

6th March 2020

City of Wolverhampton Council

Mini citizens' assembly on climate change

Full report

britainthinks.com

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01 Background

Background to this project

- In July 2019, the City of Wolverhampton Council became the first local authority in the Black Country to declare a Climate Emergency
- The council has made a commitment to reduce its CO₂ levels to net zero by 2028, and to ensure all strategic decisions and budgets are in line with the shift to net carbon zero
- However, the council recognises that tackling climate change at a local level will require a holistic, 'whole city' response
- It is therefore essential that the perspective of residents is considered as part of this

Objectives

- The mini Citizens' Assembly is a key means by which the council has engaged with its residents during its consultation on the climate change emergency
- The overall objectives of the assembly are to explore citizens' views on how Wolverhampton should respond to climate change, by exploring:

Citizens' starting views towards climate change and how Wolverhampton should respond, and the impact that information and deliberation has on those views

Perspectives on the commitments made by the council to achieve its target of reducing CO₂ levels to zero by 2028

Citizens' views on other actions that communities, the council and the city as a whole could take, by discussing a range of other policy ideas

What principles citizens think should underline Wolverhampton's response to climate change

Structure of the mini Citizens' Assembly

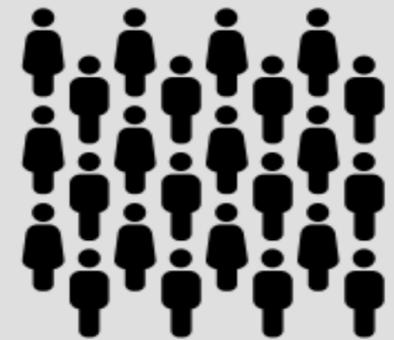
The Assembly was convened in three sessions in February 2020:

Session		Areas covered
1	Induction meeting (February 3 rd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome by Council Leader Ian Brookfield • Ice-breaker activity and discussions about what citizens know and how they feel about climate change • Presentations by BritainThinks on the causes and impacts of climate change • Discussion about how the Assembly would work and opportunity for questions • Presentation by Project Manager, Isaac Vivian, City of Wolverhampton Council, about the background to the Assembly • Pre-task exercise set and closing remarks from Director of City Environment, Ross Cook, City of Wolverhampton Council
2	First workshop (February 14 th)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to pre-task exercise: <i>citizens' ideas for actions to tackle climate change</i> • Presentation by Jackie Homan, West Midlands Combined Authority, about the West Midlands Climate Strategy, and the commitments for City of Wolverhampton council • Quiz activity and reflections on WMCA presentation • Presentation of council policy ideas by Project Manager, Isaac Vivian, followed by questions, discussion and deliberation • Discussion about principles for tackling climate change in Wolverhampton
3	Second workshop (February 21 st)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap of previous discussions • Presentation of city policy ideas by Simon Slater, Sustainability West Midlands, followed by questions, discussion and deliberation • Presentation of community policy ideas by BritainThinks, followed by questions, discussion and deliberation • Overarching prioritisation exercise across policy ideas • Concluding discussion about principles for tackling climate change in Wolverhampton • Closing remarks from the Climate Change Councillor Champion, Councillor Barbara McGarrity

Participants

Mini Assembly with citizens of Wolverhampton

- **Sample size:** 16 citizens
- **Duration:** 2.5 hours February 3rd, 5 hours February 14th, and 5 hours February 21st
- **Demographics:**
 - 8 men, 8 women
 - Spread of ages between 20 and 67
 - Spread of socio-economic groups: 9 ABC1, 7 C2DE
 - Mix of employment circumstances
 - 6 BAME participants
 - All residing in three constituencies of Wolverhampton: 8 South East, 6 South West, and 4 North East



02 Executive summary

Summary findings

1

Whilst most participants saw climate change as an issue of growing importance, there is uncertainty and concern about what 'ordinary' citizens can realistically do to tackle it. There is worry about the cost impact and disruption that going 'green' will have on people's daily lives.

2

Climate change is seen as a large-scale issue that can feel overwhelming; residents therefore want to see businesses and other powerful emitters in the city play their part. Particularly after learning that council emissions are only 1.25% of the whole city's carbon footprint, residents wanted to understand how to influence businesses and other large emitters to change and to see them lead by example.

3

Residents were impressed by the council's ambitions for tackling climate change and the progress already made and called for wider communications around these plans. Participants were particularly impressed by the council's net zero target and wanted to see more active engagement with residents to get them involved.

