Wiltshire Council

Council

26 February 2019

Notice of Motion No. 13 Acknowledging a Climate Emergency and proposing the way forward

From Councillors Dr Brian Mathew and Gavin Grant

To consider the following motion submitted in accordance with the constitution:

Full Council notes:

1. Humans have already caused serious climate change, the impacts of which are being felt around the world. Global temperatures have already increased by 1 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels. Atmospheric CO2 levels are above 400 parts per million (ppm) [1]. This far exceeds the 350 ppm deemed to be a safe level for humanity[2] and will continue to rise if no action is taken.

2. In order to reduce the chance of runaway Global Warming and limit the effects of Climate Breakdown, it is imperative that we as a species reduce our CO2eq (carbon equivalent) emissions from the current 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes by 2030.[3]

3. Individuals can accept responsibility for living in a more sustainable way, but cannot be expected to make all these reductions on their own. Greenhouse gas emissions primarily result from burning of fossil fuels, incineration of the products of fossil fuels (waste plastics), unsustainable agricultural practices and the production of cement. Thus, governments at all levels: national, regional and local, must change legislation, standards, infrastructure and their approach, to meet the need to reduce CO2eq emissions and thus make low carbon living easier to achieve and the new norm, while protecting the most vulnerable in society from poverty.

4. The County of Wiltshire is already at the fore in the field of solar electricity generation, where it has the highest UK local authority area level of photovoltaic (PV) capacity at 581.1MW[4], the second highest number of installations 9193 (large and small), and the second highest actual generation of solar electricity 530,719MW(h) per annum. Wiltshire Council has installed 5 rapid electric vehicle (ev) charging points with a further set of fast charging points being installed at 15 Wiltshire Council car parks and it operates a fleet of 3 fully electric vehicles and 10 with ultra-low emissions, it has become largely paper free with its adoption of lap top computers for all councillors and staff. It has also reduced carbon consumption by consolidating its offices into fewer more energy efficient buildings, as well as increasing the 'roll out' of LED street lighting and within its offices.

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[1] https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/news/pdfs/7074.pdf

[2] https://sustainabilityadvantage.com/2014/01/07/co2-why-450-ppm-is-dangerous-and-350-ppm-is-safe/

[3] Fossil CO2 & GHG emissions of all world countries, 2017: http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/overview.php?v=CO2andGHG1970-2016&dst=GHGpc

[4] Regen SW

5. Unfortunately, current global plans and actions are not enough. The world is on track to overshoot the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit well before 2050 [5] [6], with potentially catastrophic consequences for life on Earth.

6. The International Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, published in October 2018, concludes that we have less than twelve years to act to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. It also describes the enormous harm that a 2°C rise is likely to cause compared to a 1.5°C rise and told us that limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C may still be possible, with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities. However, on our current trajectory we are heading for at least a 3°C rise[7].

7. Local Authorities around the world are responding by declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and committing resources to address this emergency[8] with over twenty Local Authorities signing up to a climate emergency in the UK alone over the past few months since the IPCC announcement.

Full Council believes that:

1. All governments have a duty to limit the negative impacts of Climate Breakdown, and Wiltshire Council recognises it cannot and should not wait for national governments of any political party to act where it can take action itself. Addressing climate change, habitat destruction and resource depletion are issues that we should all, regardless of political party, be taking a stand on.

2. It is important for the residents of Wiltshire that its Council commits to reducing CO2eq emissions and works towards carbon neutrality as quickly as possible.

3. While Wiltshire Council has been making efforts to reduce its carbon footprint, it still has much more to do to achieve carbon neutrality for the County, and recognises that further significant change is needed in the Council's approach to dealing with carbon emissions. For example, this could include the adoption of technology to convert waste plastic back into oil for re-use in new plastics rather than incineration, and to make the Council's transport fleet completely carbon neutral, and to encourage carbon free buses and public transport. It could also develop a policy to see all new house builds in the county are equipped with photo voltaic (pv) panels as standard and adopt a further pro renewable energy stance for suitable locations in the county. It could also promote more sustainable agricultural practices, particularly those that support soil health, thereby making farming part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

Wiltshire Council could also take a lead in campaigns to help residents reduce the production of CO2 with 'car share' and 'meat free days' and other appropriate actions.

For progress to be monitored there is need to conduct an urgent baseline carbon & renewables audit which can be used to judge future progress.

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[5] World Resources Institute: https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/8-things-you-need-know-about-ipcc-15-c-report
[6] The IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5ºC: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/

[7] https://climateactiontracker.org/global/temperatures/
[8] Including US cities Berkeley: https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/blog/2018/6/13/berkeley-unanimously-declaresclimate-emergency and Hoboken: https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/blog/2018/4/25/hoboken-resolves-tomobilize, and the C40 cities: https://www.c40.org/other/deadline-2020 5. Scope 1, 2 and 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol explained: https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions

4. The consequences of global temperature rising above 1.5°C are so severe that preventing this from happening must be humanity's number one priority.

5. Bold climate action by Wiltshire Council will demonstrate real leadership and can deliver economic benefits in the County in terms of new jobs, economic savings and market opportunities, as well as improved well-being locally and for people worldwide.

Full Council calls on the Cabinet to:

1. Acknowledge that there is a 'Climate Emergency'.

2. Pledge to make the County of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030.

3. Requests and supports the work of Overview and Scrutiny to set up a task group of the Environment Select Committee to develop recommendations and a plan to achieve this pledge along with undertaking a carbon / renewables audit.

4. Call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible.

5. Work with other local government authorities (both within the UK and internationally) to determine and implement best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5°C.

6. Continue to work with partners in the private sector and civil society across the County and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans.

7. Report to Full Council on a six-monthly basis with the actions the Council is taking and will take to address this emergency and reporting these against the Carbon / Renewables Baseline audit.