

Working Group on the Climate Crisis

Monday, 12th August, 2019

Meeting of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis

Members present: The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McReynolds; and Councillors de Faoite, Ferguson, Hutchinson and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. G. Long, Commissioner for Resilience;
Ms. C. McKeown, Sustainable Development Manager;
Ms. C. Shortt, Policy and Data Analyst; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Baker.

Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were declared.

Election of Chairperson

After discussion, it was:

Moved by Councillor Smyth,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

Resolved - That Councillor de Faoite be appointed to the position of Chairperson of the Working Group for the period ending in May, 2020

Councillor de Faoite took the chair and thanked the Members for his appointment.

Agreement of Terms of Reference

The Commissioner for Resilience drew the Members' attention to the Terms of Reference for the all-party Working Group on the Climate Crisis that had been agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21st June.

She advised that the Working Group on the Climate Crisis would be responsible for researching, monitoring and considering the potential implications of climate change for the city of Belfast and for making recommendations to the Council on a strategy or series of interventions to build Belfast's climate resilience and she then detailed its specific functions, as follows:

- to identify specific challenges and risks to the city which may emerge as a result of projected climate change;

- to monitoring the particular implications of climate change for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities across the city;
- to understand the economic risks to the city associated with climate change –including how it might impact the ability of Belfast to continue to attract and retain investment and grow the rate base;
- to understand how risks associated with climate change may impact on the Belfast Agenda priorities and strategies and programmes in place across the city;
- to influence and contribute to regional considerations of the implications of climate change on both the work of the Council and on the city;
- to collate and consider good practice from other cities and local authorities from the UK, Ireland and internationally;
- to consider actions, interventions or programmes on climate adaptation which the Council may wish to take to build the city’s climate resilience;
- to consider actions, interventions or programmes on climate mitigation which the Council may wish to take to build the city’s climate resilience;
- to consider public campaigns/public education programmes which the Council may wish to deliver to change behaviour among residents and businesses;
- to take account of the Council’s statutory responsibilities on sustainable development and relevant Programme for Government commitments; and
- to hear evidence from other parties.

Membership of the Working Group would consist of one Member from each of the eight Political Parties represented on the Council and it would meet monthly.

It was suggested by a Member that an addition be made to bullet point two and that it therefore be amended to read “ to Monitor the particular implications of climate change for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities across the city and to actively plan with them under the principles of a Just Transition’.

The Working Group recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the aforementioned addition would be made under bullet point two to the Terms of Reference.

Introduction Presentation

The Commissioner for Resilience commenced by referring the Members to information highlighted in the Global Risk Report 2018 which included statistics in respect of global warming, the risks associated with it and how Governments’, including the UK Government, could arrive at a net zero carbon position by 2050.

She then proceeded to detail the specific risks for Belfast and outlined the need to work with other stakeholders and partners to build a comprehensive resilience strategy which included consideration of resilience within the context of the Belfast Agenda, the Local Development Plan and the Council’s Corporate Plan.

The officer suggested that the Working Group could potentially look at some of the following areas of focus to commence its work:

- Air Quality;
- Energy Efficiency. Both across the city and within the Council’s assets;
- Energy Transition;
- Greening the city;
- Use of plastics;
- Resilient infrastructure;

- Data analysis to inform long term carbon reduction;
- Sustainable transport – how we travel around the city;
- Building standards – existing and new; and
- Public behavior change;

The Working Group thanked the Commissioner for Resilience for her comprehensive presentation, available [here](#).

Noted.

Discussion on Draft Programme of Work

The Working Group undertook to pursue the following work streams/future agenda items:

- to investigate tidal and surface flooding to include discussions with the Rivers Agency and NI Water;
- to investigate the preparedness of Belfast for Climate Change from an Emergency Planning prospective and to request that the Programme Manager attend a future meeting to provide an update;
- to consider further the circular economy and how it could boost jobs and tackle climate change;
- to hold discussions with Invest NI and existing local businesses in the city to consider future sustainability;
- to undertake a site visit to the North Foreshore;
- to meet with the Department for Infrastructure and Translink to discuss how Belfast's high car dependency could be reduced;
- to consider offshore wind generation;
- to consider fossil fuel drilling and how it could be banned;
- to consider fuel poverty to include discussion with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and local universities;
- to be updated in respect of the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26);
- to consider adding Sustainability Impact as a decision making element to all future Committee Reports; and
- to consider the Local Development Plan (LDP) and Climate Resilience.

Correspondence from Derry City and Strabane District Council – Climate Change

The Members were asked to note that correspondence had been received from Derry and Strabane District Council in regard to a Motion that it had passed in relation to the Climate Crisis.

As the specific request to Belfast City Council was unclear, the Working Group agreed that the Commissioner for Resilience would liaise with officers from Derry City and Strabane District Council to seek clarification and she would update the Working Group further at its next meeting.

Verbal Update on the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) and Belfast Climate Commission

The Commissioner for Resilience provided the Members with an overview of the PCAN Network and the creation of the Belfast Climate Commission. She advised that the Network aimed to help the local delivery of the UK's climate change objectives by supporting the actions in cities through a partnership made up of the private, public and civic sectors.

The Belfast Climate Commission would be led by researchers from Queen's University Belfast who would aim to increase engagement with the numerous stakeholders to essentially create a shared vision and plan for the city to help make it climate resilient and map effective low carbon transition pathways, which would be driven by the specific needs for Belfast. One of the main roles of the Belfast Climate Commission would be to ensure that any low carbon energy transitions would create more and better jobs and to ensure that any benefits would be fairly distributed.

The Working Group noted the update provided.

Dates of Future Meetings

The Working Group agreed that it would meet on the following dates and times in 2019:

- Monday, 16th September at 12.00 noon;
- Monday, 21st October at 4.30pm;
- Monday, 18th November at 4.30pm.; and
- Monday, 9th December at 4.30pm.

Low Carbon Emission Vehicles

The Working Group noted that work was currently ongoing in respect of examining how the electric vehicle charging point infrastructure could be expanded throughout Belfast and the Commissioner for Resilience undertook to keep the Members informed as the work progressed.

Noted.

Chairperson