

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

2 February 2021

**Agenda Item 14 – Update on Council’s Response to the Climate
Emergency**

Statement and Questions from Bill Jarvis

**To Councillor Richard Clewer, Deputy Leader of the Council and
Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts & Tourism,
Housing and Communities**

Statement 1

The journey for Wiltshire Council to grasp the scale of the problems of tackling carbon emissions, mitigating the inevitable impacts of change on local communities and delivering substantial sequestration to absorb emissions has been well meaning but slow. A lot slower than many of its peers.

However, progress is being made.

What is lacking still is a plan to deliver real and substantial change.

The measures being put in place by the Council to mitigate its own emissions will help demonstrate the Council as a local climate leader. However, by your own admission, that reduction is less than 1% of the total in the County.

And the Council itself makes a mockery of its own efforts by driving forward with large scale building and infrastructure plans, the emissions from which will, unfortunately, dwarf any savings made in their own push to net zero.

You might say, it’s not in our control, we’re required to build new homes, developers will shy away from building net zero homes with easy active travel routes to the County’s facilities; we have to widen/build roads to cope with the increased traffic. None of this is true.

Have you ever objected to a central government infrastructure scheme or edict to build on the basis that it will destroy any chance you might have to deliver a zero carbon County?

Have you ever objected on the basis that they are in conflict with Central Government targets to achieve their own 68% reduction in emissions by 2030?

You, quite rightly say, we should provide leadership in this task, but this only works if you are actually delivering carbon reduction, not massive increases through development.

The “**Update on Council's Response to the Climate Emergency**” contains a great deal of information and analysis of the problems we face. However, it remains short on action.

By the time a firm Climate Strategy and Delivery plan is tabled and hopefully agreed, it

will be 2022.
That will only leave 8 years to deliver the change.

Wiltshire Climate Strategy Discussion Document contains excellent analysis, and we look forward to proper debate on all the issues it contains, but the Council, in the end, must deliver.

The summaries in the Strategy Development looking at “**What does a climate resilient and carbon neutral council look like**” and “**What Wiltshire Council can do**”? are again well thought through conclusions.

Interesting it does not say “....look like in 2030...”, which would give us a clue as to ambition.

And, will the Council fully commit “doing” the many things proposed?

You are asking for input to the thinking there and I’m sure there will be many of us in Wiltshire happy to contribute. Let’s hope that it’s a genuine request and that proper engagement can take place.

Time is of the essence. We are already 2 years into the journey to 2030 zero carbon, with some good deeds and many fine words and analysis.

You all have done an amazing job during the pandemic.
You’ve worked out how to bend the rules to make things happen at speed. Why can’t you apply that thinking to the climate and ecological crisis.

The answers are already in your papers, if you really look.
Treat this as the emergency it is before it’s too late.

Question 1 (21-78)

Can you please re-confirm that you will continue to seek to deliver a carbon neutral County by 2030 or will you pull back from the Full Council’s commitments made in 2019?

Response:

As per the [minutes](#) of the Council meeting on 26 February 2019, the motion as adopted still stands:

1. Acknowledge that there is a ‘Climate Emergency’.
2. Seek 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.

Question 2 (21-79)

Can you advise the timescale you have for delivery of “**What Wiltshire Council can do**” already identified in the Climate Strategy document?

Response:

The Discussion document in Appendix 1 explains that delivery plans will be required in addition to a climate strategy (section 8.1). This does not mean that the council is waiting for a strategy and delivery plans to be in place before acting on climate change. The update report shows that significant progress has been made since the last update in July 2020 and that this is happening in parallel to the development of a strategy.

Both the strategy and delivery plans will be shaped by engagement and feedback, which cannot be rushed if they are to be meaningful. Timescales for the delivery plans will be developed in line with the priorities identified through consultation. The first delivery plan to be developed will be for the council’s own footprint and we expect to have this draft plan by the end of 2021.

Question 2 (21-80)

Can you confirm that open debate will happen with communities regarding the Climate Strategy and Local Plan, giving local people a real say and not simply filling in the consultation online, for the information to be relegated to the bottom drawer on completion

Response:

The Local Plan is currently open for consultation and the Climate Strategy will be widely consulted on too. Recommendation 2 of the report is for the council to develop a Climate Engagement Plan, because to quote section 6 of the Discussion document: ‘It is crucial for the council to engage widely in order to be able to deliver on the climate agenda.’ A range of engagement methods will be used to seek feedback, and although face-to-face events may still be limited due to the pandemic we do want to encourage real discussion.

Question 2 (21-81)

Will you consider a Citizens Assembly to review key elements of the Climate Strategy and Local Plan development?

Response:

We have no plans to bring together a Citizens Assembly at this time.