

THE WALTHAM FOREST CLIMATE EMERGENCY COMMISSION: A CALL TO ACTION



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INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRS

It’s been a little over a year since the Waltham Forest Climate Emergency Commission met for the first time to explore, examine and interrogate existing plans and new ideas about how Waltham Forest could transition to a net zero-carbon borough. We are a mix of technical and policy experts, advocates and campaigners and – perhaps most importantly – residents of the borough, with an interest in climate and energy issues, especially those relevant to the urban environment. Our discussions have been principally around identifying routes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the 1.5°C goal that international climate science says we must reach, to avoid catastrophic climate change. However, we have also been doing this in the context of Waltham Forest’s priorities. From making homes warmer, transport systems cleaner, businesses more productive and efficient to improving access to green spaces and increasing job opportunities as we shift to a greener economy for the borough.

Then COVID-19 happened. And the reality of how another type of emergency, and how it can impact us has moved from a computer scenario to an ever-present danger. This should focus our minds on similar warnings we have long had from climate scientists, which are now also being felt. We are experiencing warmer wetter winters, hotter drier summers, increasing incidences of flooding. In Waltham Forest and across London the impacts are already being felt as we struggle with hotter summer nights, dodge car pollution, and seek out shade under a tree.

Our recommendations in this report look to drive action in the borough to combat climate change but also create new opportunities for greener growth through new jobs and opportunities for residents and businesses. The Council has shown leadership by declaring a Climate Emergency and by bringing together this Commission to challenge its plans.

Our report does not set out the full pathway to net zero – there is much still to do to understand how that can be achieved – but it does propose some ambitious next steps that will set the foundation for further work, and potentially a future Commission to present further ideas.

The recommendations we set out will require the full participation of everyone in the borough if they are to be successful. And part of the success is to ensure that no residents or businesses are left behind – something highlighted by Commission members throughout our discussions. We need to ensure we deliver the benefits of shifting to a cleaner and greener economy to everyone in Waltham Forest if we are going to move as fast – and as fair – as possible.



SYED AHMED



LUCY PADFIELD

THE DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSION

In April 2019, Waltham Forest declared a Climate Emergency. The Council had already taken important steps, implementing the award-winning Enjoy Waltham Forest scheme and becoming the first authority in the UK to announce it would fully divest its pension funds from oil, gas and coal stocks. In this spirit; in the summer of 2019 London's first independent Climate Emergency Commission was established. This brought together ten experts, many of whom live and work in Waltham Forest, to identify areas where the Council must be more ambitious in tackling the Climate Emergency and helping to maximise the impact of interventions. The overall aim was to radically change behaviours within the whole of Waltham Forest to reach a target of net zero-carbon emissions by 2030. Net zero would mean carbon emissions would be dramatically reduced and any remaining emissions offset, neutralising the environmental impact of activities in the borough.

Although this is a global issue, Waltham Forest will have to face specific challenges. For example, the borough is predominantly urban, despite the presence of many green spaces. The borough is bisected by the North Circular between Chingford and Walthamstow, and the A12 between Leyton and Leytonstone. These thoroughfares, both out of the Council's control, bring vehicle traffic and air pollution through the borough as people travel to and from central London. The local economy also relies on small businesses that may face difficulties in trying to adopt more sustainable business models. But Waltham Forest will also be able to build on local strengths and dynamic communities, with the Commission learning that 85% of residents agree they have the ability to make changes in their life that could help reduce climate change.

Whilst the bulk of the Commission's work was well underway prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic, there was a pause in proceedings whilst the Council and individuals dealt with the impacts and response. This gave the opportunity to take stock and reflect on the future opportunities and challenges. Despite the large-scale behaviour change and temporary reduction of carbon emissions during lockdown, the Climate Emergency is more pressing than ever. CO₂ emissions have already rebounded around the world as lockdown conditions eased and the major systemic changes needed to decarbonise the future are yet to be implemented.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the significant and severe impacts a global crisis can have on all of our lives. The dramatic upheaval to society, the economy and the role of government is unmatched since the Second World War. The challenge is now to prevent going from a pandemic to a climate crisis. Recovering from the pandemic offers an unprecedented opportunity to fundamentally reframe the way we live, so that residents can instead create a thriving, sustainable society. A green recovery, with widespread social and economic renewal, and more emphasis on equality, is what we have to work towards. COVID-19 recovery stimulus funding should be focused on a green recovery, which will create more jobs faster and deliver greater economic and health benefits than a return to business as usual.

The pandemic also highlighted endemic inequalities, which will be aggravated by climate change. Profound social benefits can be realised from tackling carbon emissions, but it is essential the Council fully understands who will benefit from each action and makes every effort to ensure climate justice for all of Waltham Forest's diverse communities. People and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts must be at the heart of the changes and the benefits of acting to tackle climate change should be shared equitably and fairly. This is especially important in Waltham Forest, where half of residents are from a minority ethnic background.

The challenges of the Climate Emergency cannot be tackled alone. The support, funding and leadership of central government is critical to enabling us all to play our part in building a better future. Residents, businesses and communities need to be brought together on this journey of making change. This is not something that can be done to them but must be done with them. Waltham Forest must lead by example, with the Council and everyone in the borough and beyond playing their part.



