



Draft Annual Report to Full Council

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee 2019/20

Foreword by the Chair, Councillor Neil Walshaw

Leeds City Council declared a Climate Emergency in March 2019. The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) was formed in May of that year with a remit to analyse, to critique, to advise and to lobby about all and everything relating to this civilizational level threat we all face.

CEAC elected members resolved at the start to be evidence lead, to work collegiately and cross party and, above all, to listen to the many voices that need to be heard on this all-encompassing issue. That's quite a daunting set of challenges but I hope in this first year that we have begun to contribute to our city's future.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow CEAC members for all their hard work and thoughtful contributions across the breadth and depth of the matters we have considered, especially through 2020 which has been a rather different year from that which we anticipated. I would also like to pay tribute to Polly Cook, our Lead Officer, and Harriet Speight, our committee clerk, and to officers from across the Council for their knowledge, commitment and steadfastness. I am especially pleased by the progress made in the CEAC Working Groups, despite the pandemic, and by the involvement of groups and individuals from across our city and region.

In Leeds we are privileged to be able to work with the Leeds Climate Commission and with a wide range of academics, businesses, third sector organisations and civic and youth groups. I am pleased that we have been able to discuss, debate and exchange ideas across such a broad group of interests and politics.

We can and will be a leader and exemplar city as we strive to reach a zero carbon future, where that future raises the living standards of future generations and that this process transform our lives and the city for the better.

I will leave you with this; in October of 2020 no Arctic sea ice had formed. This has never happened before in recorded history. Please think about this when considering the decisions you make in life. We have come a long way on our carbon journey, as this report demonstrates, but we have so much more to do.

With best wishes,



Councillor Neil Walshaw
Chair, Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

Summary

- The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee was introduced following the declaration of Climate Emergency in March 2019. It is a cross party advisory committee authorised to consider and make recommendations regarding climate change and sustainability.
- The Committee has met every other month with one meeting cancelled at the start of the pandemic until the Committee moved to virtual meetings in July 2020.
- The topics covered to date have been wide ranging and varied and many external speakers have also attended to present a whole city view of the action required in response to the climate emergency.
- As well as the main committee there have been three working groups that to date have covered planning, biodiversity and transport. The work programme of the working groups was severely disrupted by the pandemic, with work pausing for eight months due to resource constraints as a result of the emergency response.
- Public engagement has been an underlying principle of the Committee as it is clear that the net zero ambition cannot be achieved by any one organisation or individual and requires a whole city approach.
- There is a requirement to examine progress to date and plan the future direction of travel, particularly as the 'new normal' emerges and the impact of the Council's response to the Climate Emergency is further shaped by the covid-19 pandemic.
- The covid-19 pandemic has magnified and accelerated previous trends in the economy and labour markets which have been observed at both the local and national level. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has also had a significant environmental impact.
- Global emissions are expected to fall by a record 5-10% globally as a result of the pandemic, and it is vital that a sustainable, green recovery is at the forefront of the city's covid-19 response.
- Since the first national 'lockdown' in March, fuel sales have been down nationally and there have been evident improvements to air quality and a reduction in traffic levels. There has also been an observed decrease in commercial and industrial energy consumption and it is expected that global energy use will fall by 6% in 2020.

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 This report:

- Details the progress made by the main committee and each CEAC working group
- Confirms the future work programme of the working groups for the remainder of 20/21

