

**Minutes of the Climate Emergency Taskforce  
(virtual teleconference)  
21 September 2023 (6.00pm – 8.00pm)**

**Members:**

- Councillor Louise Gittins (Leader of the Council)
- Councillor Lucy Sumner
- Councillor Keith Millar
- Councillor Simon Eardley (Shadow Cabinet member for the Climate Emergency)
- Councillor Chris Copeman
- Councillor Gillian Edwards

**Wider Taskforce Members:**

- Ashley Rogers, North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council
- Rebecca Collins, University of Chester
- Charlie Steer, Grosvenor Estate
- Steve Hughes, Chester Sustainability Forum
- Niall Macfadyen, Chester Sustainability Forum
- Mark Thompson, Chester Sustainability Forum
- David Brown, Environment Agency
- Paul Nolan, Mersey Forest
- Gwydion Rhys, NHS
- Simon Dowell, Chester Zoo
- Melissa Crellin, Cheshire and Warrington LEP

**Officers:**

- Gemma Davies, Director of Economy and Housing
- Will Pearson, Climate Change Strategy Manager
- George Ablett, Energy Sector Specialist
- Steph Anderson – Senior Communications Lead
- Lyn Brown, Democratic Services Officer

**Apologies:**

- Councillor Gina Lewis
- Charlie Seward
- Adam Briggs
- Alistair Jeffs
- Jennifer Kelly
- Charlotte Harris
- Councillor Hugo Deynam

## **1 Welcome and introductions**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the teleconference meeting and reiterated the importance of the topic of Climate Change to Cheshire West and Chester Council and thanked the stakeholders present for their ongoing contributions.

## **2 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received.

## **3 Declarations of interest**

- No new interests were declared.

## **4 Public Questions**

As this was an introductory workshop session for the Taskforce, no members of the public were in attendance.

## **5 Climate Change and Local Government**

Gemma Davies and Will Pearson commenced the meeting by delivering a presentation on Cheshire West and Chester's stance regarding climate change. The discussion encompassed the broader implications of local government's response to climate change at both national and international levels. Will noted the national legislative context, the power and influences of local authorities, and the potential for the development of a sustainable and inclusive economy to be a significant driver for growth in the post-covid world. Will noted the different commitments the Council had made (2030 for organisational carbon neutrality and 2045 for borough-wide neutrality).

## **6 Reviewing our progress to date and considering our next steps**

Will Pearson and George Ablett provided an overview of the Council's progress, discussing that the Council's emissions had dropped from more than 50,000 tons in 2014-15 to 13,808, a 63.8% reduction. At a borough wide level, it was noted that emissions had dropped year on year once again, primarily driven by reducing industrial emissions. However, Will highlighted an increase in emissions within the housing and transport sectors between 2020 and 2021, potentially influenced by COVID restrictions being slightly relaxed in 2021 compared to 2020.

## **7 Our approach to Communications and Engagement**

Steph Anderson updated the Taskforce on the Council's communication and engagement strategies. She highlighted the energy saving campaign, recycling initiatives, the promotion of the Climate Emergency Fund, the Climate monthly newsletter, the ReactNow brand, and the Climate Emergency Inspire microsite, allowing individuals to share stories and best practices related to climate change. 62 media releases that featured climate change or nature were issued in 2023, and the readership of the Climate Newsletter has grown to 4700. Steph discussed the upcoming "Big Energy Conversation" alongside other campaigns. Steph requested Taskforce members assistance in identifying stories for the Climate Emergency Inspire site.

## **8 Terms of Reference, Governance, Future work plan, and next steps**

No amendments were proposed to the terms of reference. Membership updates were acknowledged, and the Taskforce agreed to maintain the quarterly meeting schedule.

During the broader discussion, Ashley drew attention to the potential impact of the carbon border adjustment mechanism, suggesting it as a topic for future consideration.

The Taskforce expressed interest in including the following items on the agenda for upcoming meetings: HyNet, an in-depth discussion on housing retrofit, planning aligned with the local plan refresh, the Local Transport Plan, and grid reinforcement.