

Climate Emergency Manchester

Report for Information

Report to: Necessary Extra Scrutiny and Capacity Building 27 May 2020

Subject: Council (in)action on climate change: Hung Drawn and Quarterly 03

Report of: Chloe Jeffries

Summary

Ten months after it announced a “Climate Emergency” (July 2019), Manchester City Council has achieved very little of substance against its commitments. This was the case *before* coronavirus knocked everyone’s plans sideways (see Hung Drawn and Quarterly 2, published in January). The crisis has thrown the lack of action into starker relief (HDQ03)

The risk of a brown (i.e. non-green) “bounce back” rather than a progressive and genuinely sustainable “bounce forward” is extremely high.

This report lays out some of the history behind the Council’s ongoing failure to act. It then lists the findings of the HDQ 03 report released last week.

It makes a series of recommendations about future actions the Council and citizens can (must) take in the coming months.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Vigorously discuss the contents of the report
2. Come up with a series of concrete and measurable objectives that can be implemented soon to slightly slow down the inevitable and accelerating slide towards the apocalypse.

Wards Affected: All

Contact Individuals:

Name: Chloe Jeffries

Position: Core Group Member of CEM, co-author of HDQ03

Email: chloe@climateemergencymanchester.net

Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available online.

Hung Drawn and Quarterly 3 (released May 2020)

<https://climateemergencymanchester.net/2020/05/20/new-report-shows-challenges-facing-manchesters-zero-carbon-recovery/>

Deeds not Words (22nd July 2019)

<https://climateemergencymanchester.net/2019/07/22/climate-campaigners-call-for-deeds-not-words-in-manchester/>

HDQ 01 (October 8th 2019)

<https://climateemergencymanchester.net/2019/10/09/new-report-manchester-city-council-a-dead-tortoise-society-on-climate-change/>

“**With Love And Rockets**,” published two weeks after HDQ01, and “calls on Manchester City Council to accelerate and broaden its climate actions.”

<https://climateemergencymanchester.net/2019/10/21/report-with-love-and-rockets-dozens-dozens-of-practical-deliverable-and-immediate-climate-actions-for-manchester/>

HDQ 02 (January 7th 2020)

<https://climateemergencymanchester.net/2020/01/07/6-months-since-manchester-city-council-declared-a-climate-emergency-virtually-nothing-done>

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Climate Change has been spoken of by policymakers as an important/urgent threat since 1988. Manchester has been at the forefront of making promises about taking real action about climate change for almost as long.
- 1.2 If glossy reports and promises could save the world, Manchester would be hailed as the saviour of humanity. They cannot and it is not. If we want a different future, we have to stop doing the same things over and over and expecting a different result.
- 2.3 This report gives a brief historical overview of climate policy (section 2). In sections 3 to 5 it accounts for what is going well, badly and what could be done.
- 2.4 The final section, 6, makes a series of serious recommendations, which will not happen, but show future generations just how much we knew about our actions, and just how culpable we are for what is to come.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Manchester City Council has been talking about environmental sustainability since 1992, when it successfully bid to host what was supposed to be the all-singing, all-dancing follow-up to the Rio Earth Summit. For a very long time the battles were over whether economic growth should be the be-all and end-all of council policy. Little has really changed (though the 'growth at all costs' faction has learned to cloak its deeds in the appropriate language, where possible
- 2.2 The first wave of environmental policymaking, which spoke of citizen engagement, came unstuck in the mid-1990s, over the questions of clean air in the city centre and the Airport (not just the second runway but also the proposal for a Passenger Tax. The Local Agenda 21 process was unilaterally destroyed by the Council in retaliation
- 2.3 In the late 2000s a second wave of specific policymaking on climate change gave us the "Manchester A Certain Future" process. The Council set two

headline targets - a reduction in the City's emissions of 41% by 2020, and the creation of a "low carbon culture." While the Council itself was able to hit a 41% target (thanks to austerity-related cuts), the City itself did not. The Low Carbon Culture goal was abandoned and thrown down a memory hole.

- 2.4 Starting in 2016, for various reasons, a new wave of promise-making/target setting began. In late 2018 the City Council committed the City to being "zero carbon" (always read the fine print) by 2038. It also committed to bringing a detailed plan showing the pathway to this to Council by February 2020. Oops.
- 2.5 In July 2019, because other UK core cities had declared a Climate Emergency, following a series of other cities and the growing external pressure (the Greta effect), Manchester City Council unanimously declared a climate emergency, committing the Council to a series of specific actions. Using the Freedom of Information Act, Climate Emergency Manchester has released a series of reports which reveal just how much spin and how little substance there has been since then. The Hung Drawn and Quarterly 03 report is the latest in this series. It forms the basis for sections 3 to 6 of this report.

3.0 What is going well

- 3.1 There were a series of policies due to be rolled out in April 2020. An update on the status of these is to needed as soon as possible, and it should be noted that even these fall into the category of 'more plans about plans'

4. 0 What is going badly

- 4.1 There was no report to the Executive about bringing the zero carbon date forward. This was a key element of the Declaration. The Executive have simply ignored it, pretended it did not exist.

- 4.2 The ward meetings to identify people interested in taking action on climate change have mostly not happened. Where they have, they have depended on the initiative of individual elected members.

5.0 Next Steps and measuring future progress

- 5.1 There simply isn't a plausible pathway for how the city gets to "zero carbon" (a loaded term) by 2038. The Council needs to engage beyond the current, overwhelmed, policymakers.
- 5.2 There is an urgent need for sequencing, prioritisation of actions, quantification and costing. This was true in February, but has only become more important in the light of Covid-19.

6.0 Recommendations

Climate Emergency Manchester has made many many recommendations (see for example the 'With Love and Rockets' report of October 2019, produced in consultation and collaboration with many people). Manchester City Council's have been resolute in their public silence towards these suggestions. Without an official statement explaining this silence, speculation will continue - is it fear of defend the defensible? Fear of losing control of the narrative (if they have not already?). Or merely the latest manifestation of a decades (centuries) long disregard by political and policy elites for citizens who dare presume to have opinions?

In the meantime, here are some more recommendations

- Embed the Zero Carbon Coordination Group into recovery discussions
- Undertake further work on costings ahead of the June / July budget refresh
- Roll out policies due to be launched in April 2020 as soon as possible
- Engage citizens meaningfully in a time of social distancing
- Scrap the Local Plan and start from scratch
- Create a Seventh Scrutiny Committee dedicated to climate policy