

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Question from Jennifer Harding

In view of Parliament's declaration of a Climate Change Emergency on 1st May, 2019, and the further declarations by other cities such as Bath, London, and Edinburgh of their own CCE's, I am very interested to know if our District Council has any plans to take the lead with a local Climate Change Emergency plan alongside the current Cleaner, Safer, Greener initiative.

Specifically, I want to understand what NSDC's view is on what the vital role of both maintaining and expanding existing green spaces, woodlands and protecting mature trees – particularly such as those at the Newark Library gardens – plays in actively reducing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Could there be a programme of planting new trees whilst simultaneously increasing the range of recycling of plastics, adding air pollution monitors on main roads near schools and hospital, given the proximity of the A1M, A46 and A17 to our town and investing in more public transport to reduce vehicle movements?

Reply from Councillor D. Lloyd – Leader of the Council

As you will hopefully hear in my answers to other questions this evening this Council certainly takes the challenge of climate change seriously, having explicitly identified this risk and how to address it across a range of Council Services. It is reflected in many planning documents and the work that we do. We are clear that as a Council we can, do, and will tackle this issue. We are mindful as a Council that we cannot and will not act in isolation and will liaise with a range of partners in order to make a real difference.

One example is Nottinghamshire County Council, who themselves have recently acknowledged the challenge of this issue in their proposed Place Departmental Strategy 2019-21, which is being considered by them at their Policy Committee tomorrow (22nd). This includes, amongst other things, the promotion of improving air quality and encouraging the use of alternative modes of transport throughout the county, including the promotion of autonomous and sustainable technology onto the roads.

We also work with the County Council on waste and recycling. We collect what we can on behalf of the County Council who dispose of it. We have done a lot of work on this, with more plastics now recyclable and trying to eradicate single use plastics. There is added complexity with the need to wait for the national waste strategy being developed. We already have a green waste collection and are looking at a food waste collection which is something we are very keen to progress as it opens up options to reflect on what is collected in all other bins and significantly reduce landfill, maybe even generate heat and energy. We could collect all plastics however, the majority are not recyclable and there is no national definition of biodegradable. Mixing collections can produce gases so we must not take a knee jerk reaction to the issue but do what we can and work with our partners.

On climate change, our policy, in the form of the Amended Core Strategy adopted in March this year accepts that climate change presents probably the biggest challenge to the delivery

of sustainable development. However it goes on to correctly identify that through supporting the move to a low-carbon economy and by securing low-carbon living, the climatic impact of new development can be reduced. We make clear that this will involve initiatives such as generating renewable and low-carbon sources, including community-led schemes and maximising, where appropriate and viable, the use of available local opportunities for district heating and decentralised energy.

The Core Strategy sets out that the Council will prepare a Supplementary Planning Document on Sustainable design (both construction and operation) and Air Quality. We will additionally be producing a Greenspace Strategy and Sustainable Transport Strategy.

The above initiatives are not currently cross-referenced into the 'Greener' element of CSG, albeit they clearly form an integral part of it. The lack of linkage is of course due to the fact that the range of Council initiatives and policies to which I have already referred were already in progress at the time the CSG campaign was launched. This campaign has now become part of the Council's 'business as usual' following the adoption at the last Council of the Community Plan. There is no need to declare an emergency in the District Council's case as the seriousness of the challenge is already accepted and understood. This Council will focus its efforts and energies on dealing with this challenge.

Supplementary question from Jennifer Harding

Jennifer Harding then asked where she could find the Council's sustainable transport policy or strategy.

Reply from Councillor D. Lloyd – Leader of the Council

Details would be sent following the meeting.

2. Question from John Samye

Why are you allowing so many healthy trees to be cut down in Newark when the government says we are in a climate change emergency, and the UN says we only have 11 years to limit climate change catastrophe? Shouldn't you be keeping trees, protecting more trees and planting new trees?

Reply from Councillor D. Lloyd – Leader of the Council

Firstly can I thank Master Samye for asking the question and for raising the issue of tree loss and climate change. I can pick up the issue of climate change as part of another question also being asked this evening.

It is always pleasing when we have a younger generation interested in first: local government and asking questions of those voted in on a mandate to make a difference and second: a keen interest in protecting trees and the environment.

It is also concerning for me if a different impression is given to a young person of this Councils approach than the one we should be promoting and doing, or one that I recognise. I

apologise if the Council's approach or record has not been made clear. I will try and address this as best I can in my answer.

Where there is tree loss, we require replacement. On the whole, we prevent tree loss and the reduction of trees. But we are limited by what we can do in law. We can place a Tree Protection Order or set a Conservation Order to protect trees. There may be issues with the health of a tree but we will try and protect them. To offer some comfort I can give some facts on the issue of the Council's management of trees. In 2018 and 2019 we have planted 18 large trees and 770 whips in our parks and open spaces. Species include oak, rowan, beech, silver birch, hawthorn and field maple, planting on a scale that many other Councils don't. Sometimes there may be conflict with neighbours and we can't promise to protect all of those. Colleagues in Planning Policy and on the Planning Committee do a lot of work with trees and hedgerows.

The Council is working in partnership with the RSPB and Sherwood Forest, the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission to try and work towards a massive tree planting exercise to extend Sherwood Forest. We have also raised opposition to Nottinghamshire County Council Highways Policy of resisting trees in new development. We should be aim for a minimum percentage of tree canopy to protect trees and so new developments can enjoy trees. We have protected 32 trees on the Highfields site with Tree Protection Orders, and undertaken enforcement action at Beacon Hill and Hutchinson Road. The development of the municipal carpark was arrested to protect trees.

To conclude, I agree that we should always look to keep trees, replacing them if their loss is necessary or required. I equally agree that we should look to plant more, either as a Council or in encouraging others. We have been doing all of this, I can assure you. We will need to strive to always do more, assessing each and every case carefully.

Supplementary question from John Samye

John Samye asked when the Council last made a Tree Protection Order.

Reply from Councillor D. Lloyd- Leader of the Council

I believe that this was in relation to the municipal car park but we can confirm this.

3. Question from Wendy Baird

What is the Council's Environmental policy and where can I get a copy?

Reply from Councillor D. Lloyd – Leader of the Council

The Council does not have a separate Environmental Policy because there are so many different ways in which we do this in different services. There would be too much to put in a single strategy. It is at the heart of Council policy across, albeit it is sat across a range of service areas and disciplines. Its definition encompasses our own approach corporately (such as the way we manage our operations, buildings and assets) but that we expect from others. It includes issues such as ensuring sustainable developments, reducing or mitigating

environmental impacts, improving environmental and construction performance, preventing pollution, reducing and recycling waste, increasing sustainable energy, and promoting sustainable transport.

In terms of our own operations we strive to ensure we have efficient buildings and energy. The building we are in is a new build, itself offering significant reductions in heating and lighting requirements. The building will also soon be the subject to proposals to install solar panels to the roof, again reducing demand on the wider grid.

With respect to developments by others you may be aware that in March 2019 we adopted an Amended Core Strategy, which set out the Council's vision up to 2033 on, amongst other things, environmental protection policies, sustainable development, climate change, and the natural and built environment.

Likewise, with respect to the public health and the environmental protection agenda the council has many regulatory responsibilities designed to protect the environment. The council has a programmed regime to monitor air quality at a number of sites across the district to ensure that the local air quality complies with national objectives. The controls also cover the investigation and remediation of contaminated land and the monitoring and control of air pollution from local industrial processes. The protection of the natural environment is also important and the council will investigate all reports of fly tipping and remove the waste as soon as possible. Where evidence is available it will seek to prosecute the perpetrators.