

## Swale Borough Councillors Report

*“It may sound frightening but the scientific evidence is that, if we have not taken dramatic action within the next decade, we could face irreversible damage to the natural world and the collapse of our societies.”*

Sir David Attenborough, *Climate Change: The Facts*. BBC TV, transmitted 18/04/2019

When the coalition came into office at Swale Borough Council, one of our first actions was to declare a climate and ecological emergency. The declaration sets very ambitious targets, in line with the science described by Sir David Attenborough. The target is to make the Council's operations carbon neutral in five years' time and the borough carbon neutral by 2030. The council undertook to draw up an action plan with improvement in energy efficiency and making space for nature as key priorities in all strategies and plans. As the Cabinet Member for Environment, Tim presented a draft of the action plan to the Policy Development and Review Committee (chaired by Alastair) on 4<sup>th</sup> March. The plan will be put before Council in April.

Research from the world-leading Tyndall Centre has found that, for Swale to make its fair contribution towards the Paris Climate Change Agreement, it should emit no more than 7.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide before 2100. **At 2017 emission levels, Swale would use this entire budget within 7 years.** The recommended pathway requires: a 13% cut in carbon dioxide emissions each year from 2020; 80% reduction in annual emissions by 2030 and 95% reduction by 2042. The recommended pathway would leave 20% of emissions from to be offset to meet our target of carbon neutrality by 2030.

At its heart the Swale action plan has key actions which include; a deep retrofit of the council offices in Sittingbourne to dramatically reduce carbon emissions from the building; leasing electric vehicles (EVs) to replace most of the council's own fleet of vehicles (summer 2020); installation of EV charging points in the town centres (look out for 4 EV chargers to be installed in the Central Car Park, Faversham this summer); improved facilities for walking and cycling; and tree planting in the country parks (2,500 trees already planted over the winter). The plan lists other actions to reduce emissions from buildings, transport and waste. Also, actions needed to adapt to the effects of climate change already affecting us, such as flooding and extreme heat. Many actions can only be taken in partnership with others including central government, Kent County Council, business, and community groups. To succeed changes in government policy are required, for example, to insulate the existing houses in Swale and replace gas boilers with highly efficient electric heating. It's the beginning of a long, but very exciting journey that will bring many benefits, such as cleaner air, healthier lifestyles, and a vibrant more locally-based economy.

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