset Council, others need significant improvement.
- 4.3. Where gaps in data occurred, we have looked to use previous years data, averaged data or proxy data from recognised sources to enable a total to be calculated for the baseline reporting period.
- 4.4. Improving data quality is a key recommendation in the report and an area of continuous improvement for the Council.

5. Somerset Council Carbon Baseline

5.1. The Carbon Baseline for Somerset Council divided by scope is presented in **Table 2**. The total carbon emissions created through the operation and delivery of council services for the financial year of April 2023 to March 2024 equals 230,928 tCO₂e. This follows the location-based approach to emissions calculations.

Table 2: Somerset Council's Carbon Baseline 2023/2024 Emissions Summary

Scope	Emission Source	Total Emissions (tCO ₂ e)	Percentage of total (%) *
1	Stationary Combustion	2,771	1%
	Vehicle Fleet	1,995	1%
2	Electricity Consumption (Location-Based)	4,794	2%
	Electric Vehicle Fleet	5	0%
Scope 1 & 2 Total		9,565	4%
3	Purchased Goods & Services	161,933	70%
	Capital Goods	28,639	12%
	Fuel & Energy-Related Activities	2,517	1%
	Water Consumption	28	0%
	Waste Generation	264	0%
	Business Travel	1,090	1%
	Employee Commuting & Home Working	3,382	2%
	Downstream Leased Assets	23,510	10%
Scope 3 Total		221,363	96%
Total Gross Emissions		230,928	100%

*All percentages within this table have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

6. Benchmarking with Other Councils

- 6.1. To provide context for the results of Somerset Council's emissions inventory, a benchmarking exercise has been undertaken. This activity involved a review of publicly available information published by:
 - Dorset Council
 - Wiltshire Council
 - Cornwall Council
- 6.2. The analysis has determined that there is significant variation in the reported emission boundaries between the Councils. Somerset's boundary is wider than that of the others, being the only Council to report emissions associated with Purchased Goods & Services (Scope 3 Category 1), Capital Goods (Scope 3 Category 2) and social housing (Scope 3 Category 11). This is a significant contributing factor to Somerset Council's higher reported emissions.
- 6.3. Comparison remains challenging due to the varying sizes of the Councils and the scale of their operations (for example the size of their vehicle fleets). In all cases the comparison was made with the most recently published datasets.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1. Following the publication of the Council Carbon Baseline, we will now look to complete and publish the Council's carbon footprint annually from 2025/26 onwards to track our progress toward carbon neutrality and highlight the success of any carbon reduction activities across the Council's estate and operations.
- 7.2. We are developing carbon data reporting protocols, are in the process of identifying all data owners across the council and are creating a data capture and reporting system and dashboard to improve the accuracy, repeatability, and transparency of the Carbon Baseline going forward.
- 7.3. Once the annual carbon monitoring system is embedded and producing consistent, reliable data, we will begin analysing the data to identify opportunities for carbon reduction. This will include assessing where the greatest impacts can be achieved, prioritising early 'quick win' interventions that offer meaningful emission reductions with lower cost or operational disruption, and building a pathway toward larger, longer-term decarbonisation measures.
- 7.4. We have included these actions within the Climate Team's work plan and will continue to work across all service areas within the Council to reduce the carbon intensity of our assets and service delivery.

- 7.5. Somerset Council will also continue to work with WSP to ensure appropriate methodologies are followed and to verify the robustness of the reported carbon footprint.

8. Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

- 8.1. The tracking of our carbon emissions links directly to a key priority of the Council Plan: *a greener, more sustainable future* which sets out the ambition to decarbonise the activities of the Council as rapidly as possible and support Somerset in becoming a carbon neutral county. Cutting carbon can also contribute to reducing financial costs for electricity, gas and other fossil fuels used to heat and light our buildings and power our vehicle fleet.
- 8.2. The tracking of our carbon footprint will also help inform where actions can be targeted to help meet our Climate Emergency commitments.
- 8.3. There is no impact on the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Any large scale actions to cut the carbon footprint of the organisation will require detailed business cases as these will be developed once we begin to more thoroughly analyse the carbon data.

9. Other options considered

- 9.1. No other options were considered as this is the recognised methodology for reporting carbon baselines.

Key Considerations for the Council

10. Key Considerations for the Council and Recommendations from Scrutiny:

- 10.1. The Somerset Council Carbon Baseline was presented to the Scrutiny Committee - Climate & Place on the 23rd of October 2025. The report was well received by the Scrutiny Members who commented on the amount of work undertaken to generate the Carbon Baseline but also requested that the quality and accuracy of data within the baseline be improved for ongoing reporting.
- 10.2. The Scrutiny Committee – Climate and Place formally proposed the following actions:
 - 10.2.1. first, that Somerset Council revise its 2030 carbon neutrality target, acknowledging that the timeline is no longer realistic given current progress and resource constraints,
 - 10.2.2. and second, to note that the Climate Team will report to Scrutiny Committee in 12 months' time with a more refined and updated carbon emissions figure.

11. Consultation and Feedback

- 11.1. This is the first time a carbon footprint has been calculated for Somerset Council. This will now form the baseline from which we can track progress towards our 2030 target. No consultation or engagement was needed to produce the data included within this report. However, the Climate Team have worked with various service areas across the Council to collect the baseline data.

