

Motion to commit to action to achieve Carbon Neutrality

Humans have caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt around the world. Global temperatures have already increased by 1 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels. Atmospheric CO₂ levels are above 400 parts per million (ppm). This far exceeds the 350 ppm deemed to be a safe level for humanity. In order to reduce the chance of runaway global warming and limit the effects of climate breakdown, it is imperative that we as a species reduce our CO₂ equivalent (carbon equivalent) emissions from their current 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes as soon as possible. The latest information gives us 11 years to take emergency action in order to prevent global warming greater than 1.5°C.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently released a report focussing on the impact that 1.5°C would have on the planet compared to 2°C. Above 1.5°C, the risks to humanity of floods, droughts, extreme heat and poverty become much greater. At current levels, the world is on course for 3°C of warming.

In addition to the IPCC report, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has called for government leadership to make the changes necessary to reduce carbon emissions. According to the WWF Living Planet Report 2018, *“Earth is losing biodiversity at a rate seen only during mass extinctions”*. The losses in vertebrate species - mammals, fish, birds, amphibians and reptiles - averaged 60% between 1970 and 2014.

Rochford District Council, and other local and regional authorities, have a role in contributing towards achievement of national, legally binding, carbon emissions reduction targets, as agreed at the 3rd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In the Rochford District the consequences of no action include:

- Increased risk of flash flooding and the resulting damages to buildings, roads and other infrastructure as a result of more extreme rainfall events.
- Health problems due to increased heat stress, particularly for vulnerable adults and children.
- Higher energy costs.

There are significant economic, social and environmental benefits to be secured from these changes. Both the Government and the Committee on Climate Change believe the shift to a very low carbon energy future represents the best course for the country's economic development while lowering the risk of fuel poverty and reducing air pollution.

The Council acknowledges:

1. That individuals cannot be expected to make carbon emissions reductions on their own. Society needs to change its laws, taxation and infrastructure to make low carbon living easier and the new norm.
2. That greenhouse gas emissions result from both production and consumption.
3. That the consequences of global temperature rising above 1.5°C are so severe that preventing this from happening must be humanity's number one priority.
4. That the time for business as usual is over, as acknowledged by the recent action of The House of Commons recently declaring a Climate Emergency
5. Bold climate action can deliver local social and economic benefits in terms of new jobs, economic savings and sustainable livelihood opportunities, as well as improved wellbeing.

The Council resolves:

To pledge to do everything within the Council's power to make Rochford District carbon neutral by 2030.

That initial funding of £200,000 from the Hard/Soft Infrastructure Fund, (currently standing at £2.8M) is ring-fenced to support scoping and delivery of the Rochford District Carbon Neutral 2030 Commitment. These funds will support action:

1. To set out a Plan of Action, including clear targets and transparent reporting, to develop District wide Locally Determined Contributions to complement National Determined Contributions in line with the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5C.
2. To include planning and support in the District for adaptation to the climate change that is already happening.
3. To develop a strategy for Rochford District Council to play a leadership role in promoting community, public and business partnerships for this Carbon Neutral 2030 Commitment throughout the District, County and region.
4. To work with partner bodies across the county to ensure that the climate emergency is adequately reflected in the development and implementation of all county wide strategies and plans.
5. To investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment.
6. To work with key partner organisations within the County and region to secure external funding.
7. To report back on an annual basis to Council on progress made.
8. To call on Central Government to provide additional powers and resources to support local and national action towards the 2030 target.

Proposer Cllr Michael Hoy

Seconder Cllr Chris Stanley

Supported by Cllr James Newport

Cllr Christine Mason

Cllr Diane Hoy

Cllr Stuart Wilson

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