

## COUNCIL

21 MARCH 2023

### **AGENDA ITEM 7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

**The following question has been received from Cllr Brian Edmonds:**

The very optimistic target of Carbon neutrality by 2030 requires a precise action plan with performance reported annually against delivery objectives.

The 7 January 2023 New Scientist reported Bill Gates note that “avoiding a climate disaster will require a new industrial revolution. Half the technology needed to get to zero emissions either doesn’t exist yet or is too expensive for much of the world to afford.”

Please could the Executive advise why it believes it believes Waverley BC can achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 with very few reduction levers and measured in tonnes what has been the reduction so far?

### **Response from Cllr Steve Williams, Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Sustainability**

I’d like to thank Councillor Edmonds for his question, and I will address each of the issues he raises in turn.

Councillor Edmonds suggests that “The very optimistic target of carbon neutrality by 2030 requires a precise action plan with performance reported annually against delivery objectives.” If Councillor Edmonds is not satisfied with my assertion that Waverley Borough Council’s Action Plan is robust and effective, perhaps I can refer him to the work of the independent organisation, Climate Emergency UK. Climate Emergency UK recently assessed the Climate Plans of all local authorities in the UK according to 28 questions across nine sections, based on the expert-approved checklist for Council Action Plan. Each council was marked against these criteria and given a right to reply before the scores underwent a final audit. This work was completed between June and December 2021. In this assessment, Waverley Borough Council’s Action Plan was ranked fifth out of all the districts and boroughs in the UK. We have subsequently reviewed our action plan and have published our progress against the targets following a review by the Executive, the Climate Emergency Board and our Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

The council recognises the magnitude of the challenge to achieving net zero by 2030 and also acknowledges that it has limited powers, resources and finances. 2030 is a challenging target when we are failing to get the support we need because our

government does not have the same sense of urgency as we do. Our Climate Emergency motion declared, and I quote:

*Waverley Borough Council recognises that the achievement of the target will require central government to provide the powers, funding and other resources to achieve the target and therefore calls on the government to provide such powers, funding and other resources as appropriate to facilitate achieving the 2030 target.*

We have, more than once, requested that the government funds our carefully costed plan and cross-party attempts in parliament have sought to fund local authorities with robust climate action plans, but such efforts have, to date, simply fallen on deaf ears.

Notwithstanding Covid, the Ukraine war, a Cost of Living crisis, an energy crisis and limited support from central government, we have made significant progress. By 2021-22 Waverley had reduced its carbon emissions to 3500t CO<sub>2</sub> from 5297t CO<sub>2</sub> in our base year 2015-16. This is a 34% reduction.

We have completed our first heat decarbonisation project at the Memorial Hall which aims to achieve a reduction of the building's carbon emissions by 40%. We are looking at renewable generation as a means of offsetting carbon emissions as well as generating an income that can be reinvested in further carbon reduction projects. We are embarking upon the decarbonising our Leisure Centres in Haslemere, Godalming and then Farnham and planning a newbuild Leisure Centre in Cranleigh at minimum of Passivhaus standard and aiming for net zero carbon. We are now working on ways of ensuring that our waste collection service has a net zero carbon footprint by the time the current contract comes up for renewal in 2027. The impact of all these changes will come through in the greenhouse gas emissions reporting in future years.

Whatever the many challenges, we are determined to continue to make every effort to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and do everything in our power to reduce emissions across the borough. There are truly dire consequences unless we act on the climate crisis. We owe it to our children, our grandchildren and future generations to act and to act now. We are definitely trying to do our bit in Waverley whatever the challenges we face.