

Climate Change

Task and Finish Group

March 2020



****“If we want things to stay as they are, everything will have to change”***

*spoken by young aristocrat Tancredi – in the novel *The Leopard*, by Tomasi di Lampedusa (*published 1958*)

Contents

Background and Committee Membership	3
Task and Finish Group Work Programme	4
Acknowledgements	4
Executive Summary	5
Recommendations	8

FULL VERSION OF DOCUMENT IS AT THIS [LINK](#)

Background and Group Membership

Approval to proceed with the Climate Change Task and Finish Group was confirmed by Scrutiny Management Committee in June 2019.

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to review the work currently being undertaken by Milton Keynes Council (the Council), including the Sustainability Strategy Action Plan, to achieve the Climate Emergency/*Making Milton Keynes the World's Greenest City* Resolutions passed by Full Council in January 2019. The Group was also to identify any further actions that could be taken to deliver this resolution and to meet the pledge to make Milton Keynes carbon neutral by 2030. It should be noted that this report and recommendations has been produced **without** sight of the Council's Sustainability Action Plan.

Terms of Reference for the Group may be found at Annex B.

The Task and Finish Group provided a dedicated, cross party scrutiny of the issues and was composed of Councillors Brackenbury, Brown, P Geary, D Hopkins, Minns and Trendall. Mr Alan Francis was co-opted as a member of the Group.

Roslyn Tidman served as the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

The purpose of this report is:

- (i) to outline the work the Group carried out to scrutinise the additional actions the Council needs to take to meet its resolution to be the *Greenest City in the World* and to be carbon neutral by 2030; and
- (ii) to present the Group's recommendations to Cabinet on 10 March 2020.

This report is the result of the Group's deliberations following a number of public evidence sessions and review of documents ranging from submissions from other local authorities, other relevant organisations and agencies and responses received from the public call for evidence. On behalf of the Task and Finish Group, I commend it to Cabinet and the wider Council.

Councillor David Hopkins
Chair, Climate Change Task and Finish Group
March 2020

Task and Finish Group Work Programme

The Group met on a number of occasions to consider the substantial amount of written evidence submitted, develop and draft the final report and recommendations as well as holding four public oral evidence sessions to consider evidence on the following themes:

Date	Subject
17 October 2019	Scene Setting
6 November 2019	Planning and Housing
23 January 2020	Energy
13 February 2020	Transport

The Group also reviewed an extensive amount of written evidence including best practice from other local authorities, reports by other agencies and submissions received as a result of the public 'Call for Evidence'.

The written evidence, along with the agenda, reports, presentations for each of the above meetings are available on the Council's website at:

<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/climatechangetfg-evidence>

Acknowledgements

The Group would like to thank the officers and invited witnesses who assisted with preparing documents and presentations, giving up their time to speak at the meetings and their assistance in supplying supplementary information when requested to do so.

In particular, the Group is grateful for the diligence and patience of Roslyn Tidman in managing the Group through an intense workload, and to Neil Allen for his technical knowledge and support to the Group.

The Chair would also like to thank those individuals who attended the oral evidence sessions and made substantial contributions at these sessions and those who presented to the Task and Finish Group and who submitted written evidence.

Executive Summary

Milton Keynes Council has responded to the climate and environmental crisis by setting an ambition to become one of the first carbon neutral cities in the UK by 2030. In line with Milton Keynes ambitions to lead on the responses to the climate emergency, the council established a Task & Finish Group to take evidence and report back on its recommendations to achieving sustainable carbon neutrality.

At the heart of this report is a suggested series of approaches that not only positively address wider environmental challenges, but which set out to improve the quality of life of Milton Keynes residents and build a new form of clean growth for our economy through a green, technical based industrial revolution. We have done so under four broad headings, namely;

- Areas Milton Keynes Council can influence directly through its own estate management and policy making powers;
- Areas where the Council can work with contractors, suppliers and delivery partners;
- Areas where the Council can work locally with residents, businesses and other organisations such as Parish Councils and the universities; and
- Areas where the Council can lobby such as other governments (national and local government and its agencies) both locally and nationally.

