

Leaders' Committee

Climate Change and Green Recovery from Covid-19

Item no: 7

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Summary:

This report seeks to update Leaders Committee on the work that has taken place on climate change policy since the last report in December 2019 and outlines some of the changes to the programme due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

London Councils officers have been working closely with senior borough officers through LEDNet and CELC and have developed a set of eight proposals for operationalising a green recovery from Covid-19 in London.

This paper seeks comments and support from Leaders Committee for these proposals going forward.

Recommendations:

Leaders' Committee is asked to:

- Note and comment on the progress made on the climate change workstream;
- Comment and support the eight green recovery proposals at paragraph 15 to be progressed and aligned with the London Recovery Board through the Economic and Social elements.

Introduction

1. The Executive and Leaders' Committee considered climate change policy at their meetings in November 2019 and December 2019 respectively, and wanted to be involved and have oversight of progress, together with TEC.
2. In recent months, officers have been focusing on how London can continue to tackle the climate emergency whilst supporting the recovery and renewal from Covid-19.
3. This report outlines some of the progress that has been made on the shared climate ambitions discussed previously and presents a number of proposals that could assist in operationalising a green recovery.
4. Leaders are asked to comment on this set of proposals, which officers will then look to progress collaboratively with borough colleagues, through the London Recovery Board structures and other stakeholders as appropriate. We will work with both the Economic and Social Recovery Task Forces of the London Recovery Board on this agenda.

Climate change action update

5. Table 2 provides an overview of progress towards each of the seven shared climate ambitions, and associated work on climate change communications.

TEC-LEDNet climate priorities	Working group	Progress
#1 Retrofit London	Home Retrofit Working Group established, under London Housing Directors' Group	Issues Paper complete; Action Plan under development
#2 Low-carbon development	Low Carbon Development Working Group established, in consultation with Planning Officers Society London	Meeting schedule in place
#3 Halve petrol and diesel road journeys	<i>Pending discussions on development of post-Covid interventions</i>	
#4 Renewable power for London	<i>Pending discussions with London Energy Project</i>	
#5 Reduce consumption emissions	Working Group to be established in June/ July 2020	<i>Pending</i>
#6 Build the green economy	Working Group to be established in June/ July	<i>Pending</i>
#7 Creating a resilient and	Resilient and Green Working	Meeting schedule in

TEC-LEDNet climate priorities	Working group	Progress
green London	Group established, under LEDNet	place
Communications support	London Councils Climate Change Communications Steering Group established	Communications plan under development

Table 1: Progress against London Councils climate priorities

6. London Councils is also supporting four climate projects:

- i. Carbon data: following agreement on an approach to data at the March TEC meeting, officers are now in discussion with the LGA about a standard carbon emissions accounting tool for all local authorities.
- ii. Climate capability training: a tender to procure a training provider is being prepared, to be published shortly.
- iii. Climate action plans: following agreement on an approach that boroughs are encouraged to take at the March TEC meeting, officers are continuing to compile a database of all action plans, and to support boroughs on an ad hoc basis.
- iv. Low carbon procurement: this has been delayed due to Covid-19 but officers are seeking to get this project underway in the coming months.

National Advocacy

7. London Councils officers have engaged with national local government and green organisation partners to develop a set of national advocacy asks, based on the seven themes discussed above. These have resulted in national agreement on five key priorities that would enable a green recovery from Covid-19, whilst helping to set the foundations for longer term solutions to the climate and ecological crises. These have been published as 'A Blueprint for accelerating climate action and a green recovery at the local level':

I. Invest in low-carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure

II. Support reskilling, retraining and research for a net-zero well-adapted economy

III. Upgrade our homes to ensure they are fit for the future

IV. Make it easy for people to walk, cycle, and work remotely

V. Accelerate tree planting, peatland restoration, green spaces and other green infrastructure

8. Going forward, officers will continue to work with partners within local government and beyond to develop a strong advocacy position that can support boroughs' climate ambitions and support the green recovery. This will include domestic opportunities such as the Spending Review, as well as the rescheduled UN Climate Conference, COP26, now scheduled to take place from 1 – 12 November 2021.