2. Background information

- 2.1.1 Full Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019, with the stated ambition of working towards a net zero carbon city by 2030. The council has accepted that very urgent action is required to make our contribution to containing global temperature rises within 1.5C. Beyond this limit, there is a strong scientific consensus that there will be catastrophic consequences for both humanity and the natural world.
- 2.1.2 The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee was set up specifically in recognition of the extent of the challenge that the council was facing in achieving its stated objective of net zero by 2030, highlighting that all political parties must work together to achieve this aim and that all organisations and individuals across the city must also be actively engaged.
- 2.1.3 The covid-19 pandemic has magnified and accelerated previous trends in the economy and labour markets which have been observed at both the local and national level. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has also had a significant environmental impact.
- 2.1.4 Global emissions are expected to fall by a record 5-10% globally as a result of the pandemic, and it is vital that a sustainable, green recovery is at the forefront of the city's covid-19 response.
- 2.1.5 Since the first national 'lockdown' in March, fuel sales have been down nationally and there have been evident improvements to air quality and a reduction in traffic levels. There has also been an observed decrease in commercial and industrial energy consumption and it is expected that global energy use will fall by 6% in 2020.¹
- 2.1.6 Throughout the pandemic, the council has continued to encourage the shift to low-carbon transport options and its fleet of electric vans – which represent the largest EV fleet of any local authority in the UK – have been used as part of the city's covid-19 response to deliver food parcels to vulnerable residents across the city.
- 2.1.7 To encourage residents and workers to try more sustainable travel, the council recently launched its E-Bike Trials scheme, which encourages people who live and work in Leeds to try an electric bike free of charge. This received phenomenal interest in the first few weeks of going live and almost 1000 miles have already been completed on electric bikes as part of the scheme.
- 2.1.8 In partnership with Highways England, the council launched the EV Trials scheme in January 2020 which gives businesses, charities and other organisations the opportunity to try an electric van for free. The scheme has already received around 450 applications and a number of participants have gone on to purchase their own electric van following the trial period. The council continues to encourage

¹ According to the IEA <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/covid19-energy-use-drop-crisis>

businesses to take part in the scheme and this has been able to progress throughout the ongoing pandemic.

- 2.1.9 To support the transition to a zero emission future, Leeds City Council is working with partners to create a network of electric vehicles rapid charge points across the city. So far, 16 of these are live and a network of over 30 charge points is planned to be delivered by March 2021. Since installing the first charge point over a year ago, the network has already been used over 22,000 times.
- 2.1.10 Housing and low-carbon retrofits continue to be a priority for the council. To help tackle inequalities whilst tackling climate change, the council has secured £2.9 million of funding to improve the energy efficiency of poorly insulated homes in area with high levels of fuel poverty. The targeted measures include specialist cavity wall insulation, air source heat pumps and external wall insulation.
- 2.1.11 A district heating network update was published in July 2020, along with proposals for a third phase of the scheme which was presented at Executive Board. Work was able to progress over the first national lockdown period to connect civic buildings to waste-powered heat. The network already connects residents to more sustainable heat and once fully built out it will save a combined 11,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases every year. The network's third phase would extend the scheme into the South Bank area of the city.
- 2.1.12 To support local wildlife and encourage green spaces across the city, the council has committed to planting 50 hectares on its own land every year. To achieve this aim, the council will work in partnership with businesses and communities across the city as well as hosting volunteering opportunities. Leeds City Council is currently developing its White Rose Forest strategy to increase tree cover across the Leeds City Region by 2050. Tree planting across the region is also being used as part of the council's natural flood management programme across the River Aire catchment.
- 2.1.13 The council continues to communicate its work to tackle the climate emergency and is working with partnership organisations to engage audiences on climate-related issues. Leeds City Council has signed up to UK100's 'Net Zero Pledge' to achieve net zero council emissions by 2030. Additionally, the council, along with many others across the globe, has signed up to the 'Count Us In' project which encourages people to take action on climate change through 5 key themes: transport, food, lifestyle, voice, and home.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 When the climate emergency was declared in March 2019, the scale of the challenge was recognised alongside the importance of public engagement to ensure that action was taken in every part of society.
- 3.2 To support this aim of public engagement the Committee was a public meeting, attracting audiences of up to 70 in the Civic Hall and when it moved on-line it received over 150 viewers of the YouTube channel.
- 3.3 Open forum was also introduced at the start of each meeting to provide members of the public an opportunity to set out their concerns, ideas or ambitions with speakers ranging from private individuals to representatives of organisations such as Our Future Leeds, GALBA and Youth Strikers.