The report sets out ways in which the Council can address these ambitions under the following broad topic headings:

Housing

- Carbon neutral housing;
- Replacement of gas heating;
- Renewable energy;
- Smart homes – energy control; and
- Using mains water efficiently.

Transport

- Larger share of journeys via walking and/or cycling;
- Larger share of journeys via public transport;
- Moving the council fleet to zero carbon vehicles;
- Improving the vehicle charging and refuelling infrastructure(s);
- Sharing of vehicles; and
- Reducing the need for travel.

Waste

- Reducing the climate impact of domestic waste; and
- Reducing the climate impact of waste from businesses and other organisations.

Businesses and Business Buildings

- Carbon neutral organisations across Milton Keynes;
- Low carbon heating and cooling;
- Energy efficient workplaces;
- Renewable energy;
- Travel & transport plans;
- World class Superfast broadband infrastructures;
- Low carbon production;
- Waste management; and
- The Council leading by example.

Land Use and Planning

- A forest for Milton Keynes and tree planting borough-wide for canopy cover;
- Ensuring new homes and other new buildings are carbon neutral and climate adapted;
- Development designed to support zero carbon travel;
- Use of low carbon building materials; and
- Planning policies (MK 2050 and the new Local Plan) complying to building standards that address the climate emergency.

The science is clear; we need to act urgently to reduce our carbon emissions to limit global temperature rise to below 1.5°C, and so prevent the most damaging of impacts around the world and closer to home. It also shows we need to prepare for a changing climate. Climate Change is a long-term and universal problem that will affect everyone, particularly our most vulnerable residents. It is also one that significantly impacts the young of today and for generations to come. Our generation, elected by our local residents and entrusted to deliver a future that is sustainable for us all, are the stewards for the world that our young people will inherit. It is an essential role of local governments, such as Milton Keynes Council, to protect the security and welfare of those citizens who depend upon us. We are continuing our work to create a prosperous, fair and resilient borough for today, tomorrow and future generations to come.

Milton Keynes Council is determined to be at the forefront of what local authorities can achieve. The Milton Keynes Council Climate Emergency Declaration and the emerging strategies for energy and MK 2050 are driving forward the Council's progress and hopefully will inspire others to do likewise. The recommendations contained in this report are designed to make a real difference to people's homes, businesses and transport, as well as to the way the Council itself operates.

The Task and Finish Group believes the approach it is taking could bring enormous benefits to the residents, businesses and organisations of Milton Keynes. This report to the Cabinet and Council sets out the principles, priorities and definitions of its suggested approach, considering the evidence (written and in person) provided to it in public meetings and state-of-the-art knowledge gathered from across the borough. This is one of the most important and complex challenges any society has faced, which is why the Council voted overwhelmingly to reconsider how it operates and why it is so pleased to be working with partners and residents to provide a genuine borough-wide response that can engage and encourage everyone across the borough to take action. Every resident, business and organisation across Milton Keynes has a role to play in this and we all have something to gain by finding more sustainable ways to live and work. Together with our partners, the report sets out ways of creating new Climate Change and Energy plans for the next decade, to help set in motion this ambitious work and turn the Council motion into actions.

However, this is only the beginning. Together this Council, its partners and residents must take forward the ambitions of a locally responsible green global city. The Task and Finish Group believe this report represents a way forward on this vital issue and we believe that by adopting the recommendations contained in this document Milton Keynes will be on the right track to fulfilling these challenging ambitions.

Recommendations

Governance

1. That the Council aligns all its strategies and policies to place its carbon neutrality and greenest city ambitions at the heart of all its work effectivity establishing a 'green/golden thread' throughout all its activity and ensuring that the reduction of carbon emissions is assessed as an impact in all reporting and decision making processes.
2. That the Council ensures that the appropriate staffing is in place to enable the delivery of the work programmes associated with its carbon neutral and greenest city ambitions.
3. That the Council establishes a permanent cross-party Council Advisory Group or Scrutiny Committee to provide ongoing oversight to the delivery of the Sustainability Strategy Action Plan.
4. That a climate change dashboard/scorecard is developed to report regularly the progress of the Sustainability Strategy Action Plan and on annual carbon budget and reduction targets.

