

Item 15 - Conservative Amendment to the Labour Motion

Full Council – Wednesday 17th November 2021

Council notes that:

- Approximately 230 councils have declared a Climate Emergency, including Merton Council in July 2019. As part of our Climate Emergency declaration, we pledged to support Merton to become a carbon neutral council by 2030.
- Local government is an indispensable partner in achieving net zero, because of our insight into our communities and local circumstances, our service delivery and regulatory functions, and our ability to join up emissions reductions with other pressing priorities, from public health, to inequality to economic development.
- ~~Without direct financial support from the Government and an acknowledgement of the pivotal role they play in tackling climate change, local authorities will struggle to achieve these vital targets~~

Council welcomes:

The actions Merton Council has already taken to tackle the climate and biodiversity crisis including, by way of example:

- approving Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan, including the key actions required to become a carbon neutral council by 2030.
- setting up and supporting the volunteers in the Climate Action Group to develop community led projects to reduce everyone's emissions, recognising that joint efforts are more effective than individuals' or the Council's alone.
- putting £2 million of reserves towards actions in the Climate Strategy and Action Plan so far
- supporting Merton Garden Streets, a volunteer-led initiative to make our streets greener, and holding Car Free Day events.
- installing 68 innovative Breathe London air quality and traffic sensors – more than any other London borough.
- installing low-energy LED lighting in our buildings and investing £2m in LED streetlights.
- putting in place over 50 PV panel systems on 44 Council buildings, generating 1,000,000 kWh every year, and 100% of the council's energy supply now coming from renewable sources.
- introducing more School Streets than any other London borough per capita, to lower pollution outside schools
- having over 200 electric vehicle charging points, 20 cycle hangars, 10 parklets, and 11 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.
- Drafting a Local Plan that sets ambitious targets for new development so that new development is net-zero by 2050.

Whilst these measures are welcome, council regrets that no meaningful progress towards introducing low emission bus zones has occurred since the motion was passed in February 2019. In addition, Merton is falling behind other authorities regarding tree planting and the use of technology based solutions to reduce pollution and the impact of climate change.

Council further notes that greater effort needs to be made to prevent the loss of established trees as was the case at Ravensbury estate, High Path, Wyke Road, St Helier Avenue, Dundonald Rec, Plough Lane Ford, Mitcham Bridge and in many recent planning applications given consent.

Council resolves:

- To continue to support Merton's communities including the Climate Action Group in their lead and delivery of projects across the borough, recognising that 97% of carbon emissions in Merton are outside Merton Council's control.
- To continue to work with employers in the borough, including businesses, the third sector, charities and the public sector to encourage them to take steps to reduce their carbon emissions and operate in a more sustainable way, and learn from any best practice that they have already put in place.
- To work with the third sector, charities, businesses, and residents across the borough to continue to meet targets set in the Climate Action Plan.
- To redouble its efforts to introduce low emissions bus zones in the town centres, recognising that recent efforts by the cabinet member have not been good enough.
- To study the use of technology based solutions to reduce pollution that have been successful in other boroughs, with a view to rapidly introduce this technology to Merton.
- To avoid removing mature trees where possible and accepts that the recent felling of many established trees was unnecessary and unacceptable.
- —
- That the Leader will write to Mayor of London Sadiq Khan Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Michael Gove MP to make the case for:
 - o Acknowledging the role City Hall has to play local government's pivotal role in tackling climate change, ~~and~~ to share examples of the work already done by Merton Council and additionally to call for:
 - The Mayor to meet his pledge to plant 2 million trees, which he promised would be achieved by the end of his first term, and to recognise that the 280,000 trees delivered so far is simply not good enough;
 - The Mayor to redouble his efforts to introduce electric busses, recognising that the current figure of 4.4% is woefully insufficient;
 - The Mayor and TfL to expedite their work on low emission bus zones in Merton's town centres;
 - An increased role out of rapid electric vehicle charging points, acknowledging that the current figure of 8% is nowhere near the level required in London. -

