

Declaring a Climate Emergency

- [Meeting of Council, Monday 28 January 2019 5.00 pm \(Item 80b\)](#)

Proposed by Councillor Simmons, seconded by Councillor Wolff

Green member motion

Council notes that:

- a) the recent 2018 IPCC report states that we have just 12 years to act on climate change if global temperature rises are to be kept within the recommended 1.5 degrees Celsius;
- b) all governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to limit the negative impacts of climate breakdown, and local governments that recognise this should not wait for their national governments to change their policies. UK cities need to commit to aggressive reduction targets and carbon neutrality as quickly as possible;
- c) cities are well placed to lead the world in reducing carbon emissions, as their higher density opens up a range of sustainable transport, buildings and energy opportunities;
- d) the Council's absolute carbon emissions have reduced by just over 10% (10.17%) over the last five years – an average of 2% per year (*Source: Oxford City Council 'Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Local Authority own estate and operations: Reporting year 2017-18' (August 2018)*);
- e) although the Council's carbon emissions reduced in 2017/18 due to changes in the national grid, the Council's underlying energy and fossil fuel consumption actually went UP slightly - a 2.1% increase in electricity, a 0.8% increase in gas and a 5.4% increase in carbon from vehicle fuel. (*Source: Oxford City Council 'Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Local Authority own estate and operations: Reporting year 2017-18' (August 2018)*);
- f) although the City Council is managing to deliver absolute carbon reductions – despite the upward pressures on carbon emissions caused by changes in the structure of its operations and services and variability caused by factors such as the weather - it is not delivering the necessary absolute carbon reductions fast enough to meet either the UK's 2050 80% reduction target or the 1.5 degree Celsius target.

In light of the above, the Council therefore agrees to:

- 1. Join other Councils in declaring a Climate Emergency;**
- 2. Call on Westminster to provide the necessary powers and resources to make local action on climate change easier;**
- 3. Request Scrutiny to urgently review and make recommendations on revisions to the Council's 2017-2022 Carbon Management Plan in light of the recent IPCC report and the latest Oxford City Council data (published August 2018). This should include the setting of an early carbon neutral target for the City Council and a governance structure to ensure close monitoring of the Plan;**

4. Continue to work with partners across the city and region to deliver widespread carbon reductions.

Minutes:

Councillor Simmons, seconded by Councillor Wolff, proposed the submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note.

Councillor Simmons accepted the amendment from Councillor Hayes set out in the briefing note.

After debate and on being put to the vote the amended motion was agreed.

Council resolved to adopt the following motion, as amended:

Council notes that:

- a) the recent 2018 IPCC report states that we have just 12 years to act on climate change if global temperature rises are to be kept within the recommended 1.5 degrees Celsius;
- b) all governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to limit the negative impacts of climate breakdown, and local governments that recognise this should not wait for their national governments to change their policies. UK cities need to commit to aggressive reduction targets and carbon neutrality as quickly as possible;
- c) cities are well placed to lead the world in reducing carbon emissions, as their higher density opens up a range of sustainable transport, buildings and energy opportunities;
- d) the 5% carbon reduction target – as defined by our Carbon Management Plan - is by our implemented measures (including control and influence of council), not the actual emissions reductions. The target has consistently been met on this basis;
- e) the Council's absolute carbon emissions have reduced by just over 10% (10.17%) over the last five years – an average of 2% per year (Source: Oxford City Council 'Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Local Authority own estate and operations: Reporting year 2017-18' (August 2018));
- f) although the Council's carbon emissions reduced in 2017/18 due to changes in the national grid, the Council's underlying energy and fossil fuel consumption actually went UP slightly - a 2.1% increase in electricity, a 0.8% increase in gas and a 5.4% increase in carbon from vehicle fuel. (Source: Oxford City Council 'Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Local Authority own estate and operations: Reporting year 2017- 18' (August 2018)).

The increasing commercial activities of the Council provides upward pressure on the carbon emissions, but in the main services are being offered locally and at a lower carbon intensity than other commercial concerns providing the service from outside the area would be operating at.

f) This Council is only responsible for 1% of the city's CO₂ emissions and works in partnership to achieve ambitious city-wide targets to reduce emissions by 40% by 2020. Although the City Council is managing to deliver absolute carbon reductions –

despite the upward pressures on carbon emissions caused by changes in the structure of its operations and services and variability caused by factors such as the weather - it is not delivering the necessary absolute carbon reductions fast enough to meet either the UK's 2050 80% reduction target or the 1.5 degree Celsius target.

In light of the above, the Council therefore agrees to:

1. Join other Councils in declaring a Climate Emergency;
2. Continue to call on Westminster to provide the necessary powers and resources to make local action on climate change easier;
3. Encourage this Council to establish a Citizens Assembly made up of a representative range of Oxford citizens to establish the facts and make recommendations for our city.
4. Continue to work with partners across the city and region to deliver widespread carbon reductions.
5. Note that this Council is a forward-looking council at tackling climate change with a very strong record. The Council has installed enough solar PV across its estate to generate the equivalent of 10% of our annual electricity from onsite generation, reducing CO₂ emissions by 380tonnes/year and reduces bills by over £100,000/year). We currently purchase accredited green electricity for practically all sites and have a policy to buy green if the price is not more than 2% above the price of standard electricity. This Council uses a **£1m revolving loan fund** to reduced energy costs by over £400k/year.
6. Note that this Council works heavily in partnership, including coordinating the [Low Carbon Oxford](#) network – a local collaborative of over 40 organisations that are responsible for the majority of Oxford's CO₂ emissions and which have committed to reduce their emissions by 3% each year. The Council is participating in [OxFutures II Growing Oxfordshire's Low Carbon Economy](#), a multi-stakeholder partnership to grow Oxfordshire's low carbon economy through assisting SMEs to reduce energy consumption and implement energy efficiency projects.