COMMISSION PROCESS

This independent expert panel, which commenced in September 2019, met 10 times over the course of a year. The work of the Commission has built on the draft Climate Change Strategy produced by engineering firm Buro Happold on behalf of the Council in 2019, to reduce emissions with a target of reaching net zero-carbon by 2030. The Climate Emergency is a broad challenge and systemic in nature, requiring coordinated thoughts and actions across multiple areas and expertise. To support this, the Commission meetings were conducted thematically to ensure each subject was given equal time and consideration, including:

- Transport
- Homes
- Businesses
- Biodiversity, Adaptation and Resilience
- Waste and the Circular Economy
- Behaviour Change and Collective Action

Throughout the process the Commission listened to evidence from Council officers and Councillors, as well as additional experts and guest speakers. Feedback was also received from over 3,000 residents in surveys and focus groups, and a further 1,400 young people within schools and workshops. Insight showed the Commission that over 90% of people who responded are concerned about the Climate Emergency.

The Commission reviewed each theme in detail, discussing many individual programmes, actions and initiatives that could support Waltham Forest to reach a net zero-carbon future. This report provides an overview of the key elements discussed, alongside overarching recommendations for the Council. It will be the responsibility of the Council to now develop a response, outlining in detail how it will deliver against the recommendations and track progress.

COMMISSIONER'S BIOGRAPHIES



SYED AHMED (CHAIR)

Syed has 20 years' experience working in the sustainable energy industry. Syed established Energy for London, chairs Community Energy London and is a member of the Mayor's London Sustainable Development Commission.



LUCY PADFIELD (CHAIR)

Lucy is a consultant engineer working on the decarbonisation of the UK energy system, particularly heat and heating systems. Lucy has worked in the public sector for most of her career and is also a local resident.



SIMERAN BACHRA

Simeran serves as the UK manager for CDP's Cities, working to support local authorities in their climate disclosure. Simeran also leads the development of new partnerships in the UK to help accelerate climate action.



TOBY BANCROFT

Toby is the Regional Director, Central England for the Woodland Trust. Trees and woods are his focus, working heavily with partners to try and realise the opportunities around protection, restoring and planting trees.



LURIE LAYBOURN-LANGTON

Laurie is an Associate Fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), leading a major project exploring responses to environmental breakdown. Laurie was previously Director of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change.



BRIAN KELLY

Brian has worked for borough based environmental social enterprises since 2002. He is a founding member of OrganicLea, a trustee of the London Community Resource Network, and sits on the board of three local sustainability organisations.



PAULA OWEN

Paula is the Founding Director of award-winning social enterprise Eco Action Games, inventing innovative games to facilitate behaviour change. Paula runs Green Gumption sustainability agency and net-zero carbon training and consultancy.



WAYNE HUBBARD

Wayne Hubbard is the CEO of the London Waste and Recycling Board, where he is responsible for helping London's boroughs to increase recycling rates and accelerating the development of the circular economy in London.



TOM RUXTON

Tom is the founder of the HEET project, an award-winning not-for-profit fuel poverty organisation. Tom is a Director of multiple community and sustainability organisations, such as GREEN, WellComm and the Hornbeam Centre.



MARK WATTS

Mark is the Executive Director of C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, which tackles climate change through the actions of mayors in the world's leading cities. Mark was previously Director at Arup, and a senior adviser to the Mayor of London.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION

Climate change is a serious threat to our planet and way of life, already causing detrimental effects around the globe with extreme weather events. It is also exacerbating existing inequalities, with the poorest and most vulnerable being the hardest hit. In Waltham Forest, climate change will cause more unpredictable weather, increasing temperatures, and heatwaves in summer. The increase in air pollution and the summer heat may also cause a rise in heat-related deaths. It is therefore incumbent on government of all levels, including local councils, to take the action required to mitigate the effects of climate change, and play their role in a great collective effort to tackle this global challenge.

ACTING NOW WILL ALLOW WALTHAM FOREST TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT SO PEOPLE CAN THRIVE. THE STEPS WALTHAM FOREST CAN TAKE WILL ALSO HAVE POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR OTHER ISSUES THE BOROUGH IS FACING.

The recommendations will contribute to improve all parts of the local environment, including green spaces and sustainable, active travel to the benefit of local residents. As the Council works to protect people's health from

the impacts of COVID-19, encouraging active travel and reducing air pollution will be crucial. Focusing on a green and just recovery will also help to curb the economic impacts of the pandemic by creating local jobs in the borough.

Over the last 20 years, the UK has significantly reduced carbon emissions by tackling the most obvious and easy to reach sources. A cleaner electricity mix has been achieved through a huge expansion of solar and wind power, closing coal stations and reduced consumption of energy by businesses and industry.

Whilst many of the recommendations in this report are focussed on reducing direct CO₂ emissions from the borough to reach net zero-carbon, the Commission recognises that this presents an incomplete picture of the borough's contribution to global CO₂ emissions.

