



# Northumberland

## County Council

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

31 JULY 2019

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PETITION REQUESTING THE COUNCIL DECLARE A CLIMATE EMERGENCY

**Report of the Interim Executive Director of Place, Paul Johnston**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Glen Sanderson, Environment and Local Services**

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### **Purpose of report**

To acknowledge the petition received requesting that the Council declare a climate emergency and agree the Council's response.

### **Recommendations**

**The Petitions Committee is asked to:**

- **note the issues raised in the petition; and**
- **note the Council approach to “Responding to Climate Change” as set out in the report to Cabinet and subsequently approved by full Council on 28 June and agree that this represents a comprehensive response to this petition.**

### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to all of the priorities included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021.

## **Key Issues**

A petition of 1,194 signatures has been received calling on the County Council to commit to reducing emissions from its own estate and activities. In so doing, it further calls upon the Council to:

1. Declare a 'Climate Emergency'
2. Pledge to make Northumberland County Council carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions
3. Call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible
4. Continue to work with partners across the county and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies
5. Report to Council within six months with an action plan identifying what steps the Council will take to address this emergency
6. Establish a committee of people representing local groups to oversee the action plan

## BACKGROUND

1. In 2015, the UK Government signed the Paris Agreement as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It marked a major step in tackling climate change by strengthening the commitments to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.
2. To meet this commitment, the Government set five-yearly carbon budgets which currently run until 2032. Four years on, the Government asked the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC) to reassess the targets based on the carrying out a detailed analysis as to the impact on global warming of each sector of the economy. This Committee has now recommended that the Government should enshrine in law the target of the UK reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
3. On 12 June 2019, the Prime Minister announced that the UK will enshrine in law its commitment to eradicate its net contribution to climate change by 2050. Accordingly, a statutory instrument was laid in Parliament to amend the Climate Change Act 2008.
4. Within this, the County Council fully acknowledges that it has a significant role to play in maximising its contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions - both in reducing its own carbon footprint and in promoting and facilitating wider behaviour change through its local leadership.
6. To this end, Cabinet approved the attached Statement of Intent as setting out the commitment and approach the Council will take to ensure its contribution is successfully maximised - both in terms of reducing its own carbon footprint and in acting as a community leader and place shaper.
7. The Statement of Intent outlines:
  - the Council's commitment to accelerate and expand its programme of investment and behaviour change so that by 2025, its carbon footprint will have been reduced by 50% from the 2010 baseline - with this target being kept under annual review with the ambition of continually improving its pace and scale; and
  - the Council's commitment to work with the Government to achieve carbon neutrality for the county of Northumberland by 2030, whilst appreciating that this will require a concerted national shift in behaviours and significant technological advancements.

8. Within the context of this Statement of Intent, Cabinet:
- acknowledged the significant progress made to date by the Council in responding to climate change;
  - agreed to declare a climate emergency;
  - committed to halving the carbon footprint of the County Council by 2025, with this target being kept under annual review with the ambition of continually improving its pace and scale;
  - pledged to work with the Government to make Northumberland carbon neutral by 2030 whilst appreciating that this will require a concerted national shift in behaviours and significant technological advancements;
  - agreed to produce a comprehensive and costed Action Plan for the next 3 years that clearly demonstrates the initial phase of delivery by which the Council will meet its above carbon reduction management commitment and work toward the wider carbon neutrality pledge;
  - agreed to maintain oversight of delivery of this Action Plan through regular progress reporting and the full engagement of the cross-party Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
  - agreed to expand the existing officer Climate Change Steering Group responsible for developing and delivering the Action Plan to include representation from other relevant partner organisations, including local groups;
  - agreed to maintain the Council's leadership in responding to climate change with the suite of tangible, practical actions being complemented within the Action Plan with clear steps aimed at:
    - raising staff awareness as to the importance of this agenda and the changes it will bring to how we currently operate; and
    - defining how best to engage the wider community in its ongoing development and delivery
9. This approach was subsequently endorsed as Council policy at full Council on 28 June. As such the Council has demonstrated its commitment to responding to climate change and fully responded to the petition.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Policy</b>	Responding to climate change is central to the future of the county's quality of life and as such is fully consistent with the Council's Corporate Plan
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	The Statement of Intent outlines issues and potential actions that have financial implications. Some of these are already built into revenue/capital budgets as appropriate with the forthcoming Action Plan will provide more details of any additional spend requirements
<b>Legal</b>	n/a
<b>Procurement</b>	The approach by which the Council procures its goods and services has a role to play in responding to climate change - the implications of changes to the current approach will be outlined in the forthcoming Action Plan.
<b>Human Resources</b>	n/a
<b>Property</b>	A significant part of the Council's carbon footprint relates to the operation of our estate, particularly in terms of decarbonising heat. Any additional measures deemed necessary to meet the Council's carbon reduction management commitment will be detailed in the forthcoming Action Plan
<b>Equalities</b>	(Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	The Council's response to climate change recognises that there are considerable risks associated with ongoing global warming and as such accelerated steps in responding to this need to be taken at a national and local level.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	n/a
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The forthcoming Action Plan will outline proposals for how the Council will engage residents in tangibly supporting and taking responsibility for the contribution they can make to reducing carbon emissions.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	The central purpose of this report is to confirm the approach the Council will adopt in leading and promoting an ongoing process of carbon reduction.
<b>Wards</b>	ALL

**Background papers:**

Responding to Climate Change, report to Cabinet, 11 June 2019

**Report sign off**

	initials
Finance Manager	AM
Monitoring Officer/Legal	HL
Human Resources	AM
Procurement	TP
I.T.	n/a
Director	PJ
Portfolio Holder(s)	GS

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