

Birmingham City Council

City Council

12th January 2021



Subject: Route to Zero Report
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Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report to full Council follows on from the report in September 2020 which outlined progress on the Route to Zero carbon programme since the declaration of a Climate Emergency in June 2019 and presented an action plan.
- 1.2 This report presents an update on the work undertaken since September 2020 and the 'Action plan' document. The Action Plan focuses on the priority actions for the next two years, it sets out what we have achieved to date in these priority areas and what we will do to scale up the delivery.
- 1.3 Birmingham City Council cannot achieve Route to Zero on its own. We will need to work with a range of partners to deliver the measures needed over the transition period. It is clear from the Anthesis report and the Action Plan that radical policy changes are required at the national level in order to achieve net zero carbon, as well significant funding in order to ensure a fair and just transition. In particular we will require support from central government in terms of legislation changes and financial resources and from the West Midlands Combined Authority to push forward on carbon reduction across the Region.

2 Motions

- 2.1 To endorse the Action Plan and the priority areas set out within it.
- 2.2 To note that the Council is committed to delivering additional resources to the Route to Zero R20 work including the establishment of a Climate Change and

Sustainability Team led by a new Assistant Director for Climate Change and Sustainability, the resources for which will be sought through the Medium-Term Financial Plan at February 2021 City Council.

- 2.3 To note the need for significant policy and legislative change at the national and regional level and the additional resources required to enable Birmingham to become net zero carbon and to agree to write to Government to set out our asks of them in order to facilitate our transition to net zero carbon.

3 Background

- 3.1 On 11 June 2019, following a cross-party motion, a climate emergency was declared at City Council. A report was presented to City Council in September 2020 setting out the progress made to date and an Action Plan based on work undertaken by consultants Anthesis. At that meeting, Council requested a further prioritised and costed action plan to be brought back to the City Council by the end of the year.

The 'Action Plan'

- 3.2 The aim of the Action Plan is to focus in on the priority actions that will move us forward over the next couple of years. Actions have been selected that will enable us to scale up existing successful projects and to deliver the largest impact in reducing carbon emissions.
- 3.3 The Action Plan outlines relevant policy and legislation, examines the need for systems change and climate justice, identifies what we can control and influence and sets out how we are working with partners.
- 3.4 The main emphasis is on the priority actions, which sit under topic areas. For each topic the document sets out what has already been achieved, what the next steps are, what we need to do to get us there and where we need to lobby for legislative or policy change or funding to deliver.
- 3.5 The Action Plan sets out the latest and most relevant legislation and policy relating to Climate Change and Climate Emergency and sets out the Birmingham context. It provides information on the carbon baseline for both the City Council and the City as a whole.
- 3.6 The document identifies the need for systems change, it describes the key institutional problems we face now and outlines why we need to change this. We have already set up a cross party R20 working group and this group has met twice with discussions informing the Action Plan.
- 3.7 We need to embed carbon reduction across all directorates and establish climate change as key priority, organisation wide. The internal working group is improving cohesion across the Council however, there is a need to continue to

build upon this to ensure that the route to zero commitment is embedded in everything we do.

3.8 The Action Plan sets out the links between climate justice and social justice and builds upon the Council's commitment to a 'Just Transition'. It recognises that we cannot deliver this alone and that we need to work with partners locally including the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP). The document starts to distinguish between what is within the direct control of the City Council and what we can influence and the degree to which we can influence.

3.9 The priority actions are:

New Build Housing

3.9.1 This focuses on Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust's (BMHT) future stock as the City Council have control over this. A Passivehaus (the leading international low energy design standard) trial is underway at Dawberry Fields and the lessons learnt from this will be applied to all new BMHT housing as soon as is practicable. This will lead to the delivery of 7,000 new homes built to the highest standards possible by 2031.

3.9.2 The review of the Birmingham Development Plan will provide an opportunity to review wider development standards across the City. However, this will need to be undertaken in line with national requirements.

3.9.3 In order to push forward on this agenda we need to lobby the Government to set more stringent standards for new development and also to continue to allow local authorities to set their own standards.

Retrofit of Existing Housing Stock

3.9.4 Again the focus here is on the Council's own stock as this is the area over which we have the greatest control. The City Council are part of a WMCA consortium bid for funding for a small pilot scheme and it is considered that the East Birmingham Task Force can play a role in progressing the retrofit agenda.

3.9.5 In order to progress this agenda further it will be necessary to lobby Government to commit further funds, as well as to promote retrofitting and its benefits across the city. The City Council will also need to commit resources internally to working up schemes that can be ready to submit in response to Government making funding available.

Transport

3.9.6 This is an area where significant work has already been undertaken to promote modal shift away from the private car. The Birmingham Transport Plan and Birmingham Emergency Transport Plan provide the framework for modal shift and a number of successes, including, a trial of e-cargo bikes, the delivery of hydrogen buses and the introduction of electric buses

on the number 6 route between Birmingham and Solihull are positive steps.

- 3.9.7 The next steps are to continue to progress the Birmingham Transport Plan to adoption and to deliver the city centre segments as well as increasing pedestrianisation and the cycling network as well as implementing the Clean Air Zone in 2021. In order to progress further it will be important to secure additional staff resources within the Transport Planning Team to work on the decarbonisation of transport as well as lobbying for a bus service franchise.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

- 3.9.8 The switch to electric vehicles will be important in reducing carbon emissions. There is currently a programme underway to install 394 fast and rapid charging points by 2022 and to deliver 9000 charging points in total by 2030. 600 of which will be fast and rapid. The City Council will prepare an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy by March 2021.
- 3.9.9 The biggest challenge to overcome is the provision of charging facilities to terraced streets. In order to deliver more it will be necessary to simplify the framework for charging which currently uses multiple smartphone applications, to attend the West Midlands Combined Authority's Electrification Task Force and to lobby Government for greater support on the switch to electric vehicles.

