



ORDINARY COUNCIL

21st JUNE 2023

REPORT TITLE:	Declaring A Climate Emergency
REPORT OF:	Marcus Hotten, Director of Environment

REPORT SUMMARY

To consider and approve the proposed declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' by the Council and agree the next steps in developing the Council's response to Climate Change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. To Declare a 'Climate Emergency' acknowledging that the Council needs to urgently act on the causes and impacts of climate change;**
- R2. To confirm the Council's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon status by 2030 for its own estate, and by 2050 for the Brentwood Borough area, and pursue efforts to achieve net-zero CO2 emissions even earlier;**
- R3. To establish a Climate Emergency Sub-Committee of the Clean & Green Committee;**
- R4. That the Council lobby for further funding and policy changes at a national level to support the delivery of the Environment Strategy.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In December 2022 the Community, Environment & Enforcement Committee approved the Environment Strategy which sets out the high-level approach as to how Brentwood Borough Council can achieve its declared aims of achieving carbon neutral within its own activity by 2040 and borough wide by 2050.

However, the current administration has expressed concern that the Environment Strategy, in its current form, does not give significant weight to the gravity of the situation facing all communities across the planet when considering the need to address climate change. Therefore, it is proposed that a Climate Emergency is

declared and that the Council's target to achieve Carbon Net-Zero is brought forward to 2030.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s Special Report, published in October 2018, states that we have just twelve years to limit global warming to a 1.5°C. This can only be achieved with ambitious action from national and local government, the private sector and local communities, and requires that CO₂ emissions fall from their 2010 levels by 45% by 2030, reaching net zero by 2045.

A global temperature rise of 1.5°C is now considered the threshold for dangerous climate change. This was the finding of a Special Report by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which highlighted the impact that a rise of 1.5°C would have compared to 2°C, or more.

Human activities are estimated to have already caused a 1°C increase in average global temperatures compared to pre-industrial levels and we are already seeing the consequence of this warming through more extreme weather, rising sea levels and diminishing Arctic Sea ice, among other changes.

The IPCC's report warns that, whilst at 1.5°C climate impacts will be greater than they are at present and include some devastating consequences, even half a degree more will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty with some impacts, such as the loss of ecosystems, potentially being irreversible.

Furthermore, the report emphasises that current nationally stated mitigation ambitions, as submitted under the Paris Agreement (2016), are not enough to limit warming to 1.5°C and deep, rapid reductions in emissions will need to be made well before 2030, reaching 'net-zero' by 2050.

Because carbon dioxide (CO₂) accumulates in the atmosphere over time, the final amount of CO₂ left will depend on when the cuts have been made. A net-zero target allows for some form of offsetting by CO₂ removal or 'negative emissions', for example through afforestation or technological approaches such as carbon capture and storage. However, leaving the deepest cuts until closer to 2050 would mean a greater reliance on CO₂ removal techniques, the effectiveness of which are unproven at large scale. Given that the planet is currently heading for 3°C warming, keeping to 1.5°C will require "rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems" (IPCC,2018).

All governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to limit the negative impacts of climate breakdown, for the benefit of the population for which they are responsible. Therefore, UK Councils need to pursue ambitious reduction targets and seek to achieve carbon neutrality as quickly as possible.

Declaring a Climate Emergency is an acknowledgement of the scale of the problem and a recognition of the urgency for change. Limiting warming to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and local authorities, citizens and the private sector. Indeed, it will only be possible if change happens across all sectors of society. In particular, it will require Government to ramp up policies and introduce clear, stable and well-designed policies to cut emissions, backed by the financial mechanisms to deliver.

There are multiple benefits of transitioning to a low-carbon economy. These include benefits to people's health from better air quality, less noise thanks to quieter vehicles, more active travel, healthier diets and increased recreational benefits due to changes to land use. There are also a range of economic benefits associated with the development of low-carbon products and services including electric vehicles, finance and engineering and carbon capture and storage with potential benefits for exports, productivity and jobs. Conversely, the costs to the economy and society of not taking action are predicted to be significantly higher and pose a real threat to sustainable development and eradicating poverty.

The Council acknowledges that it has a role to play in taking action to reduce carbon emissions – both within its operations and by facilitating wider change through its role as a community leader.

Climate Emergency Declaration

The Council recognises that it has a role to play in helping to achieve emissions reductions, both from its own operations and by acting as a leader and catalyst for community-wide action. The Council acknowledges that achieving the necessary emissions reductions across the Borough will require strong support not only from Central Government but also from citizens, businesses, charities and other public bodies.

Therefore, it recommends that Council declares a 'Climate Emergency' and endorses the commitments to:

- Work toward a net-zero CO₂ by 2030 for the Council, and by 2050 for the Brentwood Borough area, and pursue efforts to achieve net-zero CO₂ emissions even earlier;
- Work with Government departments to ensure the necessary policies (such as tighter building regulations), powers and funding are put in place to achieve a net-zero CO₂ target;
- To establish a Climate Emergency Sub-Committee reporting into the Clean & Green Committee;
- To further develop the clear action plan of the Environment Strategy – setting out a costed suite of practical actions which demonstrate the

Council's initial phase of delivery toward net-zero CO2 emissions and which define its leadership role in promoting community- wide action;

- Build on work to identify opportunities for low carbon and renewable energy sources and storage.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Tim Willis, Director – Resources & Section 151 Officer
Tel & Email: 01277 312500 / tim.willis@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

At this stage there are no additional resource implications but progressing the commitment will require the Council to identify resources to drive the action plan and to invest in new measures, including those which will have a pay back in financial terms (as well as quality of life terms).

4.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Claire Mayhew – Joint Acting Director of People and Governance & Monitoring Officer
Tel & Email: 01277 312741/claire.mayhew@brentwood.gov.uk

There are no further legal implications arising from this report.

5.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager - Communities, Leisure and Health
Tel & Email 01277 312500 kim.anderson@brentwood.gov.uk

There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

6.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Phil Drane, Director - Place
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The implications are included within this report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Community, Environment & Enforcement Committee	December 2022