A green recovery from Covid-19

9. The unprecedented crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a prediction of a global drop in carbon emissions of 8 per cent.¹ There is now a window of opportunity to efficiently embed the fundamental changes that will allow London to transition from a high carbon economy to a net zero carbon economy.
10. Since lockdown began, there has been a massive decrease in public transport use, a decrease in car use, and an increase in active travel in London. Polling funded by LEDNet shows that:
 - i. 25 per cent of Londoners are walking and running 'a lot more', and more than 35 per cent think they will continue walking and running more after lockdown
 - ii. Nearly 10 per cent are cycling 'a lot more', and more than 15 per cent think they will continue cycling more after lockdown²
11. This has led to a huge reduction in air pollution and carbon emissions: London roadside locations have seen a fall in daily average NO₂ of around 40 per cent.³ Readings from the BT Tower in central London have shown a 58 per cent decrease in carbon dioxide emissions during the lockdown.⁴
12. To support public health and active travel, boroughs have already started to implement social distancing measures such as pavement widening, temporary traffic restrictions, and new cycling routes.

¹ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/iea-coronavirus-impact-on-co2-emissions-six-times-larger-than-financial-crisis>

² <https://www.centreforlondon.org/blog/lockdown-changing-travel/>

³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/dramatic-improvements-in-air-quality>

⁴ <https://www.timeout.com/london/news/bt-tower-records-58-percent-reduction-in-carbon-emissions-during-london-lockdown-052120>

13. In light of these activities, London Councils officers have worked closely with the LEDNet climate cluster, the CELC Environment sub-group as well as the climate change officer group on operationalisation of a green recovery from Covid-19. This has resulted in a set of eight proposals, which officers now seek Leaders views and comments on before progressing.
14. This work will be aligned with the efforts of the London Recovery Board to promote a cleaner, greener and fairer city resulting from the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.
15. The eight proposals are:

Proposal 1: Homes fit for the future

Alignment with climate ambitions: #1 Retrofit London

Action: Develop and lobby for funding and investment in a comprehensive plan for retrofitting housing and the public sector estate in London that delivers efficiency through scale, including an area-led approach, and whole-house retrofits at the property level; to encompass energy efficiency, low carbon heating, and adaptation to future climate change.

Advocacy: Lobby for this to become a national infrastructure priority, with a package of resourcing that includes funding from government to accelerate the retrofitting of housing to help develop the retrofitting supply chain, a supportive tax policy, flexibility around local government finances that can allow authorities to support retrofitting schemes and development of private sector investment options for the wider retrofitting industry.

Contribution to recovery and renewal: retrofitting London housing alone represents a multi-billion pound opportunity, with potential to use this as a launchpad for the wider private sector market, and many thousands of jobs created with new, green skills; it will also significantly support the resilience of London households in the future, by reducing energy bills and increasing resilience to future climate change.

Development route: establish a pan-London team to develop and deliver proposals for retrofitting at pace, building on the work of London Councils Home Retrofitting Working Group, and existing programmes within the GLA and individual boroughs.

Proposal 2: Net zero development for London

Alignment with climate ambitions: #2 Low carbon development

Action: establish a Commission on Net Zero development for London, to secure agreement on how developers and planning authorities will deliver zero carbon new development (operational and embodied carbon) across all sizes and tenures, by 2025

Advocacy: lobby for a Future Homes Standard that requires all new buildings to be zero carbon from 2025, and enables councils to continue to be able to set higher requirements for energy efficiency than national standards where practical and demonstrably viable

Contribution to recovery and renewal: the need for homes in London remains acute, but the opportunity to use this industry to accelerate economic recovery must not come at the expense of future carbon emissions; instead, developers and councils must come to a shared agreement on basic standards that can accelerate home building, progressively reduce carbon emissions and develop green skills within the built environment sector.

