

Local authority sustainability benchmark 2021: Summary for Warwickshire County Council



This document summarises the progress Warwickshire County Council is making on sustainability based on the results of the 2021 West Midlands' local authority [sustainability benchmarking exercise](#).

1.1 Warwickshire County Council score and rank

This table shows how the council scores against each Roadmap theme, and how it compares to the scores of the other local authorities that took part in the benchmarking exercise.

Little or no progress	Some progress	Good progress	Excellent progress/best practice
<17%	17 – 49%	50 – 83%	>83%



Rank	Roadmap symbol	% Score	Is your score above or below the average of all 21 local authorities?	Your rank against all 21 local authorities
1=		83.3	↑33.3	2=
		83.3	↑36.5	1
3		77.8	↑21.8	5
4=		72.2	↑23.0	5
		72.2	↑19.3	5
6		66.7	↑18.3	5=
7		42.9	↓1.3	11=
8	Various	42.4	↓1.9	13
9		40.0	↓0.3	11
10		38.1	↑5.0	6=
	Average score	61.9	↑15.4	7

'Various' refers to a question in the benchmark that covers multiple or all Roadmap themes; this could be a question on governance and communications, for example.

1.2 Demonstrating leadership and good practice



Based on the results of the benchmark, the council is already showing leadership and good practice via the implementation of the following example activities:

Clear path towards achieving Net Zero by 2030 (own estate) and 2050 (county-wide) using local partnerships carbon accounting tool.	The concept of Biodiversity Net Gain is within all Warwickshire planning strategies and is embedded into the Warwickshire Council Plan.
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	<p>The council so far funded 69 projects worth £625k as part of its Green Shoots Community Climate Change Fund, the largest of its kind in the UK. Projects funded have focused on energy, transport, health and behaviours.</p>		<p>Significant progress made on energy efficiency improvements, e.g. 86% of street lights are now LED. The council has also invested heavily in solar PV, heat pumps and battery storage technologies.</p>
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1.3 Emerging and exciting areas of promise

The benchmarking exercise also picks up some potentially very exciting activity to come soon:

	<p>Building on the rollout of electric vehicles, a review and implementation of pilot opportunities for alternative fuels such as hydrotreated vegetable oil and hydrogen is to take place in the coming years.</p>		<p>A delivery plan and outcomes framework is being developed that will allow for the monitoring of indicators around inequalities in health; this is due to be published in January 2022.</p>
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1.4 Areas and ideas for improvement

Based on the areas where the council has scored '0' in the benchmark assessment, the following analysis looks at what the authority could do to kick-start action against each area.

Metric against which the council score '0'	Potential actions to improve this metric
<p>Has your local authority calculated a carbon budget (amount of carbon emissions left to 'spend' between baseline and target date) that is in line with your carbon target?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligning the overarching Net Zero targets, especially the county-wide 2050 target, to carbon budgeting will help the council to set more short-term targets rather than just planning for the final date of the target, and will help to break the required interventions down in stages. This should be reflected in any forthcoming plan. This could help to embed low carbon thinking across all council teams, as shorter term targets are often easier to envisage.
<p>Has your local authority implemented targets to strengthen the low carbon and environmental goods and services sector in the local area?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult the 2021 Low Carbon Goods and Services study for the region which will outline the area's local strengths in the sector, to establish what targets could be realistically set. Work with the Coventry & Warwickshire Green Business Network and the LEP to help establish this.
<p>Has your local authority built on existing local laws, regulations and policies, or implemented new ones, that help to accelerate the delivery of sustainability outcomes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the key policies and regulations that the council or WMCA has enforced that may be able to be accelerate sustainability activity. Consider building in mandatory sustainability related targets that are embedded into existing council laws and regulations.
<p>Does your local authority have sustainability champions allocated across a variety of delivery teams to support the implementation of sustainability outcomes across the organisation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put out a call for participation to council employees in internal communications (e-bulletins etc.) asking for sustainability champions from a cross-section of the authority who are responsible for encouraging others in their team to make more sustainable choices. You could look for a champion in all key departments, or look for one champion per Roadmap theme. Champions

