

AGENDA ITEM 4

PETITIONS

1. Lead Petitioner: Jennifer Leach  
Declare a Climate Emergency in Reading

- Humans have caused irreversible climate change to Planet Earth; the impact of this is already being felt around the world.
- We were warned last month by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) that we have **twelve years left** to limit this damage. If we do not, our world will most likely face runaway Global Warming and full Climate Breakdown.
- Our current plans and actions are not enough. We must act now, decisively and radically, to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Individuals cannot be expected to make this reduction on their own. Society needs to change its laws, taxation and infrastructure, to make low-carbon living easier and the new norm.
- City Councils around the world are responding by declaring a **Climate Emergency** and committing resources to address this emergency.
- This petition urges Reading Borough Council to do the same.

RESPONSE by Councillor Page (Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport):

I thank Ms Leach for presenting the petition on this very important issue. Later this evening I will be moving a Climate Emergency resolution, which I hope will receive substantial support and I attach a copy of the text below:

“Reading Borough Council (RBC) believes the world is now clearly in the midst of a climate emergency and that more concerted and urgent action is needed at local, national and international level to protect our planet for future generations. As such, this Council commits to playing as full a role as possible - leading by example as well as by exhortation - in achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.

RBC has a long standing commitment to action on climate change. A signatory of the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change in 2006, the Council was one of the first authorities to produce a detailed Climate Action Plan.

We note that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the Borough have fallen by 41% since 2005, which is greater than all but 19 of the 405 authorities in Great Britain, and that Reading Borough Council has reduced its own emissions by 53% since 2008.

Reading is urban in nature and the majority of emissions are from the use of fossil fuels and energy to run buildings and transport. Methane is also harmful to the climate. In Reading, these emissions are primarily from food, human waste and landfill. Gases from the latter two are captured and used to generate energy.

Despite good progress at local level, new evidence continues to emerge about the scale of the likely impacts of climate change. We are now aware through the launch of the Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in October 2018 that, in order to reduce the risks of severe climate change, all countries must act much more quickly.

This Council was proud to host the Model Climate Conference in December 2018 in this Chamber attended by students from local secondary schools, which coincided with the Katowice Climate Conference (COP24), and resulted in all the participating students stressing the urgency of climate action and pressing the Council, Government and others to act quickly.

RBC notes that we have already set out a number of ambitious policies and actions which will help to pave the way for the delivery of a Zero Carbon future such as:

- 'Zero Carbon Standards' within its draft Local Plan,
- The RBC Carbon Plan
- The forthcoming consultation on options, such as a Clean Air Zone, for improving local air quality and reducing congestion prior to publishing our draft Fourth Local Transport Plan
- The Reading Climate Change Partnership and Strategy - Reading Means Business on Climate Change
- The Launch of Reading Community Energy Society

This Council therefore instructs officers to report to the SEPT and Policy Committees on further potential measures that could accelerate the timescale for reducing carbon dioxide emissions to zero by 2030, but recognises that this date can only be achieved with substantial policy changes from national government.

Council also requests officers to ensure that forthcoming revisions to the Local Transport Plan and Climate Change Strategy (and any other relevant policy statements) reflect the urgency of this resolution.

The Council also calls on the Government to follow the recommendations of the Committee on Climate Change and radically improve the policy framework including, for example:

- detailed and practical proposals for retrofitting private and public housing stock, where the Green Deal failed.
- upgrade social housing energy efficiency to higher standards
- more support for renewable electricity and heat (and not taxing them unfairly)
- more support for establishing renewably powered heat networks
- more support for the smart technologies and storage and connecting to local power grids.
- more support for electric vehicle infrastructure and ownership, whilst incentivising the scrappage of older polluting vehicles
- more national investment in cycling and walking policies, and the expansion of public transport and car clubs using the latest zero carbon technology
- working with local businesses to improve their energy efficiency
- putting solar arrays on most of the suitable roof space and erecting more large wind turbines
- developing local energy storage facilities
- establishing national recycling standards on industry and supermarkets whilst supporting the roll-out of food waste collection and its use for the generation of clean local energy

- building a town centre district energy system which harnesses heat from local rivers or watercourses
- establishing the widespread use of ground-source heat pumps and potentially air source heat pumps
- amending local authority procurement powers to require the delivery of carbon neutral environmental strategies by private sector suppliers

The Council calls on the Government to accept its moral and ethical responsibilities and give Reading as soon as possible the additional powers and funding needed to ensure that Reading is carbon neutral by 2030.

The Council therefore instructs the Chief Executive to write to our local MPs, and to the Prime Minister and to relevant Government departments (DEFRA, MHCLG, DfT, and Treasury) setting out the above requirements and the need for new legislation and financial support to deliver this radical agenda.”