

# Working Group on the Climate Crisis

Monday, 18th November, 2019

## MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Members present: Councillor de Faoite (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McReynolds;  
Alderman Spence; and  
Councillors Baker, Hutchinson and Smyth.

Also attended: Councillor O'Hara.

In attendance: Ms. G. Long, Commissioner for Resilience;  
Ms. C. Shortt, Policy and Data Analyst; and  
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

### **Apology**

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 21st October, 2019 were taken as read and signed as correct.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were declared.

### **Schedule of Meetings 2020**

The Working Group agreed its schedule of meetings for 2020 but agreed however that the start time of those meetings would be 5.15 p.m.

### **Presentation – Sustainable Transport Planning in Belfast and Low Carbon Business Leadership**

Mr. C. Conway, Chief Executive, Translink attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

Mr. Conway provided the Working Group with an update on the transport challenge faced by Translink to reduce its carbon emissions and meet its obligation to mitigate against the impact of climate change. He provided the Members with information in respect of global temperature statistics, including the levels of emissions recorded for a range of categories such as transport aviation and agriculture. He advised the Working Group of the efforts needed and the reductions required to meet a zero emissions target by 2050.

The Working Group was provided with a range of practical solutions, identified by Translink, as a means to meet the targets set in respect of carbon emissions including, amongst other things, infrastructure development to support sustainable transport and a switch to zero carbon vehicles incorporating the use of electric and hydrogen as their energy source. Mr. Conway provided an overview of Translink's Bus Fleet Strategy to

achieve zero carbon emissions which would include, the conversion of their Belfast/Foyle fleet to Euro V1 and the completion of both electric and hydrogen fuel trials. He highlighted some of the initiatives undertaken in respect of the rail fleet strategy incorporating the use of low emission diesel and the potential future electrification of the rail network. As part of Translink's objectives of becoming carbon neutral, their Chief Executive provided the Working Group with an overview of the collaborative work undertaken in conjunction with the business sector and policy makers to invest in low carbon initiatives. He referred also to the development of new technologies and reporting mechanisms to measure, report and communicate on carbon emissions in respect of that sector.

In response to a question from a Member, Mr. Conway highlighted the significant challenges ahead to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2050. He stressed the need to increase significantly the investment in public transport, incorporating both the bus and rail networks. He referred to the trials undertaken in other major cities, including London and Birmingham, in the development and use of Hydrogen powered vehicles and accepted the views of the Working Group that infrastructure investment required to be undertaken to facilitate that objective.. A Member asked a further question in respect of the transport hub for Belfast and, in particular, questioned if walking and cycling might be incorporated into the project development. In response, the Chief Executive explained that Translink did not have authority or permission to develop an integrated cycling and walking corridor in that it did not have ownership of the routes which would be required to undertake such a development proposal.

A Member, while congratulating Translink on the development and success of the Glider East/West corridor service, enquired whether such a development could include complimentary safe cycle routes, citing the danger faced by cyclists commuting from the west of the city into the city centre. The Chief Executive stated that, while he understood the Member's concern, the road network referred to did not allow currently for the provision of a separate and dedicated cycle lane.

The Working Group thanked Mr. Conway for his detailed and informative presentation and he departed from the meeting.

### **Towards a Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan**

The Commissioner for Resilience provided the Working Group with a proposed methodology, governance structure and resourcing plan, incorporating an eighteen month programme of work, to agree decarbonisation targets and produce a climate plan for Belfast City Council which would be presented to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its approval. She reminded the Working Group that the Council had approved a motion in October 2019, to develop a fully costed Climate Plan to be completed by the middle of 2021.

The Commissioner submitted the undernoted report highlighting the various phases of the Climate Plan including the resource implications for the Council associated with its adoption:

#### **“What is a Climate Plan?”**

- 2.3 Many cities globally have developed Climate Plans to set out how to respond to the potential impacts of climate change, and to reduce adverse impacts on the environment, e.g. by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Belfast's city-wide climate plan will aim to deliver the vision set out in the draft Resilience Strategy- to transition to a low-carbon economy in a generation.**