	should then get together on a quarterly basis to discuss the impact their influence has had.
Does your local authority provide training to staff about climate change and sustainability issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run training for all council officers and members, providing the key activities they can do to actively contribute to the council's Net Zero targets (SWM delivered something similar for City of Wolverhampton Council recently) to embed sustainable thinking across the authority. This could also include carbon literacy, as cited in the benchmark return.
Does your local authority work with independent, cross-sector organisations to help shape climate change policy and activity e.g. via a Climate Change Commission?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is currently being investigated with SWM via the possible 2022 launch of a Public Sector Decarbonisation Group.
Has your local authority mapped out the roles and responsibilities of external partners to help achieve sustainability and carbon reduction objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the above, build on existing working relationships with organisations such as the University and WMCA to identify collaboratively what roles and responsibilities each organisation has to helping the city achieve its Net Zero and other sustainability objectives.
Does your local authority have a sustainable procurement policy in place, including targets and tangible actions around sustainable and ethical sourcing of products and services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the council's procurement team to ensure the council makes efforts to source goods and services from ethical and local companies. This could include always using local companies that can demonstrate their commitments to sustainability, unless there's a good reason not to do so. This will reduce carbon directly but also strengthen the council's support to the local economy.
<p>Has the local authority implemented an adaptation action plan to ensure protection of its local people, infrastructure, economy and environment?</p> <p>Has the local authority implemented an adaptation action plan to ensure protection of its local people, infrastructure, economy and environment?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWM has just published a Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the region. This could be used by the County Council as a framework to help develop its own, more bespoke plan for both its local area and services. A climate risk assessment that sets out how the council is likely to be affected by climate change should also be undertaken so it can effectively adapt.
Has the local authority prioritised the actions included in its sustainability-related action plans in terms of cost, benefits and their ability to help meet related targets?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority actions should be those that can be done quickly, with little resource but have the greatest impact on Net Zero and other sustainability related outcomes. SWM has applied a similar prioritisation in the regional Adaptation Plan, cited above. Including actions in plans that are not realistic is unhelpful and this must be acknowledged from the outset.
Has your local authority won any awards for its sustainability activity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is clear from the ranking that Warwickshire County Council has achieved in our benchmarking exercise that it is excelling in many areas. Celebrate this success by applying for relevant awards, which will also allow you to share your activity with other authorities that may be struggling with progress.

Does the local authority encourage staff participation in sustainability/low carbon activities via implementation of behaviour change programmes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This would be a natural link with the rollout of both training, carbon literacy and through identification of champions as outlined above. A key role of the latter would be to influence others.
Has your local authority provided support or implemented actions to improve sustainability objectives in schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Via engagement with energy managers, identify which schools produce the most energy and provide support to these in the form of energy audits and advice on key areas to change. Alan (SWM) was involved in a programme when at Staffordshire County Council that did just that, and can share learning if it would be helpful. Priority actions should start simple (e.g. energy efficiency) and move to bolder actions (e.g. renewables) if they are already performing well.
Does the local authority have any incentives in place to encourage more public transport use, walking, cycling or remote working of staff?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish incentives, programmes and targets that encourage a reduction in car use and an increase in public transport usage, walking and cycling, capitalising on remote working practices adopted during Covid-19. Cycle schemes and discounts on public transport are simple way of encouraging greater use
Does your local authority signpost businesses to the West Midlands Net Zero Business Pledge?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would be hugely helpful if the council could signpost the Pledge to any businesses that it is engaging with. If the Pledge could be circulated to those departments that have frequent engagement with businesses that would also be very useful. SWM can speak to the council about the Pledge if it wishes to obtain more details and it will feature in the forthcoming business webinars that SWM hopes to support.
Has the local authority ensured that its actions related to sustainability benefit all areas of society, including more vulnerable and socially deprived residents?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the benchmark return, it looks as though work is beginning to be considered on this. The key point is that all council projects should also consider the concept of a 'just transition' which essentially means ensuring social issues are embedded into all development projects so that they factor in the needs of a range of people.

Please consult [the main benchmark report](#) for overarching recommendations, the implementation of which could be beneficial to all local authorities.

1.5 Further support

Should the council wish to discuss its progress on any of the above, or if it would like SWM to help support any of its activity on sustainability, please [get in touch](#).