It is essential to tackle the harder-to-reduce emissions that arise from the management of land and the production of buildings, vehicles, electronics, clothes, food, packaging, and other goods and assets used every day. They represent 45% of global CO₂ emissions and will require the accelerated development of a circular economy in order to minimise reliance on virgin materials and inefficient, pollution heavy methods of production and consumption. Further reductions over the coming decades will require harder choices. The Council must enable local delivery of these difficult solutions to reach net zero-carbon and involve communities in making the difficult choices that lie ahead.

The Commission was encouraged by a number of initiatives that the Council has implemented to contribute towards its net zero-carbon target.

Installing cavity wall and loft insulation in all suitable council-owned properties and implementing the award-winning Enjoy Waltham Forest scheme which transformed active travel infrastructure in much of the borough are examples of the leadership in this area shown by Waltham Forest. The Council's commitment is clear, most recently demonstrated through a successful bid to the government for almost £1 million to retrofit over 100 homes so they are more energy efficient and achieve an Energy Performance Certificate of C or above, which is an important move in the bid to aid the green recovery. However, Waltham Forest must go further still and increase ambitions to face this challenge and limit its impacts locally.



RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission has advised the Council on recommendations for each themed area, laying out how Waltham Forest can accelerate progress in reducing emissions as part of its journey to net zero-carbon.

THE COMMISSION HAS ALSO UNDERLINED THE NEED FOR CROSS-CUTTING AREAS OF ACTION SUCH AS EDUCATION ACROSS THE COUNCIL'S DEPARTMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS, AND THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT ALL PARTS OF THE COUNCIL WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE THE COMMON GOAL TO REDUCE EMISSIONS.

Across the borough, the need to move to a low carbon energy model is a critical cross-cutting concept the Council must embrace if it is to facilitate a net zero-carbon future. The size and complexity of the challenge means that everyone in the borough will need to play their part.

To implement systemic change; residents, businesses and partners will need to be better informed and empowered so that they are able to make the required changes, and the Council must support community initiatives to achieve this. Waltham Forest will also need to work with other local authorities, public and private sector organisations and, in particular, central government to combine knowledge and maximise opportunities, looking to support local action wherever possible.

These recommendations are a call for the Council to go further in the fight against climate change, and to take determined action to reduce carbon emissions.

The graph on the opposite page demonstrates how the Commission's recommendations help tackle emissions to support Waltham Forest's ambition to be net zero-carbon by 2030.

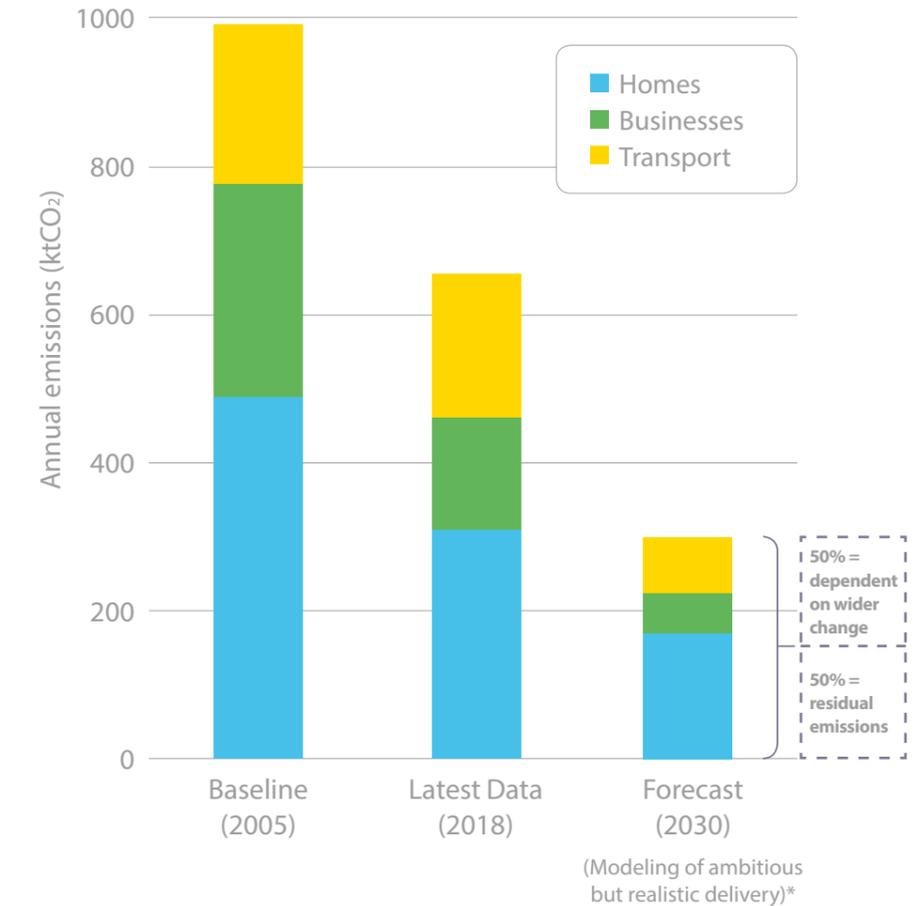
The graph is based on the previous work conducted by Buro Happold for the Council, and demonstrates how the recommendations in this report support and nuance the existing modelling to cut carbon emissions on the themes of homes, businesses and transport. This is based on a highly ambitious yet realistic view of delivery.

