



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Agenda
Item

4

Members of the Public's Questions to Environment Committee 6 June 2019

Questions from Rachel Beckett

1. Given the climate emergency, and working with Gloucestershire County Council, what strategies will you initiate and develop to ensure that by 2030 all citizens of Stroud District have reduced their carbon footprint as near as possible to zero (bearing in mind that many, such as myself, want to live a sustainable life but cannot afford in excess of £8000 for an air source heat pump or a new electric car)?

Reply

Firstly, it is correct to assume that moving to a Carbon Neutral District 2030 cannot be achieved by the District Council alone. It will require every sector of society including central Government to take responsibility to prevent future generations suffering catastrophic climate change breakdown. This can only be achieved through purposeful action in virtually every aspect of our lives.

It should be noted that as set out in the advice in Agenda Item 6 the report to be discussed tonight is only the Councils "initial" response to the declaration of a Climate Change Emergency.

However, future opportunities for joint working with the County Council could include transport planning, strategic planning, installation of electric vehicle charging points, potential joint ventures on Council owned land, potential use of retained business rate tax funds, joint bids to central Government funds when available particularly through the Warm and Well Partnership (which in the past has brought £32 million into the County to improve the energy performance of over 20,000 homes).

For individual homeowners cutting energy use by improving the energy performance of houses through prevention drafts, insulation of walls, roofs, floors and windows is likely to produce more carbon saving than switching to air source heat pumps unless one is already planning on replacing an "off gas" heating system such as oil or coal with air source heat pumps. There is currently some Government support for air source heat pumps via the renewable heat incentive which Severn Wye Energy Agency can further advise on.

It is not within the remit of Local Authorities to direct citizens' car purchase choices. There is some Government support for those who can afford new electric vehicles. The UK Governments' current policy is for all new cars to have zero emissions by 2040. However this is a rapidly changing market and many market commentators predict that there will be few if any new petrol or diesel cars on sale by 2030.

Low cost behavioural changes, such as walking or cycling when appropriate, incorporating more vegetarian or vegan food in to our diets, reducing flying, and shopping more responsibly can make significant contributions to reducing our own carbon emissions. For

residents, including Councillors wanting to monitor their own carbon emissions there are a number of carbon calculators to help as set out below:

- WWF calculator <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/> - simple but well researched, it is a good starting point.
- National Energy Foundation <http://www.carbon-calculator.org.uk/> - good calculator that shows calculations, conversation factors and assumptions.
- The Resurgence Carbon calculator <https://www.resurgence.org/resources/carbon-calculator.html> - this is a much more detailed calculator that although developed over ten years ago can provide a good insight to the emissions from your house and lifestyle.
- Carbon Trust <https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/tools/> - provides a range of tools and a calculator for small business.
- Carbon Footprint <https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx> - a more detailed commercial site which will offer you ways to offset you emissions with relatively low costs.
- UK Carbon Footprint <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uks-carbon-footprint> - how the government calculates the UK Carbon footprint.

2. Since local government decisions always come down to budget, and council tax is already a significant financial burden for less well-off households, how will you work with Gloucestershire County Council and central government to acquire additional funds for tackling the climate emergency, and how will you recalibrate the local economy to phase out carbon-hungry activities and reward carbon-neutral activities, while enabling citizens to continue to heat their homes and make essential journeys?

Reply

Unfortunately District Councils have limited powers to make significant adjustment to financial incentives to encourage or discourage particular activities to recalibrate local economies.

However, one of the roles of the proposed new post set out in Agenda Item 6 will work with the County Council, the Gloucestershire Local Economic Partnership and the Regional Energy Hub to maximize funding to support the transition to a low carbon economy.

The Council is unique in Gloucestershire in that it still owns its Council Housing stock and is in the process of updating its Housing Revenue Account Energy Strategy to consider ways to improve the energy performance of the Council owned housing.

It should however be noted that a report for Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Hargreaves et al 2013 <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/distribution-household-co2-emissions-great-britain>) found a strong correlation between carbon emissions and household income.

Therefore, it is likely that the greatest carbon savings from housing in the District can be achieved by those households with the greatest disposable income who will also benefit from the greatest savings in their energy costs.

3. Given that seismic changes are essential, and there is massive public dissatisfaction with politics and the inaction on climate change to date, are you prepared to change the way that local politics is done, so that the community is more engaged and there is a forum for creative and imaginative ideas from members of the public, and are you prepared to think big, be open-minded, and take all intelligent suggestions seriously even if the cost initially makes them seem impracticable?

Reply

In declaring a climate Change Emergency the Council has recognised that it can no longer be business as usual and whilst the action required to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 is well documented, how these actions are to be achieved is a considerable challenge.

The Council recognises that there is a need to engage with businesses, public sector organisations and the charitable sector from across the District. If the report under Agenda Item 6 is approved it is proposed that the Council approaches the Local Strategic Partnership to take a leadership role in the implementation of the Carbon Neutral 2030 agenda.

In addition to the active campaign groups within the district (e.g. Extinction Rebellion (XR), Greenpeace, 'YouthStrike4Climate - Stroud') lobbying for change in Government policy there is also considerable activity amongst community groups such as Transition Stroud, Transition Stroud Youth group, Stroud Carbon Neutral 2030 on practical measures to mitigate against climate change.

Since the District Council declared a climate change emergency it is very encouraging to learn at least nine Parish/Town Councils have already declared, or are planning to declare a climate change emergency (Stonehouse, Cam, Randwick, Chalford, Rodborough, Kings Stanley, Nailsworth, Horsley and Stroud).

They all seem to be developing their own ways of working but most seem to involve groups of both Parish/Town Councillors and members of their communities. There are clearly considerable opportunities for these groups to work together, work with businesses and groups within their areas as well as the District Council.

This Council will be open to innovative ideas and intelligent suggestions but it must be remembered that when dealing with public money the Council does have to follow the appropriate Government guidance and accounting protocols.