- 3.4 In order to retain Open Forum during the pandemic, members of the public have been offered the opportunity to provide video recordings, enabling the public to still have its voice heard at virtual meetings. Digitising open forum has brought other advantages as it has enabled more people to be a part of the open forum as submissions can easily contain multiple people and be more creative,. It also allows open forum to be more inclusive as you don't have to be free at the time of the meeting to participate.
- 3.5 One meeting was also dedicated to businesses and the Committee heard from Yorkshire Building Society, Yorkshire Design and Civic Engineers, explaining both what they had achieved to date, their future ambitions and plans as well as where they would like to see action from the Council.
- 3.6 The Committee also provides another focal point for the media and one that is climate emergency focused. For example the last committee meeting received coverage of the item on food production. Capturing the media's attention on the climate emergency can be difficult, particularly since Covid and so this helps with public engagement.
- 3.7 The main committee has had a wide ranging agenda, starting by providing an in-depth overview into the challenge that the climate emergency presents from various angles such as planning and transport, including aviation. It provided oversight into the planning that went into the Big Leeds Climate Conversation and had the opportunity to question the outcomes and follow up actions. It has more recently been provided with an update into the impact of Covid on the climate agenda.
- 3.8 The committee had the chance to explore the process surrounding the citizen's jury and then to receive and comment on its 12 recommendations. It has committed to do this on a quarterly basis. The next update will be due in the New Year.
- 3.9 It has also received a report about the recent, successful lottery bid that will focus on community engagement through a series of community hubs across a number of different work streams. It will continue to work with the third sector to see how the council can support to best effect by way of regular updates to the main committee.
- 3.10 There was a session that focused on business with three businesses presenting at the open forum sessions (see 3.5 above) and then the Chamber of Commerce providing their overarching views of the climate emergency and businesses.
- 3.11 More recently a presentation was brought forward on the impact of food and the opportunities to take more action locally to reduce the carbon impact of food supplies locally. It was agreed that the food and biodiversity working group would examine this paper in more detail and return to the main committee with their recommended actions.
- 3.12 In April it was intended to hold a meeting that was focused entirely on schools and engaged with children of all ages. This unfortunately had to be delayed due to the pandemic. However, we hope to reschedule this in early 2021.
- 3.13 As well as the main committee, three working groups were set up that were aligned to the key themes of the Climate Emergency. The working groups work programme has been more disrupted by the pandemic and has paused for eight months, due to the resource challenges faced by the Council as they dealt with the impact of the pandemic with staff being redeployed temporarily to support the emergency response. The paragraphs below document progress to date and discuss the future work programme.

Bio-diversity and Food

- 3.13.1 The Biodiversity and Food working group has focussed principally on the issue of tree planting as a means to both capture and store carbon and to improve biodiversity across the city. This group has considered opportunities and barriers on both council land and non-council land, and ways to involve the community alongside some of the factors impacting on tree planting. Members have provided intelligence regarding potential planting sites and links to community groups willing to support planting activities
- 3.13.2 The group has also considered how open spaces in parks could be managed to improve biodiversity, the role of planning policy in supporting biodiversity, how the impact of streetlights on animals and insect circadian rhythms has been mitigated and what other options are available, alongside how access to nature is important to improve physical and mental health.
- 3.13.3 The group will continue to explore ways the council can deliver services that enhance biodiversity over the next year and will look to expand activities to also focus on the carbon footprint of Leeds' food, exploring how to support existing local food producers as well as ways to expand food production and to improve understanding across the city of the contribution that food makes to the city's emissions.

Planning

- 3.13.4 The Planning, Energy and Building Group has met five times since September 2019. It has agreed a work programme linked to five key themes. The following paragraphs describe the progress made against each theme to date:
- 3.13.5 Working with developers - A Developer Forum has been established which met in December 2019. A key action of this was the development of a toolkit to make what developers need to do at the planning application stage easier to understand, and this is at a final draft stage. With the working group having now resumed, the intention is to organise another Forum meeting.
- 3.13.6 Better implementation of existing statutory policies – The 2011 “Building for Tomorrow Today” and 2003 “Neighbourhoods for Living” Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) provide guidance to developers for delivering quality sustainable developments. These have been refreshed on the web-site to note that the principles within them are highly relevant to help the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency, and further guidance is provided to help use the documents against an up to date planning framework. Training material has been agreed through the CEAC group and launched initially for officers to re-inforce the climate, health & well-being and inclusive growth benefits of the existing planning policies, primarily around the theme of better place-making. A member training package can also be implemented as part of any overall Climate training, with specific training on Trees already having been delivered.
- 3.13.7 Lobbying - The group has responded to the Government's proposals for changes to Building Regulations and a joint letter to MHCLG was co-signed by core cities and the Mayor of London seeking a more ambitious approach to building fabric and for local authorities to be allowed to continue setting their own standards. The CEAC Group as a whole and its members via DPP fed into a cross-party response on the Government's Planning White Paper (October 2020).
- 3.13.8 Updating existing policies - Members of the group set the initial scope for policies to be reviewed on climate change which were subsequently considered by Development Plans Panel. Work on the Local Plan Update with a focus on climate

change policies is underway and more detail on these matters was considered by Development Plan Panel in November and will be again in January prior to initial public consultation in spring 2021.

