

REPORT TITLE	UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION
REPORT OF	Mike Cockburn – Lead Commissioner for Environment

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides Committee with an update on the Council's response to the Environment and Climate Emergency Declaration of July 2019. The Council has renewed its commitment to tackling the causes of climate change for some years. However, the resolution of July 2019 to declare a climate emergency, which received all party support, is a significant move and requires the Council to reset its corporate priorities in order to address the requirements of the climate emergency resolution. Through the Climate Emergency resolution, the Council is committing to do all in its power and influence for Wirral to be carbon neutral by 2050 and is now developing a Climate Emergency Action Plan, which will set out the framework for developing and establishing this.

In order to ensure a quick response to the emergency declaration, the Council has established an initiating action plan, to deliver quick actions and at the same time put in place the framework and clarification of responsibilities that will drive the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

This report provides Committee with an update on the initiating action plan, the actions that have been achieved and are being put in place. The Climate Emergency Declaration and carbon neutral target will require all our partners to commit to the declaration, deliver their own plans and work together in partnership to drive major change for Wirral. The Wirral Climate Change Partnership have renewed the Cool Wirral Strategy for all partners to jointly implement, following extensive joint preparation work this year. The updated Cool Wirral Strategy is currently being prepared to go out to public consultation for establishment this year.

Emphasis is also being placed on urging everyone in Wirral to acknowledge the climate emergency and commit to making the necessary changes to the way they live their lives or operate their businesses in order to make the necessary changes. The Council and its partners within the Cool Wirral Partnership will help people to make changes to their lives by providing advice and support to their activities.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the contents of this report and the steps being taken to respond to the Climate Emergency Declaration.
2. Provide the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change with comments on the Climate Emergency Declaration response.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council has declared an environment and climate emergency in recognition of the urgent need to take action to address global warming and the crisis being created by unavoidable climate change. The Council has committed to making climate the emergency a top corporate priority, realigning responsibilities and resources and establishing a long-term climate emergency action plan to help tackle climate change and enable Wirral to be carbon neutral by 2050.

In order to respond quickly to the climate emergency declaration and prepare for the establishment of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, the Council has established an initiating action plan, a summary of which is attached, see **Appendix 1**. Committee will be provided with an update on progress with this plan and preparations for the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

This report provides Committee with an update on the Council's response to the Environment and Climate Emergency declaration. Since the declaration was made, initial plans have been developed to put in place the framework that will enable the Council to implement the required changes and realignment of responsibilities. However, the Council will consider all options when developing the Climate Emergency Action Plan for Wirral to be carbon neutral by 2050 and be resilient to unavoidable climate change. Committee will be further updated on the options considered for the plan and its impact once implemented.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Climate Emergency Declaration July 2019

Wirral Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency in July 2019. Through the resolution made at the Council meeting of 15 July, the Council welcomed Parliament's UK Climate Emergency Declaration of May 1st. The Council also welcomed the United Nation's Climate Action Summit, taking place this month following the publication of the IPCC and IPBES reports. The Council's resolution also recognised the overwhelming scientific consensus that global emissions will need to fall by around 45% from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching net zero by around 2050 in order to avoid more than a 1.5°C rise in global warming.

Through the resolution the Council recognised the need to support the Climate Emergency Declaration with the required realignment of responsibilities and the delivery of practical local action. A summary of the measures and actions from the climate emergency resolution is set out below:

- In order to progress a meaningful response to reforestation and to the development of sustainable agriculture, Cabinet is requested to ask that the Government, as part

of the forthcoming Spending Review, provides additional funding for schemes that will bring this about.

