



**Syed Ahmed, Waltham Forest Climate Emergency Commission co- chair: Blog One**

*Monday 7 October 2019*

Whilst we're being inundated with news stories on the growing incidence of extreme weather events, and world leaders meeting to set out new global greenhouse gas reduction ambitions, what is less reported is the real revolution going on the local level, with councils across the country pledging to respond to the climate emergency by adopting greener actions in their areas.

Last week saw the first meeting of Waltham Forest's Climate Emergency Commission, which brought together experts across a range of disciplines to examine how the borough could set out new initiatives to help reduce energy use across council buildings, homes, businesses and the transport sector and also better prepare for some of the predicted impacts of climate change.

With my co-Chair, Lucy Padfield, a busy timetable has been set out over the next few months for the Commission to examine the council's existing environmental programmes, explore potential new opportunities, and wherever possible link these to boost key council priorities. These range from driving down energy bills for households and businesses in the borough, supporting new investment into cleaner technologies, such as electric buses and EVs; linking in the health agenda with programmes to further encourage walking and cycling and ensuring residents do not have cold homes; and also securing new jobs and training opportunities for residents and local businesses as we look to retrofit the 100,000 plus homes across the council-area.

This is all going to take some time: there are no 'silver bullets' and the Commission's work will be part of a longer dialogue the council will need to have with the community over the coming decade. Our first meeting was helped by a presentation on some initial findings of a revised climate change strategy for the borough, to a timeline of 2030 and the Commission will be working to further develop this plan. A key challenge, however, is to ensure national government recognises that the shift to a zero-carbon economy can only be achieved by better engaging with the people – and this is something not easily done by officials based in a Whitehall department. Securing our environmental goals will require greater resources and powers devolved to local government to support local communities and businesses with this transition. We are only at the start of this dialogue – but it's one that we actively want engagement with all stakeholders in Waltham Forest.

I am looking forward to Meeting Two of the Commission tomorrow, Tuesday 8 October 2019, where we will focus on transport. I look forward to updating you all in my next blog.

Until we speak next - stay safe,

Syed