

Overview & Scrutiny

Meeting date: 09 September, 2023

Member Questions for Climate Team (2 total)

1. Question from Councillor Chelin

There is fantastic work going on, a really collaborative approach with different organisations across the town, lots of successful funding bids, etc. What is the biggest challenge for the team and how best can councillors help to address this?

Response from Climate Team

The biggest challenge for the climate team links to the multi-faceted nature of addressing local climate change impacts and the scale of getting to net zero, particularly at a borough-wide level. There are two work streams, which each have a different set of challenges.

Firstly, decarbonising the council's own portfolio and assets. This requires significant up-front initial costs and a well-resourced team, encompassing a high level of technical knowledge and project management skill.

Secondly, to address borough-wide emissions, relies on wide-ranging societal changes. Elements needed to achieve net zero by 2030 lie outside of the council's direct remit, for example, the renewables mix in the electricity grid. Each business, charity, school, house and resident needs to be part of the net zero journey; whilst the council can clear barriers and provide support, there isn't yet clear and consistent messaging from central government prioritising climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Councillors have influence in their wards to champion the clear message that net zero is a fundamental priority, notwithstanding the resourcing challenges. In decision-making, the Climate Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT) now provides a template, which clearly evaluates the environmental and societal impact of potential projects and decisions. To embed the responsibility of considering the impact of Council actions and share it across the organisation, Councillors can reference and request evidence that the CIAT has been effectively considered and used proactively in project/policy development.

2. Question from Councillor Chelin

Related to the above – there is just so much going on that it can seem quite confusing. How does the team ensure that initiatives are complementary and not duplicating effort or competing for resources?

Response from Climate Team

The 'Climate Emergency Action Plan – pathway to net zero' has an indicative timeline linked to the actions within it, which informs the direction of the climate team in working towards the delivery of specific carbon-reducing actions.

The climate team initiated an internal Climate Staff Action Group, within which there is currently a member from most teams across the council. As the actions listed in the Action Plan span across different service areas and teams, these meetings are used to monitor progress of actions and discuss how to overcome barriers, as well as identifying opportunities for collaboration and reduced duplication of effort. There is also a specific Cheltenham Borough Homes and Cheltenham Borough Council meeting including both climate teams and managers, which achieves a similar purpose of monitoring progress, discussing how to overcome barriers and knowledge sharing. A monthly meeting also takes place to discuss energy usage across Council-owned operational assets with all the relevant stakeholders.

When considering external attempts avoid duplicated effort and outcompeting for resources, multiple meetings seek to successfully achieve this. The CN2030 meeting occurs monthly, chaired by the Climate Change County-wide Co-ordinators, with the relevant teams from each Council. The councils that are members of the Publica group also have monthly meetings to discuss ongoing projects, knowledge share and align working on projects across councils. The CBC Climate Team has a strong presence in the Cheltenham community, collaborating with Vision 21, aligning community and SME support through Planet Cheltenham and CheltZero.