

# STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Questions to Portfolio Holders

### Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel Monday 6 September 2021

#### **1. Question received from Councillor Hoptroff:**

“Why isn’t Climate Change on the agenda for this meeting when it is the platform for the Portfolio Holder to report to members of the panel and allow scrutiny and support. This was agreed and promised when the Climate Change Emergency was approved in 2019 to be on every agenda of this committee?”

#### **Response from Councillor Porter – Portfolio Holder for Climate Change & Biodiversity:**

On the 10th July 2019 this Council took the crucial step of declaring a Climate Change Emergency. The resolution from that meeting of the full Council included undertakings to:

- 1 Work towards making Staffordshire Moorlands carbon neutral by 2030
- 2 Call on the Government to provide guidance, powers and resources to make carbon neutrality possible
- 3 Request that the Chair of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel establishes a sub committee to undertake detailed research with a view to developing an effective, achievable and costed plan for addressing climate change within the Staffordshire Moorlands.
- 4 Ensure that all Council Bodies and Scrutiny Panels consider the impact of climate change and the environment when making decisions and reviewing Council policies and strategies.
- 5 Review progress made on an annual basis via Scrutiny and Full Council.

Councillor Hoptroff’s question quite rightly refers to the importance of providing a platform for Members of this Committee to scrutinise and support the Council’s work towards achieving carbon neutrality. This is why one of the undertakings was to establish a specific sub-committee to provide the required support and scrutiny.

Since making this undertaking, the Climate Change Working Group has met on ten occasions to help formulate our action plan. However, the Council went beyond its initial undertaking and also established thematic sub-groups to consider the Council’s emissions, Energy, Housing, Natural Environment, Travel & Transport, and Industry & Agriculture. These groups have also met regularly, often on a monthly basis, to provide further opportunities for Members to contribute to this agenda. The

Council also extended membership of the Working Group to include the Moorlands Climate Action Group.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairs and all the members of the Working Group and the six Sub-Group for their support in developing our Climate Change plan.

The other undertaking was to review progress on an annual basis via Scrutiny and Full Council. I am committed to presenting annual reports to both this Scrutiny Committee and to Full Council each year to coincide with the anniversary of the Council signing the Emergency declaration.

We will be looking at Part 2 of the Climate Change action plan in the coming months and this will be presented to both the Climate Change Working Group and this Committee to gain the valuable input of those two groups.

We have always said that the action plans will be flexible documents that will be updated on a regular basis and it is important that we have an on-going mechanism to involve Councillors in that process.

Most importantly, we must now have a strong focus on delivering our plan. I recognise the desire of Members to support the delivery of the Council's action plan and that only providing an annual update to the Committee and Full Council does not provide sufficient opportunities for Members to be engaged with delivery of the plan.

For those reasons, I intend to meet with the Chair of this Committee, the Chair of the Working Group, Officers and others to consider how the current structures need to change as we move from preparing the plan to monitoring its delivery and updating where necessary.

Officers are also working on the reporting arrangements so that this important priority is included in the quarterly performance reports that are provided to all Members.

It is important to remember that our intention is to put Climate Change at the heart of the Council's priorities and actions. All reports that are received by this and other Committees include a section on Climate Change implications. In addition to updates on delivery of the plan, Members will have the opportunity to consider and scrutinise specific, detailed reports on such things as the Asset Management Strategy, Procurement Strategy, and the Parks and Open Spaces Management Policy.

## **2. Question received from Councillor Swindlehurst:**

"The Government has announced a £338 million investment in walking and cycling, which, together with the Highway Code amendments should increase the potential for significantly less car use. Mindful that transport is the biggest source of carbon emissions resulting in premature death what provisions do we intend to implement to encourage active travel?"

**Response from Councillor Porter – Portfolio Holder for Climate Change & Biodiversity:**

A verbal response will be provided at the meeting.