- 2.4 The plan will focus on climate adaptation and mitigation. Climate adaptation is the process associated with preparing for the effects of climate change, e.g. building flood defences. Climate mitigation is the process associated with preventing or alleviating the impacts of climate change, e.g. reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by reducing an organisation's carbon footprint. Many organisations produce two separate plans as they tend to involve distinct disciplines. However to reflect the level of urgency attached to the climate crisis by Belfast City Council, it is proposed that adaptation and mitigation are planned together within the Council.
- 2.5 Separately from the Council's plan, a city-wide Climate Plan amounts to a substantial piece of work, and some cities have spent several years developing plans. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, we are proposing a parallel process; (1) that Belfast City Council develops its Climate Plan by mid-2021, overseen by the All-Party Group on the Climate Crisis, for approval by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and Council (2) a city-wide Climate Plan is developed by stakeholders across the city using existing community planning structures through the establishment of a Resilience and Sustainability Board, which will commence its work in November, and is Chaired by the Commissioner for Resilience. In steering the development of both plans, the Commissioner for Resilience will have responsibility for ensuring they are aligned.
- 2.6 This document recognises that the core business of Council cannot stop as we put the plan together- therefore the plan must have sufficient in-built flexibility to be applied to a complex organisation. Existing work on climate change will continue as the plan is developed- e.g. progress on air quality, on urban forestation etc.
- 2.7 **Belfast City Council Climate Plan- Proposed Objectives:**
1. To establish a science-based set of targets for decarbonisation (e.g. BCC arriving at a net-zero carbon position and milestones to meet as we progress towards a net zero carbon target)
  2. To set out how Belfast City Council will protect its assets from the impact of climate change
  3. To agree a range of measures which the Council can take to ensure an inclusive and just transition to a low carbon city –alignment with our Inclusive Growth Strategy. As a core principle, we must ensure that those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change are protected.
  4. To identify as far as possible the projected costs to the Council associated with climate mitigation and adaptation measures, and to identify financial models and sustainable funding structures in response.
  5. To use our existing networks and partnerships effectively to drive this work, e.g. Global Resilient Cities Network

(100RC), Place Based Climate Action Network (P-CAN), Eurocities etc.

6. To agree a broad range of costed measures which the Council will take to ensure Belfast is climate resilient (our contribution to the wider city plan)

## **2.8 Developing the Plan in Three Phases**

### **Phase One (January- June 2020): Understanding the Problem**

In recent months, significant work has already been undertaken to understand the scale and nature of the climate challenges for Belfast. This work should be completed by the middle of 2020, and includes the following:

#### **1. Research and Data Collection**

- Use the completed 'mini-Stern' to identify a range of priorities for decarbonisation
- Commission an external review, to consider the range of ways the Council can reduce its own carbon footprint (following the Edinburgh model)
- Commence work to agree a Carbon Budget for Belfast City Council
- Complete a climate risk assessment of Belfast City Council assets
- Undertake adaptation research- examining how climate change will affect Belfast [work through P-CAN network]

#### **2. Governance and Structures**

- Establish a Resilience and Sustainability Board to bring together a range of agencies in the city to agree a collaborative adaptation and mitigation plan for the city
- Establish an internal officer Programme Board within BCC to develop the adaptation and mitigation plan for the Council – board will bring papers to All Party Working Group and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval

#### **3. Legal and Policy Levers**

- Identify and map the legal and policy levers available to Council on climate adaptation and mitigation. For example, how to urgently reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions (e.g. changes to procurement criteria) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the wider city (e.g. planning regulations), and to improve water conservation (e.g. public education and campaigns). This should include opportunities arising from transformational programmes e.g. City Deal implementation.
- Identify legislative constraints which might inhibit climate adaptation or mitigation approaches (e.g. charging policy and impact for adoption of EV infrastructure).

- Map existing climate related policy and programmes across the city
- Identify funding opportunities – EU Commission funding, Innovate UK etc.

## **2.9 Phase Two (July- December 2020) Agree targets and priorities**

### **Set targets**

- **Carbon budget:** Using the data from the Mini- Stern and other relevant tools and sources (e.g. the Tyndall Carbon Targeter<sup>1</sup>, used by Manchester City Council) to agree a maximum carbon budget for Belfast, as well as projected emissions reduction pathway, interim carbon budgets and average emissions reduction rate. This will be done in partnership with agencies on the Resilience and Sustainability Board as the target will apply city-wide<sup>2</sup>.
- Identify global standards to work towards (e.g. Destination Sustainability Index, working with Visit Belfast and ICC)
- Based on data from the external review of BCC assets and other sources in Phase One, agree a target to arrive at a net zero carbon position for Belfast City Council's assets/estate. This should include energy efficiency of existing buildings, energy transition and decarbonisation across BCC fleet/transport, decarbonisation of our new build properties/projects etc.

