

COUNCIL MOTION AND RESOLUTION 06 OCTOBER 2020

“This Council recognised the urgency for action on climate change through the declaration of an emergency. However, given the scope and scale of the challenges we face, Guildford Borough Council cannot tackle the climate change crisis alone.

Because climate change is a global issue and requires the cooperation of everyone on the planet, in order to make a meaningful difference we must work as far as possible to develop partnerships and alliances across the county and region.

We also recognise the need – as expressed by Sir David Attenborough in his recent broadcast – that our response to climate change must not just be global, national, or even regional, but that it is a personal and local responsibility including that of local government and that it must start now.

The Council recognises that we are not only facing great uncertainty over the borough’s recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. There are also imminent discussions on possible unitary local government structures in Surrey, arising from the Government’s Devolution White Paper. Unitary local government in Surrey would bring about significant change to roles and responsibilities for areas and services contributing to carbon emissions. It also has the potential to create and improve strong partnerships and alliances that are better able to tackle climate change.

Therefore, we believe “*implementing a binding citizens’ assembly to formulate a plan for the council to tackle the climate emergency*” for Guildford borough alone is not appropriate or practicable at this time in these circumstances, particularly due to the impact of Covid.

The Council notes that the Lead Councillor for Climate Change has already held informal discussions, at lead councillor level, with a number of councils in Surrey to explore possible joint working arrangements to address the climate emergency. This work will continue and will include consideration of holding a citizens’ assembly jointly with neighbouring authorities.

The Council also notes that Lead Councillor for Climate Change has commenced discussions on a programme of community engagement, education and action with all Guildford stakeholders, including (but not limited to) parish councils, residents’ associations, local businesses and environmental groups, to enable Guildford borough to reach net Carbon Zero.

We believe that we should work proactively with our partners in this regard and ensure we are best placed to meet and adapt to any changes in local government

structure in the future and be strongly placed to lead action on climate change locally and across the county. This is a good start.

However, we feel that this is not enough and that we must also support the petition in agreeing to establish a Citizens' Assembly as soon as it will be practicable to hold this due to Covid. We feel that the council should seek to change hearts and minds in the community to encourage residents to make appropriate individual choices.

We also wish to implement policies which will have an immediate impact on reducing climate change now. We recognise that Guildford is a key partner in the drive to reduce carbon emissions, and that our capacity to reduce the local carbon footprint is magnified by the planning policies which we are able to introduce.

Accordingly, the Council

RESOLVES:

- (1) That the Managing Director be instructed to open discussions with all Surrey councils:
 - (a) to explore possible formal joint working arrangements on climate change;
 - (b) to seek formal agreement that the implementation of robust and sustainable policies on climate change should be the leading priority for any new unitary council(s) in Surrey with a recommendation that they explore the benefits of using a citizens' assembly as a means of engaging with the community and harnessing the power of local activism in the formulation of such policies; and
 - (c) to report the outcome of these discussions to the full Council.

- (2) **That, in addition, the Council itself commits that it will take urgent action in the short term to minimise climate change, such action shall include the development of policies by the Climate Change Board, who will present a progress report to full Council within three months, such policies will include:**
 - (i) measures to reduce the carbon footprint of:
 - (a) the borough's own activities (moving to a net zero-carbon position);
 - (b) the borough's assets;

- (c) buildings within the borough, so that the carbon footprint impact is assessed on all planning applications and given substantial weight in determining those applications; and

- (ii) new building policies, using the Council's planning and policy role including detailed planning requirements to minimise embedded carbon and impose the highest possible standards on all new building within the borough".