Of the remaining emissions modelled in 2030, it is forecast that approximately 50% of these are due to actions that the Council could potentially influence by increasing uptake and accelerating pace. However, this is dependent on significant changes to Government policy, support and funding, alongside the resolving of issues around technology advancements.

The remaining 50% of emissions will be residual emissions relating to national actions that are outside of the Council's control. Even if the Council, residents, businesses and community groups try as hard as possible to reduce emissions by all the methods shown in the carbon modelling there will still be remaining carbon emissions. For example, the energy grid will not be totally de-carbonised and there will still be older fossil fuelled vehicles on the roads. In order to meet the equivalent of net zero-carbon, the Council (like all other local authorities) will need to implement additional local projects to "offset" the equivalent of those remaining emissions. These projects could include planting more trees, investing in additional solar panel farms, residents and businesses switching to green energy tariffs and contributing towards voluntary off-setting funding for local Waltham Forest projects. The necessity to include offsetting highlights the need for rapid and system-wide action to be taken by central government. No council can do this alone.

All of the recommendations will directly or indirectly play an important role in reducing carbon emissions in the borough. The Commission believes that its recommendations must be embraced and adopted by the Council as a means of driving its ambition for a net zero-carbon borough.

Projected 2030 carbon emissions by theme in Waltham Forest



TRANSPORT

OVERRIDING AMBITION

TO FACILITATE THE REDUCTION OF CARBON EMISSIONS FROM THE TRANSPORT SECTOR AND CREATE MORE PLEASANT PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE ORIENTATED STREETS.



The theme of transport encompasses all of the private vehicles (cars, vans, lorries) as well as public transport (rail, bus) and active travel (cycling, walking) within the boundaries of the borough. In 2018, this sector accounted for 29% of the total carbon emissions in Waltham Forest. The Commission welcomed the success of the Enjoy Waltham Forest scheme, through which the Council has supported a huge growth in active travel through behaviour change and infrastructure improvements, leading to a reduction of motor traffic, marked improvement of air quality and health and wellbeing of residents.

The borough is undergoing rapid growth, but the existing transport infrastructure is already under pressure. A further reduction in vehicle journeys will only be possible through investment in public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure. However, the local authority only has limited power to influence some of the emissions-intensive modes of transport.

During the pandemic people have enjoyed walking and cycling as they make more use of smaller local shops and visit our parks and green spaces to exercise and relax. This has brought into even sharper focus the fact that a disproportionate share of public space is allocated to private vehicles.

THE 15-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD CONCEPT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO RE-IMAGINE THE BOROUGH AS A PLACE WHERE RESIDENTS CAN MEET MOST OF THEIR NEEDS WITHIN A SHORT WALK OR CYCLE.

With current public transport capacity significantly reduced, there is potential for an uptake in private car use. Guaranteeing that all amenities are within a 15-minute walk or cycle of home is critical to ensuring private car travel does not increase, and that the long-term recovery from COVID-19 is a green one. This will bring communities closer together and improve local quality of life.

Encouraging active travel will allow the borough to remain healthy and for residents to enjoy their neighbourhoods.

CALL TO ACTION

The Commission recognises the excellent progress made so far. However, to progress to the net zero-carbon target, the Council must further improve infrastructure for walking and cycling and reduce car travel. The Council must think differently to achieve this, using smart travel data to review the role of commercial traffic and provide residents and businesses with alternative travel choices. Enforcement measures would also support a reduction in car travel, with borough-wide controlled parking zones and traffic restrictions. Residents must be able to reach town centres easily and safely to help support the social and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Residents must capitalise on the active travel opportunities available to them and avoid using private cars where possible.

Through these measures, the borough's perceptions of public space prioritisation would be further shifted in favour of active travel. This will need to be supported by, and reviewed following, the Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, and other announcements to emerge in the recovery from, and adaptation to, the COVID-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Improve infrastructure across the borough to develop 15-minute neighbourhoods, supporting active modes of transport and increasing journeys by bike and foot fivefold by 2030.**
- **Further increase cycling rates within the borough, ensuring it is an easy and accessible choice for all by increasing service provision around training, advice and repair, and improving the necessary infrastructure.**
- **Reclaim town centres as places for residents and communities, reducing use of private and commercial road vehicles by 30% by 2030.**
- **Review the borough's Parking Strategy with a much greater Climate Emergency focus, disincentivising driving and making greener travel the most appealing choice.**
- **Be the lead authority in London for incentivisation and enforcement measures through traffic restrictions and smart data usage, to reduce emissions and improve air quality for all.**

HOMES

OVERRIDING AMBITION

TO CONTINUE TO REDUCE ENERGY DEMANDS IN THE DOMESTIC SECTOR AND ENCOURAGE THE UPTAKE OF RETROFIT ACROSS THE BOROUGH, WITH A TARGET OF 35% OF DWELLINGS TO HAVE HAD ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS BY 2030.