- 3.13.9 Understanding the value of planning to the zero carbon trajectory - Members have discussed the importance of clarifying approaches to environmental monitoring and working across organisations to have a better understanding of the implications of development on carbon and the environment.
- 3.13.10 The group has developed a forward programme of activity which is set out as follows:
1. Working with developers – Launch toolkit and widen developer forum to include more housebuilders.
 2. Better implementation of existing statutory policies – Continue to deliver training during 2020.
 3. Lobbying – Develop links with Planning Inspectorate and continue to lobby on specific planning guidance.
 4. Updating existing policies – Local Plan Update underway – first statutory consultation in Spring 2021. Strategic Flood Risk Assessment brief ready to market and continued discussions with WYCA on renewable energy potential,
 5. Understanding the value of planning to the zero carbon trajectory – Continue to improve baseline data that enables better policy making and planning decision taking. Link with other agencies such as DEFRA, Yorkshire Water and the Environment Agency on matters such as Natural Capital and Biodiversity Net Gain
- 3.13.11 This work has been slightly delayed by the legal challenge to the Site Allocations Plan and the impacts of Covid-19. It is important to note however, that much of this agenda is not only about climate change, but about creating better and more resilient places and communities which can adapt to external changes. The Covid-19 outbreak is reinforcing the need for such resilience and exposing where places are failing, such as where green infrastructure links are poor or where environments are not assisting in providing support to well-being and mental health.
- 3.13.12 In addition to this, it is also proposed that the group focus over the coming months on the priority of reducing carbon emissions arising from existing housing through energy efficiency and renewable energy measures. Members will be involved in determining the scope of proposed work to develop a potential retrofit offer to homeowners. As part of this, they will also be asked to identify the key 'asks' of Government that are required to create the conditions and context in which such a programme can be accelerated in the face of limited local resources.

Transport

- 3.13.13 The transport working group started its work programme with a city centre tour that showed members of the committee the various projects that were already underway to help improve transport across the city.
- 3.13.14 The group has heard from experts on a variety of matters, including a detailed session looking at the future of electrification and its limits, especially for freight.
- 3.13.15 Just prior to the pandemic representatives from Living Streets Leeds came and explained their aspirations for active travel in the city. The focus on active travel continued at the first virtual meeting as the group considered both school streets

and active travel neighbourhoods. In December the group will consider the proposed new transport strategy, having considered the transport vision earlier in the calendar year.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 One of the key focuses of the Committee is consultation and engagement. It enables cross party discussion on a wide range of issues, it offers the opportunity for other organisations to attend and present their own views/ findings as well as allowing the public to provide their input through open forum.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 The committee is a public meeting that allows access to all members of the public. The recent digitisation of open forum has further enabled access for those who may have struggled to travel to the city centre or who may have been unable to attend day time meetings.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 There are three Best City key performance indicators of direct relevance to this report. Performance information is reported regularly via the council's performance reporting framework and is used to inform project development and progress.

- Reduced carbon emissions across the city;
- Number of households in fuel poverty;
- Improved energy and thermal efficiency performance of houses.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee has helped the council to understand the wider work that is underway across the city to support the climate emergency by hearing from a number of representatives from the third sector, businesses and academia.

5.2 The Committee has helped to increase public engagement in the climate agenda and provided members of the public with an opportunity to present their views.

5.3 The Committee has responded well to the pandemic, managing to hold virtual meetings that still enabled public engagement and actually helping to improve inclusivity by the digitisation of open forum. It is appropriate that a Committee that's purpose is to enable the delivery of net zero across the city is proactive in adopting new ways of working.