

COUNCILLOR LOUISE PEPPER, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT & GREEN ISSUES AND EQUALITIES

COUNCIL REPORT, 21 JULY 2020

Climate Change

Climate change is the greatest challenge facing our world today. There is overwhelming scientific evidence saying we have limited time to act. We are experiencing it **NOW!** If the world is to avoid warming by more than 1.5C, countries need to increase their carbon-cutting ambitions five- fold. By allowing temperatures to rise more than 1.5 degrees, it will have hugely damaging effects for human, plant and animal life across the planet.

Experience has shown that local government is a good place to start government commitment to climate emergency action. UDC has been addressing climate change issues for 15 years. However, in July 2019, we took this serious issue even further by declaring a cross-party climate & ecological motion and setting a bold net zero carbon target by 2030.

Climate Working Group

We set up a cross-party climate emergency group, consisting of councillors, officers and invited outside residents (around 40 people), that will work collectively towards a Climate Local Strategy and Action Plan. Our six climate sub-groups (Biodiversity, Transport/Air Quality, Energy, Waste & Recycling, Planning & Development and Campaigning & Lobbying), are cross-party lead. We have already started video conferencing workshops, seeking enterprising solutions that will help to reduce our local carbon emissions. With a minimal budget in these tight financial times, we are using expertise within our community rather than expensive consultants. We are directly empowering people within our community to have a bigger say on how we should spend public money and what affects them where they live.

Green Climate Objectives & Achievements

Our council will lead, with rolling out a Green Champion programme coordinating green changes within the council. This was also rolled out at our Climate Business Breakfast in November, where 120 local businesses attended. Our Parish and Town councils will also be invited to select Green Champions. They have already received a list of simple steps to help with climate change and how local residents can get started.

UDC are switching to a green tariff. This will almost halve UDC's own carbon footprint and will demonstrate the Council's commitment to leading by example.

We have reduced our organisation's emissions by 1/3 (down to 2291 tonnes/yr). 90 council owned properties have had heat pumps installed, 80 properties have had oil boilers replaced, we've upgraded boilers at our two leisure centres, 280 council owned properties have had external wall insulation, solar panels installed on 300

council owned properties, solar array on Lord Butler bowls club and 44KW array at our Shire Hill depot. We have installed electric car charges in public carparks. We regard our cycle infrastructure as **a key priority**. We've installed cycle racks in Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and at Audley End train station and we're urgently seeking funding to make further improvements to our cycling facilities, cycle lanes and lowering speed limits to 20mph in busy traffic hotspots, allowing safer cycling for everyone. This is especially imperative around schools and now that less people are inclined to use their cars.

We have recently raised water scarcity and taken direct action by contacting Water Resources East and joining their organisation.

We are looking into tree management and the varying seasons we encounter. Trees need to be planted in the right place at the right time and require consistent management to help them to thrive.

We will look into reducing local air pollution, toxic spraying and recycling. Last year Uttlesford DC recycled 52.4% of waste. We were the highest performing collection authority in Essex in terms of dry recycling, collecting 32.8%. We will continue to encourage composting garden waste. We will be actively raising awareness about litter and the danger it causes to our wildlife and environment.

In respect to new developments, we are developing a comprehensive Interim Planning Policy Document to address climate change issues in the absence of an up to date adopted Local plan. This will set out the Council's expectations in new developments to become fully sustainable. With less than 10 years to avoid catastrophic climate change, building net zero carbon developments is essential.

Raising climate awareness & lobbying

A six- page document titled, "Preparing for a sustainable future", was sent to All Councillors & an LGA think tank (72 different council members). This was regarding Central Government transitioning to a greener economy and making sure the fossil fuelled industry bail-out came with green strings attached. This also highlighted Uttlesford District Council's key green objectives.

Two letters have been written to Dunmow Broadcast. 1) What positive environmental changes have occurred during lockdown 2) The importance of rewilding

An email was forwarded to Kemi Badenoch supporting the Local Electricity Bill.

An email was forwarded to the Climate Minister Lord Duncan (cc Kemi Badenoch) titled "The future is in our hands". The urgency to carrying on reducing our emissions hasn't gone away. We need to harness our greener lifestyle change and adopt robust green policies and a green economy.

Another letter was sent to Boris Johnson (cc Lord Duncan & Kemi Badenock), titled "Our future is in your hands". Due to covid 19 and lack of funding for 2020-2021, Local Authorities have been forced to review "essential spending only". It was suggested that Central Government takes the same approach and pumps money

into existing services and infrastructure **which desperately require funding and upgrading**. Building more roads is carbon intensive and creates more traffic and pollution. We need to build towards a climate smart recovery.

All of the above was highlighted at the Essex Climate Action Forum hosted by Simon Walsh on 13th July 2020, pledging his support towards central government's green infrastructure funding to be fairly allocated to **all** Essex councils and lowering speed limits in busy areas. This is vital so that we reduce local carbon emissions, pollution and harness covid 19's new mode of green transport (cycling). We will look at working collectively on key climate objectives.

Climate pandemic conclusion

Lastly, during lockdown, not only have we seen a vast improvement in our air quality, the UK workforce have learnt to work and host video meetings from home, there's been an increase in the sale of bikes, seed plants and more people are outdoors enjoying nature, cycling and walking in public parks and open countryside.

We need to grasp this opportunity and make sure that we continue with our greener lifestyle that will not only benefit our health and well-being but the future of our children and the planet.

Equalities

Black Lives Matter – public statement in support. *"I was saddened and appalled by the recent killing of George Floyd in the USA. The world-wide response shows that this tragedy has been felt globally. It highlights the discrimination and injustice that still exists for BAME communities. Discrimination is never acceptable and nobody should ever have to face it because of the colour of their skin. Never. In the UK we still have much to do to eradicate discrimination in our society.*

"Uttlesford District Council is fully committed to treating everyone in our district fairly and with respect and to listening to all voices in our communities. I would like to assure all residents that we will not tolerate discrimination, whether as an employer, in the delivery of our services, when applying our policy guidelines or where we see it in our district. We believe Black Lives Matter."

As leader of the Equalities portfolio, it was important that Uttlesford District Council sent out a strong message condemning black injustice and any form of discrimination. We acknowledge that this serious issue needs to be addressed and eradicated.

Starting with our council members, a Residents for Uttlesford Town Councillor, Jonathon Toy shared a personal blog titled 'Wallpaper of life', that poignantly highlighted the brutal inequalities UK Black Communities suffer on a regular basis.

To establish further enlightenment, council members who have been working closely together (along with Community Officers), will look into raising additional awareness and offering our support to an Independent panel (to be selected), that will focus on Uttlesford's Black and Minority Ethnic Youth and Wider Community.