Domestic homes within the borough are the biggest emitters of CO₂, totalling 48% of the borough's emissions. The Commission has learnt of the Council's work in this area to date, including fitting over 1,000 solar panels on council-owned homes, upgrading properties to communal heating systems and piloting decentralised energy (communal networks providing heating and hot water more efficiently) in Blackhorse Lane and Marlowe Road. However, the limited enforcement and legislative powers the Council has over the private rented and owner-occupied sectors, which constitute 37% and 41% of houses in the borough, is a major challenge. Considerable uncertainty remains as to how homes and buildings will be able to shift from the use of gas heating to low and zero-carbon options (such as heat pumps). The UK Government will shortly set out the route map for this change in its Heating and Building Strategy, which should provide clarity on the combination of technologies the country will rely upon in the future. However, it is not yet clear which combination of technologies will work best at scale and keep costs down.

The financial investment to retrofit properties means large-scale change is problematic without a significant shift in residents' behaviour and Government policy. Incentives such as the recent and time limited Green Homes Grant scheme are a positive step, but insufficient to support the major shift required. With COVID-19 expected to

cause a deep economic recession, the significant financial investment needed from property owners, including the Council and Government, will be major challenges. The predicted sharp rise in unemployment and economic uncertainty may also mean that residents are less likely to be able to invest in long-term energy improvement schemes. However, the recovery from COVID-19 presents an opportunity to create decent, sustainable new jobs, particularly in the building and retrofit sectors, and to train and develop residents so they have the skills they need to succeed in a green economy.

CALL TO ACTION

THIS AREA OF ACTION IS ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING, AS IT REQUIRES AMBITIOUS ACTION FROM THE COUNCIL AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS AND HAS ONE OF THE GREATEST DEPENDENCIES ON FUNDING.

With the current signals from the Government pointing to greater funding for retrofit, particularly with the Green Homes Grant scheme already announced, this is an opportunity

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Launch a large-scale energy-efficiency programme in collaboration with partners to retrofit 35% of existing homes and all homes with an EPC rating lower than C by 2030.**
- **Educate homeowners and landlords in the private rented sector to retrofit properties by sharing examples of best practice, signposting to advice and utilising the intelligence and proactive enforcement capability afforded by the Council's large-scale property licensing schemes.**
- **Develop planning policies that insist future developments are net zero-carbon and incentivise existing properties be retro-fitted where planning permission is required.**
- **Design and implement a low carbon energy and heating plan for Waltham Forest in close consultation with businesses and residents.**
- **Continue to pilot new trials within the Council's housing stock of alternative heating methods, evaluating their impact and roll out successful initiatives across the sector.**

area which the Council, homeowners and the private rented sector must capitalise upon. The Commission has set the Council extremely challenging, but necessary, targets.

The Council should implement a retrofit route map, setting out the steps that properties of all sizes and tenures can take to improve energy efficiency and how the Council will support this. Significant capital investment from the Council, property owners and Government will be needed to meet the recommendations. The large-scale retrofit will require the Council to further invest in its own stock, but action will also be needed from the private rented, registered providers and owner-occupied sectors. The Council must utilise planning, building standards and Council Tax to drive the energy efficiency improvements required. As the current utility mix of gas and electricity changes over time, the Council must be flexible and plan for a modal shift towards low carbon heating, whilst supporting households struggling with cold homes and high energy bills including from the economic shock of COVID-19. Key to supporting the targets is undertaking low carbon energy and heat zoning across the borough, supported by the imminent Heating and Building Strategy to be published by the Government soon. A net zero-carbon borough is not possible without significant change in approaches to energy and heating.



BUSINESSES

OVERRIDING AMBITION

TO MAKE BUSINESSES MORE EFFICIENT AND RESILIENT AND REDUCE COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL EMISSIONS FROM THE BUSINESS SECTOR.



The business sector refers to the emissions of all companies, from international organisations to the self-employed, which operate within Waltham Forest. Evidence has shown that businesses currently account for 23% of total borough emissions, largely due to the energy inefficiency of the buildings occupied. The Commission has learnt that the Council has a good knowledge of local businesses with a track record of using sustainable methods to reduce their impact on the environment. Work must be done to harness the enthusiasm around this and to expand and build on these networks.

The Commission were informed that the vast majority of businesses in Waltham Forest are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), with 94% of businesses employing fewer than nine people. Compared with larger organisations, SMEs often face significant barriers and financial pressures to implement building retrofit measures and this presents a significant challenge to the borough. COVID-19 has also had a huge impact on the economy, but particularly on SMEs, with many local businesses struggling.

However, there is significant opportunity for growth in the low-carbon and circular economy sectors due to the pandemic, with the increase in people choosing to shop, work and stay local creating new operating and business models. This may benefit the development of localised supply chains and grow the capacity of the low-carbon business sector. A rise in unemployment may also offer an opportunity to (re)train for careers of the future, including low-carbon and retrofitting industries.

CALL TO ACTION

THE ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE WILL CHANGE DRAMATICALLY OVER THE NEXT DECADE, WHICH IS WHY THE COMMISSION CALLS ON THE COUNCIL TO SUPPORT GREEN BUSINESSES AND LEAD A SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY IN THE BOROUGH.

