



Draft Annual Report to Full Council

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee 2020/21

Foreword by the Chair, Councillor Neil Walshaw

It is a pleasure to present this report to Full Council from the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year. I would like to place on record my thanks to all the Committee members, our hard-working officer team and everyone from our great city who has attended and contributed over the last twelve months. As a Committee we have continued to hold the majority of our meetings and workshops remotely to reduce our own carbon footprint and assist in maintaining a healthy work life balance for members and officers. This approach also helps a wide and diverse range of organisations and groups to work with us far more easily and at lower cost.

It is by turns both fascinating and amazing to reflect on the climate and carbon journey CEAC has been on since its formation in May 2019. We have been able to build upon the excellent work already being undertaken by the Council and across Leeds; help develop the knowledge base of ourselves and our partners; bring people and their ideas together for collaborative working and raise awareness of the Climate Emergency we all face. I am especially pleased with our work examining how to fund the changes we know we need to make in Leeds. Every member of CEAC can be proud of what we have achieved together.

The Climate Emergency is a clear and present threat to our civilisation. I wish I was exaggerating I really do. We must do everything we can do to limit warming to 1.5 degrees. A four-degree warmed world is one of chaos and destruction. Currently we are on track for around two and a half. Whether we achieve the former or the latter will be shaped by the decisions we take in this decade. Once we accept that doesn't our mission become clearer and easier colleagues?

I look forward to working with you all in the future.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Walshaw', written in a cursive style.

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.
- This report provides an annual update on the work of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee and its working groups. The last report was taken in January 2021. This report does **not** provide an update on all climate work undertaken by the council – this will be covered in the annual report that is taken to February’s Executive Board.
- The main committee has continued to host open forum, allowing members of the public to present on issues that they wish the committee to consider via video link or via pre-recorded video. This is considered an important aspect as it provides an opportunity for public engagement.
- The key themes that have been explored by the committee this year are:
 - Funding in the context of the climate emergency and alternative funding routes,
 - How to best engage the city on climate,
 - Review of the climate action plan
 - Green jobs and skills
 - Climate mitigation within schools
 - Climate education
- Two of the four working groups have continued as last year:
 - Food and Biodiversity working group
 - Planning, Energy and Buildings working group
- The transport working group was amended to also include wider behaviour change as this was considered such a fundamental part of the work that is needed to achieve net zero.
- A Finance working group was set up following the main Climate Emergency Action Committee that focused on funding.
- The working groups allow members to delve into issues in more depth, often hearing from external speakers as well as officers from across the council. The working groups provide a number of key benefits:
 - Support members to be well briefed on climate related areas, enabling them to engage in the climate discussion in a more meaningful way with stakeholders;
 - Provide a forum for check challenge of progress against a number of key themes as well as supporting the development of policy;
 - Develop cross party lobbying strategies on key climate related issues;
 - Input into local and national consultation responses

Main Committee

As the country started to return to work, the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee debated whether they should return to face to face meetings or continue on a remote basis. As the committee is not a decision-making body, it was not bound by the central government decision on returning to face to face meetings. It was decided that most meetings would remain on a remote basis as this was more in keeping with the overriding objective of the committee to reduce carbon emissions due to the reduced travel emissions of members. It also enables the committee to hear from a range of speakers from across the country as well as ensuring that the meeting can be accessed by the community as it continues to be broadcast via YouTube.

In June the meeting focused on climate communications as lack of buy in or engagement continues to be considered a key barrier to achieving net zero. We heard from the communications leads within the council on both the specific climate emergency communication as well as the travel behaviour change campaign on Connecting Leeds. A representative from the Leeds Climate Commission and Climate Action Leeds also gave an overview of the work that they were undertaking, highlighting partnership work taking place to engage the Leeds public by public, private and third sector groups. Members underlined the importance of engaging a wide variety of different communities across the city, especially those not already engaged on climate issues. Comments helped to inform the council's own communications strategies.

