

**EXTRACT OF DRAFT COUNCIL MINUTES FROM MEETING ON  
14/10/19**

**9. 'CARBON NEUTRAL CHELTENHAM - LEADERSHIP THROUGH STEWARDSHIP'**

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services introduced the report. He explained that in February 2019, Full Council unanimously called on the Cabinet to declare a Climate Emergency. As part of the motion, Council requested that a report be presented back within six months, with the local actions the Council could take to help address this emergency. The report therefore outlined the actions needed and an indicative timetable.

He advised that the project was being undertaken by Simon Graham, who was the Head of Innovation at DCA and knew Cheltenham well having worked at a local company where he drove the implementation of a sustainability programme. The work had been split into two work streams, the first was focused on achieving a carbon neutral council and would be led by the Executive Director of People and Change and the Cabinet Member Corporate Services. The second workstream would focus on the development of a carbon neutral borough and would be overseen by Director of Environment and Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment.

He explained that, in order to develop the report, meetings and interviews were conducted with a range of officers from across the council, key Members, a number of external organisations including GCHQ, Superdry and the LEP and key partners including Gloucestershire County Council, Ubico, the Cheltenham Trust and the emergency services. A public assembly was also held to hear residents views.

The report outlined a number of initiatives that the council could take to become carbon neutral by 2030, these included introducing a zero carbon sports and leisure experience, upgrading the crematorium to zero carbon operation and rolling out zero emission fleet. The roadmap also outlined a number of major community initiatives such as a Cheltenham Standard, Cheltenham Green Deal and Cheltenham Energy.

He acknowledged that the roadmap would need to be developed in to more detailed and deliverable action plans and they would need to establish what impacts the initiatives would have on the priorities already set out in the council's corporate plan.

He noted the steps that the council had already taken to proactively reduce carbon emissions, including the installation of PV systems on CBH housing stock which provide enough electricity to power around 350 homes and also offer savings to the customer. He also confirmed that the council had reviewed its electricity purchasing arrangements and all of the council's third party electricity now comes from renewable energy sources.

He highlighted that £150,000 of seed funding per year, had been recommended to fund additional staffing resources in order to create the capacity and capability to develop the business cases for the initiatives outlined in the roadmap and that the project would require a comprehensive approach to engagement involving residents, communities, businesses and partner organisations.

In the debate that followed, Members made the following comments:

- They commended officers and Simon for a fantastic and thorough report. They felt it was an important step in highlighting the council's intention to achieve its target and become carbon neutral by 2030 and also showed that the carbon neutral target was achievable.
- One Member suggested having a Cabinet Member solely responsible for climate change.
- Whilst government intervention was essential in tackling the problem, they noted the steps that could be taken at a more local level and welcomed initiatives such as the Cheltenham Standard and Cheltenham Green Deal. Members felt that the borough council had a duty to remind the public of measures they could take in order to reduce their carbon footprint, such as reducing food miles, eating less livestock intensive diet, using public transport and taking fewer flights.
- The council had a duty to lead by example and travel by euro star as opposed to aeroplane for twinning visits.
- One Member stressed the importance of attributing timescales to the initiatives as soon as possible.
- Members acknowledged the potential for making improvements through the planning process by focusing on biodiversity and environmental standards when applications come before the planning committee.
- They noted that the European Union does a lot in terms of tackling climate change and lessons could be learned from countries all across Europe that have ultra-low emission zones.
- One Member felt that we should be developing these initiatives further and look at how we can actually remove carbon-dioxide from the atmosphere. They hoped that the Cyber Park could attract businesses that do biological and geological sequestration, which involves the net removal of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.
- Members agreed that we need to start looking at hydrogen and the potential for using electric vehicles for the taxi fleet. Although, they acknowledged that the necessary infrastructure would need to be put in place to facilitate this.
- One Member highlighted that there would inevitably be many change projects running over the next decade that would impact on people's everyday lives and stressed the importance of advising members of the public on the benefits of any initiatives. They believed that the citizen's assembly concept had the potential to change the way in which the debate moves forward in Cheltenham. Members agreed that community engagement and involvement was key to meeting the targets.
- Members noted that a huge amount of money was being invested in hydrogen technology and retrofitting of social housing in the European Union and that the retrofitting of social housing has also received a significant amount of funding. They hoped that if the UK were to remain in the EU that CBC would have the opportunity to bid for some of the funding in order to retrofit our social housing.
- One Member felt that there should be more of a focus on the key polluters as consumers do not have the choices and power that large corporate organisations do.
- One Member highlighted the positive steps that the council had already taken, including the fact that over 50% of domestic waste was now being recycled and the significant investment by CBH in solar panels. They noted that the changes at Boots corner had

