

Report to: Place Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 18 September 2019

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Climate Change

Purpose: To consider two Notices of Motion calling for the County Council to declare a climate emergency and the scope of a potential review of climate change.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) agree that the principles of the Motions as set out in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2 of the report are supported;
 - 2) recommend the County Council to agree the adoption of the Motion set out in paragraph 3.1; and
 - 3) note the scope set out in paragraph 3.4 and consider whether to undertake a scrutiny review of climate change.
-

1 Background Information

1.1 The following Motion has been submitted by Councillor Bennett:

“East Sussex County Council:

supports the aim and implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals;

declares a ‘Climate Emergency’;

will build upon the work we have undertaken to date. We will use our Environment Strategy to provide a strong unified voice in lobbying for support to address this emergency, sharing best practice across East Sussex and more widely through other partner; and

will, with our Environment Strategy partners we will set out a clear plan of action not only to reduce our carbon emissions but to enhance and protect our environment.”

1.2 The following Notice of Motion has been submitted by Councillor Webb:

“East Sussex County Council:

(i) recognises the Climate Emergency and will commit resources where possible and will align its policies to address this;

(ii) will set a target of carbon neutrality from its activities and those of its trading companies by 2030 using the Carbon Trust framework, with an Action Plan for achieving this;

(iii) will report annually at the May County Council Meeting on its progress towards the target; and

(iv) will work with partners and contract providers and will investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment, as well as writing to central government with respect to the emergency to request funding to implement swift appropriate actions in response.”

2 Supporting Information

2.1 The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a call for action by all countries to ‘end poverty and protect the planet’. Agreed by world leaders at the United Nations (UN) in 2015, the 17 SDGs are not legally binding but all signatories are expected to contribute to them internationally and take ownership domestically by driving delivery through their own policies, plans and programmes. Each of the SDGs has a set of targets and indicators. East Sussex County Council’s (ESCC) policies and work programmes support a number of the SDGs, for example Goal 4 on ‘quality education’ is supported through our Excellence for All strategy 2017 – 2019 and Goal 13 on climate change is supported through our progress in reducing our corporate carbon footprint and supporting businesses to do the same. Further details are set out in appendix 1.

2.2 The 2018 report by the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that “rapid, far-reaching, and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society” will be required in order to limit a global temperature rise to 1.5⁰C above pre-industrial level. Modelling indicates that to achieve this requires an estimated 45% reduction in global CO₂ emissions by 2030 from 2010 levels. Even half a degree above that will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, mass extinctions of animal species, and extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people. The predicted impacts in East Sussex include an increase in heat-related deaths, particularly amongst the elderly, disruption and higher costs to businesses and service providers caused by flooding, and increased costs for the County Council, for instance due to greater damage to highway assets from more frequent and intense flooding and episodes of extreme heat.

2.3 There is increasing evidence of a change in public mood on environmental issues. This is evident from the Extinction Rebellion protests, the rise of school and student protests around climate change, and the recent local and European election results. The County Council is also facing increasing pressure from partner organisations to see what more we can do to address specific aspects of climate change. For example, District and Borough Councils are looking to County to decide what role it wants to take in driving the local uptake of electric vehicles, and the environmental law firm ClientEarth has written to 100 Local Authorities that are developing their Local Plans to threaten legal action if they do not set out evidence-based carbon reduction targets to tackle climate change.

2.4 Many organisations, including Parliament, have declared a climate emergency, and in June 2019 Parliament agreed a new target, which is legally-binding on the Government, for the UK to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2050. There are currently no legally binding carbon targets on local government. However, over 200 Local Authorities have declared a climate emergency to date, though only a minority have committed to making either their administrative areas or just their own operations carbon neutral by 2030, with most Local Authorities either committing to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 or not setting a particular date. This probably reflects the significant uncertainty as to how carbon neutrality might be achieved, particularly as most of the large scale interventions required to achieve rapid and far-reaching change are driven by international and national financial and regulatory requirements. In East Sussex, Eastbourne Borough Council and Hastings Borough Council have committed to becoming carbon neutral towns by 2030, Lewes District Council has committed to its own estate becoming carbon neutral by 2030, Wealden District Council has committed to its own estate and the district becoming carbon neutral by 2050, and Rother District Council is considering declaring a climate emergency.

2.5 There is currently no clear pathway to carbon neutrality for the County Council's own operations, not least because technology is evolving at a rapid pace. In the absence of a clear pathway and an understanding of potential costs and benefits, it is recommended that the County Council commits to:

- 2.5.1 the principle of its own operations becoming carbon neutral by 2050, in line with the new national target;
- 2.5.2 carrying out modelling to understand the scale and pace of change required, the range of options available to achieving carbon neutrality, and the likely resource implications;
- 2.5.3 preparing 5 year carbon action plans, in line with the national approach set out in the Climate Change Act of 2008, to set out a package of short and medium term measures along the pathway to carbon neutrality. This will enable the County Council to review and update the package of measures to reflect changes in legislation, technology and access to finance, which could enable the target date of 2050 to be brought forward.

