



Briefing paper on the February 2020 Climate Action Plan documents

by Climate Emergency Manchester and supporters, for the benefit of Councillors and citizens

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Introduction

This briefing paper examines the Draft MCC Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 (to be discussed at Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee, 5 February 2020. Item 6, Appendix 2 - the 'plan' itself rather than the additional documents).

This document is not yet a plan. It is a several stages before a plan. The document provides insufficient detail on action taken over the past year.

- Even with a generous interpretation of what is proposed by 2025, only half the required carbon savings are visible.
- There is no quantification of city-wide emissions.

The present briefing paper makes a number of recommendations. The top three are:

1. Bring a comprehensive, fully-costed and quantified plan back to NESC in July 2020
2. Talk in tonnes. Use tonnes rather than percentages, consistently and in all climate documents
3. Report quarterly on the City Council's own emissions, in writing and verbally

Our questions and recommendations here focus on the City Council's emissions. This is not because we are only interested in scrutinising the Council, but rather because the information on city-wide emissions is so vague that it is not yet possible to ask specific questions or make firm recommendations. The briefing paper is divided into three sections: comments, questions and recommendations.

Disclaimers

This briefing paper is not intended to pre-empt or undermine the role of Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee or the independence of its members. The questions are by no means an exhaustive list. If a completed plan comes back to NESC in March, we will be in a position to ask a further set of more detailed questions.

Comments

- Where is the Zero Carbon Framework 2020-2038 and the two year plan (2020-2022) which were both promised in March 2019? If MCC has changed plans, it would be good to explain how, why and when this happened, and be transparent.
- The document is thin on detail
- The document offers little evidence of buy-in from other organisations, or how they will help
- The proposed actions are not quantified and so difficult to prioritise. We need to identify the biggest impact interventions now.

Questions

1 Buildings

- There is no explanation of how this £10.2m of the Carbon Reduction Programme (mentioned in the accompanying report by the Deputy CEO/Treasurer, section 5.3) is going to be spent: when and what buildings? It seems ambitious to hope to retrofit this number of homes in this amount of time
- **1.5** The document hopes to achieve a reduction of 8,400 tonnes by end 2020. However, grid carbonisation since 2014, when this was first quantified, means that some of the saving has already been realised. This is an example of how figures have not been transparently calculated within the document.

2. Transport and travel

- Why is there no mention of the grey fleet which makes up 1.4% of MCC direct emissions? Businesses have to account for grey fleet energy use under Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS) regulations? Discussions about grey fleet would be a way to engage with staff.
- **2.1** hopes to replace half the Biffa fleet. Why only half? What happens to the other half?
- **2.2** hopes to achieve 'influence' over staff travel choices. The council already has *control* over its own travel policy. There should be a ban on short-haul flights to destinations within the UK or to Paris or Brussels, at the least.

3. Reducing consumption based emissions and influencing suppliers

- **3.2** hopes to achieve a 'reduction' in indirect emissions from the Council's procurement and commissioning activity. But how much? MCC stated that reporting would start on this ten years ago, as did many other businesses and cities. Other cities has reported on this for some time.
- **3.3** sets out the ambition to be single-use plastic free by 2024. Where does this date come from? Where is the work to say that an earlier date is impossible?

4. Climate adaptation, carbon storage and carbon sequestration

- **4.1** hopes to achieve a target of 1,000 trees planted per annum. This equates to approximately 30 per ward, which does not seem sufficiently ambitious. Where is the calculation for how much carbon these trees will absorb? The Woodland Trust can help with this, as may Red Rose Forest.
- Which wards are particularly vulnerable to flooding? What emergency planning is underway for particularly vulnerable groups (e.g. the elderly, the sick, the isolated, the

young) in heatwaves)? Note the urban heat island effect, especially in the new, high density city centre.

5. Influencing behaviour and being a catalyst for change

- **5.1** hopes for the carbon literacy to be 'rolled out' throughout 2020. In the Climate Emergency declaration, the Council committed to carbon literacy having being completed by all elected members and staff by the end of 2020. Does 'rolled out' mean that the training programme will be underway or complete by this date?
- We struggled to comment further, because there was so little detail.

Recommendations

General

Manchester City Council should :

- **Talk in tonnes.** All percentages mentioned in all of its climate documents should also be expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide. The tonnes figure should be prominently displayed (e.g. a giant 'thermometer') in both Albert Square and Piccadilly Gardens.
- **Bring back quarterly carbon reports** about the City Council's own emissions, presented to not just Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee and the climate change Sub Group but also the other scrutiny committees. These reports existed between 2015-2018, so there was a precedent.
- **Issue a media release every quarter**, regardless of whether the news is good or bad. This is akin to a quarterly budget report. It should quantify in tonnes, how much has been saved and if the Council is on track, behind or ahead of schedule.
- **Make climate change a standing item** at both Full Council and the Executive meetings from this point forth.
- Commit to never talk about 48 percent reduction in its own emissions without always contextualising that the reduction was achieved in large part thanks to grid decarbonisation and the **effects of austerity**
- **Select one councillor in each ward as 'climate champion'**, an idea put forward in an October 2019 report by Climate Emergency Manchester.

By the July 2020 meeting, NESC need to have a fuller plan that is fully budgeted with carbon savings quantified in tonnes.

Specific

Buildings

- Whenever the Council disposes of a building, this decision should be made public (i.e. reporting to NESC), with data on a) the building's energy efficiency rating b) the building's emissions over the past three years, per annum, c) the agreements made between MCC the purchaser of the building regarding further reductions in emissions.

Transport and travel

- There should be a ban on short-haul flights to destinations within the UK or to Paris or Brussels, at the least.

Reducing consumption based emissions and influencing suppliers

- Be clearer on the criteria for social value and environmental standards.

Climate adaptation, carbon storage and carbon sequestration

- Bring emergency planning for particularly vulnerable groups (e.g. the elderly, the sick, the isolated, the young) in heatwaves) to scrutiny committees (including Health) and then communicate this planning broadly. Integrate into ward plans.

Influencing behaviour and being a catalyst for change

- The political leaders of Manchester City Council, including all members of the Executive, as well as the CEO and Deputy CEO/Treasurer, should give frequent speeches on the climate emergency to civil society and business.
- It is now seven months since the declaration of a climate emergency. The website of Manchester City Council is still largely silent on the climate emergency. This must change immediately.
- Partnership agencies must be encouraged, vigorously, to include links to climate emergency plans (both their own and the Council's) prominently on their website front pages.