

Climate Emergency Manchester

Report for Information

Report to:	Necessary Extra Scrutiny and Capacity Building Monday 24th June
Subject:	Manchester City Council (in)action on climate change
Report of:	Climate Emergency Manchester

Summary

Manchester City Council is in the middle of an unprecedented budget shortfall, caused by coronavirus. It is also supposed to be progressing its climate change action, and working with partners to do likewise.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Vigorously discuss the contents of the report
2. Figure out how to better tackle the inertia and resistance of the Council, both its elected and unelected portions

Wards Affected: All

Something about Aaargh Manchester?

Contact Individuals:

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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.

[Climate Emergency Manchester reports](#)

[MCC and climate change for beginners](#) (February 2020)

[Deeds not Words](#) (22nd July 2019)

[HDQ 01](#) (October 8th 2019)

[HDQ 02](#) (January 7th 2020)

["With Love And Rockets"](#) was published two weeks after HDQ01, and "calls on Manchester City Council to accelerate and broaden its climate actions."

["Non Plans" Briefing Paper](#) (in advance of the February 2020 meeting of the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee)

[Manchester City Council](#)

COVID19 update report to NESC, June 2020 (especially section 12)

The other endless glossy guff that they produce.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report summarises where we have come from (Background), where we are now, section 3 and 4, and what is needed (section 5)
- 1.2 Mostly, though we should probably all be following the Cocker Protocol more than we currently are.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Manchester City Council has been making the right soothing noises about 'sustainability' and climate change since the early 1990s. There is a very obvious cycle of escalating public pressure, followed by Council promise to Take Action, followed by a policy, followed by excuses, followed by wilful collective amnesia, followed by more public pressure. Throughout the last 30 years of promises, civil society has faced the dilemma of how to put political/moral pressure on a council leadership that has quite deliberately hermetically sealed itself from most forms of scrutiny and pressure. Civil Society organisations (and individuals) have on the whole fallen into three categories - co-opted (i.e. become a fig leaf for the status quo), exhausted and defeated (usually within 1 or 2 years) or diverted (into national level campaigning, or else into other projects under the same 'name'). Ongoing scrutiny and challenge to the Council's growth at all costs agenda has therefore been ineffective.
- 2.2 In November of 2018 Manchester City Council said it would bring the 'zero carbon' date forward from 2050 to 2038, and would produce a "pathway" to 2038 which would be agreed in February 2020. In February 2020 they produced an entirely different document, covering 2020-2025. It was very very vague.
- 2.3 In the meantime, in July 2019, the Council was pressured into declaring a Climate Emergency. There were a series of actions the Council promised to take. Freedom of Information Act requests reveal that the Council has not undertaken these.
- 2.4 From March 2020, because of the coronavirus lockdown, the City Council's spending has gone up massively, and revenues have gone down. An emergency budget will be brought to the Executive in late June 2020. Right now, there's a £133m hole in the budget.

3.0 What is going well

4.0 What is going badly

- 4.1 Manchester City Council is failing to act quickly and in collaboration with other local authorities to create cycle lane provision for people who do not have the luxury of climbing into their cars. What action the council MIGHT be taking, or planning to take, is shrouded in secrecy, and hidden behind non-answer replies and drive-by tweeting.
- 4.2 There has been minimal action over the last year by the Council on climate change (see multiple CEM reports)
- 4.3 They have some “communication” strategy planned, which will probably be as successful as all the others.
- 4.4 Campaigning groups that you might reasonably have expected to take a firm public stance on pop-up cycle lanes have gone AWOL, either through reasons of co-optation, confusion or exhaustion.

5.0 Next Steps and measuring future progress

- 5.1 Manchester City Council and its community-interest company the Manchester Climate Change “Agency” will no doubt have some sort of charm offensive planned for the one year anniversary of the Climate Emergency Declaration in early July. They will doubtless take advantage of the emission factors for electricity (down 10%) and the short-term reduction of UK emissions because of COVID19 to create the (false) impression that real progress is being made, and that their actions are anything to do with that.
- 5.2 CEM and other groups must work to combat the creation of this false impression while SIMULTANEOUSLY building networks of individuals and groups with the skills, knowledge and resources so that the “pressure-promise-pitiful performance” cycle does not continue.

5.3 CEM will play its part via

- a) The petition for a seventh scrutiny committee
- b) Active Citizenship Toolkit

Which are the subject of a separate report

6.0 Recommendations

Let's discuss what actually needs to be done (by who, when) to create the conditions for a real response to climate change in this city.