~~o To call on the government to agree to a national framework and strategy with local government and business, that provides certainty of funding to enable local government to leverage its unique role and influence and maximize its potential in tackling climate change in the UK.~~

[Cllr Daniel Holden](#) [Cllr David Dean](#) [Cllr Nigel Benbow](#)

Motion now to read:

Council notes that:

- Approximately 230 councils have declared a Climate Emergency, including Merton Council in July 2019. As part of our Climate Emergency declaration, we pledged to support Merton to become a carbon neutral council by 2030.
- Local government is an indispensable partner in achieving net zero, because of our insight into our communities and local circumstances, our service delivery and regulatory functions, and our ability to join up emissions reductions with other pressing priorities, from public health, to inequality to economic development.

Council welcomes:

The actions Merton Council has already taken to tackle the climate and biodiversity crisis including, by way of example:

- approving Merton’s Climate Strategy and Action Plan, including the key actions required to become a carbon neutral council by 2030.
- setting up and supporting the volunteers in the Climate Action Group to develop community led projects to reduce everyone’s emissions, recognising that joint efforts are more effective than individuals’ or the Council’s alone.
- putting £2 million of reserves towards actions in the Climate Strategy and Action Plan so far
- supporting Merton Garden Streets, a volunteer-led initiative to make our streets greener, and holding Car Free Day events.
- installing 68 innovative Breathe London air quality and traffic sensors – more than any other London borough.
- installing low-energy LED lighting in our buildings and investing £2m in LED streetlights.
- putting in place over 50 PV panel systems on 44 Council buildings, generating 1,000,000 kWh every year, and 100% of the council’s energy supply now coming from renewable sources.
- introducing more School Streets than any other London borough per capita, to lower pollution outside schools
- having over 200 electric vehicle charging points, 20 cycle hangars, 10 parklets, and 11 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.
- Drafting a Local Plan that sets ambitious targets for new development so that new development is net-zero by 2050.

Whilst these measures are welcome, council regrets that no meaningful progress towards introducing low emission bus zones has occurred since the motion was passed in February 2019. In addition, Merton is falling behind other authorities regarding tree planting and the use of technology based solutions to reduce pollution and the impact of climate change.

Council further notes that greater effort needs to be made to prevent the loss of established trees as was the case at Ravensbury estate, High Path, Wyke Road, St Helier Avenue, Dundonald Rec, Plough Lane Ford, Mitcham Bridge and in many recent planning applications given consent.

Council resolves:

- To continue to support Merton's communities including the Climate Action Group in their lead and delivery of projects across the borough, recognising that 97% of carbon emissions in Merton are outside Merton Council's control.
- To continue to work with employers in the borough, including businesses, the third sector, charities and the public sector to encourage them to take steps to reduce their carbon emissions and operate in a more sustainable way, and learn from any best practice that they have already put in place.
- To work with the third sector, charities, businesses, and residents across the borough to continue to meet targets set in the Climate Action Plan.
- To redouble its efforts to introduce low emissions bus zones in the town centres, recognising that recent efforts by the cabinet member have not been good enough.
- To study the use of technology based solutions to reduce pollution that have been successful in other boroughs, with a view to rapidly introduce this technology to Merton.
- To avoid removing mature trees where possible and accepts that the recent felling of many established trees was unnecessary and unacceptable.
- That the Leader will write to Mayor of London Sadiq Khan to make the case for:
 - o Acknowledging the role City Hall has to play in tackling climate change, to share examples of the work already done by Merton Council and additionally to call for:
 - The Mayor to meet his pledge to plant 2 million trees, which he promised would be achieved by the end of his first term, and to recognise that the 280,000 trees delivered so far is simply not good enough;
 - The Mayor to redouble his efforts to introduce electric busses, recognising that the current figure of 4.4% is woefully insufficient;
 - The Mayor and TfL to expedite their work on low emission bus zones in Merton's town centres;
 - An increased role out of rapid electric vehicle charging points, acknowledging that the current figure of 8% is nowhere near the level required in London.

Cllr Daniel Holden

Cllr David Dean

Cllr Nigel Benbow