Every business in the borough must play its part, with the Council providing help and advice to encourage organisations to think about what actions they can take to minimise their impact. Businesses must be supported to become more energy aware and energy efficient in order to be part of the green recovery.

Retrofitting properties is one of a number of initiatives urgently needed in this sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Significantly grow and increase the capacity of the low-carbon business sector and develop and actively promote a directory of low carbon and circular economy businesses.**
- **Through London's only retrofit-training centre of excellence at Cathall Road Construction Training Centre, (re)train young people and existing workforce for the jobs of the future that are needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change.**
- **Ensure, within the next 12 months, that all new procurement conducted by the Council will have strict environmental measures and a credible net zero-carbon plan to influence suppliers and their wider supply chains to be greener.**
- **Provide a building retrofit support service for businesses, enabling them to take advantage of the options available by creating virtual networks and physical hubs.**
- **Lead by example, increasing the energy efficiency of council-owned business premises.**

Decarbonising supply chains, using lower carbon transport and taking advantage of programmes and funding opportunities available are significant contributions that the business sector can make to lower emissions in Waltham Forest. The Council must lead by example through own operations and procurement processes, and support residents and businesses to make the right decisions through a directory of local green businesses.

Signposting businesses to support programmes such as Advance London and Better Futures will help businesses to prepare for a net zero-carbon future. Businesses have been badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and developing career paths into low-carbon businesses would aid a green recovery, help to tackle youth unemployment caused by the pandemic and establish a local skill base of residents ready for the future.

BIODIVERSITY, ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

OVERRIDING AMBITION

WALTHAM FOREST SHOULD BE A DIVERSE NATURAL LANDSCAPE, WHERE LOCAL PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND ENJOY THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, AND WHERE WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE CAN THRIVE TOGETHER. THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT SHOULD BE PROTECTED AND UTILISED AS A WAY OF TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE AND INCREASING RESILIENCE TO ITS EFFECTS.

Biodiversity is the variety of plants and animals and their habitats. The richness of biodiversity contributes to a healthy and sustainable planet and can provide protection from some of the effects of climate change, such as extreme weather events. Waltham Forest is one of the greenest boroughs in London. The Commission has learnt the borough already has approximately 26.8% of tree canopy cover, above the advocated target of 19%, and over 50,000 trees. Areas such as the award-winning Walthamstow Wetlands provide obvious recreational, environmental and biodiversity benefits to the borough. The Wetlands, alongside the ancient woodland of Epping Forest and the protected Lee Valley Regional Park, are vital areas to protect and maintain due to their importance for habitats, in carbon storage, improvement to air and water quality, plus flood water storage.

A key challenge on this theme is around on-going maintenance of sites of enhanced biodiversity, which can be costly and resource intensive. Biodiversity improvements also need to be incorporated alongside the other requirements that good sustainable development and growth should provide. Effectively supporting biodiversity, adaptation and resilience is about ensuring the appropriate measures are implemented at the right location and protecting what exists already in the borough.

THE COMMISSION SAW THE EVIDENCE OF HOW THE BOROUGH'S QUALITY GREEN SPACES ACTED AS A VITAL LIFELINE FOR EXERCISE AND MENTAL WELLBEING DURING THE LOCKDOWN PERIOD.

This demonstrated the importance of having easy local access to quality green spaces and protecting the vital natural areas that help to keep the borough cool as the climate warms.

Whilst biodiversity, adaptation and resilience is not an area with significant carbon reduction potential, it is a topic on which collective action and community support is often easiest to inspire. The Council must use this leverage to deliver the significant changes needed for a net zero-carbon future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Increase tree and canopy cover in the borough to 35% by 2030.**
- **Mobilise and empower residents to increase habitats for wildlife and biodiversity across the borough by giving power and resources to residents to help make our public spaces greener.**
- **Develop nature-based solutions, including greater use of adaptable plants and water refill points, to ensure the borough adapts to the changing environment and residents remain safe through periods of extreme weather.**
- **The Council to lead by example with best practice in maximising greening and doing all it can to boost biodiversity across its estate, including introducing green roofs and retrofitting of street furniture.**

CALL TO ACTION

Mobilising communities is at the heart of the Commission's call to action. COVID-19 has raised everyone's understanding of the importance of gardens and green spaces. It is essential that interest in the natural environment is capitalised upon by the Council to encourage mass participation for residents in activities such as tree planting, wildlife monitoring and in developing their own greening projects and community resilience strategies.

Residents must ensure their own gardens and private spaces provide natural capital to enhance biodiversity and natural carbon storage. It is also vital that the borough remains safe for local people through periods of extreme weather such as heatwaves and floods, and to support this the Commission proposes nature-based solutions to water management and widening support measures for times of heat stress. Crucially, the Council must lead through best practice on its own estate, such as the new Fellowship Square development.



