

DECLARATION OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY

FULL COUNCIL BRIEFING REPORT

December 2019



1. Introduction

Climate science is clear that to a close approximation, the eventual extent of global warming is proportional to the total amount of carbon dioxide that human activities add to the atmosphere. So, in order to stabilise climate change, CO₂ emissions need to fall to zero. The longer it takes to do so, the more the climate will change. Emissions of other greenhouse gases also need to be constrained. In the Paris Agreement, governments agreed to keep global warming 'well below' 2 degrees Celsius, and to 'make efforts' to keep it below 1.5°C. However emissions across the global and locally in Plymouth are still rising and therefore a focussed and substantial programme of action is need to ensure we can stabilise climate change.

To support the urgent action needed to tackle this globally important issues at a local level a motion on notice was brought to Full Council in March 2019 highlighting the need to declare a climate emergency. The motion included 7 points of action. This paper details progress against each of the seven motion on notice points.

2. Motion on Notice – Actions Taken Summary

1. Declare a Climate Emergency.

The Climate Emergency (CE) Motion on Notice was agreed unanimously at Full Council in March 2019. All Councillors that spoke in support of the motion highlighted the importance of Plymouth reaching a net zero carbon position by 2030 supporting work that needs to be done at a national and internally level and the high level of correspondence that they received from their constituents asking them to support the Motion.

2. Pledge to make Plymouth carbon neutral by 2030, and commit to working with other councils with similar ambitions.

The unanimous support of the Climate Emergency motion secured the pledge to make Plymouth carbon neutral by 2030, two decades ahead of the National target of 2050. The commitment to work with other Council with similar ambitions has been taken forward. Since the Motion was agreed we have engaged directly with 10 other Councils and many more through existing networks including ADEPT and the Association of Local Energy Officer (ALEO). We will continue to work with other Councils to share best practice, develop new approaches and form a collective voice on this important issue.

3. Request the Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible; and commit to working with other councils with similar ambitions.

The letter was sent and a response received from Chris Skidmore MP. The letter recognised the role local authorities have to play in achieving net zero carbon and highlighting current government achievements and policy.

4. Work with other governments (both within the UK and internationally) to determine and implement best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5°C.

We have signed up to the Carbon Disclosure Project. This is a global carbon monitoring programme to help organisations and governments work together and monitor their actions

on climate change and reduction of emissions. Existing data relating to city wide emissions has been disclosed and a working group to discuss initial results has been set up.

5. Continue to work with partners across the city and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans.

We are part of the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group chaired by Devon County Council. We are also working with other organisations within Plymouth to ensure we deliver a city wide climate emergency approach. This includes the University of Plymouth, Derriford Hospital, and the University of St Mark and St John. We will be encouraging other organisations to work with as part of the city wide action plan.

6. Report to Full Council within six months with a Climate Emergency Action Plan and new Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan.

Progress on the two action plans has been reported back at each Full Council since the motion was passed.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan and new Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan will be presented at Full Council on the 16th December 2019. Further details on the two plans are in section 3 below.

7. Request the Leader to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer stating the concern of the Council with respect to the above, the likely national impact on the economy and on the wellbeing of citizens, and requesting Government funding be made available to implement swift appropriate actions in response.

Letters sent and response received from Chris Skidmore MP achieving net zero carbon and highlighting current government achievements and policy.

3. The Climate Emergency Action Plan and Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan

The Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) sets out the city wide strategic approach and response to the declaration of the climate emergency. The CEAP is a dynamic and living document that will be reviewed and updated yearly. The climate emergency requires quick and decisive action to halt the ongoing increase in emission and reverse this trend by delivering actions that reduce emissions through credible and proven methods. In the CEAP this period of activity is identified as the emergency response phase. The actions for this phase are incorporated within the document under each of the chapters.

There are two further stages identified in the journey towards net zero carbon in the CEAP. Transitional, when policies are reshaped, more significant carbon reduction projects that have a longer development period come on line and as a City we move more substantial towards zero carbon living. The transitional phase will focus on further carbon emission reductions and ensuring the policy and resources are in place to meet the 2030 net zero carbon challenge. The final phase is the acceleration phase. It is anticipated that over this period a significant shift to net zero carbon, living, working and travelling is achieved.

The CEAP will require resources to enables its successful implementation. This resource will in some cases come from changing how we currently deliver services so they are delivered with lower emissions, realigning staff resources, securing external funding and partnership formation around this issues as well as organisation across the city supporting the action through direct finance. The CEAP is a city wide plan that will require everyone to play their part if it is to succeed.

The Council however want to facilitate and support this important work and will therefore be setting aside some revenue funding in next year's Medium Term Financial Plan to specifically support the development of work around the CEAP. This will help assist resourcing and compliment the far more significant capital funds available to support the CEAP actions.

The Corporate Carbon Reduction Action Plan 2019-2023 (CCRP) sets out the Council's internal approach to energy and carbon management. It identifies key actions and activities that the Council will implement to achieve its targets for the reduction of corporate carbon emissions, which supports the city's overall ambitions.

Plymouth City Council is determined to lead by example in achieving to a sustainable and low-carbon future that will ensure that residents, visitors and businesses choose Plymouth as a preferred location in which to live, work and invest. However, a sustainable and low carbon future won't happen by chance, it will require a concerted effort by those organisations that influence energy consumption and resource use in Plymouth. As a local authority, we recognise that we have a responsibility to take positive action and provide strong leadership on averting the dangerous effects of climate change.

The City Council has already begun reducing carbon emissions from its operations but it is readily accepted that we need to do more and accelerate action to achieve the net zero carbon target by 2030. The Corporate Carbon Reduction Action Plan 2019-2023 (CCRP) sets out what it will do to achieve this and covers the early phase and transitional phase periods of the CEAP. We will therefore be focussing on carbon reduction initiatives and reviewing and where needed evolving our internal policies to meet the climate emergency challenge.

The plan will require investment, on-going rationalisation of the estate; efficient use of space and other resources, together with effective management of stakeholder behaviours relating to all energy consumption. As the CCRP starts to take shape the Council will need to consider the financial implications arising from the delivery. Budgets will need to be reassessed and capacity released to enable delivery. It is proposed to set aside a small sum in next year's budget to be used to fund some of the start up work not already funded. It should be noted that a number of the actions are already in place with funding secured either through the use of existing budgets or externally generated. The CCRP will constantly evolve, and by means of an annual evaluation of its success, will improve its effectiveness and ensure relevance as the Council adapts and leads the way in achieving a sustainable and low carbon future. The CCRP demonstrates the Council's commitment to playing a full part in meeting the climate emergency challenge.

4. Conclusions

Since Full Council unanimously agreed the Climate Emergency motion on notice in March 2019 all seven actions contained within the notice have been commenced. The Motion set out long term actions, such as working with other local authorities, which will continue to develop as the work on delivering net zero carbon matures, but there has been focus and accelerated action against each of the 7 points.

The presentation of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and the Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan to Full Council marks a key milestone towards net zero carbon but also a first small step. The scale of the challenge to reduce emission across the city to net zero carbon by 2030 is not underestimated and the changes and challenges ahead are significant. However, these challenges and the resources needed to meet them will seem insignificant to the resources and issues that will face our City if climate change is not stabilised. It is therefore essential that as a City we all play our part.