

REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY



Report Reference C-21-15
Meeting Date 6th September 2021
Agenda Item 9
Prepared by Town Clerk

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In response to a request made at the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting in early May, the Town Mayor undertook to table an item at the next formal meeting of the Town Council to consider the declaration of a climate emergency.

This report contains a draft resolution for declaring a climate emergency, outlines work that other town and parish councils are undertaking pursuant to their own declarations and provides an overview of work the town council currently undertakes to tackle climate change.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Human influence over the last centuries has unequivocally resulted in a warming of the atmosphere, ocean and land and without significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions this century is likely to see warming of 1.5-2°C¹, the impact of which is already resulting in significant change to weather and climates across the planet.

Local authorities across the UK have declared a climate emergency and committed themselves to undertaking work to reduce their own impact on the environment and that of their wider community. Cheshire East Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and locally the town councils for Macclesfield, Bollington, Poynton, Congleton and Middlewich have each declared a climate emergency too.

Cheshire East Council has produced a Climate Emergency Toolkit for Town and Parish Councils as part of its work to achieve carbon neutrality. The toolkit outlines the need for a clear strategy and wide community engagement and participation to deliver the greatest impact; it also provides a range of examples of work councils in Cheshire East and across the UK are taking:

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/environment/carbon-neutral/climatetoolkit-v3.pdf

2.0 EXISTING POLICY AND EXAMPLES OF OTHER COUNCILS' WORK

2.1 EXISTING POLICY AND ACTIONS

Whilst the Town Council has not previously declared a climate emergency, in July 2020 it strengthened

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Headline Statements of the 6th Assessment Report

its Environment Policy, setting out its commitment to “continually striv[e] to reduce its impact on the environment and tackle climate change whilst delivering services for the community.” A pending action under this policy is for an annual environmental audit of council operations to be undertaken. The council has already adopted a number of actions which contribute to tackling climate change, these include:

- Moving electricity supplies to green energy providers
- The adoption of the Nature Action Plan through which it is planting hundreds of trees and creating new habitats
- Implementing onsite composting to reduce waste at the cemetery
- Installing a water butt at the cemetery chapel to reduce freshwater usage
- Adopting the Knutsford Cycle Action Plan to lobby for improvements to cycling routes and reduce car usage

There is undoubtedly more that the council can do (the above list is indicative not exhaustive), and an action plan will be created following the first environmental audit.

2.2 EXAMPLES OF WORK UNDERTAKEN BY OTHER COUNCILS

The following councils have each declared a climate emergency and this section outlines some of the work they are undertaking pursuant to this. More examples can be seen in the Cheshire East Council Climate Toolkit.

Weymouth Town Council

Undertook an energy audit and produced a decarbonisation action plan. It is working to go plastic free in all its operations and is replacing petrol/diesel vehicles/tools with electric where feasible. It maintains water refill stations on its beaches and has replaced all lighting with LED. It plans to develop an active travel plan for the town.

Henley Town Council

This council has appointed a part time (0.6 FTE) Climate Emergency Project Officer and is working to facilitate a range of projects across the community including energy audits for public buildings, on street EV charging points, creation of car clubs, promotion of working from home, tree planting, enhancing sustainable transport links and retrofitting solar panels on homes.

Chippenham Town Council

Established a Climate Emergency Advisory Group and hosted a series of ‘climate conversations’ for the community, on topics such as solar power, water conservation and transport.

Buckingham Town Council

Exploring the creation of local guides on action that individuals can take, supported the formation of a Climate Action Group for the town, changed to renewable energy contracts and exploring carbon offsetting for its activities. Installing solar panels on council buildings, installed water saving devices on council toilets and implementing recycling at council events.

3.0 DRAFT DECLARATION RESOLUTION

The following draft resolution is provided based on similar resolutions passed by councils in the UK:

This council recognises the catastrophic consequences of climate change and declares a climate emergency. The council believes that all governments have a duty to tackle climate change.

The council believes that actions are more important than words and commits to making the council carbon neutral by 2026 and to considering the climate impact in all its decision making.

The council will develop a Knutsford Climate Emergency Strategy to work with the whole community to reduce Knutsford's contribution to climate change by 2030.

4.0 DECISION REQUIRED

Council should consider declaring a climate emergency and determine what further action to take.