



Open Letter - Citizen suggestions for the Scrutiny Committees of Manchester City Council

Dear Councillors,

Happy new municipal year. Welcome (back) to the first round of scrutiny committee after the local elections and thank you to those of you who signed our three [climate pledges](#).

We know that the second part of the scrutiny committee meeting in May is a work programme setting session. Although this is done in private between the committee and officers, scrutiny is supposed to reflect the opinions, wishes and priorities of Manchester residents. Councillors will of course be able to feed in the views of those in their ward. In addition, we at Climate Emergency Manchester have convened a range of citizens and local groups to identify broad themes and issues that they would like to see each committee examine in 2021/2. Some mention climate change; some relate to other parts of the Our Manchester Strategy and come from organisations focused on other issues.

The top suggestions we received for each committee are below. There will be other good ideas out there. We know how busy councillors are, but would welcome their consideration in the work programme setting session.

Climate Emergency Manchester and supporters

[Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee](#)

Proposal	Comments
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<p>Zero Carbon Communities Programme and scrutiny of Manchester Climate Change Agency, where its activities fall within Communities and Equalities remit eg. EDI accessibility to participation, community events in public places, funding opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take seriously the role communities will have in delivering carbon transition. ● Work needed in every ward to bring people into the climate conversation and develop solutions which are owned, both in terms of ideas and in terms of money, by the community. ● Ensure all groups are represented in shaping and owning these solutions, e.g. community renewables, developing green and blue spaces, and making the most of street space for active travel and greening. For inspiration, look at Plymouth Energy Community
<p>How to include climate breakdown implications to direct and indirect planning around the needs of communities and residents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish Communities & Equalities remit on climate to manage expectations of citizens. ● Ensure cross-scrutiny committee scrutiny on climate, so committees are not working in isolation.
<p>How the Council engages with communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider ‘accessibility champions’ - those who understand the council’s systems and processes and can help the average person navigate them to get the best outcome. ● Discuss how to address the perceived closed culture of the council which stymies meaningful engagement with community groups. ● Carry out a review of current forums and their ability to influence decision making. ● Consider citizen assemblies (with commitment to implement agreed decisions and outcomes) on certain issues

Digital and technological inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review the role of digital / technology in reducing social isolation, increasing access to public services, managing money etc. ● Consider support in place for those unwilling or unable to engage with digital life such as Digital Champion Volunteers
Policing of protests and public events (in aftermath of Policing Bill)	

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Proposal	Comments
The Airport - from cash cow to white elephant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What money to spend? ● What retraining for employees?
The Council's communications around climate - the website, the twitter feed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to make more user-friendly and provide up-to-date statistics - Leeds Observatory is a good example ● Language and images used are important -- are they apocalyptic / apolitical? Do they suggest the problem is far away?
Procurement - continuous reporting needed on how they are meeting their 10% environmental consideration (part of 30% social value consideration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Launch of this weighting has featured on R&G agendas but work programme for 2021/2 must ensue it is enacted despite post-covid constraints and must ensure it is socially/environmentally just
Retrofitting council buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How will the council buildings become carbon neutral? Is there a plan for this beyond the various high profile buildings that have received money. Crucially - when buildings are sold, they then contribute to the City's emissions, while moving off

	the Council's own books. Is any record now being kept of this (when we asked in 2016, it wasn't).
School catering suppliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider ways to encourage schools to bring catering back in house or other ways to improve access to sustainably sourced, nutritious ingredients.

Health

Proposal	Comments
Climate impacts on health (heatwaves, flooding) and specific threats for the 32 wards. What learning from other cities? Who is affected particularly (race, class, gender, pre-existing conditions, age by them. What does effective community resilience look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health inequalities of climate impacts - climate impacts, like all crises, affect the vulnerable first - disabled people will be affected first and foremost, as well as older people, those in poverty, BAME people etc This needs to happen both for the wider community as a matter of public health and for the social care system in particular Discussions could include (e.g.) housing energy efficiency that keeps houses colder in heatwaves and warmer in cold snaps as a public health issue and a way to prevent excess deaths Who are the trusted messengers in different communities across wards that can communicate climate risks and facilitate developing community resilience?
The mental health burden of an ever-more destabilised climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effect of continued climate distress on developing brains - anxiety and distress in youth causes lifelong changes in brain function and increases risk of severe mental illness. Mental health provision for those who have experienced disasters - lose house in floods, loose loved ones during heatwave or cold snap
Air quality and lungs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particular focus on young lungs and effects of those who have had COVID-19 and now have reduced or impaired lung function
Is Manchester's social care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to develop expertise and capacity now