WASTE AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

OVERRIDING AMBITION

CREATE ECONOMIC VALUE FOR BUSINESSES AND SOCIAL VALUE FOR RESIDENTS BY FOSTERING A REPAIR AND RE-USE CULTURE, WASTE MINIMISATION ALONGSIDE A SHARING ECONOMY, AND HIGH RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING RATES TO REDUCE THE BOROUGH'S CONSUMPTION-BASED CO₂ EMISSIONS.

The amount of waste we all produce has a direct impact on our environment. Decomposition of organic waste or the incineration of plastics creates greenhouse gases. All of the things we use and consume - food, clothing, buildings - have a carbon cost associated with their extraction, production, transport, use and disposal in a circular economy. Products are designed to be reused to minimise waste. It is important to note that waste does not directly contribute to reducing carbon emissions measured in the borough, as waste is processed outside the borough boundary and therefore is not shown within government monitoring data.

The Commission has learnt of the steps taken by the Council to reduce waste and improve recycling rates through communications with residents and some changes to infrastructure. There are clearly a range of initiatives supported by the Council to further develop the circular economy in the borough, including the Leytonstone Community Fridge and Plastic Free Pilot, Forest Recycling Project and thinkFOUND.

Waste reduction, higher re-use rates and correct segregation for recycling require the right infrastructure coupled with large-scale behaviour change. This makes it a complex problem with parameters not always directly within the Council's control.

However, the Council still provides a weekly waste collection service to all residential properties, alongside weekly recycling and fortnightly food and garden waste collections. Consumption must be dramatically cut across the world to support a net zero-carbon future, and the Council must work with local government partners in London, the London Waste and Recycling Board (LWARB), the Mayor and the Government to examine how we can reduce consumption-based emissions. The Commission urges the Council to minimise waste creation by promoting circular economy businesses and leading by example, implementing circular procurement policies and maximising re-use and recycling of any waste produced within the borough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Work creatively with customers, traders, schools and businesses to reduce levels of waste to support the London Councils LEDNET target of reducing consumption-based emissions by 66% by 2030.**
- **Maximise capture rates of food and dry recycling through weekly collection and move to fortnightly residual waste collection.**
- **Prevent waste and strengthen the local circular economy by providing opportunities for residents to share, borrow and repair through a directory of circular economy services.**
- **Run targeted communications campaigns to increase recycling rates and reduce contamination from domestic waste.**

CALL TO ACTION

To meet the recommendations of the Commission the Council must creatively facilitate behaviour change to reduce waste and drive up recycling rates. Behaviour change can be maximised through communications and incentives, and by supporting circular businesses, alongside physical infrastructure and enforcement. The Council must also widen the remit of its waste and recycling work, encouraging shops where residents can share, borrow and repair, fostering a circular economy within Waltham Forest.

RESIDENTS MUST TAKE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ACTION TO REDUCE CONSUMPTION AND RESIDUAL WASTE PRODUCTION IN ALL ASPECTS OF THEIR LIVES.

Above all, the Council should demonstrate the courage similar to that shown in the Enjoy Waltham Forest scheme to implement changes in collection cycles to reduce levels of waste and maximise recycling in the borough.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

OVERRIDING AMBITION

CREATE MORE SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS THROUGH CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITIES, EMPOWERING RESIDENTS AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS THROUGH EDUCATION AND TRAINING.



This theme is cross-cutting by nature and is an imperative part of the delivery of all recommendations, so should not be viewed as an isolated element. The goal is to empower community groups, residents, young people and stakeholders so that they can all have an impact on reducing carbon emissions. This will involve giving them the necessary tools and motivation to change their behaviours and contribute to the reduction of the borough's carbon footprint. It has been clear through the research and engagement presented to the Commission that Waltham Forest is a highly engaged borough with a strong sense of community. The Commission learnt that 80% of residents feel strongly that they belong to their immediate neighbourhood, with 65% thinking people in local areas tend to work together to improve the area. The Commission was informed that many young people in Waltham Forest choose active travel over driving (60%) and are willing to stop flying (43%) and stop consuming animal products (20%) to contribute to a greener future. The Council must work with everyone in the borough across all ages to develop a climate response.

The pandemic has highlighted that residents trust the Council to provide information in times of crisis and has shone a light on how much the world can change when people mobilise to perform collective action. Across the country, and particularly here in Waltham Forest, a sense of civic duty was mobilised as neighbours cared

for neighbours, charities and businesses came together to support the vulnerable and the Council reported a 400% increase in volunteers. The Council should use this collective action as a sign of how to engage everyone to tackle the Climate Emergency. However, achieving long-term behaviour change will be challenging and can only be done with government support and development in national policies.

CALL TO ACTION

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND SUBSEQUENT LOCKDOWN SHOWED THAT IN THE FACE OF CRISIS PEOPLE ARE ABLE AND WILLING TO MAKE DRAMATIC CHANGES TO THEIR LIVES FOR THE GREATER GOOD.