- Council therefore requests that, as a significant practical step to slow the build-up of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere, Cabinet is requested to ask officers to initiate a major tree-planting initiative, ensuring that they discuss the opportunities for additional tree planting in Wirral with the major landowners, identify land for tree planting to create a range of sites and wildlife corridors and add to the biodiversity of Wirral and involve local schools.
- Further, Council requests that officers work with local landowners, agents and the farming community to increase the scope for the Environmental Land Management contracts suggested by the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP to the Oxford Farming Conference in January 2019.
- Council supports a drive to localise food production and asks Cabinet to support the uptake and maintenance of allotments, offering advice and support to residents to take on an allotment.
- Recognising the need to progress the switch to electric powered cars, Council urges Cabinet to work with large employers, the Chamber of Commerce and other organisations to promote and secure the provision of more charging points for electric vehicles across Wirral.
- Council recalls that at its meeting on 18 March 2019, members voted unanimously to ask Cabinet to explore the possibility of building its own solar farm.
- Set senior leadership responsibilities across all departments to reflect that the climate emergency relates to all aspects of the Council's activities.
- Prioritise the climate emergency as part of a wider partnership ensuring the Cool Wirral initiative has clear reporting links with other strategic partners.
- Implement a long-term climate emergency communication programme including a dedicated web site and a dedicated mailing list to build a network of interest groups.
- Adopt appropriate decision-making tools supported by a staff and member training programme.
- The reintroduction of environmental and climate impacts in committee report templates.
- The reinstatement of carbon budget reports.
- Robust carbon/sustainability appraisals for all significant plans and strategies and
- Establish a cross - department task group to draw up the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

3.2 Second Climate Change Strategy – 'Cool Wirral 2'

The Climate Change Strategy for Wirral (Cool Wirral) has been renewed by the Wirral Climate Change Partnership and is being prepared by public consultation, prior to being launched this year. The initial Climate Change 'Cool Wirral' Strategy was established in 2014 by the Partnership and endorsed by the Council as a member of the partnership and to confirm its commitment to tackling climate change. The Cool Wirral Strategy was established to run for 5 years from 2014 to 2019 and each year since the Council has reaffirmed this commitment through the Local Government Association's Climate Local

Declaration initiative. As part of this the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee have received an update of progress with delivery of the strategy's actions.

The initial Climate Change Strategy concludes this year and therefore the Wirral Climate Change Partnership has been reviewing and updating the strategy. Through the updated strategy the Partnership fully acknowledge the Climate Emergency Declaration and the updated strategy sets out the strategic direction and required change for Wirral to be carbon neutral by 2050 in line with the declaration. The Climate Change 'Cool Wirral 2' Strategy is due to go to public consultation this autumn before being launched later this year.

3.3 Response to the Climate Emergency Declaration

The Council is developing a Climate Emergency Action Plan to address the commitments and requirements of the resolution passed in July 2019. The Action Plan will set out the long-term direction for the Council and provide a route map for the changes required to address climate pollution to enable Wirral to become carbon neutral and resilient to unavoidable changes to the climate.

In order to quickly respond to the Climate Emergency Declaration and establish the framework for developing the Climate Emergency Action Plan, officers have established an initiating action plan. A summary of the initiating action plan is set out in **Appendix 1**. The Council is making progress with the actions set out in the initiating plan and the position is evolving and developing quickly. The following are highlights of what has been actioned or is currently being planned as part of the plan.

3.3.1 Awareness and Understanding of Climate Emergency

In declaring a climate emergency, the Council has made tackling climate change a corporate priority and Climate Emergency Action Plan will reflect this. Therefore, it is crucial that everyone connected with the Council has a full understanding of why a climate emergency has been declared and what is required in order to respond to it. The Climate Emergency Declaration resolution makes clear that everyone has a responsibility for delivering the requirements of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and must understand this responsibility. Therefore, an important early action in response to the declaration is for everyone to receive briefing and advice on climate emergency and its implications. This will enable the planning and realignment exercises to be undertaken across the Council and specifically for the all-party taskforce to be established.