12. Risk Implications

- 12.1. There are no direct risk implications from the Somerset Council Carbon Baseline report however within Ideagen there is a corporate risk ORG005/005 which relates to the delivery of the Climate Emergency Strategy outcomes by 2030.

13. Financial Implications

- 13.1. There are no direct financial implications from developing the Carbon Baseline as the report costs have been covered within existing revenue budget. Any future requests for funding associated with carbon reduction actions and activities will be subject to individual business cases that will be brought forward for approval.

14. Legal Implications

- 14.1. There are no direct legal implications from the development of this Carbon Baseline Report. Any future carbon reduction actions or activities will follow Somerset Council due processes to ensure compliance with legal processes and procedures.

15. Procurement Implications

- 15.1. There are no direct procurement implications from the development of this Carbon Baseline Report. Any future carbon reduction actions or activities will follow Somerset Council due processes to ensure compliance with procurement processes and procedures.

16. HR / Workforce Implications

- 16.1. There are no expected HR implications from the completion of this Carbon Baseline as it is a report on the emissions created by the Council operations and assets. As we look to reduce our carbon emissions in future, then we would consult with HR on any policies which would have implications for Council staff.

17. Equalities Implications

- 17.1. There are no direct equalities implications from the Somerset Council Carbon Baseline. This is a high-level strategic document which calculates the carbon footprint of the organisation across scopes 1, 2, & 3.

17.2. Any actions and activities taken to reduce the Council's carbon emissions will require funding via appropriate business cases and internal sign off and governance along with the engagement and support of multiple stakeholders from services across the authority. It is at that point when we would consult regarding any implications upon the protected groups.

18. Community Safety Implications

18.1. There are no community safety implications or public's perception of crime and disorder or anti-social behaviour rates across Somerset from the production of or monitoring of the Carbon Baseline.

19. Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

19.1. This Carbon Baseline for Somerset Council will provide the data from which we can track and measure progress towards our 2030 carbon neutrality target. It will also help identify where Council emissions are arising and help focus actions and activities to help cut the amount of carbon created by the Council's estate and operations.

20. Health and Safety Implications

20.1. There are no health & safety implications to Council staff or the wider community from bringing this Carbon Baseline report to this committee, as this is providing the carbon baseline data for Somerset Council only.

21. Health and Wellbeing Implications

21.1. There are no health & wellbeing implications to Council staff or the wider community from bringing this Carbon Baseline report to this committee as this is providing the carbon baseline data for Somerset Council only.

22. Social Value

22.1. There are no social value considerations to consider in bringing this Carbon Baseline report to this committee as this is providing the carbon baseline data for Somerset Council only.

23. Background Papers

23.1. The following documents form the background papers for this report to Executive:

23.1.1. The Public Somerset Carbon Baseline Report (attached)

23.1.2. Scrutiny Committee - Climate & Place Minutes: Thursday 23rd October 2025 [Agenda item - Somerset Council Carbon Baseline Report - Modern Council](#)




- 23.1.3. [The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy 2020 Towards a Climate Resilient Somerset - Somerset's Climate Emergency Strategy](#)
- 23.1.4. [Somerset Council UK100 Countryside Climate Network declaration UK100 | Countryside Climate Network | UK100](#)

Report assurance

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Governance Implications	Scott Wooldridge	19/02/2026
Legal Implications	Catriona Herbert	18/03/2026
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	17/02/2026
Workforce (*)	Dawn Bettridge	N/A
Asset Management (*)	John Kulasek	17/02/2026
Equalities and Diversity Manager	Tom Rutland	09/03/2026
Service Director	Paul Hickson	09/03/2026
Executive Director	Chris Hall	09/03/2026
Executive Lead Member	Cllr Graham Oakes	27/02/2026
Consulted:	Councillor Name	N/A
Opposition Spokesperson(s)	Cllr Mark Healey	02/03/2026
Relevant Scrutiny Chair(s)	Cllr Martin Dimery	06/02/2026

Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer or www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment

Organisation prepared for (mark as appropriate)	 Somerset Council		 NHS Somerset		 NHS Somerset NHS Foundation Trust
Version	1	Date Completed	09/03/2026		
Description of what is being impact assessed					
Somerset Council Carbon Baseline 2023/24					
Evidence					
<p>What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the Office of National Statistics, Somerset Intelligence Partnership, Somerset’s Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA), Staff and/ or area profiles,, should be detailed here</p>					
Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups and what have they told you? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?					
The Somerset Council Carbon Baseline is a high-level strategic document which calculates the Carbon Footprint of the organisation across scopes 1, 2, & 3. Any actions and activities taken to reduce the councils carbon emissions will require funding					

via appropriate business cases and internal sign off and governance along with the engagement and support of multiple stakeholders from Services across the authority. It is at that point when we would consult regarding any implications upon the protected groups. The action plan and any projects that arise from it will need to recognise these key issues that:

- When considering physical works, the Council is mindful of its proactive duties to reduce the potential impacts this will have on accessibility and disabled people (i.e. if building works are required this does not have a negative impact on disabled people being able to travel around whilst the work is happening or after this)
- We make a commitment to ensure that due regard considerations inform the action plan and any work that comes from this.

Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	☐	☒	☐
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	☐	☒	☐

Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families and veterans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
N/A	Select date	N/A	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>

If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

N/A

Completed by:

Mark Fortune

Date	09/03/2026
Signed off by:	
Date	
Equality Lead sign off name:	
Equality Lead sign off date:	
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	
Review date:	