

# Climate Emergency Advisory Committee Annual Report

Date: 16 December 2024

Report of: Chief Officer Climate, Energy and Green Spaces

Report to: Full Council

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

## Summary:

- The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) was introduced following the declaration of the 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/workshops. The last report was published in January 2024. This report does **not** provide an update on all climate work undertaken by the council – this was covered in the annual report taken to Executive Board in October 2024 and can be located here
- 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 either in person, via video link, via pre-recorded video, or submitted text. This is considered an important aspect as it provides an opportunity for public engagement.
- Climate Adaptation is integrated throughout the work of CEAC, with speakers at each main Committee meeting providing information as to how it is featuring amongst their work.
- The development of a forward plan at the start of each municipal cycle allows opportunity to curate the agendas to ensure all areas of climate related work are covered and those with the expertise on subjects can be invited at the earliest opportunity.
- Climate Emergency Advisory Committee working groups allow elected members to explore 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:

- Supporting members to be well briefed on climate related areas, improving climate understanding and enabling them to engage in climate-related discussions in a more meaningful way with stakeholders including residents;
  - Providing a forum for 'check and challenge' of progress against a number of key themes as well as supporting the development of policy;
  - Developing cross-party national asks on key climate related issues;
  - Input collectively into local and national consultation responses
- The four Committee working groups continued until the end of the 2023/24 municipal year remaining as:
  - Food, Biodiversity and Waste working group
  - Infrastructure, Energy and Buildings working group
  - Community and Business Engagement working group
  - Economy and Finance working group
- While the CEAC Main Committee is designed to receive and comment on updates on work that has taken place in addressing climate change, the working groups are designed for constructive feedback on developing policies and plans still under development.

For the 2024/25 municipal year it was decided to change the 'working groups' to 'workshops', leaving these broad and not under the previous four headings. This decision was taken to allow topics to be discussed in a timely manner, which was important for any subject that is time sensitive. The previous format meant it could be between six and eight weeks for a particular working group to meet, delaying any discussion about a specific topic. These workshops, similar to the working groups, are open for all councillors to attend, not just those who are part of the CEAC main committee membership.

## **1. CEAC Main Committee**

- 1.1.1 Now in its sixth year of operation, although the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee has maintained a hybrid structure, with meetings taking place both virtually and in person, main committee meetings where possible are held in person. The meeting continues to be broadcast via YouTube, allowing opportunity for the community to access the meeting, both live and to the recording at a later date.
- 1.1.2 As mentioned earlier in the report, members of the public continue to be invited to speak at open forum. Those who have spoken in this municipal year are listed within Appendix 1, alongside the responses they have received.
- 1.1.3 Over the course of 2024, the main Committee has met a total of eight times.
- 1.1.4 Each of the council's directors received an invitation to attend a main committee meeting on a rolling basis to provide an overview of how their directorate is supporting the city's response to the climate emergency. This ensures that the committee has insight into a wide spectrum of work and will help identify areas to explore in more depth as part of next year's work programme. This provides opportunity for the Committee to feedback into key strategies and workstreams that departments are undertaking and challenge officers in the work that they are

delivering. Each director is asked to include a focus on specific areas including procurement and adaptation.

- 1.1.5 In November 2023, Leeds City Council was awarded an 'A' grade for a consecutive year and recognised as one of 119 city authorities across the world leading the way on climate action in a new list published by renowned international authority, the Carbon Disclosure Project.
- 1.1.6 The 2024 submission to CDP has been made, however officers will not receive results until early 2025, due to a change in submission deadlines. This will be reported back to CEAC once received.
- 1.1.7 Throughout the year the Committee has used the feedback from the 2023 CDP result to shape the agendas throughout 2024, ensuring that where required, higher levels of focus were on areas to improve, ahead of the 2024 submission
- 1.1.8 A summary of the key themes that were discussed at the main Committee this year is included below.

## 1.2 The development of policy related to the city's climate emergency response

- 1.2.1 One of the first topics of the year was an update on **Mass Transit** provided by West Yorkshire Combined Authority, in response to the latest information regarding the Mass Transit Programme and its next stages
- 1.2.2 Following on from a previous update, detailed information was shared on the intended changes to the transport network and what this would mean for Leeds, its stakeholders and residents.
- 1.2.3 It was noted that West Yorkshire, although a great place to live and work, the poor connectivity between areas limits opportunities and applied to both urban and rural settings.
- 1.2.4 The aim of the development of the network was to provide affordable and efficient transport, allow behavioural changes by improving walking and cycling infrastructure.
- 1.2.5 Key areas of discussion focused on the importance of the balance between prioritising areas with low car ownership and areas with high car ownership as well as being inclusive to the entire city, particularly conscious of those in outer city locations.
- 1.2.6 Members asked WYCA to return to a future committee meeting to provide further updates.
- 1.2.7 Similar to this, an update was brought to the committee on the **Connecting Leeds Strategy**, providing an update following the latest Executive Board report in late 2023.
- 1.2.8 Members welcomed the data for active travel and public transport use that stated during peak commuter hours was overall positive with a long term trend for uptake in sustainable travel options and a 10.9% reduction in car use over 2022 to 2023. This

had a particular ask in previous years, what data was available to monitor progression.