Waste

- 3.9.10 In order to reduce the impact of waste it is necessary to look at total waste arisings rather than focus on household waste. A Waste Strategy will be prepared. In order to progress further there is a need to lobby the West Midlands Combined Authority to commission a study to look at waste movements across the conurbation and a need to engage with the West Midlands Combined Authority on their Circular Economy work to reduce waste arisings.

Energy

- 3.9.11 The City Council is engaged with the BEIS decarbonisation of heat programme which will look at the options that could be implemented to reduce carbon emissions from heat across the City. It will be important to maximise the benefit of Tyseley Energy Park and to lobby for Tyseley to become the national centre for decarbonisation of heat.

The Natural Environment

- 3.9.12 The work being undertaken by 'Naturally Birmingham' the Future parks Accelerator will be important in looking at new governance models for open space. The Cole Valley Corridor work provides another important opportunity and a European Regional Development Fund bid has been submitted to seek funding to progress this work. Moving forward, there is

an aspiration to increase tree canopy cover to 25% in all wards with a focus on those wards with the lowest levels of canopy cover. The City Council will also engage with the West Midlands National Park Concept and explore how this could be implemented to enhance the provision of green infrastructure.

- 3.10 The Action Plan will guide the work on Route to Zero in the short-term. Further, more detailed work will be undertaken on costing and prioritising all of the actions within the Anthesis report, this will include actions for the Council and actions for the City.
- 3.11 Monitoring and feedback will be an important part of implementing the Action Plan. A report will be brought to City Council annually to set out progress and outline priorities for the year ahead. The City Council will continue to report its carbon emissions through the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) however, there will also be a need to consider how more detailed information can be gathered and reported to ensure that the City Council is on target to meet its net zero carbon ambition.

Resources

- 3.12 In order to deliver Route to Zero there is a need for the Council to commit greater resources to the programme. The City Council does not currently have a full-time programme lead for Route to Zero, the programme is being led by existing Council officers as part of their roles. However, in order to deliver the programme within the timeframe and to ensure that we are best positioned to access resources as they become available, there is a need for a full-time lead officer for Route to Zero. In order to be able to fully embed the Route to Zero within everything the Council does, this position needs to be sufficiently senior to work across the Council's directorates and services and therefore, it is suggested that there should be an Assistant Director for Climate Change and that the post should be supported by a team which will complement the existing skills within the City Council.
- 3.13 Approval for funding additional staff will be sought through the Council's Medium-term Financial Plan at February 2021 City Council.

The Regional and National Context

- 3.14 The City Council cannot deliver Route to Zero alone, however, the City has set a more ambitious target date to achieve net zero carbon than the West Midlands Combined Authority (2041) or national Government (2050). Therefore, continued lobbying will be necessary at both levels in order to secure the legislative and policy framework within which Birmingham can bring about change more rapidly.

- 3.15 The Action Plan identifies a number of areas where lobbying will be needed. We need to lobby central Government on:
- 3.15.1 Clarifying the role of the planning system in achieving net zero carbon.
 - 3.15.2 Releasing additional funding for retrofit across the housing sectors.
 - 3.15.3 Improving the energy efficiency of rented homes through legislation.
 - 3.15.4 Delivering a zero emissions public transport network.
 - 3.15.5 A bus franchise for the West Midlands (led by Transport for West Midlands).
 - 3.15.6 Accelerating the move to electric vehicles, ensuring all types of vehicles move away from petrol and diesel engines.
 - 3.15.7 Greater support for public transport services.
 - 3.15.8 Reducing waste through legislation, particularly commercial waste.
 - 3.15.9 Ambitious new legislation around the decarbonisation of energy supply.
 - 3.15.10 Adopting the concept of environmental justice.
 - 3.15.11 The implementation of the West Midlands National Park concept.
- 3.16 In order for Birmingham to become net zero carbon ahead of the national target of 2050 and the West Midlands Combined Authority target of 2041, we will need to have the ability to set out our own high standards for new buildings, to require the retrofitting of all existing buildings across all tenures, to accelerate the switch to electric vehicles and significantly reduce car use by investing in public transport, walking and cycling; and to reduce the volume of waste generated in the city. In order to achieve this, we will need significant additional financial resources and a more ambitious timetable for achieving net zero carbon at the West Midlands Combined Authority and at the national level.

The Route to Zero (R20) Task Force

- 3.17 One of the commitments in the climate emergency motion was to constitute a Climate Emergency Task Force. The R20 Task Force was set up in September 2019 and an update on activity was provided in the report to September 2020 City Council. Since September 2020, the Task Force have met monthly and have helped to shape the Action Plan, endorsing it at their meeting on 9th December 2020.
- 3.18 The Task Force has an important role to play in helping Birmingham to become net zero carbon. The Task Force are due to meet in January 2021 and will discuss options on the future role and format of the Group, including the option of it becoming a Citizens' Assembly. Individual Task Force members will be able to volunteer to sit on topic specific working groups to take forward groups of

actions in relation to elements of Route to Zero. The Task Force membership will be reviewed to ensure that it fully reflects its role and purpose.

R20 Advisory Committee

- 3.19 Following the decision at September Council, the R20 Advisory Committee has been set up. This group has met twice and has agreed Terms of Reference and informed the preparation of the Action Plan. The next meeting of the group will take place on Tuesday 5th January 2021.

4 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Route to Zero Action Plan

5 Background Documents

- 5.1 Report to Full Council – 15th September 2020 – ‘Route to Zero Interim Report’ - <https://birmingham.cmis.uk.com/birmingham/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/11778/Committee/39/Default.aspx>