In July the meeting focused on another key barrier to success – funding. A presentation was provided that set the scale of the financial challenge and then two external speakers provided an insight into different routes of funding:

- Bankers without Boundaries – the key focus was on investment at scale utilising low cost pension funding, combined with pre-existing funding such as HRA or grant.
- Abundance provided insight into the new government bond scheme as well as green bond schemes that they had supported other local authorities to establish and the level of success

Due to the complexity and importance of the topic, it was agreed that an additional working group would be established to allow further time to be spent with both organisations and to help members and officers to gain a more in-depth understanding and agree how to progress this area of work.

In September, the committee heard from the Parks and Countryside service about the work that they are undertaking to improve their estates. This led to a number of follow up actions that were assigned to the Food and Biodiversity working group to explore in more detail.

The committee also heard about the different activities happening linked to COP26. Detail was provided on the launch of the regional climate action plan by the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission. An overview was also given on the various events that would be happening in the lead up to COP26:

- Car Free Day Event (22nd September)
- Low Carbon Lunch Event (29th September)
- Nature and environment themed light night (14/15th October)
- Exploring Green Careers event for young people (5th November)

An update was also provided on the council's own climate action plan with a focus on the work we are undertaking to meet the COP26 objectives:

- Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach
- Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats
- Mobilise finance
- Work together to deliver

In November the main Committee looked at green jobs and skill in more depth. Context was provided around the importance of green jobs and skills and a just transition. The session also examined the role of various parties in this transition – government, education sector, industry and how they need to work up in a joined-up way to guarantee a successful transition. Practical examples were provided of how investment by the council in both District heating and Air Source Heat Pumps had led to job creation in the city. Economic development provided an overview of the newly developed Talent and Skills plan and how this will link to green jobs and Ahead Partnership provided more insight into the Green Careers event, linked to COP26.

Within the same meeting the committee heard about the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and how the team were delivering a £25 million programme of decarbonisation across circa 40 buildings. The session focused on the schools' element of the programme and set out some of the challenges such as the amount of preliminary work that has to be undertaken before a contractor can even start on site and the difficulties of balancing the additional running costs of air source heat pumps with solar panels to ensure that a school is not left in a worse financial position.

Finally, the Committee heard about Climate Education, hearing from a representative from Children's and Families on their own programme of work and a particularly outstanding example from Southroyd Primary School who have created their own Climate Action Plan. LeedsDec also presented the great work that they are undertaking to create climate educational materials that can be used within numerous subjects, allowing for true integration of climate into the curriculum as well as the training courses that they can offer within schools as well as within communities. The committee agreed to help promote their work and as a result LeedsDec have been promoted at every community committee with an ask to members to promote their work within schools where they have a relationship as a governor, parent or grandparent.

Working Groups

Food and Biodiversity working group

The food and biodiversity working group has primarily focused on the food aspects since the last report. This has included consulting with numerous parts of the council to understand the scope of catering within the council – ranging from pre-prepared meals to food that is freshly cooked on the premises. During the work on food the working group also heard from a number of external speakers who provided in-depth insight into some of the actions that we could take as a council. The work on food culminated in the council making three food commitments on 29th September 2021 and a food action plan being created:

1. Buy local, serve local. We'll increasingly source more of the food we serve from producers based in Yorkshire and surrounding counties, to support local businesses and cut food miles.
2. Ban air-freighted imports. Where we use ingredients that can't be produced locally, we'll reduce the impact of transporting it by using boat, road or rail
3. Halve the carbon footprint of meals served by 2030. We'll review and update all of the meals we serve to cut their environmental impact, without sacrificing flavour, variety or nutrients.

Some actions from the main committee meeting were also deferred to the food and biodiversity working group to take forward. This included working with Housing Leeds to consider how they best use their land to support biodiversity as well as tree planting as well as looking at the policy related to the use of chemicals within park maintenance. The group also reviewed the leaflet produced by planning to encourage residents to leave their front gardens as gardens rather than paving over them and provided valuable feedback to the planning team.

