
Meeting of the Cabinet – 6th July 2020

Report of the Acting Deputy Chief Executive

Climate Change Emergency

Purpose

1. To seek the views of Cabinet on Dudley MBC declaring a Climate Emergency for the borough of Dudley.

Recommendations

2. That, subject to the approval of the Council, the Cabinet is recommended to:-
 - a) Approve the declaration of a Climate Emergency in line with other local authorities in the wider region.
 - b) Establish a cross-party Climate Change Working Group to lead on the development and implementation of a Carbon Reduction Plan for Dudley with a Membership to be agreed following consultation with the Group Leaders.
 - c) Request the Climate Change Working Group:
 - To consider what activities are in scope and what are out of scope to inform the decision on setting a realistic carbon reduction target;
 - To submit a further detailed report to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

Background

3. According to the United Nations the world may have just 10 years to prevent “severe, widespread and irreversible” climate change effects. This has led to calls for urgent action from communities across the globe, with many organisations declaring a climate emergency.



4. Dudley Council is well placed to drive and influence action on climate change in Dudley through its role as a large employer, large scale procurer and commissioner of services, a social landlord, regulator and enforcer of environmental, housing and public health law and community leader.
5. Action on climate change can deliver many local benefits, including lower energy bills, economic regeneration and creation of local jobs, reductions in fuel poverty and improved air quality. In addition, increasing resilience to climate change risks can result in avoided costs from flood damage to buildings, infrastructure and services, enhanced green spaces and improved health and wellbeing.
6. The negative effects of climate change and its causes disproportionately impact on the most disadvantaged groups, locally, nationally and across the globe. For example, more deprived groups are more likely to be exposed to pollution, live in energy inefficient homes, and be less resilient to extreme weather events. These groups can also face barriers to individual level action that can help reduce carbon (e.g. own electric cars, reduce single use plastics, etc.)
7. A letter requesting Dudley declared a Climate Emergency was received from Hugh Burton, Team Rector of Dudley Parish (C of E) on 2nd December 2019. This request came after a meeting of the Dudley Borough Inter-faith Network and following similar declarations made by Birmingham and Coventry.

Friends of the Earth in Stourbridge have also called upon the council to adopt and develop their Climate Action Plan for the borough.

8. A motion concerning the Climate Emergency, and a proposed amendment, were debated at Full Council on 24th February, 2020. The text of the motion and the amendment are recorded in the minutes of the Council meeting. These are available on the [Committee Management Information System](#).
9. Consideration will need to be made on what would be in and out of scope. This includes activities over which the council has direct control such as council assets and travel or whether this extends to the whole borough including emissions from business and industry. The council's ability to reduce emissions from these other sectors may be limited.
10. There will be implications for a number of council functions with examples of the potential activities that could be considered detailed below:
 - Transport and Highways, to maximise the potential of other modes of transport including metro, public transport, walking, running and cycling and increase the use of electric vehicles



- Waste and Recycling, encourage behavioural changes in recycling and reductions in the usage of single use plastic, consideration of wider roll out of a business recycling service
 - Housing, to build new energy efficient homes and retro fit higher efficiency boilers and smart thermostats in council homes. Increase the usage of our regulatory and enforcement powers to increase energy efficiency of the private rented sector
 - Council Estate, develop a programme of cost effective heating solutions and green energy supply options in council sites
 - Planning, shape new and existing developments in ways that reduce carbon emissions
11. The consequences of Covid-19 are far reaching and have resulted in significant behavioural change, less travel and more home working supported by the increased use of video-conferencing. Many changes have started as short-term actions but are now perhaps worth embedding for the longer-term. Although the majority of office-based staff are now working from home, the Council continues to provide key services and remains effective. Covid-19 has forced cultural change and presented the Council with an opportunity to make radical decisions that have created a “new normal” that is considerably more environmentally friendly than the old.

12. **Borough Vision**

The action necessary to deliver carbon reduction is consistent with the Forging a Future for All Vision and will accelerate progress towards a number of the Vision’s aspirations. The Council will need to actively engage and work with partners in the borough to take steps to achieve a net-zero footprint in their activities.

13. **Next Steps**

A number of actions will need to take place that the council, individuals, communities, businesses and key partners would lead on.

It is recommended that a council wide cross party Climate Change group is established to oversee the development and delivery of a Carbon Reduction Plan for Dudley.

It is also suggested that the Council invites and assess staff suggestions for carbon reduction, and oversee engagement with the public about how the council can work together with communities to reduce carbon in the borough, to inform the plan.



