

**KIDDERMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
22nd January 2025**

PUBLIC REPORT TO TOWN COUNCILLORS

Agenda Item 10. Climate Change (Appendix 7)

To consider how the Council might react to climate change.

1. BACKGROUND

On 15th September 2021 the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to doing the following:

- Continue to work with our partner authorities to review and update all relevant policies
- To establish a Member Group to assist the future revision of the plan and report annually
- This Council agrees the target of reaching net carbon neutral by 2050 in line with the Government's target.

This review will help to re-focus the Council's aims and objectives regarding Climate Change and the target of Carbon Neutrality.

2. DISCUSSION/ COMMENT

2.1 The Climate Emergency

The Climate Emergency refers to the urgent and significant threat posed by climate change, which is primarily driven by human activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes. This situation has led to rising global temperatures, increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events (such as hurricanes, droughts, and floods), melting ice caps, and rising sea levels.

The consequences of the climate emergency are far-reaching, affecting ecosystems, biodiversity, agriculture, water resources, and human health, while also exacerbating social inequalities. Scientific consensus indicates that immediate action is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Recognizing the climate emergency calls for transformative changes across all sectors of society, including energy, transportation, and urban planning, to create sustainable solutions and foster resilience against the impacts of climate change. The urgency of this situation has prompted governments, organisations, and communities worldwide to mobilize efforts aimed at achieving carbon neutrality and mitigating environmental damage.

2.2 What can the Town Council do to respond to Climate Change?

The Town Council's Vision for 2025-2029 states that the Council will take actions to address the climate emergency, including the following:

- A. To Ensure the activities of the Town Council are carbon neutral by 2035.
- B. To promote biodiversity across our parks and open spaces
- C. To actively encourage and support actions that will make Kidderminster as a whole more environmentally sustainable.

A. TO ENSURE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL ARE CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2035.

A.1 Carbon Neutrality

Carbon Neutrality requires the Council to balance the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emitted with an equivalent amount of CO₂ removed from the atmosphere, resulting in a net-zero carbon footprint.

This is typically achieved through a combination of reducing emissions (by improving energy efficiency, using renewable energy sources, and altering consumption habits) and offsetting any remaining emissions through measures such as reforestation, carbon capture, or purchasing carbon credits.

The goal of carbon neutrality is to mitigate the impact of climate change by ensuring that the total greenhouse gas emissions produced do not exceed the emissions that are effectively removed or offset.

A2 Steps towards Carbon Neutrality by 2035

1. Assess Current Carbon Footprint

- Conduct an audit of current Green House Gas emissions across all operations of the Council
- Identify key areas of emission (energy use, transportation, waste, etc.)

2. Set Clear Goals

- Establish specific, measurable targets for reducing emissions
- Set interim goals leading up to 2035 to track progress

3. Energy Efficiency Improvements

- Invest in energy-efficient technologies and practices.
- Upgrade facilities with energy-efficient lighting, heating and ventilation systems, and appliances.

4. Transition to Renewable Energy

- Shift to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric
- Switch to Green Energy Suppliers
- Consider purchasing renewable energy credits (RECs) to offset energy use.

5. Sustainable Transportation

- Promote the use of public transportation, cycling, and walking.
- Transition Council vehicles and machinery to electric or hybrid models.

6. Waste Reduction and Management

- Implement recycling and composting programmes to minimise landfill waste.

7. Carbon Offsetting

- Invest in carbon offset projects that sequester carbon, such as reforestation or renewable energy projects in developing regions.

8. Employee Engagement and Education

- Foster a culture of sustainability within the organisation through training and awareness programs.

9. Partnerships and Collaboration

- Collaborate with and support other organisations, partners and stakeholders to share best practices and resources.

10. Monitoring and Reporting

- Establish a system for regular monitoring of emissions and progress towards goals.
- Report findings transparently to maintain accountability.

B. TO PROMOTE BIODIVERSITY ACROSS OUR PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

The Council has already made substantial progress in this regard. A Biodiversity Working Group has been formed and a Biodiversity Policy approved. The Council's Operational services team are delivering these objectives and aims.

The Biodiversity Working Group could be requested to present an Annual Report on Policy Delivery.

C. TO ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT ACTIONS THAT WILL MAKE KIDDERMINSTER AS A WHOLE MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE.

1. The Council could set up, support or participate in groups, partnerships or forums promoting these aims for Kidderminster.
2. The Council will include groups working for environmental sustainability in the criteria for Ward Grants

3. LEGAL OR FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- A. The Council has resolved to exercise the General Power of Competence and accordingly, there are no legal implications arising from the recommendations arising in this report.

- B. The budget proposals for 2025-26 include specific provision for expenditure on biodiversity works. £9,000 is also provided for Ward Grants (£500 per Councillor) which could be used to support projects promoting or delivering on these objectives.

Carbon emissions, waste minimising, green energy and reuse recycle alternatives should be criteria for the Council when awarding contracts or procuring goods and services.

4. THE TOWN HALL

The Town Hall will generate most of the Council's carbon emissions in the future. Reducing carbon emissions in old historic buildings presents several challenges due to their unique architectural features, materials, and preservation requirements.

A) Some of the difficulties encountered include:

- Building Materials and Structure
 - Some parts of the Town Hall use materials that may not be energy-efficient or compatible with modern insulation techniques, leading to higher heat loss or gain.
 - Structural limitations may restrict the addition of energy-efficient systems or retrofitting.
- Preservation Regulations
 - The Town Hall is a listed building which limits modifications, making it challenging to implement modern energy-efficient technologies.
- Aesthetic Considerations
 - Modern energy-efficient solutions may not align with the aesthetic qualities of historic architecture
 - Changes that alter the visual appearance of the Town Hall may not be acceptable.
- Financial Constraints
 - The cost of retrofitting historic buildings to improve energy efficiency can be prohibitive, especially when considering the need for specialised materials and techniques.

B) Measures to Address These Problems

- Conduct Energy Audits
 - Perform energy audits to identify areas of energy loss and prioritise upgrades that can be implemented without compromising the Town Hall's historic value.
- Implement Insulation Solutions
 - Use non-invasive insulation methods, such as interior storm windows or breathable insulation materials, to improve thermal performance while preserving the building's appearance.

- Utilise Renewable Energy Sources
 - Explore options for integrating renewable energy solutions, such as solar panels or geothermal heating, designed to blend with the building's historic character.
 - Procure supplies from green energy sources
- Preserve Existing Features
 - Focus on enhancing and maintaining existing architectural features, such as large windows, to improve natural ventilation and daylighting while minimizing energy use.
- Government Incentives and Grants
 - Utilise available funding sources, grants, and tax incentives aimed at improving energy efficiency in historic buildings to offset costs.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and should lead by example by working to achieve the objectives set out in the Council Vision 2025-2039, as stated above.

The Council is recommended to resolve as follows:

- i. To expand the remit of the Biodiversity Working Group to present an Action Plan to address the climate emergency, including actions to deliver the following:
 - A. To Ensure the activities of the Town Council are carbon neutral by 2035.
 - B. To promote biodiversity across our parks and open spaces
 - C. To actively encourage and support actions that will make Kidderminster as a whole more environmentally sustainable, and
- ii. That the Working Group presents the draft Action Plan for approval at the October meeting of the Council

Hugh Peacocke
Chief Executive Officer

17th January 2025.