

ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 25th November, 2019
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present:

Councillors:	Mrs J Cooper	T. Kearon	A. Parker
	G. Heesom	M. Olszewski	M. Reddish
	M. Holland	B. Panter	J Tagg

Officers:	Jayne Briscoe	Democratic Services Officer
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Also in attendance:	Phil Butters	Director of Estates and Development
	Professor Zoe Robinson	Professor of Sustainability in Higher Education

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the Chair (Councillor G White), Councillor Fear who was represented by Councillor Parker, Councillor Jones, Councillor Rout and Councillor T Johnson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CLIMATE EMERGENCY MOTION

The Executive Director of Operational Services submitted a report following a decision of Council (03/04/2019) to acknowledge that there was a climate emergency and the role this Authority would play in addressing its adverse effects.

The report noted that the Council aimed to make Newcastle under Lyme a carbon-neutral borough by 2030 for both Borough Council activities and Borough wide and that this was more radical than the UK Governments target of 2050 and that the implications of this may be an issue that Scrutiny Members might wish to understand more fully, as work develops.

In terms of the Governments position, on 12 June 2019, the Government announced that the UK would eradicate its net contribution to climate change by 2050 and it is understood that the Government intended that a statutory instrument would be laid before Parliament to amend the Climate Change Act 2008, in order to implement the announcement. This would mean that the UK would be the first G7 country to legislate for net zero emissions and is likely to introduce statutory responsibilities upon all levels of government, including District Councils.

The Director suggested that as part of their work members might wish to assess the extent to which this new legislation would require Council to act, and how this relates to the already stated commitment and aims of the Council in relation to carbon neutrality once more information was known. There was no indication at this stage

whether the Government would provide funding to progress this work or whether it will be left to each local area to identify funding opportunities. If funding was not made available, this could present a major barrier to the achievement of carbon neutral aspirations.

In conclusion the Director referred members to the Council report which set out the resolutions made at Council and the action required of this Committee to examine and recommend to Cabinet a plan of action to achieve the ambitions.

The Chair introduced Professor Zoe Robinson and Mr Phil Butters from Keele University.

Professor Zoe Robinson presented to Committee on the scientific measurements and data which led to the declaration of a climate emergency, explained what carbon neutral meant, what measures were being introduced and what the Borough, its partners and residents could do.

Members engaged in the discussions with examples including concerns about deforestation and the need to ensure ethical procurement and, in relation to the need to eat less meat, change the vegetarian option to a meat option. As a consumer humans could buy music as a service rather than an object.

In terms of an individual response one of the most important measures was to insulate their own home, this also had related implications for local authority building stock. Acting collectively the residents of N-u-L could deliver a community energy project.

Members of this Committee asked for clarification on the relationship with the climate change action group and pointed out the requirement to hold the Executive to account in respect of the requirements set out in the Council resolution.

All members agreed that representatives from Keele University be invited to share their expertise.

Agreed: That a task and finish group, including representatives from Keele University and other experts to be determined, be established to progress the actions set out in the report of the Executive Director – Operational Services now submitted; the terms of reference to be agreed at the next meeting of this Committee.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

5. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

Chair

Meeting concluded at 8.20 pm