

Our Climate Commitment: workshops for staff and Councillors on the climate emergency

Lead Organisation:

Sustainability West Midlands
Project Manager: Alan Carr (Senior Sustainability Adviser)

Customers:



Project Duration:

May – August 2020

The Project

In July 2019, SWM member, [City of Wolverhampton Council \(CWC\)](#), became the first local authority in the Black Country to declare a Climate Emergency. It has set a target to be net zero carbon by 2041 across the City and 2028 for the council's own operations. In late 2019, the council [commissioned SWM](#) to provide an independent review of their draft sustainability strategy and action plan, the methodology for calculating their carbon footprint and input to their citizens assembly. Following a pause due to the Covid-19 pandemic, SWM then delivered part two of its work for CWC: running four virtual workshops for staff and Councillors and contributing to a fifth session for young people.

Aims

- Run three virtual workshops for CWC staff to provide an overview of Wolverhampton's progress to date in tackling climate change and present a call to action as to how all staff contribute to reducing carbon emissions and ensuring that recovery from Covid-19 is a sustainable one.
- Run a fourth virtual workshop, for a cross-party group of Councillors, to empower them to support their residents and businesses to tackle the climate emergency.
- Put together a brief report summarising discussions from each workshop and align this to the recommendations stipulated in our previous strategy review.
- Contribute to a fifth virtual session by presenting on Wolverhampton's climate emergency plans to young people in the city and providing them with useful ideas and suggestions on how they can help hold local decision makers to account.

Challenges

From a logistical perspective, the impact of Covid-19 delayed these workshops by a few months; originally, they were due to take place in person earlier in the year. Given the limitations around the interactivity of workshops online versus in person, it was important that we used the virtual platform, Microsoft Teams, in an effective way to ensure attendees felt comfortable speaking and participating. This



transition from physical to virtual engagement is one we are embracing but constantly learning from!

From an implementation point of view, the content of these workshops was also different compared to what it would have been had they been run pre-Covid-19. Many extra considerations have transpired to ensure CWC can meet its ambitious net zero targets, such as reinvigorating public transport use and capitalising on recent changes such as greater usage of local green spaces. These needed to be factored into the content of the workshops and agreed with CWC prior to them taking place.

The Outcome

Despite the extra demands placed on councils during the pandemic, approximately 70 individuals attended the four council sessions in total, including around 25 Councillors. Approximately 25 young people were also in attendance at the session on 10 August. This represents enthusiasm and a genuine interest by a range of people in the city to make a difference. Many pertinent and perceptive points were made at each session and this shows real promise as CWC leads the city's future response to climate change.

In the Future

The workshops, alongside the newly published *Our Climate Commitment* strategy, provides the city and CWC with a blueprint to take forward actions to address the climate emergency. The key will be to find the right levers and resources to enable genuine change and implement activities that make the greatest difference.



Links and Downloads

Details of all climate change and sustainability related activity are available on the council's [website](#), along with its '[Our Climate Commitment](#)' strategy.

Accolades

"SWM went above and beyond expectations in this work formatting the workshops so that they were bespoke and unique to Wolverhampton's situation. As a consequence of both this and the engaging delivery of SWM staff, we are noticing greater enthusiasm from Councillors and staff around this agenda" – Isaac Vivian, Climate Change Project Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council.

Contact Details

For further information on the project or to work with us in one of a variety of ways, please contact the SWM team on 07599 658889 or enquiries@swm.org.uk.