Development route: developing from the Mayor's Housing recovery task force, with input from London Councils' low carbon development working group.

Proposal 3: New neighbourhoods

Alignment with climate ambitions: #3 Low carbon transport, #4 Renewable power for London, #5 Consumption emissions, #6 Green economy, #7 Resilient and green

Action: enable connected, low carbon neighbourhoods that support hyperlocal community interaction, exchange and support, focusing on disadvantaged neighbourhoods, within a wider framework of polycentric development, through a series of connected initiatives:

- Initiatives to build continuing engagement and co-design around climate action with residents, for example through citizen assemblies and forums
- reclaiming road space for active travel, green spaces and community infrastructure, through wide roll-out of school streets, the London Streetspace programme and a connected initiative to secure permanent car-free areas in London;
- localising services in line with the 15 minute city concept, including more civic space, and supporting the use of void properties/ shopfronts and underutilising space by supporting circular economy businesses;
- ensuring that bike hire opportunities are equally accessible across London's boroughs, with adequate provision of infrastructure to support cycling, including bike lanes and bike parking;
- enabling low carbon first and last mile delivery, including through sharing and subscription models for e-bikes and e-trailers, and take back schemes; and
- enabling home working by engaging with sub-regions, boroughs and providers to accelerate superfast broadband roll out.
- establish 1000 energy projects across London by 2030, with at least 20 in each borough, delivering green energy generation, energy efficiency retrofits, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, fuel poverty alleviation and anaerobic digestion, securing at least £1m investment from Londoners and providing more than 3,000 training opportunities, including 1,000 for young people.

Advocacy: lobby government to support councils to make temporary changes that have reallocated road space to pedestrians and cyclists permanent, where this is locally supported and lobby for reinstatement of incentives and the removal of tax burdens for Community Energy Companies to unlock local investment in community energy projects

Contribution to recovery and renewal: this new neighbourhoods approach takes a place-centred approach to renewal, embedding new ways of connecting, working and accessing goods and services, and ensuring that people continue to feel more connected in their local area, that they have ready access to services and businesses they need, that they can easily get around by bike or walking, and that each local area is a hub for local and green businesses.

Development route: to be determined, any suggestions welcome.

Proposal 4: Renewing our roads

Alignment with climate ambitions: #3 Low carbon transport

Action: radically reform the focus of the road network in London by working with the Mayor and TfL to introduce a London-wide road pricing scheme that can underpin fair contributions by people using our roads, and supporting significant enhancement of strategic interconnection of walking and cycling routes across borough boundaries

Advocacy: lobbying HM Treasury to devolve VED receipts to London, to support this refreshed and holistic approach to fair road user charging

Contribution to recovery and renewal: to permanently move to a low carbon transport city, we need radical change in the quality and accessibility of cycling routes, and overhaul our approach to the costs and benefits of roads, through a fair and robust charging regime for those who use London's roads – building on the gains of the congestion charge and ULEZ.

Development route: Establish a working group of TfL, GLA and borough officers in the first instance to develop some suitable options based on some of the extensive works already undertaken by TfL colleagues and bodies like Centre for London.

Proposal 5: Accelerating low carbon heating

Alignment with climate ambitions: #4 Renewable power for London

Action: develop a Local Area Energy Plan for London, together with the GLA and the LEAP, to drive forward a low carbon heating transformation in London

Advocacy: lobby for a government road map for decarbonising heat

Contribution to recovery and renewal: decarbonising heat is a major climate challenge, but also one where there is a significant economic opportunity for infrastructure investment, the development of skills and enterprise, and innovation.

Development route: Establish a task and finish group of GLA and borough officers, taking the work undertaken on the development of district heat networks as a starting point.