seen an increase in bus journeys by 250,000 trips per annum. A bid had also been put in to get electric buses in Cheltenham, which was an initiative that would be fully supported by the council.

- The Leader confirmed that they were in discussions with a view to appointing a Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Cabinet would be looking at funding for the initiatives at Cabinet on 5<sup>th</sup> November.
- One Member stressed the importance of having specific, measurable targets in place as soon as possible and also the importance of devising impact statements. For example, to identify the impact that reducing cars travelling in to the town centre would have on car parking income.
- One Member questioned what the benefit would be of creating a Cheltenham energy company as they reasoned that there are many commercial operators that would do that for us without the risk. They also questioned where the additional trees would be planted.
- One Member felt that there needs to be more of a focus on biodiversity and finding solutions that will work within the natural environment.
- One Member stressed the importance of drawing from work that has already been done i.e. Birmingham who are leading the way in hydrogen research and Cheltenham's twin town of Gottingen that has a fantastic green action plan.

The Director People and Change explained that they were in the process of working on a council social value policy. He also advised that they were looking at the resources required to take the project forward as part of the council's budget setting process; once that had been confirmed they could start looking at putting the roadmap in to action.

In response to Members, Simon Graham advised that:

- With regards to energy companies, there are a range of different business models that have been worked through and the proposal is to explore the best way of providing energy to the people of Cheltenham that is equitable and draws upon the lessons that have been learned in the past.
- As part of the carbon footprint that is reported, all travel by council officers e.g. for twinning is included and when somebody chooses to travel more responsibly that would be reported as a reduction in carbon. Therefore, there are already mechanisms to encourage more environmentally friendly ways of travel.
- Proposals are already in place to encourage more responsible modes of transport available to the people of Cheltenham.
- Already a number of engagements are taking place with potential and existing partners within other councils and public sector organisations, as well as conversations with Vision 21.

In conclusion, the Cabinet Member Corporate Services noted that community engagement was the overriding theme and that the initiatives would require significant cultural change. He stressed the importance of the borough providing leadership in this area and engaging

particularly with those in less affluent areas. He agreed that as the timeframe is so tight, it is important that they have clear timescales attributed to the initiatives in the roadmap.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY THAT:**

**Council endorses the findings of the ‘Carbon Neutral Cheltenham – Leadership through Stewardship’ report and its associated roadmap and recommends that Cabinet:**

- **Writes to the relevant Secretary of State, setting out the Council’s climate concerns, ambition and roadmap to take action, formally requesting Government to provide the planning powers, guidance and resources to local government to make the 2030 target feasible;**
- **Subject to available resources, considers setting a challenging interim community-wide target for achieving a reduction in borough-wide carbon emissions by 2025, to provide a clear signal of the scale of the local ambition to take effective action;**
- **Considers, prioritises and identifies the resources needed to deliver the actions required to meet the 2030 carbon neutrality targets;**
- **Develops an annual reporting process to effectively track progress;**
- **Delegates authority to the Executive Director People & Change and the Director of Environment, to develop the roadmap into a realistic action plan for project delivery, with appropriate business case development taking account of the impact on the Council’s financial position.**