- 1.2.9 The update was seen as positive and provided plenty of opportunity to provide feedback from members who felt the more transparent these updates were including data would be helpful in understanding what challenges are still present.
- 1.2.10 Supporting the net zero ambition is the work being done through ***Nature and Tree-planting initiatives through Leeds*** which has presented, similar to other areas, celebrations and challenges while understanding the needs of the community.
- 1.2.11 In addition to tree-planting initiatives, an update was provided on biodiversity net gain as well as on practical initiatives such as the establishment of wildflower areas in collaboration with Butterfly Conservation in Roundhay Park, which is providing managed habitats for native butterflies and other invertebrates which links to the conservation work undertaken at Tropical World.
- 1.2.12 An update was brought to the main Committee on the development of the ***Leeds Food Strategy*** ahead of its next report to Executive Board.
- 1.2.13 The committee were updated on the key areas of progress and challenges that and received an overview of the three missions;
  - Health and Wellbeing
  - Food Security and Economy
  - Sustainability and Resilience, which linked to the Council's three pillars.
- 1.2.14 Senior Officers attended to update on the ***Leeds Household Waste and Recycling Collection Strategy Update*** following the introduction of glass collection within green bins as of 1st August 2024. 7000 tonnes of glass had been collected in August, with 80% suitable for remelting, this was above the current national target of 72%.
- 1.2.15 A wider update was provided on government policy surrounding food waste collections, and the proposed changes to the method of recycling. Officers confirmed that Leeds were in a good position currently and prepared for any changes that may come from national policy.
- 1.2.16 Members welcomed an update on the future work of the strategy, to include exploring options for food waste processes, with agreement from the Executive Board. Members were also keen to add the committee's support for the food waste proposals.
- 1.3 The implementation and delivery of projects or initiatives related to the city's climate emergency response
  - 1.3.1 Colleagues from Climate, Energy and Green Spaces attended meetings throughout the year to update the Committee on the substantial work being done to decarbonise infrastructure throughout the city and to explain the support being delivered to

residents to make their home more efficient; helping the net zero ambition for the city and their own wellbeing.

- 1.3.2 An update was provided by senior officers on **Heat Network Zoning** and the implications for the city. It was confirmed this was a national policy with implementation due in 2025 following consultation.
- 1.3.3 The policy mandated that larger buildings and new developments were connected to district heating, with Local Authorities becoming Zoning Coordinators. Members and officers raised concerns and discussed the challenges the local authority may face with this additional responsibility.
- 1.3.4 Updates were also received for ongoing work to address air quality throughout the city and the current position on Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure throughout the city. It was noted that a switch to identifying indoor air pollution was more of a focus moving ahead with this work.
- 1.3.5 The limited time frame in which to obtain and then use grant funding was used as an example as this is an additional strain to stretched resource capacity. Another example, not exclusive to just this area of work, was how external impacts, such as utility company capacity, can also delay projects.
- 1.3.6 The Committee welcomed an update on **Flood Risk Management** in July. Senior officers provided an update on the implementation of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, particularly the latest updates in relation to the Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase 2
- 1.3.7 Members noted particular interest in the Aire Resilience Company being the focus of a future workshop discussion.
- 1.4 Engaging residents and stakeholders to shape and accelerate the city's climate emergency response
  - 1.4.1 Throughout the course of the year communications and engagement has been a prominent feature of the main committee and the working groups/workshops, and its importance is key in addressing the net-zero ambition of the city
  - 1.4.2 With the limited resource available within the Climate, Energy and Green Spaces team, the work to achieve the Council's net zero ambition has to continue to be a collaborative effort throughout the departments within the Council and as a wider city.
  - 1.4.3 Key examples of excellent decarbonisation work were brought to the committee in November, throughout the Leeds Anchors Network – with representation from Leeds Teaching Hospitals and University of Leeds to present the work they are undertaking to address the net-zero ambition.
  - 1.4.4 Climate Action Leeds (CAL) provided an update on how they were working for a zero carbon, nature friendly, socially- just Leeds, through different workstreams and collaborations. The committee endorsed the work the different climate action groups

are doing citywide and agreed to explore the Leeds doughnut economics and climate education in future workshops.