The following events are scheduled or being planned to raise understanding of climate emergency:

- Cabinet and the Council's senior management team (SMT) are attending a climate emergency workshop focusing on the use of the SCATTER tool (Setting City Area Targets and Trajectories for Emissions Reduction) on 16th September.
- It is proposed that all Council Members will attend SCATTER tool workshops.
- Senior officers will attend a climate emergency event this autumn to develop the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- A climate emergency briefing programme will be developed for all Council staff.
- The Council's reporting template is being amended so that the environment and climate implications of all recommendations or officer advice are set out.

- The establishment of a Climate Emergency Team, which includes a dedicated graduate placement for climate emergency, to coordinate the 100-day action plan and establishment of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

3.3.2 Community Support and Engagement

The Council is developing public awareness campaign on climate emergency and to offer support to residents wanting advice on how to take action. A climate emergency task group has been established to drive the public awareness campaign. This will include the following:

- The establishment of a dedicated Climate Emergency website.
- Climate emergency information to be available at all Council events and meetings.
- The Eco Schools programme will be overhauled to address climate emergency.

3.3.3 New Strategies and Policies to Support Climate Emergency Action Plan

The Council is developing a range of new policies and strategies that will form important elements of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, these include the following:

- Tree Strategy will set out a commitment to planting trees to increase Wirral's tree canopy cover, the strategy is due to go out to public consultation.
- Report to Cabinet on recommendations for using sustainability appraisal to improve decision making.
- Policy for encouraging pollinators and wildflowers along hedges and verges.
- Review and update the Council's procurement policy to reflect the climate emergency.
- Proposals for developing electric vehicle charging provision.

3.3.4 Urging Partners to Declare Climate Emergencies and Pledge Action

The Council recognises that addressing climate emergency cannot be achieved in isolation and requires full collaboration and a joint approach from all partner organisations. Therefore, as part of the Climate Emergency Action Plan all partner organisations will be urged to commit to climate emergency declarations and make pledges for action. As part of the development of the Climate Emergency Action Plan it is intended to hold a climate emergency summit of partners to plan joint approaches and pledge action. The Council will also work with other Liverpool City Region authorities on climate emergency and with the Mayor to deliver regional environmental and climate priorities.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are financial implications to declaring a climate emergency and setting a new corporate priority for the Council. Therefore, as part of the process for developing the Climate Emergency Action Plan, an assessment of the funding requirements for the delivery identified actions and commitments will be undertaken.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications of this update to Committee on the response to the Climate Emergency Declaration.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

There are resource implications to declaring a climate emergency and setting a new corporate priority for the Council. The process for developing the Climate Emergency Action Plan will identify areas of responsibility, new resources requirements or realignments.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

The Council's corporate risk register is being amended to reflect the climate emergency declaration and the reasons behind it in terms of the risk climate disaster has on the Council, Wirral as a place and its residents. The Climate Emergency Action Plan and working jointly with partner organisations and residents will form the mitigation to such risk.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

There will be public consultation delivered as part of the development of climate emergency related strategies such as the Tree Strategy and the Wirral Climate Change Partnership's Cool Wirral 2 Climate Change Strategy. Work will be undertaken as part of the development of the Climate Emergency Action Plan to identify approaches to ongoing resident and stakeholder engagement on climate emergency issues.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the development of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

The Climate Emergency Declaration was resolved with all party support at Council in July due to extreme concern about the impact of climate change and the urgent need for action. This report provides Committee with an update on the Council's response to the declaration and progress with the development of the Climate Emergency Action plan called for as part of the declaration. Therefore, the actions and planning set out in this progress report are designed to have a positive effect on the environment and climate. In future all reports and briefing notes produced on behalf of the Council will set out the environmental and climate implications of the recommendations or advice being put forward.