That sense of collective action is required to achieve the Commission's recommendations. Everyone must play their part, but the Council must support this by highlighting examples of good practice and empowering passionate residents, particularly young people, to lead the rest of the borough. The Council must embed learning within schools to provide young people with the knowledge and skills needed to fight

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Provide a funding platform for residents and businesses to support Climate Emergency projects such as crowdfunding.**
- **Develop a single source view of Climate Emergency initiatives across the borough, supporting over 10,000 residents to partake in climate actions in the next 12 months and making getting involved the easy choice.**
- **Work with residents and partners to be bold in lobbying central government for the systemic change required for a net zero-carbon society, including the devolution of powers and greater control of funding at a local level.**
- **Roll-out mandatory carbon literacy and sustainability training to all Council staff to reduce carbon emissions at work and at home.**
- **Educate young people about the Climate Emergency and empower them to take action by embedding it within the school curriculum and providing them with a platform to lead the borough.**
- **Show Waltham Forest's communities the simple actions they can take and the benefits they bring through clear communication and engagement activities.**

the Climate Emergency and adapt to its impacts. As well as teaching about the changes required, schools must also be leaders in responding to the Climate Emergency, ensuring their own practices are low emissions and implementing measures such as eliminating single use plastic and removing animal products from food in school meals. The Council must also work with all services within the borough, including GP surgeries and Whipps Cross Hospital, to adopt practices with emissions reduction in mind.

To implement systemic behaviour change, the Council must enable residents and businesses to make the right choice through developing its own support services, providing a directory of green services and options such as crowdfunding and voluntary carbon offsetting to be directly involved in the solutions that are needed. Ensuring community groups are empowered to lead many of the actions required is vital. As the UK hosts COP26 international climate conference in 2021, the Council must take advantage of policies and programmes to reduce emissions to secure funding for its own projects, and build on the messages and communications that come out of national government to stimulate action in the borough.

EMBEDDING THE CHANGE

The Climate Emergency must be the top priority for the Council and the borough. For the Council, tackling the Climate Emergency must be embedded in all practices and processes, with all services working collectively to reduce carbon emissions and support a greener borough. Ensuring every member of staff has mandatory training on carbon literacy will go some way to achieving this, but this must be matched by every decision being made with a full understanding of the carbon implications. The Climate Emergency impacts the whole borough and needs to be part of all our responsibility – individuals, communities, partners, businesses, schools – nobody is exempt. The Council must embed practices at every level, with resources and funding channelled towards the Climate Emergency to reinforce and expand delivery capacity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about fundamental behaviour change at a scale and pace not seen for generations. It has altered the way residents move around the borough and value their green spaces, how businesses operate, and how we all work. The crisis has increased fragility in the Council's financial position, and the Commission recognises the impact this will have on the Council's ability to implement the full spectrum of recommendations. Despite this, the Council can fundamentally change the way it operates to adapt to the Climate Emergency as a central theme of the borough's economic recovery.

The Council should lead by example, setting a precedent for everyone in the borough to follow. Sustainable procurement, removing reliance on petrol and diesel transport across all Council operations, flexible working regimes, encouraging and incentivising employees to make changes within their own individual jobs and personal lifestyles are all obvious avenues to explore. Existing programmes and policies need to be consolidated, and new opportunities to expand them should be seized. The Council should be proud of all it has achieved so far, but now is the time to go further, quicker.

The Council cannot do this alone. The implications for the borough's businesses, partners, community organisations and residents are clear – tackling the Climate Emergency is a common effort. Many of the actions that can have the greatest impact on the reduction of carbon emissions are in the hands of residents, businesses and other public sector bodies. The Council must work with partners to champion implementation and engage with various stakeholders, including the Mayor of London, pan-London organisations and government bodies to ensure support, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.

The pathway to net zero-carbon is through greater collaboration, and the Council must work with neighbouring local authorities and public sector organisations like schools and the NHS to achieve the scale of change needed. It is vital that sufficient funding interventions and support from Government are provided to create a net zero-carbon future. Central government must be active in pursuing a net zero-carbon agenda, and local authorities need to work with the state to achieve change in a way that benefits everyone.

OUR ASK OF THE COUNCIL

The ask from the Commission has been clear. The recommendations should act as a catalyst for the Council's approach to tackling the Climate Emergency over the next decade. The Council's response to the recommendations need to be ambitious, innovative and bold, and build on existing practices and embed change. The Council's response to the Commission's recommendations must include:

- **A commitment to the Climate Emergency being the Council's top priority, embedding it within all practices, processes and decision making across the organisation.**
- **The key steps and actions that will be taken over the next 10 years, including resource commitments and details of individual projects and programmes.**
- **A commitment that all necessary levers at the Council's disposal will be used to tackle the Climate Emergency.**
- **A flexible, agile approach to maximise external funding opportunities and collaboration with partners and other local authorities to deliver projects.**
- **Transparency at its heart, with governance arrangements for how monitoring and evaluation will be conducted.**

To help the Council deliver on the recommendations, several of the Commissioners are keen to keep in touch and support the work the Council is starting. Independent expertise can be used as projects develop, furthering the ambition of Waltham Forest to become the greenest borough in London. The scale of the challenge is clear, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The desire for Waltham Forest to be a cleaner, greener, fairer and net zero-carbon borough must be critical to all ambitions of the Council moving forwards, particularly in a post pandemic reality.





STOP THE
CLIMATE
ENGINEERS

CLIMATE
EMERGENCY