

An Open Letter to the Members of the Brighton & Hove Climate Assembly

11 January 2021

Dear Assembly Members,

In recognition of the scientific advice and the significant challenges we face as a city, all councillors in Brighton & Hove declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency in December 2018. To respond to the magnitude of the crisis, the city council has also jointly pledged to enact work to become a carbon neutral city by 2030.

Our shared intention is to work with residents, not least because tackling climate change is a city-wide challenge. In addition to the city council, there are actions that will need to be taken by a variety of different organisations. We know too that there is great appetite in the city for action that will reduce emissions, protect natural environments and crucially, at a time of Covid-19, improve air quality and our health and wellbeing. We also recognise that action is required beyond our city, as combating climate change needs system-wide change that involves stakeholders across all sectors, across the country and the wider world.

Collective action such as this also means bringing people together to understand the range of perspectives and thoughts on the challenges we face. We would like to thank you all, the 50 members of the Brighton & Hove Climate Assembly, who have contributed their time, passion and ideas in responding to the important question 'How can we step up actions to reduce transport related carbon emissions in the city?' The Citizens' Assembly was a new engagement approach for our city and we want to thank you for the important role that you played in this initiative. The design and delivery of the assembly was led by Ipsos MORI, but also supported by an Advisory Board of academics, specialists and activists, as well as councillors and council officers. Each group provided necessary input and scrutiny. The city council's carbon neutral programme is overseen by a cross-party councillor working group, and we will continue to work with organisations across the city to rise to the challenge.

We are delighted that despite the grave pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Climate Assembly was able to meet via an on-line format. We are informed that our Assembly is thought to be the first nationally to be delivered wholly online and we thank you for engaging in this way. We were keen to ensure that the Assembly was broadly representative in terms of reflecting the demographics of the city population and involved residents from across the city. Independent experts, the Sortition Foundation, were responsible for selection and a range of selection criteria were applied: gender, age, ethnicity, long-term illness or disability, occupation, car ownership, and area of the city. We thank you all for your input.

We are pleased now to receive and publish the report. The Findings Report provides valuable feedback for the city council and others, including the 10 key recommendations made by assembly members along with caveats and conditions. Each of the recommendations you have made will be considered and explored further so they can be considered by council committees. In addition, there

is feedback throughout the report, providing context on the key recommendations and additional suggestions for consideration. We wanted to let you know that your feedback is important, and we will consider it carefully when developing key plans and strategies relating to transport and carbon reduction.

We also wanted to feedback to Assembly Members that we have already started using the Assembly findings in the development of the city council's 2030 Carbon Neutral Plan, which will be taken through the democratic decision-making process for approval in March 2021. In addition to this, work is already underway to deliver on the council's carbon 2030 pledge and has been for some time. The assembly findings will assist this.

We will use the Assembly findings in developing the new Local Transport Plan for the city and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, which will be taken through the democratic decision-making process for approval later this year. Work on this is already happening. In addition, the Assembly findings will be used to inform the development of transport initiatives. In line with recommendations, this includes progress on the Liveable City Centre and Ultra Low Emission Zone schemes. As you can see, we are focusing on a Liveable City Centre – rather than a 'car free city centre,' in line with advice from the Climate Assembly to focus messaging on what is gained, rather than what is lost. It is these insights and many more from the assembly report that will prove really useful, and for a long time to come.

We wanted to take this opportunity to encourage you to continue contributing to the city conversation on climate action and share the link for 'Let's Talk Climate' the city's on-line space: <https://climateconversationsbrighton.uk.engagementhq.com>. Initially, in line with the Climate Assembly the conversation focussed on travel and transport, and now it will cover other thematic areas such as informing the development of a new City Downland Estate Plan, including exploring how we can use this land to help tackle the climate and biodiversity emergencies and reduce carbon emissions.

With the United Nations COP26 summit on climate change happening in November in Glasgow, and given that we now have less nine years to play our part to bring down toxic emissions, you have helped us put our best foot forward. So once again, we would like to thank you, sincerely, for the active role you have taken in helping shape our city's response to climate change – your contribution is deeply valued and will help shape city council plans and initiatives over the coming months and years. We would also welcome your future and continued engagement.

Yours faithfully

On behalf of the Carbon Neutral Member Working Group
Brighton & Hove City Council:

Cllr Phélim Mac Cafferty
Leader of the Council
(Green)

Cllr Nancy Platts
(Labour)

Cllr Samer Bagaen
(Conservative)