### **Co-design with communities**

- The development of a climate adaptation and mitigation plan is an opportunity to ask communities to shape the future of their city, and to build community resilience to climate change. Many cities globally are currently engaged in community-led climate adaptation and mitigation planning, so there are lessons for us to learn, and models we can adopt from elsewhere. [Learnings already identified from Wales, London, Rotterdam, Gothenburg, Dublin.] Furthermore, the involvement of young people in climate activity at a community level provides an opportunity for proactive engagement with Council, and to build civic leadership among young people.

### **Focus on Air Quality, Transport, Energy, Circular Economy and Water**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tyndall.ac.uk/news/tyndall-carbon-targeter-helps-local-authorities-respond-their-climate-emergency>

<sup>2</sup> These targets could include, for instance, agreement on a carbon budget and the overall target; agreement on a target year for when our emissions should have peaked ; agreement on a year in which we stop being a net energy importer and become energy self sufficient; agreement on a % of the city's energy coming from renewables

- **Take account of/ align with the development of revised Air Quality Plan for the city by 2020- led by City and Neighbourhood Services directorate and ensure appropriate level of ambition in setting strategic goals on air quality**
- **Take account of/ align with development of Belfast City Council Transport Plan – led by Economy and Place directorate and ensure that solutions are driven by principles of sustainable development**
- **Align with ongoing implementation of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy- led by Economy and Place directorate- in particular considering ways to decarbonise the city and design and build sustainable and green solutions for the city centre**
- **Produce an energy plan for the Council aimed at setting and delivering targets on energy transition– led by the Resilience Commissioner and an opportunity to transition to renewable energy as well as becoming more energy efficient. The plan should also include ambitions on renewable energy generation by the Council.**
- **Align with the ambitions set within a future fleet strategy- led by City and Neighbourhood Services directorate. The strategy will outline the future direction for the Council’s fleet in terms of type, number of vehicles. The fleet strategy will include medium and long-term ambitions for transition to low-carbon options, powered by renewable sources of energy. It should necessarily include a fully costed range of options and a timeline for transition. The strategy will be informed by piloting/testing of a small number of low-carbon vehicles currently being added to the fleet.**
- **Take account of/align with the Circular Economy strategy. Led by led by the City and Neighbourhood Services Directorate, the work aims to achieve a more sustainable pattern of consumption, production and reuse/recycling in the city, thereby supporting the Belfast Agenda.**
- **Align with Living with Water Programme Board priorities on water resilience for the city and undertake work to identify ways in which BCC can drive greater levels of water conservation and water re-use**
- **Develop a plan for urban forestation – which could potentially encompass a ‘One Million Trees’ initiative- a possible collaboration between resilience, culture and CNS teams and city stakeholders- currently in early development following discussion at People and Neighbourhoods Committee, with future proposals to come before CMT in due course.**
- **Agree actions arising from the blue and green infrastructure strategy which could enable climate adaptation opportunities. Align with work ongoing by DFI to build sustainable urban drainage systems across the**

- city, as identified by the Living with Water Programme Board
- Identify a range of measures BCC will take to improve our climate resilience through protection of the city's biodiversity
  - Consider potential actions BCC can take to contribute to a city-wide focus on sustainability and food

#### Exploit existing partnerships

- Using existing partnerships and networks (e.g. P-CAN and Dialogue on European Decarbonisation Strategies-DEEDS), identify external funding opportunities to support the delivery of the adaptation and mitigation plan.
- Using our existing city networks, such as Belfast's Economic Forum, and relationships at a global level (such as Resilient Cities Network, Eurocities, World Economic Forum), identify and secure a major global city partner to work alongside Belfast in the development of our adaptation and mitigation strategy.

#### Climate Finance

- Supported by climate finance expertise in the P-CAN network, put in place a financing strategy for investment in climate mitigation and adaptation- led by Deputy Chief Executive.