The content and recommendations contained within this report are expected to:

- Reduce emissions of CO2

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Summary of the Climate Emergency Initiating Action Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Extraordinary meeting – Environment and Climate Emergency.	15 July 2019

APPENDIX 1 - SUMMARY OF THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY INITIATING ACTION PLAN

1	Update corporate carbon reduction target to reflect the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change's recent recommendations that Wirral needs to eliminate CO ₂ pollution by 2041 at the latest.
2	Agree process to set senior leadership climate emergency responsibility and accountability across all Council services.
3	Launch public consultation on the Cool Wirral Partnership's new climate change strategy (Cool 2).
4	Report to Cabinet to recommend the endorsement of the Cool Wirral 2 strategy.
5	Commence review of the Council's environment policy to reflect the climate emergency.
6	Commence action to make the Council's operations and services 'paperless.'
7	Agree mechanism and format to re-establish annual Council carbon budget reporting.
8	Introduce a revised energy management system based on the re-established carbon budget.
9	Set ambitious short-term targets for the further roll-out of renewables and low carbon energy across the Council estate.
10	Continue programme to upgrade the Council's remaining street lighting stock to LED lamps.
11	Prepare a report for the Council on proposals for developing electric vehicle charging provision.
12	Conduct a cycle audit of all council premises.
13	Commence a pilot exercise to extend the use of electric vehicles across the Council's fleet, as well as for a feasibility study into utilising pedal-powered and electric-assist pedal-powered vehicles for local travel needs.

14	Ensure that the environment and climate implications of all committee decisions are considered by amending the Council report template to include an 'environment and climate implications' section.
15	Report to Cabinet on recommendations for using a sustainability appraisal to improve decision making.
16	Review and update the Council's purchasing policy to reflect the realities of responding to the climate emergency.
17	Commission an investigation to identify initiatives to enable the planning system and Local Plan to assist in the Council's response to the climate emergency.
18	Review the Council's catering and food contracts to reduce meat consumption and expand vegetarian and vegan options.
19	Review recycling facilities at all Council locations and establish required infrastructure to support improvements.
20	Support partners from the community and social housing providers to develop and operate projects to enable reuse and repair of furniture and other bulky items.
21	In partnership with MRWA, conduct a pilot and feasibility study regarding the introduction of additional materials to the kerbside recycling service.
22	Establish a tree strategy following a consultation exercise.
23	Submit a bid to the Urban Tree Fund.
24	Initiate a major tree-planting initiative across Wirral.
25	Amend the Council's corporate risk management strategy to reflect the climate emergency and its implications for the way the Council functions and delivers services.
26	Deliver a climate emergency workshop for the Council's Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet utilising the SCATTER emissions reduction model.
27	Encourage Council Members and staff to make public pledges of personal commitment to take action in response to the climate emergency.

28	Update the Council's website and intranet to reflect the climate emergency declaration and 100-day Action Plan and provide a clear list of actions residents can take in response to the climate emergency.
29	Establish a network of Environment and Climate Emergency Champions within the Council's workforce.
30	Create a Climate Emergency promotion resource pack and equipment for utilisation as part of community events and roadshows.
31	Mobilise the Eco Schools scheme to help schools address the climate emergency.
32	Develop and launch a climate emergency communications strategy and programme to explain to the public what the climate emergency declaration means and promote understanding and action.
33	Develop and launch a climate emergency staff training programme and information roadshow.
34	Deliver climate emergency training workshops for all Council members utilising the SCATTER emissions reduction model.
35	The Council Leader to write to the Prime Minister requesting additional powers and funds to address the environment and climate emergency.
36	Establish a cross-party climate emergency task group to provide strategic leadership and oversee the development of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.
37	Direct the Council's climate emergency task group to urge all partner organisations to declare a climate emergency and identify and implement required action.
38	Report to Cabinet on capturing the economic opportunities and green jobs that can be realised through a low carbon economy.
39	Deliver an all Council service planning event for senior officers and heads of service to plan and develop the Climate Emergency Action Plan.
40	Conduct research and produce a plan on planting in areas in the Wirral to attract pollinators with specific emphasis on: cost and maintenance; advice on suitable areas; area for suitable trial; and, proposals for consultation regarding further areas where this could be introduced.
41	Utilise the Graduate Programme to introduce more staff resources to the Council's climate emergency response.

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Participate in the Wirral Earth Festival to raise awareness of the climate emergency.