Sub text:

The Task & Finish Group agreed that the council, in support of a new climate emergency support team, focuses on delivery of the necessary work programme to achieve its ambitions to address the climate emergency at a local level and establish an internal technical officer forum in support of those ambitions. In addition, it is suggested that all Council reports and strategy recommendations contain a detailed and topic specific Impact on Carbon Neutrality – Dealing with the Climate Emergency section/paragraph.

It was agreed that the Leader of the Council should be required to report annually to Full Council on the progress made with the implementation of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and that the Council develops annual or bi-annual targets for carbon reduction in each directorate so that progress can be monitored on that basis.

Communication, Engagement & Education

5. That the Council establishes a dedicated web and social media presence to provide information and news in support of its ambitions for a carbon neutral Milton Keynes.
6. That the Council establishes or supports the establishment of a climate change advice service for businesses and residents.
7. That the Council develops and delivers a climate change public engagement programme to engage and empower citizens, Town and Parish Councils, community groups, schools and businesses, possibly through a Citizens Assembly, to enable everyone across the borough to achieve the aim of being carbon neutral by 2030. This would include establishing a Green Champions Community across Milton Keynes.

Planning Policy

8. That when the relevant planning policies are reviewed, for example Section 106 Agreements, that the Council look to maximise what it can receive for carbon reduction projects.
9. That the Council place carbon reduction and the consideration of environmental impacts at the heart of the new Local Plan and associated planning policy documents.

Sub text:

The Task & Finish Group discussed ways in which the Council develop and implement new planning policies (as part of the current review of Plan:MK) to achieve the council's objectives for Zero Carbon buildings and that in particular the Council should integrate the need to reduce car use into the review of the Local Plan – this would require a range of possible measures, including: considering denser housing developments with quality walking & cycling; priority car parking provision for electric vehicles; the provision of transport & delivery hubs to enable the use of cargo bikes and similar for deliveries; and support for climate adaptation measures such as green space and green architecture (e.g. roofs, walls, etc.). The Task & Finish Group also suggested that the Council should encourage local food production by the provision of a greater proportion of land to be used as allotments and small holdings to reduce food-miles.

Procurement

10. That the Council include an agreed sustainability/environmental statement within tender documents and implement a percentage weighting of supplier environmental performance in its supplier/contractor selection process.

Sub Text:

In effect, the Task & Finish Group suggests that the Council conducts a review of the carbon footprint of materials/products/services the council procure and identifies options to reduce carbon emissions from the Council's supply chain

Staff & Councillors

11. That the Council defines an optimum flexible working pattern and develops an enabling programme to reduce carbon impact of staff travel.
12. That the Council develops and delivers a climate change skills/learning and development programme for staff and councillors to improve understanding of carbon reduction and the wider environmental context.

Energy Efficiencies

13. That the Council assesses the energy efficiency of all of its properties including offices, social housing and schools, and retrofit these properties to Energy Performance Certificate C or higher and that all new council owned or commissioned properties are built to at least this standard.
14. That the Council speed the progress of and complete the delivery of the switch to LED smart lights action across Milton Keynes.
15. That the Council develops a Strategy to tackle Fuel Poverty Borough wide.

Transport

16. That the Council undertakes a fleet review of all its vehicles (plus existing and/or potential supporting infrastructures to move towards a fleet of ultra-low emission vehicles.
17. That the Council utilise all measures open to it to ensure that bus services are convenient, frequent, accessible, affordable, reliable, punctual and low carbon emitting and that this ultimately leads to reducing the need for private car use across the Borough.
18. That the Council commit to pursuing franchising powers under the Bus Services Act 2017.
19. That the Council delivers a borough wide programme to increase the number of journeys taken by walking and cycling.
20. That the Council considers the introduction of ultra-low emission zones where the air quality evidence suggests this mechanism would be beneficial.

Sub text:

The Task & Finish Group were mindful of the representations made regarding safer cycling and suggests that the Council undertakes a borough wide programme of safer cycling – including school safety training, redway safety (and repairs to the redway) with improved wayfinding to help develop (at an early age) a cycle use culture within the community. Parents often cite the lack of safety of the cycling journey to and from schools to justify car use. The Council needs to increase walking and cycling by challenging this perception - Add e-scooters to this programme of training (if/when they become legal).