### **2.10 Phase Three: Finalise Actions for Implementation** **(January – June 2021)**

- Ensure a range of planning policies are reviewed/developed to deliver on the targets agreed in Phase Two. This may, for example, include:
  - using plan making and development management/building control functions to enforce energy efficiency standards in new buildings and extensions
  - reduce transport emissions by concentrating new developments in existing areas and/or ensuring communities are well served by public transport
  - work with developers to make renewable energy projects acceptable to local communities;
  - plan for infrastructure such as low-carbon district heating networks, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems;
  - Managing Belfast's risk to climate change impacts by considering the location of new developments relative to areas of flood risk.
- Finalise changes to corporate policy as relevant to give effect to the targets outlined above, e.g. changes to procurement frameworks etc. Consider implications for our grant-making function, i.e. requiring prospective

- partners to demonstrate commitments to sustainable development.
- Use the data gathered from the range of studies in Phase One to establish a city wide single source of data of climate adaptation and mitigation (in collaboration with QUB, UU, Belfast Met or other relevant institution)
  - Arising from the plans completed in Phase Two, identify and agree positive campaigns on behaviour change as part of public education on climate adaptation and mitigation.
  - Map out fully costed action plan for decarbonisation of BCC assets- including potential revenue streams and financial models
  - Seek peer review/external challenge on the draft Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan from PCAN cities (e.g. Leeds Climate Commission).

### **2.11 Resource Implications**

This paper has been produced as part of the budget estimates process with Climate Resilience identified as a potential growth area for the Council. It is being proposed to establish a small permanent team working to the Commissioner for Resilience to lead the development of the BCC Climate Plan and coordinate the development of the wider city plan. The team as proposed would include the following functions: project management and support; research and statistics; climate adaptation technical advice and climate mitigation technical advice.

## **3 Recommendations**

### **3.1 To approve the proposed methodology, governance structure and resourcing for development of a Climate Plan, and establishment of internal Programme Board to take forward.”**

The Commissioner suggested that, by using best practice from other cities, it would be more effective to incorporate climate adaptation and mitigation together rather than dealing with these areas of work as separate entities. She highlighted the importance of protecting the Council’s assets and agreeing measures to ensure a just transition to the new operational arrangements which would be required and the need for collaborative partnerships to ensure a holistic and integrated approach. The Commissioner emphasised that the Climate Plan should involve the public and should be couched in terms that the general public felt part of the process and understood how their role could make a difference in reducing the impact of climate change.

In regard to the recent fire at an agricultural warehouse and the pollution caused associated with that fire, the Commissioner was asked to produce a report in the matter outlining the emergency services response and the actions learned to manage any similar incident in the future.

After discussion, the Working Group adopted the recommendations in the Commissioner’s report.



## **Consultation on NI Environment Strategy**

The Commissioner for Resilience submitted the undernoted report including appendix highlighting the Belfast City Council's response to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1** Members are advised that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) have recently commenced a consultation into proposals for a new Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland. DAERA have stated that a Northern Ireland Environment Strategy is required to form the basis for a series of interventions that can deliver real improvements in the quality of the environment and thereby improve the health and well-being of our citizens, create opportunities to develop our economy and play our part in protecting the global environment for many decades to come. The various consultation documents are available to download via the following weblink: and is attached in your papers for this meeting.

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/esni-public-discussion-document>

**1.2** This report serves to summarise the contents of the consultation document and to highlight some of environmental statistics and environmental progress that DAERA have referred to within the consultation document.

**1.3** This report also includes proposed consultation responses to the various questions that DAERA have proposed throughout the overall Environment Strategy consultation document.

**1.4** Members are asked to note that this report will also be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for notation, given the Committee's interest in climate action, and comments are also sought from members of the All Party Working Group on the Climate Crisis. Officers are currently finalising a response.

### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1** Members are requested to note the draft response and to agree that the council's consultation response, as detailed in Appendix A to this report, be forwarded to DAERA by the consultation deadline of 17:00 on 23rd December, 2019.

### **3.0 Main report**

#### **3.1 Key Issues**

DAERA has advised that within the current draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2016-2021, the Department is responsible for Outcome 2 – *'We live and work sustainably, protecting the environment'*, and for five of the six associated indicators relating to greenhouse gas emissions; household waste that is reused, recycled or composted; annual mean

nitrogen dioxide concentrations at monitored urban roadside locations; levels of soluble reactive phosphorus in rivers and levels of dissolved inorganic nitrogen in marine waters and; biodiversity – the percentage of protected areas under favourable management. DAERA has also advised that at a Departmental level, their vision is of '*A living, working, active landscape valued by everyone*'.