- 1.4.5 The Committee noted that a lot of good work is being done to support climate adaptation and feedback from the Committee was that the public's awareness of this work could be improved – if they were, this could open more opportunities for engagement.
- 1.4.6 Providing cross-cutting messaging that allowed communities to understand the benefits undergoing improvements to their property remains a key factor when delivering projects and programmes of work. This ensures that people understand the reason behind the work they are having completed and the positives that will come as a result.
- 1.4.7 It was welcomed that methods of communications and engagement include virtual and in-person consultations, as the mutual agreement by the Committee as not everybody has the same level of accessibility to resources.

## **2. CEAC Working Groups (known as CEAC Workshops from May 2024)**

- 2.1.1 Climate Emergency Advisory Committee working groups provide an additional opportunity for elected members to explore issues in more depth, often hearing from external speakers as well as officers from across the council.
- 2.1.2 While the CEAC Main Committee is designed to receive and comment on updates on work that has taken place in addressing climate change, the working groups and workshops are designed for constructive feedback on developing policies and plans still under development.
- 2.1.3 The working groups also allow opportunity for discussions and input on regional and national consultations.

2.1.4 Each working group/workshop over the last 12 month are summarised below:

### **2.2 Food, Biodiversity and Waste working group**

- 2.2.1 The Food, Biodiversity and Waste working group focused on the Leeds Food Strategy, with a particular focus on the redistribution of food and reducing food waste.
- 2.2.2 An in-depth discussion was held to identify the potential opportunities available throughout the city and what members could assist with. Examples included; community composting schemes, school composting sites, community windfall, and the Right To Grow motion. Allotment availability and mapping the city assets to identify available land were additional suggestions, which would require resource and capacity.
- 2.2.3 Members agreed to explore opportunities in their wards to establish opportunities to reduce waste and encourage community growing. It was agreed that the outcome of

the Right to Grow motion in Hull would be taken into consideration at a future working group

### 2.3 Economy and Finance working group

2.3.1 The Economy and Finance working group received a detailed update from colleagues on Procurement, following a previous update in February 2023.

2.3.2 A discussion was held on opportunities for future procurement and methods to reduce waste, improving energy efficiency, increasing green skills and tackling emissions. This included scope 3 emissions for businesses that the council are engaged with and share the same procurement values.

2.3.3 Following this working group, it was agreed that future Director Updates were to include an update on procurement within their directorate

2.3.4 Due to staff capacity, and topics not suitable for the working groups in question, both the Community and Business Engagement, and the Planning, Buildings and Energy working groups did not have any meetings in 2024.

### 2.3.5 Workshops

2.3.6 From May 2024, the working groups had been changed to workshops, in order to better reflect the logistics of the meetings, as explained earlier in the report.

2.3.7 Due to resource availability, the first of these meetings took place in November 2024. For this workshop, discussions were on the use of glyphosate within our estate with members and officers using nationwide case studies to aide the discussion.

2.3.8 Additional discussions were brought to the workshop by officers to explore the risk of climate impact on estate buildings and the heightened risk this could bring e.g increasing air pollution within historic buildings following extreme heat.

2.3.9 A discussion was then held to establish workstreams and topics members wanted to explore in future workshops. Topics identified included communication and engagement, air quality, energy and the Aire Resilience Company.

## 3. Conclusion

3.1.1 This year's Climate Emergency Advisory Committee has considered a wide range of issues at the main Committee meetings, referring many issues to its working groups for further examination.

3.1.2 The change from working groups to workshops better reflect the key topics that the Committee wanted to explore, in a timely manner.

3.1.3 CEAC will continue to play a key role in ensuring that the net zero ambition is embedded across the council, engaging with external partners to ensure makes recommendations for effective action, not only in the council but the wider city.

- 3.1.4 The Committee has seen that the Council is making significant progress, with the powers and resources available to it, to reduce the city's impact on the environment through its policies and delivery programmes.
- 3.1.5 The Committee recognises that much of the Council's work in this area is objectively ambitious and considered best practice among the local government sector. It notes the 'A Grade' recognition by the CDP that the council has been awarded.
- 3.1.6 The Committee will continue to play an important role to check, challenge, and support the relevant work of different council departments as appropriate to help ensure that the council is leading by example and making progress as fast as practical, with reasonable community and stakeholder engagement and support.
- 3.1.7 The Committee notes that the capacity and capability of the local authority and wider city to deliver faster progress in reducing carbon emissions and adapting to climate change is currently constrained by factors beyond the local authority's control, as well as its own financial challenge
- 3.1.8 The Committee has, and will continue to, engage with national policymakers and others to advocate for the changes that would enable Leeds council, communities, and businesses to accelerate action on climate change.

#### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 To note the contents of the report and the work of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee throughout the 2023/24 and 2024/25 (to date) municipal year