The on-going role of the group will be to monitor progress against the food action plan and to provide check and challenge.

The group will also be involved in considering the initial findings from the micro feasibility study that has been commissioned to consider options for the development of a sustainable greenhouse, linked to the district heating network as well as providing oversight to a new tool that is being developed in partnership with the University of Leeds that will enable the calculation of the carbon footprint of recipes to be automated, enabling easier decision making and smarter use of data.

The group would also like to support community engagement to promote allotments and back garden vegetable growing as well as looking at how vertical farming can be developed in the city.

Finance working group

The finance working group was set up following the finance Climate Emergency Advisory Committee and was used to delve more deeply into the issues raised at the main committee. This group has then asked a group of officers to work together to identify the ideal area to target for an area based scheme, demonstrating the level of investment already present in the area identified and what further funding would then be required to deliver an area based intervention. The group will review the decision making process used by officers to identify the area and will support the development of a strategy to raise the profile of the identified area as a potential pilot with both private investors and government.

Planning, Buildings & Energy working group

Since the last report to Full Council, members of the CEAC Planning, Buildings & Energy working group have reviewed existing climate related planning policies with a view to these being updated and their implementation strengthened. They have also influenced the development of new and enhanced climate related policies through the Local Plan Update ahead of this going out for public consultation this year, including topics on carbon reduction, flood risk, green infrastructure, place-making and sustainable infrastructure. This consultation has now been concluded, with the outcomes reported back to Members.

The group has also been involved in the development of a domestic energy strategy for the City. Although there have been significant successes in delivering energy efficiency and low carbon measures across the Council's housing stock, this needs to be scaled up and delivered at pace across all tenures if carbon reduction targets are to be met. Members have considered and fed into the development of strategic

business cases for the most deliverable packages of work, how the relevant skills and supply chain can be developed, how a financial offer can be created that will ensure sufficient take-up across the owner occupied and private rented sectors, and how Government should be lobbied to provide policies and funding in support of these aims.

Members have engaged with the issue of the significant potential implications of the new PAS 2035 domestic energy efficiency retrofit standard on the Council's low carbon housing schemes and have steered the approach to lobbying Government. This has resulted in consideration of amendments to the standard's criteria such that it does not frustrate schemes due to impacts on delivery timescales and affordability.

The working group has also reviewed examples of current best practice in achieving net zero carbon through sustainable design and considered how these principles might be embraced by the major housing contractors in delivering zero carbon schemes. The group has monitored progress on the implementation of decarbonisation measures across the corporate estate using grant funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). Members have also reviewed relevant local and national strategies (including the recent BEIS Heat and Buildings Strategy) and have fed into relevant consultations on key building decarbonisation issues.

Transport and Behaviour Change working group

The Climate Emergency and Advisory Committee's transport and behaviour change (T&BC) working group has played an important role this year, briefing members on a range of issues related to transport emissions and enabling members to advise on both local and national policy.

Still in its early stages, the working group has convened academics and policy makers to discuss issues including the future of commuting, increasing bus patronage, the provision of electric vehicle charge points and more.

The T&BC working group has ensured that interested members from all political parties in Leeds have received expert briefings on the above issues and have been able to contribute their view on behalf of residents to official consultations relating to the UK's Net Zero Strategy, for example a consultation on proposals regarding the future role of local authorities for electric vehicle charge point provision. Going forward, it is expected that members of the working group will also be given an opportunity to contribute to a response to Government proposals regarding ending the sale of certain types of single use plastics. The working group will also discuss behavioural issues including wood burning, walking and cycling, getting people into green jobs, and promoting goods reuse.

Conclusion

The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee has considered the key barriers to implementation at pace this year including funding, communications and engagement as well as further area specific investigations such as jobs and skills and climate education. CEAC continues to provide challenge and oversight to the on-going work of the council on achieving net zero as well as identifying potential new opportunities and developing policy direction in response to numerous consultations.