That the Council launch a consultation on introducing Low Emission Zones/Clean Air Zones in areas across the Borough when air quality monitors record levels which indicate it is appropriate.

Housing

21. That in the review of the new Local Plan, and any related planning policy documents and building regulations, the Council prioritises policies to ensure that all existing and new residential and non-residential dwellings are built or retrofitted to achieve zero carbon standards.

Sub text:

The Task and Finish Group recognised that retrofitting the existing building stock in the Borough is essential if Milton Keynes is to meet the ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030. The Group acknowledged that most of this work was outside of the Council's direct control and would instead rely on ways the Council could influence or incentivise private owners to carry out this work potentially by the use of grants, bulk purchase schemes, guidance and advice. The Group was of the view that all new dwellings should be built to the highest standards to ensure that the Council's carbon ambitions could be met. The Council should also ensure that the storage and efficient use of water was promoted, including grey water reuse, community water butts etc. and that the Council should consider the installation of low energy factory built housing units such as Zedpods.

Biodiversity

22. That the Council delivers on a commitment for a *Forest for the Borough of Milton Keynes* of (at a minimum) an additional one million trees.
23. That the Council include a greater commitment to deliver sustainable planting of trees and increasing biodiversity as part of any planning proposals for 11 dwellings or more including encouraging rewilding projects.

Working in Partnership

24. That the Council establishes a 'Climate Change Partnership' to include a wide range of organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to work together to achieve a carbon neutral Milton Keynes by 2030 and that the Climate Change Partnership be responsible for developing and delivering a borough wide carbon neutral action plan.

Sub Text:

The Task & Finish Group suggested that the Council facilitate and host an annual conference - Oxford/ MK /Cambridge wide - to broaden the climate change conversation and the co-designing of a future climate change programme. In addition, the group felt that the Council might work with main utility providers across Milton Keynes to establish effective working relationships to Define, Scope and Manage likely actions and ensure alignment with emerging Climate Change Distribution/ Energy / Objectives.

Consideration should be given to the Council engaging with our local Universities (The OU, Cranfield and future UMK) and Milton Keynes College to create an Advisory Committee on Climate Change to provide an annual report to Cabinet, and annually to Council and that, in parallel, the Council engage with organisations such as Parish and

Town Council's and the business community via the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and other business support organisations to develop a joint medium/ long term action plan and to establish a vehicle to deliver the elements of that plan.

That given the importance of logistics and retail to the local economy that the Council should engage with hauliers/haulage clients and other large heavy vehicle fleet including rail freight operators and retailers to identify opportunities for addressing the issues identified within this report.

Waste

25. That the Council adopt circular economy waste policies as well as promoting residents and community sharing, reuse and recycling.

Energy Supply

26. That the Council explore the bulk purchase of renewable energy for example from offshore wind farms to provide lower cost sustainable energy options.
27. That the Council uses the carbon offset fund to establish a programme to deliver innovative and sustainable energy generation projects.

Sub Text:

Members of the Task & Finish Group were keen to see the Council consider establishing an energy supply company that develops district heating. The Council should develop district heating, ensuring it's from low carbon sources. Such a venture to be formed as a non-profit green energy company, and that the council investigate district heating networks including use of local parks and other innovative sustainable heating solutions. The Group agreed that all new developments should include the consideration of green energy generation schemes.

Given its reputation internationally as a Smart City and a City for Technological Innovation, the Task & Finish Group felt that the Council should monitor a wide range of technologies and how their use can help combat the impacts of climate change. For example, Collaborative Telepresence technologies, Use of Big data, Mobile Apps, Hackathons, Clean Energy and Internet of Things (IoT) smart energy, General Fusion Power Generation, battery powered transport, Beyond Meat foods, Carbon engineering powered manufacturing, smart city traffic modelling and management, Artificial Intelligence (AI) based energy efficiency and AI planning tools.

Flooding

28. That the Council invests in service provision in areas such as highways drainage clearance to deal with the increasing number of flash flooding rainfall incidents.