

# Climate Emergency Advisory Committee Annual Report

Date: 17th January 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. The last report was published in January 2023. 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 Executive Board in September 2024
- 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.
- The key themes that have been explored by the Committee since the previous report updating on the Committee's work are:
  - The development of **policy** related to the city's climate emergency response, e.g. Mass Transit, Leeds Food Strategy, Corporate Travel Plan, Inclusive Growth Strategy.

- The implementation and **delivery** of programmes or initiatives related to the city's climate emergency response, e.g. Flood Risk Management, Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), Woodland Creation.
  - How residents and stakeholders are being **engaged** to shape and accelerate the city's climate emergency response, e.g. communications, Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission (YHCC), Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)
- 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
- All four Committee working groups have continued unchanged since last year, with the headings 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 policies and plans still under development.

## 1. CEAC Main Committee

- 1.1.1 Now in its fifth year of operation, the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee has maintained a hybrid structure, with meetings taking place both virtually and in person. This allows for improved accessibility as well as the reduction of carbon emissions associated with the travel of members and guest speakers. 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 2, alongside the responses they have received.
- 1.1.3 In some instances, Open Forum has resulted in further research being undertaken to ensure the committee can reach a well-informed position and advocate for changes to national policy, if appropriate. Open Forum has also allowed a diverse range of views on climate action to be heard, including from residents who wish to raise their disagreements with current national and local policy on climate action. Open Forum therefore provides an important democratic function and enables the committee to

consider the full spectrum of local views when making its recommendations and engaging with the people making or delivering climate policy locally.

- 1.1.4 Over the course of 2023, the main Committee has met a total of seven times.
- 1.1.5 As per the previous year, 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 provides an opportunity to challenge officers in the work that they are delivering.
- 1.1.6 In November 2023, Leeds City Council was awarded an 'A' grade for the second 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.
- 1.1.7 To retain this grading highlights the cross-cutting work being done throughout the council in achieving net zero and ensure that the city continues to lead on climate action in future years. The Committee intends to use the feedback to identify further opportunities of development and areas of focus for the Committee's agenda in the year ahead and asked that the CDP feedback report be brought to a future working group for discussion.
- 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 **Mass Transit** was the first topic of the calendar year to be addressed at the main Committee.
  - 1.2.2 Officers spoke about the West Yorkshire Mass Transit programme proposals, as well as updating members on the Council's response to the statutory consultation of the West Yorkshire Mass Transit Vision 2040.
  - 1.2.3 Proposals that were presented highlighted alternative methods of transportation to a car and how environmental responsibility will be integrated into the work through the consideration of biodiversity, use of the natural landscape and place making.
  - 1.2.4 Key areas of discussion focused on how route planning is key to future developments and the importance of the balance between prioritising areas with low car ownership and areas with high car ownership and congestion.
  - 1.2.5 It was agreed that creating attractive alternatives to using the car is key to unlocking opportunities around the city, with many alluding to the fact radial public transport is important to assist the behaviour change to car use and will help to progress the net zero ambition and reducing carbon emissions.

- 1.2.6 Linking into this, the **Corporate Travel Plan** was a key item of interest discussed by members. In addressing movement around the city, and the number of employees Leeds City Council has, it was identified as a key area of development in the work needing to be done to reduce carbon emissions.
- 1.2.7 More in-depth data and statistical research would provide evidence-based reasoning behind the current behaviour change and what is needed to naturally create the modal shift. The right approach and engagement were identified as a key element when developing this work.
- 1.2.8 The Committee noted the barriers within implementing a Corporate Travel Plan and understood that consideration would have to be taken in relation to office locations of employees, the type of work they undertake and the home location of employees.
- 1.2.9 Following the discussion, the Committee agreed that the chair would ask each director to report on their directorate's implementation of the Corporate Travel Plan with the aim of reducing emissions.
- 1.2.10 Having been approved by Executive Board in March 2023, in November an update was brought to the main Committee on the development of the **Leeds Food Strategy**.
- 1.2.11 An extensive action plan has been developed under each of the three missions during this time, with workshops and working groups held to prioritise the first areas of development.
- 1.2.12 The Leeds Food Strategy is a strong example of the partnership work needed to implement the work throughout the city. The involvement of multiple internal departments as well as third sector representatives provides the vital links throughout the communities of Leeds.
- 1.2.13 Members were supportive of the work brought forward to date and echoed the vast workload involved in the ongoing development of the strategy while it is embedded into the city.
- 1.2.14 The Committee noted the reported difficulties in implementing community composting schemes and Members lent their support to the initiative in order to encourage the roll out of community composting across the city.
- 1.2.15 Members also supported the suggestion that the draft report measuring the success of the Food Strategy actions be discussed by the Committee's Food, Biodiversity and Waste working group prior to being presented to the Executive Board in March 2024.
- 1.2.16 The updated **Inclusive Growth Strategy** had recently been updated to reflect the changed economic, political, social and environmental context whilst maintaining a focus on economic growth that benefits everybody within the city.