2.6 The key to dealing with the issues raised in the IPCC report is not rhetoric but action. The County Council has reduced emissions from its own activities by about 46% between 2008-9 and 2017-18, through implementing a wide number of measures, and has supported a range of programmes to enable schools, businesses and those in fuel poverty to reduce their carbon emissions. Further details are set out in appendix 1. In addition, the County Council has recently set up the Environment Board, which is accountable to Team East Sussex, to work with a range of partner organisations to update the 2011 Environment Strategy for East Sussex. The revised Strategy will provide an up-to-date evidence base, reflect the range of new national environmental policies and strategies that have emerged since 2011, and will aim to set out a clear plan of action for all members of the Board to work together to reduce carbon emissions as well as enhance and protect our environment.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The principles of the two Motions are supported, as the evidence of the need for action is urgent and Local Authorities play a significant role in leading by example and working with partners to shape a community response to these issues. To avoid confusion and establish a single proposal for Council to consider it is recommended that that Notices of Motion received from Councillor Webb and Councillor Bennett are combined into one cross party Motion, that this sets out a realistic target of carbon neutrality for those activities within the direct control of the County Council, and that this includes a commitment to develop a plan with partner organisations to reduce carbon emissions across East Sussex. It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee consider recommending that Council supports the following motion:

“East Sussex County Council:

- (i) supports the aims and implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.*
- (ii) recognises and declares a Climate Emergency.*
- (iii) will set a target of carbon neutrality from its activities by 2050, in line with the new target for the UK agreed by Parliament in 2019.*
- (iv) will build upon the work we have undertaken to date, will commit resources where possible and will align our policies to address the Climate Emergency.*
- (v) will set out a clear plan of action to reduce our carbon emissions.*
- (vi) will report annually at the May County Council Meeting on its progress towards the target.*

(vii) *will investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment, as well as writing to central government with respect to the emergency to request funding to implement swift appropriate actions”.*

(viii) *will use our Environment Strategy to provide a strong unified voice in lobbying for support to address this emergency, sharing best practice across East Sussex and more widely through other partners”.*

3.2 Some statements from the original Motions have not been included in the proposed combined Motion above for the following reasons:

3.2.1 ‘Trading companies’ have not been included because the County Council does not have any trading companies;

3.2.2 the ‘Carbon Trust framework’ has not been included because there are other frameworks that could be used which may be more appropriate;

3.2.3 ‘contractors’ have not been included because the County Council does not currently include them in its carbon management programme and because previous work to engage contractors was largely unsuccessful. However, the Scrutiny Committee could consider whether to expand the current scope of the carbon management programme to include contractors, once the practical and resource implications are better understood.

3.3 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the focus of a potential scrutiny review of climate change, or other scrutiny work on this subject. Topics are suitable for scrutiny when:

- There are unanswered questions that scrutiny could help answer;
- Scrutiny could have impact or add value;
- The topic is of high local importance and reflects the concerns of local people;
- Resources are available to conduct the review; and
- The Committee can realistically influence the issue, and the topic is not so broad as to make a review unrealistic.

3.4 It is also recommended that the following areas are considered for inclusion as part of the scope for a review, when the Scrutiny Committee determines whether to carry out a review of climate change:

- (i) The current evidence on the potential impacts, costs and possible benefits of climate change in East Sussex.
- (ii) The legislative, policy, financial and reputational drivers for change.
- (iii) The potential opportunities and challenges in mitigating and adapting to climate change in East Sussex.
- (iv) Examples of mitigation measures taken to date and planned by the following organisations and sectors:
 - a. the County Council in its own operations;
 - b. schools;
 - c. businesses;
 - d. other public sector organisations;
 - e. 3rd sector organisations;
 - f. residents.
- (v) The main adaptation measures taken to date, and planned, to address the effects of climate change by the same sectors as listed above. (Please note that in March 2019 the Place Scrutiny Committee reviewed a paper on climate change adaptation and agreed to a further review in 2024.)

RUPERT CLUBB
Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officers: Andy Arnold

Tel. 01273 481606

Email: andy.arnold@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Place Scrutiny Committee report on climate change adaptation (March 2019).

Appendix 1 – Actions by the County Council to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change

1. Background

1.1 Currently, there is no legal requirement for the County Council either to mitigate or adapt to climate change. Nevertheless, ESCC has implemented a number of pragmatic measures over a number of years, although these have not been articulated clearly in one place. Below is a summary of what the County Council has done to date.

2. Climate change mitigation:

2.1 Within ESCC:

2.1.1 The Business Services portfolio plan has included a commitment to reduce corporate carbon emissions by 3% per year for a number of years, which is in line with the previous national target of an 80% reduction between 1990 and 2050 and supports the corporate policy to make efficient use of resources. The new national target, set by government in 2019, is to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

2.1.2 Currently, ESCC's own carbon emissions are about 0.8% of the total emissions from the county. Between 2008-9 and 2017-18 ESCC reduced its emissions by about 46% by implementing a number of measures, including:

1. Changes to the way we work, for example through the Agile and SPACES programmes, which enable a reduction in travel through staff being able to be connected whilst working remotely, and enable a more efficient use of the organisation's buildings;
2. Improved and more energy efficient connectivity, for instance through server virtualisation;
3. Encouraging behaviour change, for example by providing the ICT equipment, tools and support to enable Members and staff to work digitally, and providing discounted bus travel and season-ticket loans to encourage the use of public transport;
4. Installing a number of energy efficiency measures in ESCC buildings through the £1m Salix invest-to-save fund and over 1.5MW of renewable energy generation on buildings. Measures include loft insulation, better heating controls, energy efficient street lighting, which have been supported with energy awareness workshops and good housekeeping measures;
5. Requiring energy efficiency improvements in key contracts, for example including performance indicators for street lighting and business mileage within the current highways contract.
6. Changing our approach to procurement to enable more goods and services to be delivered by local businesses, which reduces the transport impact of our supply chain.

2.2 Transport:

2.2.1 The County Council has invested in improving walking and cycling infrastructure in the county and secured Department for Transport (DfT) funding to deliver a number of schemes to increase the use of cycling and walking infrastructure and increased use of public transport. For instance, the Local Sustainable Transport Fund programme between 2011-16 and the current Active Access for Growth programme (2017-20) have delivered a range of measurable benefits, including reduced travel by private car, savings to businesses by lowering their transport costs and new jobs created, as well as a reduction in local carbon emissions. There are a number of co-benefits from such schemes, such as a reduction in congestion and local air pollution, and

health benefits through increased physical activity, which support the policy objectives of helping people to help themselves and driving sustainable economic growth.

2.3 Households:

2.3.1 The County Council leads the East Sussex Energy Partnership, which provides support targeted at the estimated 9% of households in East Sussex that are in fuel poverty, with the aim of reducing excess winter deaths and the number of households in fuel poverty. Since 2015 the partnership has secured over £1.8m of external funding and has delivered 1,850 Warm Home Checks, provided thousands of minor heating and insulation improvements and installed over 350 major measures such as new boilers, heating systems or insulation works.

2.3.2 The County Council is also a partner in the Sussex Tariff, which is a Sussex-wide partnership that encourages households to look at whether they can save money by switching their energy tariffs, and offers a 100% renewable electricity tariff through Robin Hood Energy.

2.4 Businesses:

2.4.1 The County Council has been closely involved in developing a tri-LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) energy strategy, which includes the South East LEP, Coast-to-Capital and Enterprise M3, and has supported feasibility studies for new local projects, such as how to use the heat from the Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) in Newhaven. ESCC has also offered free energy audits and match-funded grants to local businesses to improve their energy efficiency and cut their carbon emissions for over 10 years. We are currently bidding for further external funding to be able to continue to deliver this programme for a further 3 years.

3. Climate change adaptation:

3.1 The purpose of adapting to climate change is to help minimise the effect of impacts that cannot be avoided, as this will ensure greater capacity to cope with, and recover from, these impacts. The County Council is addressing the need to adapt mainly through its statutory functions for Emergency Planning, Public Health and as the Lead Local Flood Authority. In addition, a number of partner organisations also have policies and plans in place that contribute to ensuring that East Sussex is likely to be reasonably resilient to the effects of climate change in the short term (e.g. the NHS's national Heatwave Plan and the Environment Agency's Shoreline Management Plans).

3.2 The main measures taken to date by the County Council to adapt to climate change are:

- 1) Working through the Sussex Resilience Forum to prepare for emergencies such as the effects of extremes of weather, including storms, flooding, heatwaves and droughts. For example, early warnings from the Met Office and the Environment Agency about extreme weather events are cascaded to front line staff, vulnerable residents and schools before they occur to enable appropriate action to be taken.
- 2) Business Continuity Planning by every County Council department to ensure the rapid and co-ordinated re-establishment of priority services after events that cause service disruption.
- 3) Future-proofing corporate buildings by including appropriate measures stipulated in the Corporate Sustainable Buildings Policy, such as the installation of sustainable drainage systems and orienting buildings to minimise solar gain.
- 4) Through our statutory Lead Local Flood Authority role, ensuring that drainage schemes in new developments are designed and implemented in a way that accounts for the impacts of climate change (i.e. increased intensity of rainfall events).

- 5) Working with the Highways service provider to implement the new national Code of Practice on taking a risk based approach to managing highway infrastructure assets ('Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice'). This includes using the local Flood Risk Management Plans, produced by the County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority, to take a targeted, risk-based approach to maintenance of drainage assets to reduce the risk of flooding.

3.3 Climate change is a complex and long term challenge, characterised by considerable uncertainty as to exactly what types and severity of impacts will occur when and where. Consequently, the Place Scrutiny Committee agreed in March 2019 to request a 5-yearly review of the County Council's climate change adaptation measures, to ensure these remain up-to-date and proportionate to the risks, with the next review to take place in 2024. This will enable us to learn from experience and growing knowledge about how best to adapt and to do so at least cost, to ensure service delivery and vulnerable residents and businesses are supported appropriately.