Proposal 6: Embedding a resilient, green economy for London

Alignment with climate ambitions: #6 Green economy

Action: develop an ambitious green economy strategy for recovery from Covid-19, working hand in hand with London's business community to develop proposals including:

- using 'greening' measures to support short-term survival, particularly of SMEs,
- promoting sustainable, low carbon and circular business models and their role in supporting business' long-term resilience
- supporting specific low carbon sectors, including renewable heat and power, retrofitting, low carbon building and development and urban farming
- supporting low and zero carbon procurement by local authorities

- working across London local government to align funding from the National Skills fund, the National Retraining Scheme and the Apprenticeship Levy, together with the Adult Education Budget, so that it accelerates low carbon skills development and supports re-employment in London into the green economy
- developing wider skills and employment programmes set up to alleviate the effects of recession and support a green recovery by accelerating the growth of low carbon skills and the green economy, targeting the newly unemployed, disadvantaged Londoners and young people who are out of work
- rebuilding London's reputation as a global city founded on efficiency, innovation and wellbeing

Advocacy: lobby for a multi-billion pound place-based infrastructure fund that enables local authorities to develop low carbon infrastructure that supports local economic recovery from Coronavirus, such as public transport, segregated cycle lanes and cycle parking, walking infrastructure, electric vehicle charging, renewable energy generation, low carbon heating networks and digital connectivity; lobby for funding for full fibre rollout and digital support for businesses and local authorities

Contribution to recovery and renewal: we need the green economy to thrive in London if we are to make a green recovery from Covid-19, and we cannot do that without the active support and ownership of our business community; their investment, energy and innovation are vital to London's prosperity as a low carbon city, and we should use our convening power as local government during this opportunity to bring them together around a set of shared green economy ambitions. London currently has the lowest percentage of workforce that is already aligned with a low carbon economy, at just 8.9%.⁵

Development route: establish a task and finish group for London local government and business groups.

Proposal 7: Financing for a future London

Alignment with climate ambitions: underpins all seven ambitions

Action: a green finance taskforce, co-chaired by the boroughs and the GLA, to develop proposals for funding and financing London's short, medium and long-term action to tackle the climate emergency, including advising on the green recovery from Covid-19, building on the LSDC report 'Financing a Future London'

Advocacy: lobby for support for green financing approaches to support London's ambitions

Contribution to recovery and renewal: each of our climate ambitions, and our overall recovery from Covid-19, will require the development of robust funding and financing approaches, which should make best use of London as a world-leading financial centre, which can in turn support London to re-build with new expertise and focus post-Covid

Development route: the proposal is to establish a taskforce.

⁵ Investing in a just transition in the UK, The Grantham Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, page 5.

Proposal 8: Creating a culture of sustainability

Alignment with climate ambitions: underpins all seven ambitions

Action: Develop a programme that can build a culture of sustainability in London, so that citizens choose or demand sustainable options by default, to include:

- research into Londoners' current and potential lifestyles to identify barriers to transitioning to sustainable lifestyles;
- a strong, pan-London communications approach and strategy, working together with Directors of Communications on campaigns to encourage, for example, walking and cycling, and using local shops;
- education materials and tools developed for use by schools, educational institutes, learning centres, and related community groups; and
- tools to enable Londoners to make informed choices about sustainability and low carbon action.

Advocacy: N/A

Contribution to recovery and renewal: we will not achieve a lasting or green recovery from Covid-19 if our residents are not supported and if they do not actively support and engage with efforts to put the green economy at the heart of our economy base.

Development route: Heads of Comms sub-group on climate change.

Next Steps

16. Officers will continue to work closely with senior borough officers and other stakeholders on delivering the agreed workstreams and look to integrate the proposals outlined in this report, with those workstreams as well as the London Recovery Board structures, based on the outcomes of the discussions at Leaders Committee.

Recommendations: Leaders' Committee is asked to:

- Note and comment on the progress made on the climate change workstream;
- Comment and support the eight green recovery proposals at paragraph 15 to be progressed and aligned with the London Recovery Board through the Economic and Social elements.

Financial implications for London Councils

None

Legal implications for London Councils

None

Equalities implications for London Councils

None