<p>system equipped to deal with the climate crisis?</p>	<p>for dealing with climate-related issues in the social care system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explaining concepts connected to climate change like flooding risk and communicating behaviour changes to people with cognitive impairment. ● Drawing on the learning from the COVID response and the concept and process of ‘a meaningful offer’ of a vaccine. Communicating complex scientific ideas from ‘trusted voices’ in the community has been vital for COVID and will be vital for climate change ● Facilitating lifestyle and behaviour change where possible or necessary - eg ensuring that people with impaired mobility don’t live in a flood risk area, or that adequate joined-up data exists to ensure that if there is a flood warning that people with impaired mobility are safely evacuated ● Not forcing unnecessary behaviour changes on disabled people e.g. straw bans, high carbon inhalers etc! ● Making sure this links across other areas- eg accessibility of public transport links, accessibility of local food etc etc. Living up to the mantra, Better Outcomes Better Lives across the board! <p>Some precedent of climate and health and social care here:</p>
<p>Monitoring climate-related health issues over time</p>	<p>Looking at specific health issues and their connections to climate change, to provide for increased need of services or to connect to public health campaigns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skin cancer as prolonged heat events occur - Heat-related deaths - Cold-related deaths (connected, of course, to increased unpredictability of climate) - Food poisoning as increased heat allows bacteria to proliferate - Insect-borne illnesses - Respiratory illnesses and responses aero-allergens like pollen etc (both higher in times of extreme heat) <p>Again, some starting points here</p>
<p>Review the tendering process for health and wellbeing services</p>	<p>To minimise outsourcing of services and the way that services and staff move from organisation to organisation, outsourcing of services</p>

<p>Food and health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Subsidising and incentivising food outlets and shops which increase peoples' access to fresh, sustainably-sourced and nutritious food (both ingredients and ready-made) ● Increasing awareness of Healthy Start Voucher scheme and increasing uptake - increasing number of businesses registered to receive the vouchers and supporting them throughout transition to digital voucher/card system. ● Using growing, cooking and eating projects to increase mental and physical well being, provide long-term 'life skills' and reduce social isolation. ● Ensuring that each local area has an active community kitchen where people can access emergency food, learn cooking skills and cook together - all in line with food safety and food hygiene standards, and linked up with local surplus food suppliers and local growing projects.
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[Children and Young People](#)

<p>Young people's mental health and the climate emergency</p>
<p>Young people and green space</p>
<p>More indoor and outdoor spaces for young people to meet, socialise, exercise</p>
<p>Young people's environmental (and climate) activism - How can it be celebrated, supported without crushing it and using it as a 'youthwashing' figleaf</p>
<p>Supporting school's with campaigns for regular school streets and encouraging parents not to drive to school</p>
<p>Young people and skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scrutinising how young people leaving care are being supported to learn life-skills (digital, cooking, growing, accessing services etc) so they are empowered to live healthy lives and close the huge disadvantage gap

- Ensuring that vital life skills, including cooking-from-scratch, which can help forge a more resilient, healthier future are part of the school curriculum and actively encouraged outside of institutions.g. through holiday projects

More devolved children's services - more resource controlled at School level

Environment and Climate Change

Proposal
The climate "agency" and its efficacy over the long term (5 years). Its behaviour in the last year - gaslighting over the 26 percent budget blow out
The climate change "partnership" - what is actually being achieved? What could be achieved?
The 98 per cent of emissions that are not the COuncil. Who is keeping tabs? Who is trying to do anything?
The carbon literacy debacle - why has it taken ten years to get even half the councillors carbon literate?
Food packaging and food waste, growing projects in every ward
'Final mile' deliveries and increased provision / funding for bike couriers; sustainable transportation of goods
Meaningful and radical plans for LTNs and safer walking and cycling. Supporting local groups to campaign against negative opinion
Easier to access support and funding for community creation of small green spaces (not big complicated applications for just a few to get larger amounts of funding)
Ward plans? Making councillors accountable for getting key actionable changes in each ward plan.

Economy

Proposal	Comments
What is a green job ? What is actually being done?	Although there have been discussions of green jobs, more granular work and plans are needed

<p>Housing - both retrofit and new build - and how this will meet zero carbon targets</p>	<p>Housing and retrofit do appear on agendas, but often as part of other items. There is a need for a sustained discussion which also considers costs.</p> <p>From January 2021 Economy Scrutiny Committee: “The report to the Economy Scrutiny Committee included an explanation that there wasn’t enough money to carry out the planned retrofitting of existing homes by Northwards to meet Zero Carbon targets. Shockingly, this wasn’t discussed in the meeting.”</p> <p>https://climateemergencymanchester.net/2021/01/19/economy-scrutiny-committee-14-january-2021-reports-reveal-money-has-run-out-for-retrofit-no-questions-asked/</p>
<p>Asphalt and low-carbon procurement</p>	<p>Other Councils in the UK are investigating this and doing it. There are companies with good stories to tell about new products, and also the recycling and reusing of asphalt. Manchester is no, to our knowledge (a recent FOIA) doing anything concrete (sorry for the pun).</p>
<p>How do we encourage other organisations and businesses in Manchester (including the Airport) to radically reduce carbon emissions?</p>	<p>To stimulate the skills and businesses who can deliver what we need for the transition, the council needs to partner with other anchors in the city, forming an anchor network.</p>
<p>Low Traffic/Active Travel/15 minute neighbourhoods and School Streets</p>	<p>These issues are a source of considerable concern to citizens (who admittedly have different views).</p> <p>School street programmes close streets to cars outside of schools, and are shown to create a significant modal shift from cars to active travel. There are hundreds of such programmes nationally, and as yet one or two pilot projects (at best) in Manchester. The committee should scrutinise why MCC does not have a plan to make every street outside school a school street in the next five years.</p>

Running throughout the suggestions we received was a concern that the discussion of recovery from COVID-19 really does focus on the **green** and the **local**. How will the Council seriously emerge from the crisis / a recession in a way that does not replicate the economic injustices of the last 50 years? How will we invest in building a zero carbon economy (including decarbonisation of transport and energy)?