4

Residents were broadly positive about the policies proposed by the council in each of the areas of council, city and community and developed key principles guiding implementation, recommending that all policies should keep the costs impact low and be as sustainable/effective at reducing emissions as possible.

Citizens' principles for tackling climate change in Wolverhampton

1

Climate change plans and activity should be communicated clearly and widely

2

Behaviour change should feel voluntary and be incentivised

3

The 'ask' should be appropriate to people's abilities and needs - actions should be achievable and realistic

4

Getting involved should be as accessible as possible, and vulnerable residents should continue to be supported

5

The cost impact of actions on residents and the council should be considered

6

The council should be transparent about its plans and associated costs

7

Activities should be genuinely sustainable and/or effective at reducing carbon emissions

8

Some plans should have an immediate impact in order to motivate further change

Participants ranked the policies within each topic area



Council



City



Community



Most popular policies

- Using renewable energy sources (e.g. wind power) to power the electricity in all Council buildings

- Increase sustainability in schools

- Deliver a public campaign on the risks of climate change and actions communities and businesses can take to mitigate it



Runner-up policies

- Making sure all Council buildings are as energy efficient as possible

- Encourage businesses to stop using single-use plastics

- Support to access fundraising for community groups undertaking 'green' projects

03 Attitudes towards climate change

- Starting attitudes
- Responses to information about climate change
- Climate change in Wolverhampton

03 Attitudes towards climate change

- **Starting attitudes**
- Responses to information about climate change
- Climate change in Wolverhampton

Whilst residents had mixed levels of understanding about climate change, most saw it as an issue of increasing importance

- Few had directly engaged with climate change as a topic – many lacked confidence in their understanding of what causes it and how it can be tackled
 - Some were unclear about what, if anything, made climate change different from other ‘green’ issues
- But media coverage of high profile figures such as David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg were familiar to all
- Plus, some talked about large weather events (e.g. fires in Australia) as being related to climate change
- And parents in particular spoke of their children learning about it at school, and bringing facts home that have a strong sense of urgency

“It’s always bad news isn’t it... it’s another thing as well that’s going down the pan really... certain animals are going extinct... the pollution is really bad.”

“I’m a bit uneducated on it. I know things that contribute to it, that I do myself to be honest, like short journeys in the car. But I’m not entirely sure about it.”

Climate change was viewed through a global rather than a local lens which could make the solutions feel even more remote

- The predominant view was that climate change requires action on a global scale and that central (rather than local) government has a key role to play
 - However, awareness of specific government activity or policies was very low, and there were comments about policy inconsistency that made it hard to know what to think (e.g. support/opposition of diesel petrol)
- Large businesses were also seen as having a big responsibility to take action
 - But it was unclear if/what they were doing
 - Or if it was possible to influence them to make changes

“I’ve only heard things [from politicians] when it’s come to an election or a campaign... following up from that, nothing.”

“Everybody’s saying ‘you need to do this’... but how are we going to do it?”

There was much uncertainty over what individuals could do to tackle climate change and reluctance to make 'radical' changes

Beyond ensuring they have good recycling habits, it was difficult for participants to imagine what else they could do and none had made substantive changes in their own lives

Residents' behaviour around tackling climate change:

- Residents talked about changes they had made where they hadn't had a choice: e.g. smart meter installation; avoiding parking near their workplace or using fewer plastic bags due to increased cost
- 1-2 participants talked about proactively trying to make more sustainable food and travel choices e.g. buying organic, using public transport
- Driving less was one suggested change that people could make, but this was generally considered fairly radical as it was felt to be costly/impractical
- There was uncertainty about whether other 'green' behaviours had any link to climate change, or were just a 'trend' e.g. eating less meat

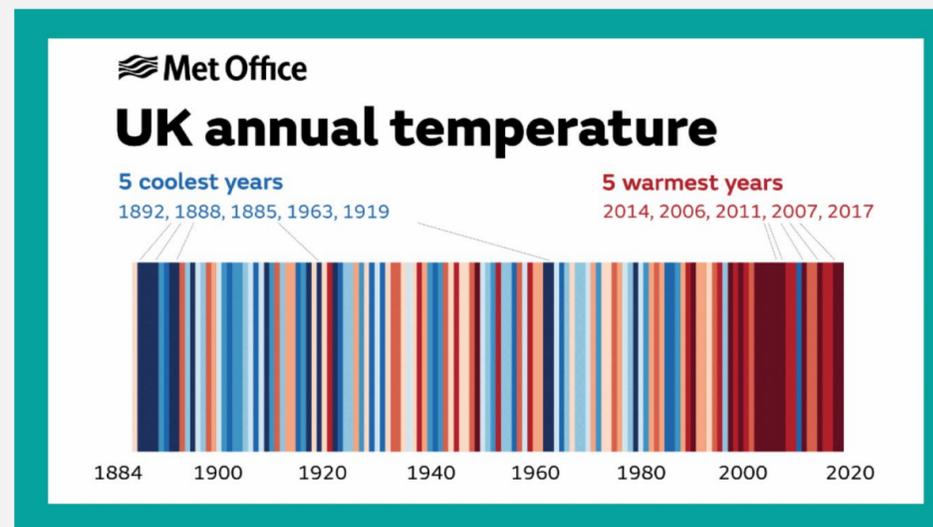


Overall, participants were demotivated to take action because climate change felt like such a big and complex problem that no one individual could influence

03 Attitudes towards climate change

- Starting attitudes
- **Responses to information about climate change**
- Climate change in Wolverhampton

Residents were briefed in the induction meeting on the causes and impacts of climate change using fact-based materials



6. Which of the following are advantages associated with onshore wind and solar energy sources?

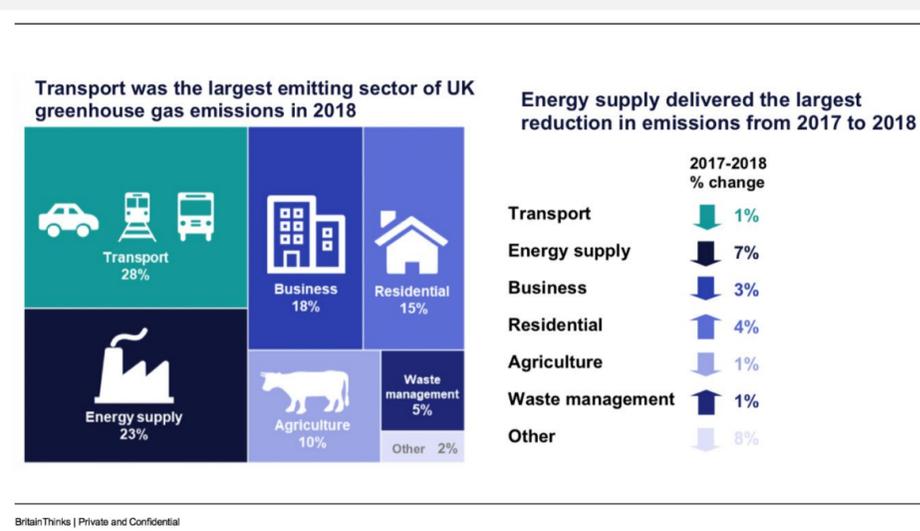
- a) It's cheaper than burning fossil fuels
- b) It makes the UK less reliable on other countries for its energy supply
- c) It reduces carbon emissions
- d) They reduce wind speeds so make it less windy

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Carbon is an important element in many natural processes

- When it is in solid form (e.g. in coal, wood, or plastics) it is in the form of *carbon*
- When CO₂ is released into the atmosphere, it acts like a blanket around the earth and traps heat from the sun
- When it is released as a gas into the atmosphere (if coal or wood is burned for example) it takes the form of *carbon dioxide* or CO₂

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In addition to hearing this information, residents said they read/picked up information about climate change in their own time in between mini-assembly sessions

The briefing information prompted a stronger sense of concern and urgency about climate change

“If we don’t act now, what’s the future generation got to look forward to?”

“In a way, it is our fault, we’re damaging the environment”

“It’s good that renewable energy is making a difference, but is that good enough?”

Information that residents found particularly striking included:

- *The success the UK energy sector has had in reducing emissions*
- *The large contributions that business and transport make to CO₂ emissions*
- *The fact that UK residents are still a significant contributor to emissions (15%), and one of the only groups to increase carbon emissions between 2017-2018*

Despite the raised concern levels, there were still strong concerns about the ability of ordinary people to respond

Residents cited concerns about:



- **The cost of making changes to their lives**
 - e.g. driving lower emission vehicles, using more sustainable energy suppliers



- **The availability of tools for change:**
 - e.g. alternative modes of transport, sources of information about what companies are greener to buy from than others



- **Their ability to continue their day-to-day lives:**
 - e.g. reliability of public transport



- **The scale of the problem:** in some cases this now felt more daunting, making it hard to translate the issue into changes they could make in daily life

“From an individual point of view... we’re limited to what we can do to change our habits. The big companies have the resources, the money [to change].”

“If there were more services available at a reasonable cost, people would use them more. But it’s unreliable... trains, buses and trams, they’re always delayed half the time.”

03 Attitudes towards climate change

- Starting attitudes
- Responses to information about climate change
- **Climate change in Wolverhampton**

Residents were introduced to the council's climate change strategy and recent climate activity, as well as the WMCA's strategy:

So what are WE doing?



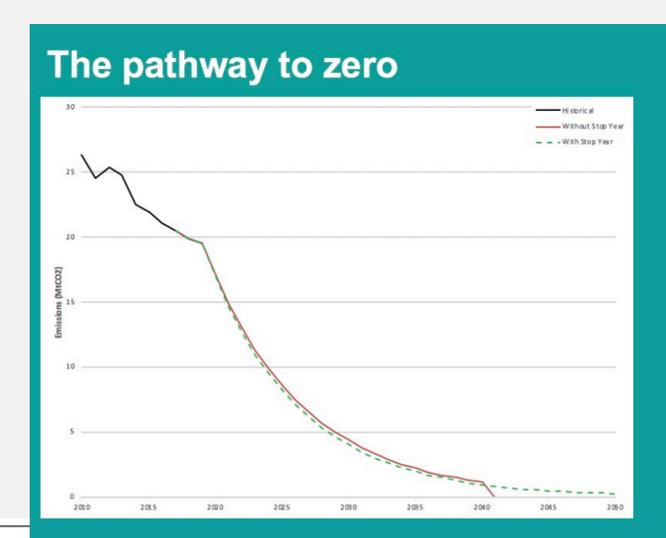
#WM2041 – the action plan

- A plan to identify actions to take us to net zero carbon emissions by 2041
- Approved by the WMCA Board on 17th Jan
- Formal launch on 23rd Jan
- Out for consultation until 12th March
- Parallel engagement process being run with The Democratic Society



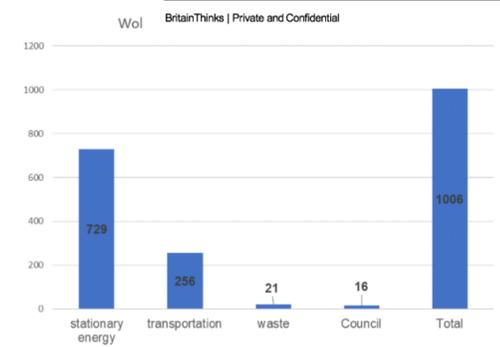
Progress in Wolverhampton so far has included:

2011	2012	2015	2017	2019
Planning policies put in place to ensure renewable generation built into new housing developments	Solar panels installed on the Civic Centre, and first of three Passivhaus (carbon neutral) schools built in the city	6 Mega Watts of Solar Panels built into the i54 plant	24km of new or improved cycle path delivered	All council buildings and street lighting within the city powered by renewable electricity. Member Champion for Climate Change appointed 6 electric vehicle charging points installed The council's carbon footprint has been reduced by 45% between 2012-13 and 2018-19

Background and introduction to council p

- Since 2012 the council has reduced its carbon footprint by 45%.
- This is due to the greening of the grid, greater energy efficiency of buildings and putting solar panels on council buildings.
- Council emissions are only 2% of the whole city's carbon footprint.
- But we still have big role to play in leading a whole city response to the climate emergency.



Desired outcomes for Wolverhampton residents are:

- Giving children and young people the best possible start in life
- Well skilled people working in an inclusive economy
- More good jobs and investment in our city
- Better homes for all
- Strong, resilient and healthy communities
- A vibrant, green city we can all be proud of



Responses to the climate emergency declaration from the council centred on the following themes:

Mixed views about the language of 'emergency'



Low awareness of the announcement



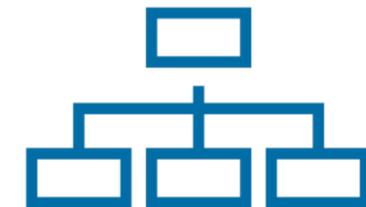
Impressed by the ambition of the council



Concerns about the impact on costs and other services



A desire to see other parties more involved



Declaring an emergency was seen as a way to convey urgency, though the language risked feeling too strong for some

Mixed views about the language of 'emergency'

Low awareness of the announcement

Impressed by the ambition of the council

Concerns about the impact on costs and other services

A desire to see other parties more involved

- The declaration was seen by some as an important 'wake-up call' and an example of the council taking an interest in the future of the city's inhabitants
- But there was confusion over what it meant, especially in a local context
- And some found the language shocking, worrying or even 'over the top'

"It would make people panic. It could be communicated a bit more subtly."

No residents were previously aware of the declaration, leading to calls for wider communications and increased engagement with residents

Mixed views about the language of 'emergency'

Low awareness of the announcement

Impressed by the ambition of the council

Concerns about the impact on costs and other services

A desire to see other parties more involved

- Residents said they didn't hear from the council often
- They wished for more opportunities to hear important announcements and news about their activities on climate change and other key issues

"In the news, it's not 'Wolverhampton's doing this'... we might all know that here but how many people out there don't know about it?"

Residents were surprised by the extent of the council's climate activity and its target to have net zero carbon emissions by 2028

Mixed views about the language of 'emergency'

Low awareness of the announcement

Impressed by the ambition of the council

Concerns about the impact on costs and other services

A desire to see other parties more involved

- The 45% reduction in the council's own carbon emissions felt significant and to some suggested that larger-scale changes were more achievable than initially expected
- Some spontaneously suggested the council could go further in transitioning its vehicle fleet to renewable energy

"They should tell you when you go into their buildings, that these are buildings which are net zero."

Residents wanted to know where funding for more costly changes would come from

Mixed views about the language of 'emergency'

Low awareness of the announcement

Impressed by the ambition of the council

Concerns about the impact on costs and other services

A desire to see other parties more involved

- There were concerns about the impact on council tax as well as whether other council would services would suffer in a rush to meet the net zero target
- There was little knowledge about opportunities for funding of climate change initiatives from elsewhere

"If they were a bit more upfront about how much it costs, people would trust it more."

It was seen as important to encourage large businesses in the city to reduce their carbon emissions

Mixed views about the language of 'emergency'

Low awareness of the announcement

Impressed by the ambition of the council

Concerns about the impact on costs and other services

A desire to see other parties more involved

- Residents were surprised that council emissions are only 1.25% of the whole city's carbon footprint
- They wanted to understand how to influence businesses and other large emitters to change
- There was some confusion about the role of public services that aren't run by the council (e.g. hospitals, schools) and who would need to be held accountable for their carbon emissions

"It's important to make big businesses accountable."

04 Citizens' principles for tackling climate change in Wolverhampton

Residents developed the following principles for how Wolverhampton Council should address climate change

1

Climate change plans and activity should be communicated clearly and widely

2

Behaviour change should feel voluntary and be incentivised

3

The 'ask' should be appropriate to people's abilities and needs - actions should be achievable and realistic

4

Getting involved should be as accessible as possible, and vulnerable residents should continue to be supported

5

The cost impact of actions on residents and the council should be considered

6

The council should be transparent about its plans and associated costs

7

Activities should be genuinely sustainable and/or effective at reducing carbon emissions

8

Some plans should have an immediate impact in order to motivate further change

Residents felt this principle could be met by:

- ✓ Educating citizens about the importance of climate change as an issue
- ✓ Informing people of the actions the council is proposing, what other green initiatives and activities are ongoing, and the impact/progress being made
- ✓ Having ambitious communications via online and offline channels, including social media and information embedded in the community (e.g. schools, cafes, doctor's surgeries)
- ✓ Using plain English in its communications
- ✓ Including a range of voices as spokespeople to show climate change is a city-wide issue and if feasible, using local figureheads/celebrities as spokespeople in order to attract attention and highlight the importance of climate change

"If everyone knew it was an emergency, we didn't know that before we came here, so making sure everyone is aware of it is really important"

These principles informed participants' view on policy ideas...

- Residents felt that the community policy of 'educating the public on the risks of climate change' was particularly important
- They also felt the council policies such as 'increasing buildings' energy efficiency' should be highlighted to inspire the public

Residents felt this principle could be met by:

- ✓ Adopting a fun, positive and engaging tone to communications
 - To avoid pushback from residents being 'told' to change behaviour, and ensure legitimate questions and concerns are listened to
- ✓ Providing 'fun' opportunities for different communities to get involved in climate action
- ✓ Creating a sense of a 'movement' rather than change being 'top down'
 - Informing residents about other people in their community taking action against climate change, to help encourage them to feel part of wider, larger, city-wide activity
- ✓ Educating residents about how some 'green' behaviours can bring financial savings (e.g. using less energy/water at home)
- ✓ Developing systems for influencing other behaviours via financial or other rewards, e.g.:
 - An 'air miles' or 'loyalty card' style rewards system for residents making greater use of public transport
 - Tax-related benefits for businesses acting in sustainable ways

"If you make people think they are committing to something, they worry 'oh what if I can't do it', its more about encouraging them. Not trying to force it upon people."

These principles informed participants' view on policy ideas...

- Residents felt that an ultra low vehicle emission programme may require a specific incentive to encourage usage
- Asking businesses to use eco-ratings would be more effective if they were rewarded for achieving a high rating
- There were concerns that encouraging citizens to make climate change pledges would feel like it was a 'forceful'/ 'all or nothing' approach

The 'ask' should be appropriate to people's abilities and needs - actions should be achievable and realistic

Residents felt this principle could be met by:

- ✓ Ensuring that any new rules are fair, balanced and proportionate:
 - For example, by understanding that those who rent may not be able to make as many changes to their household emissions as homeowners
 - That some activities may be harder for older and disabled residents to achieve
 - And that small businesses may not have the same resources to act as sustainably as their larger competitors
- ✓ Thinking through the feasibility, cost and impact of policy actions
- ✓ Providing a timeframe for when actions should take place
- ✓ Considering whether or not a policy idea is overly ambitious, and developing more 'gradual' alternatives if take-up from citizens or businesses is low

“Small businesses and charities will have to go out of their way to do these things. It might disadvantage them and cost them money.”

These principles informed participants' view on policy ideas...

- Concerns that some smaller businesses may not be able to eliminate the use of single-use plastics as easily as larger, nationwide companies
- And that if the council went totally 'paperless' this might be challenging for older residents
- Residents felt encouraging green investment was a good way to find natural funding for climate change initiatives, and wanted to ensure that investors were then committed to completing relevant projects

Residents felt this principle could be met by:

- ✓ Giving vulnerable residents clear information about any changes to services as a result of 'going green', and providing them with time to adapt to these, as well as opportunities to 'opt out' if they have additional needs
 - E.g. in relation to paperless communications; new recycling facilities
- ✓ Ensuring that climate change related investment doesn't happen at the expense of services for residents who require care and other forms of support

"You can't make the less abled feel excluded from that community."

These principles informed participants' view on policy ideas...

- Residents wondered if moving the council's vehicle fleet to net zero would cause any safety issues for vulnerable residents due to lack of engine noise

Residents felt this principle could be met by:

- ✓ Not putting actions in place that lead to dramatic increases in council tax
- ✓ Avoiding actions that financially ‘punish’ residents and businesses for negative behaviour, but instead support those that ‘reward’ positive behaviour
- ✓ Considering the impact of activity on the already significant financial pressures facing the Council
- ✓ Not letting existing infrastructure or land ‘go to waste’

“We don’t want to see our council tax suddenly go up.”

These principles informed participants’ view on policy ideas...

- The impact of activity on residential council tax was raised as a concern in relation to a number of policies
- Residents therefore appreciated that the idea to help roll out renewable energy would be funded by the private sector

Residents felt this principle could be met by:

- ✓ In the first instance, communicating its planned and suggested actions for others in a way that is accessible to all
 - E.g. on a dedicated website, rather than purely in council-run meetings
- ✓ Showing where the funding for actions has come from, and if this has any impact on citizens' council tax
- ✓ Showing overall what initiatives money spent on climate change has supported, and providing updates on what progress has been made
 - E.g. impact on carbon emissions

“You’re always thinking ‘oh god how much is that going to cost us now?’. So you’ve got to beat that negativity and be transparent.”

These principles informed participants' view on policy ideas...

- There was some questions about whether making council buildings energy efficient would involve using technology where the costs and emissions were variable, and a desire for any technology being used to be carefully considered

Residents felt this principle could be met by:

- ