

Report to: Lead Cabinet Member for Resources

Date of meeting: 28 January 2020

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Petition for climate change

Purpose: To consider the response to the petition on climate change submitted to the County Council by the Lewes District Green Party

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to advise the petitioners:

- (1) That the majority of the actions requested by the petition are already being implemented/planned for by the County Council; and**
 - (2) Why the County Council has set a target for achieving carbon neutrality from its activities by 2050, but not 2030.**
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1 Background Information

1.1. At the County Council meeting on 15 October a petition was presented to the Chairman by Councillor O'Keeffe on behalf of the Lewes District Green Party. The petition calls on the County Council to:

- 1. Declare a climate emergency;*
- 2. Set a target for East Sussex to be carbon neutral by 2030 and put a plan in place within six months to achieve this aim;*
- 3. Put this goal at the forefront of all future decision making;*
- 4. Call on Government to support the Council to achieve this aim;*
- 5. Be pro-active as the education authority in ensuring the young people of East Sussex have a voice in shaping this zero carbon future;*
- 6. To support a series of county wide citizens' assemblies on the climate crisis and implement their recommendations;*
- 7. Commit to the principles outlined in the Wildlife Trust's Nature Recovery Network that puts space for nature at the heart of our planning systems in order to bring nature into the places where most people live their daily lives;*
- 8. Revise the transport strategy to reduce car use and put walking, cycling and sustainable transport at the centre of future plans for the county;*
- 9. Commit to a zero waste strategy and embed the principles of a circular economy into its future corporate plan.*

1.2. Standing Orders provide that where the Chairman considers it appropriate, petitions are considered by the relevant Committee. The Chairman has referred this petition to the Lead Member for Resources.

2 Supporting Information

2.1. The following sets out what the County Council has already done, and is proposing to do, to address the petition:

- 1) Declare a climate emergency: the County Council declared a climate emergency at its meeting of 15 October 2019.
- 2) Set a target and put a plan in place: the County Council has set a target of achieving carbon neutrality from its activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050, in line with the new target for the UK agreed by Parliament in 2019. The County Council:
 - a. did not set a target for 2030 because the Committee on Climate Change, which provides independent advice to government, concluded in May 2019 that a commitment to reaching net zero emissions earlier than 2050 is not credible.
 - b. Set the scope of its declaration to cover its own activities and not the whole county because the emissions in East Sussex over which it has either direct control or influence is limited.
 - c. Is a partner on the East Sussex Environment Board, which has set a long term aim for the county to be carbon neutral by 2050 or earlier. The board includes the environmental regulators, the two universities, and representatives of land managers, farmers, local authorities and businesses.
- 3) Put this goal at the forefront of all future decision making: the County Council's climate change declaration states that the County Council '*will align our policies to address the Climate Emergency*'.
- 4) Call on Government to support the Council to achieve this aim: the County Council's climate change declaration states that the County Council will write '*to central government with respect to the emergency to request funding to implement swift appropriate actions*'.
- 5) Ensure the young people of East Sussex have a voice in shaping this zero carbon future: the County Council organised an event for the Children's and Young People's Trust in November to begin to discuss climate change, and will be working with the new ESCC Youth Cabinet from January 2020 to help shape its campaign during 2020 on climate change.
- 6) To support a series of county wide citizens' assemblies on the climate crisis and implement their recommendations: the County Council will engage staff in the process of developing its climate change programme.
- 7) Commit to the principles outlined in the Wildlife Trust's Nature Recovery Network: the County Council hosts the Sussex Local Nature Partnership (LNP), which brings together approximately 25 organisations in Sussex from a range of sectors to conserve, enhance and expand Sussex's Natural Capital, and ensure that Sussex residents share in the benefits provided by healthy, well-functioning ecosystems. The LNP has developed a Natural Capital Investment Strategy, part-funded by the County Council, which provides a strategic assessment as to how and where best to focus resources to protect and enhance the stock of natural capital assets. The LNP is currently developing an investment plan, also part-funded by the County Council, with the aim of developing a pipeline of local natural capital projects.
- 8) Revise the transport strategy to reduce car use and put walking, cycling and sustainable transport at the centre of future plans for the county: the County Council already has a Local Transport Plan in place that seeks to deliver infrastructure and initiatives that support integrated sustainable travel. In part, this Plan has led to schemes and programmes such as the East Sussex Active Access for Growth Programme and improved cycling and walking infrastructure. However, we do recognise that the Local Transport Plan is now a number of years old and therefore the County Council will be reviewing this Plan in 2020/21. The revised version of the Plan will take into account issues such as the climate emergency, the move to electric vehicles and the continued need to increase sustainable travel.
- 9) Commit to a zero waste strategy and embed the principles of a circular economy into its future corporate plan: The County Council is currently waiting to see how the government responds to the consultation on the national Resource Strategy, which proposes lots of

positive steps to reduce waste to landfill, increase recycling and increase producer responsibility. If the draft Environment Bill which implements the Strategy is introduced next year, then this will result in the current County Council waste strategy being updated. It is at this stage that committing to a zero waste strategy and embedding the principles of a circular economy could be agreed.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Lead Member for Resources advises the petitioners:
- 1) That the majority of the actions requested by the petition are already being implemented, planned or considered by the County Council; and
 - 2) The reason why the County Council has set a target for achieving carbon neutrality from its activities by 2050 or earlier, but not specifically by 2030, is informed by the conclusion of the Committee on Climate Change set out in paragraph 2.1(2)(a).

RUPERT CLUBB

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LOCAL MEMBERS: All.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None