- 3.2 DAERA has advised that an Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland is therefore now required due to a number of factors including, environmental challenges, climate change, publication of the UK Government document, '*A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment*', Brexit and environmental knowledge gaps.
- 3.3 In terms of progress with the PfG indicators, DAERA has advised that for greenhouse gas emissions, Northern Ireland accounts for around 4% of the overall UK total and in terms of the UK Climate Change Act committing the UK to at least an 80% reduction by 2050 from 1990 baseline levels, DAERA has stated that Northern Ireland emissions have decreased by 17.9% from 24.3 to 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent between 1990 and 2017. For household recycling, DAERA has stated that the NI household waste recycling rate was 48.1% in 2017/18; an increase from 44.3% the previous year, with a new high of over 420,000 tonnes of waste sent for recycling. DAERA therefore considers household waste recycling to have experienced a positive change since the baseline year. In terms of ambient air quality, DAERA has advised that the nitrogen dioxide average annual mean background figure measured in urban areas has remained relatively stable over recent years, whereas monitored roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations have been variable. For river and marine water quality, DAERA has stated that levels of soluble reactive phosphorous in river water are unchanged since the baseline year and levels of dissolved inorganic nitrogen in our marine waters have also remained relatively stable. For biodiversity, DAERA has advised that whilst the total terrestrial and marine protected areas have increased between 2009 and 2018, the proportion of these areas under favourable management has shown a decreasing trend.
- 3.4 DAERA has stated that the normal procedure for developing an Environment Strategy document would be for the Department to take its lead from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and that the form and content of any Environment Strategy would be a matter for a DAERA Minister and NI Executive. DAERA has also stated that in the absence of a Minister, they would wish to obtain as broad a view as possible on what a future Environment Strategy might seek to address in order to help inform an incoming Minister. DAERA is therefore seeking views on what the environmental priorities and objectives should be, and how the Department should achieve them.
- 3.5 DAERA has advised that at the very least, the key environmental areas covered by the new Strategy will be

climate change (mitigation and adaptation); the natural environment and landscapes; resource efficiency, the marine environment, environmental quality (air, water and neighbourhood); fisheries (inland and sea) and aquaculture and; the built environment.

**3.6 To help inform the consultation process, DAERA has posed eleven questions for consultees to consider and address. The DAERA consultation document has been internally circulated to relevant council Departments and Services, and responses have been provided to the consultation questions where deemed necessary and where the questions relate to areas of council responsibility. A copy of the questions, together with proposed council responses have been provided as Appendix A to this report.**

**3.7 In terms of the headline environmental issues and matters highlighted within the council's proposed responses, Members are advised that the council has highlighted the issues of climate change and climate adaptation; biodiversity; ambient air quality and links to transportation; neighbourhood environmental quality; local development planning and the built environment; the consideration of natural capital in environmental decision making; resource and energy efficiency; zero waste and achieving a circular economy; waste management and enforcement; the need for a Northern Ireland litter strategy; dealing with dangerous structures and tackling dilapidations and; the need for greater education on the environment.**

The Working Group noted the information contained in the aforementioned report and agreed to send comments, on the strategy, to the Commissioner for Resilience by Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November, for comments to be collated and for sign off by the People and Communities Committee in time for the December deadline.

### **Visit of UK Climate Change Commission**

The Commissioner for Resilience informed the Working Group that the Climate Change Commission had requested the use of City Hall to host its Northern Ireland meeting on 2nd December, 2019. The event comprises a stakeholder workshop to inform the development of the NI Climate Change Risk Assessment. The draft agenda was discussed, and Members of the Working Group are welcome to attend and contribute.

Noted.

### **P-CAN Network and Launch of Low Carbon Climate Commission**

The Commissioner for Resilience provided the Working Group with information on the work of the Place-based Climate Action network (P-CAN) and the launch of the Low carbon Climate Commission. She highlighted the climate data contained within the draft mini-stern report and advised that the work will be completed shortly, in advance of the launch in January.

It was reported that the Council had secured £15,000 of external funding from the P-CAN project to raise awareness of climate change and that plans were underway currently to

hold a conference on the Low Carbon Transition, scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 2020.

Noted.

### **Resilience Board**

The Commissioner advised members that the first meeting of the city-wide Resilience and Sustainability Board took place on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November, as part of the existing Community Planning Partnership structures. The board is tasked with overseeing implementation of the resilience strategy for the city, and working together to develop a collaborative Climate Plan for the wider city. The priority for the board is to agree a methodology for this plan, and commence work in the coming weeks.

A Member requested information on the operation of the Belfast Food Network and requested further that a representative from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust be invited to attend the next meeting of the Working Group to provide an update in the matter. This was agreed.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The Working Group agreed that its next meeting be held on Monday, 9th December at 4.30 p.m.

Chairperson