14. **Development of a Carbon Reduction Plan for Dudley**

Engagement with local environmental charities and community groups took place in 2019 and led to the development of a co-produced set of outcomes to inform social value and the 'cleaner greener' element of the Dudley Deal. These outcomes could form the overall goals of a carbon reduction plan for Dudley. They are:

- Dudley is pollution-free
 - Dudley keeps it local
 - Dudley has a biodiverse natural and built environment
 - Dudley has zero waste and is free of single use plastic
 - Dudley is sustainable for the future: Local people (especially children and young people) are involved and understand the opportunities for them to make a difference
 - Dudley has local and renewable energy
15. Consideration could be given to the creation of a portfolio position specifically for climate change so that Dudley has a political champion for this agenda and the associated actions.

Finance

16. The Council has no specific budgetary provision for costs relating to a declaration of a Climate Emergency. The costs of delivering on a Zero Carbon target would be significantly beyond any resources likely to be available to the Council in the near future. There will be a requirement to call on Central Government to provide the necessary funds.

Law

17. To date there is no precise or accepted international definition of a 'climate emergency'. The UK government has a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by the UK by 50% on 1990 levels by 2025, and by 80% on 1990 levels by 2050. In 2019, Parliament declared a climate emergency, however this does not legally compel the government to act.

Pursuant to Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, a local authority shall have power to do anything (whether or not involving the expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is



calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides the Council with general powers of competence.

Equality Impact

18. Climate change impacts disproportionately on different groups - these will include a range of groups who share protected characteristics - and that people from particular backgrounds may be more constrained in the individual actions they can take to reduce their own carbon footprint. Two examples of disproportionate impact are that children and older people, particularly those with respiratory problems, are particularly vulnerable to the effects of air pollution on their health. Measures to remove or restrict access by car to town centres may disproportionately impact on people with mobility disabilities.

Equality impact assessment therefore needs to be an integral part of developing and implementing a carbon reduction plan in order to understand and to respond to how the actions to be taken will impact differently on particular protected characteristics, and to ensure that all communities can make a contribution. Children and young people have been extremely active in campaigning to tackle climate change in Britain and across the globe. The council should ensure that children and young people are fully engaged in identifying and taking forward actions to tackle climate change locally.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

19. Unlike many neighbouring Local Authorities, Dudley council doesn't have a sustainability team or officer. The declaration of a climate emergency is likely to have significant impact on staffing and consideration should be given to the establishment of new resources to take overall responsibility for this area.

Commercial/Procurement

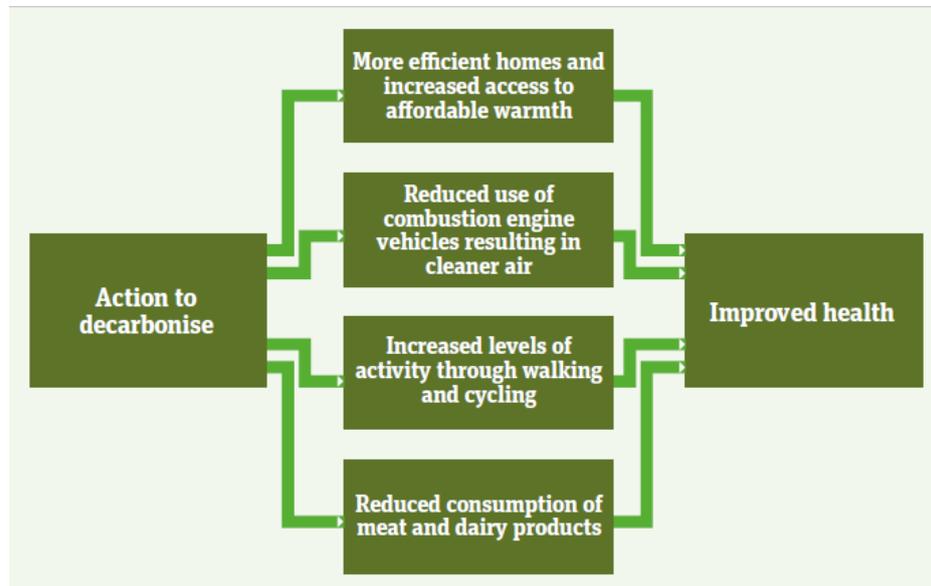
20. There is a potential impact on our ability to generate income from services that may not meet our climate change ambitions; e.g. Services that are required to travel to our customer base as well as the higher equipment costs to provide services such as trade waste and any additional recycling requirements.

The need for specifications in existing and new contracts to be reviewed to ensure only climate sustainable companies and products are selected to supply the council. We will give consideration to Social Value and how that might help achieve the Council's aspirations.



Health, Wellbeing and Safety

21. Effective carbon reduction actions have the potential to make a significant positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Dudley residents and on contributing to reducing inequalities on health and wellbeing. The primary shared benefits on health and wellbeing from climate actions are shown in the diagram below



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