- 1.2.17 Senior officers were joined by key external partners for the meeting, providing a breadth of information and examples of the work being undertaken throughout the city's digital sector, in reducing carbon emissions.
- 1.2.18 The Committee and speakers noted that developing green skills within West Yorkshire is key to achieving net zero and it is important for businesses to engage with educational establishments to share these opportunities and raise awareness of the green jobs market.
- 1.2.19 The Committee noted the work that had been undertaken to date and requested that within the Social Progress Index a forward programme of future indicators regarding climate change to be designed, when resources permit.
- 1.2.20 Later in the year, the **Net Zero Homes Plan** was welcomed by the main Committee. Members noted the work that had been undertaken by officers to consider how improvement schemes and support can be communicated to residents.
- 1.2.21 The Committee noted that residents require reassurance and access to accurate information, which the Net Zero Homes Plan provided.
- 1.2.22 Work has been done to circulate the wider benefits to residents, such as those of a financial nature, when improving their home efficiency. Understanding the different co-benefits of home retrofit that may appeal to residents has underpinned tailored communications.
- 1.3 The implementation and delivery of programmes 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 Highlights were shared of the carbon emissions reductions that had been made to date through the different Public Sector Decarbonisation Schemes and the different types of buildings that had been supported to date including leisure centres, schools and heritage buildings.
- 1.3.3 With extensive information provided on the background to the public decarbonisation work, challenges were highlighted which provided an insight into the barriers and bottlenecks the team face in project delivery.
- 1.3.4 The limited time frame in which to obtain and then use grant funding was used as an example of an additional strain to stretched delivery capacity. Another example, not exclusive to just this area of work, was how external impacts, such as utility company capacity, can also delay projects.

- 1.3.5 Members were pleased to see the volume of work achieved so far and a discussion was had as to what could be done to share the good work and encourage eligible buildings in their wards to enquire about how they can decarbonise their property.
- 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 over the last 12 months, as well as future measures proposed for the coming years.
- 1.3.7 Members noted that two key topic areas would be taken to their relevant working groups. The Infrastructure, Planning and Buildings working group would explore surface water incentives further and the Community and Business Engagement working group would consider the current monitoring indicators and improving engagement within the community.
- 1.3.8 Supporting the net zero ambition is the work being done through **Woodland Creation** which has presented, similar to other areas, celebrations and challenges while understanding the needs of the community.
- 1.3.9 The development of woodland and tree planting initiatives has to integrate with other strategies, one of those highlighted by colleagues is linking into the ongoing work within our green spaces to make them places people can safely enjoy. For example, trees provide shading within green spaces during increased temperatures, contributing towards the adaptation work needed within the city.
- 1.3.10 Following the discussion, Committee members agreed to support the tree planting scheme and to engage with ward members and residents to seek sites.
- 1.4 How residents and stakeholders are being engaged to shape and accelerate the city's climate emergency response
- 1.4.1 Although presented as a standalone item at one of the earlier Committee meetings, it has been evident throughout the course of the year that communications and engagement has featured in most meetings and within the working groups.
- 1.4.2 With the limited resource available within the Climate, Energy and Green Spaces team, it was agreed that the work to achieve the Council's net zero ambition has to be a collaborative effort throughout the departments within the Council and as a wider city.
- 1.4.3 At the meeting in March, Committee members recommended that climate literacy training be delivered across the council including to elected members. Due to the current financial challenge the council is facing, it has been noted that additional work needs to be done to identify the resource for this.
- 1.4.4 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.

- 1.4.5 Members were particularly keen to understand how community engagement could be developed further and were eager to stress the importance of engaging with residents, particularly those participating in home improvement schemes. This would ensure residents understood the reason for their home alterations, the benefits to them and lessen the risk of engaging with fraudulent contractors and companies.
- 1.4.6 It was welcomed that methods of communications and engagement include virtual and in-person consultations, as the mutual agreement by the Committee is not everybody has the same level of accessibility to resources.
- 1.4.7 The attendance of the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission and Leeds Climate Commission later in the year highlighted the key partnership work that Leeds is involved in and the importance of utilising partnerships throughout the region.
- 1.4.8 Discussions were had as to how consistent communications and engagement needs to remain at the heart of the work being done by the council to reach the net zero ambition.
- 1.4.9 The Committee made recommendations to the representatives from the commissions about future priorities that the commissions could focus on and invited them to a future CEAC meeting.

## **2. CEAC Working Groups**

- 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 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's activities and key outputs are summarised below:

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

- 2.2.1 The first Food, Biodiversity and Waste working group of the calendar year was focused on the outcome of the Leeds Food Strategy consultation, prior to the Executive Board meeting. Members were provided opportunity to feedback on the results and better understand, and provide suggestions on, the concerns that had been raised by residents, businesses, local charities and other stakeholders.

- 2.2.2 Continuing with the Food Strategy theme, the next meeting of the working group focused on community growing; identified as one of the objectives within the 'Sustainability and Resilience' mission of the strategy.
- 2.2.3 An in-depth discussion was had to understand the barriers faced within community growing, the different opportunities available and what authority Leeds City Council had in resolving any challenges.
- 2.2.4 Incredible Edible was one example of a partnership operational within communities, having attended a main Committee meeting earlier in the year to highlight their challenges in expanding throughout the city.
- 2.2.5 Suggestions from members focused on community-led initiatives, changes to existing policies within the Council and utilising existing community networks. It was agreed that these areas would be explored in further detail by officers and prioritised accordingly as part of the available resources and timescales required.

### 2.3 Economy and Finance working group

- 2.3.1 The first Economy and Finance working group of the year received a detailed update from colleagues within the Procurement team which shared the work being done within procurement, alongside structure changes, to reduce carbon emissions.
- 2.3.2 Procurement is an area of priority when addressing net zero, especially emissions which occur indirectly from within supply chains and not as a result of the immediate activity by the council; known as scope 3 emissions.
- 2.3.3 It was a conversation welcomed by the working group members, who provided suggestions to colleagues within Procurement on how emissions can be reduced in a shorter timescale. An example of one of these suggestions made was in relation to increasing the social value percentage within contracts. Members of the working group noted that they would like Procurement to return to the working group during the next municipal year to further support their work reducing emissions within their work.
- 2.3.4 Green Finance (later renamed) was another subject matter brought to the working group throughout the year. Conversations were had amongst members as to how, in reality, this could benefit communities and how impactful this would be in relation to net zero. It was agreed that alternative channels would be identified to better support the kind of investment required.

### 2.4 Planning, Buildings & Energy working group

- 2.4.1 The Planning, Buildings and Energy working group started the year with the Net Zero Homes Plan (which, as seen earlier in the report has since been developed further) and the latest government support schemes – providing opportunity for members to feedback on the material needed to communicate this at ease with their communities.
- 2.4.2 It was important given the scale of the consultation that the Local Plan Update was a part of the working group once initial consultation results had been evaluated. This



provided a strong indication of the challenges that may present themselves at a later stage of the consultations. Feedback and suggestions were welcomed by officers who committed to returning to the working group throughout the consultation progress.

2.4.3 The Home Improvement Grant (HUG) Scheme was the substantive item at the following working group, brought to members for a briefing, but also for honest feedback, again, ahead of the official introduction. Members provided their insight and understanding to help improve the relevance and relatability of public documentation and communications relating to this work.

## 2.5 Community and Business Engagement working group

2.5.1 Supporting SME's and communities with accessibility to grants and overcoming barriers has played a key role throughout discussions at the Community and Business Engagement Working Group this year.

2.5.2 External guest speakers from West Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce and Greenwood provided valuable insight into the different challenges and opportunities facing public sector and private sector organisations in working towards net zero.

2.5.3 Members were keen to understand how they could support businesses in obtaining access to funding to make improvements that reduce emissions, however differing policies and conditions of grants often become barriers to some smaller enterprises. A preview of the Business Sustainability Scheme from West Yorkshire Combined Authority was seen as a positive opportunity for many SMEs. Members agreed to help promote this programme and encourage sign up for this.

2.5.4 Leeds 2023 has been a large presence in the city during the last 12 months. With a strong focus on sustainability throughout the year's events, the working group, were keen to understand how the legacy of the events would see sustainability improvements implemented throughout the city; identifying how this can be implanted at future events and sharing best practice with others who run public events.

2.5.5 Engaging with children is often highlighted as a important consideration when communicating climate conversations with communities. The working group heard from officers representing Child Friendly Leeds, while they were refreshing their "12 Wishes" in celebration of their tenth year, and their proposals to have a wish (informed by young people) directly linking to climate and net zero.

2.5.6 Members were supportive of this idea and discussions have continued on a regular basis to understand what additional actions can be taken, including promoting climate friendly activities and opportunities for young people via stalls at events.

## 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 working groups have also evolved to better reflect the key topics that the Committee wanted to explore. CEAC will continue to play a key role in ensuring that the net zero ambition is embedded across the council and will make recommendations for effective action.
- 3.1.3 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.
- 3.1.4 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.
- 3.1.5 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.
- 3.1.6 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. 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 2022/23 and 2023/24 (to date) municipal year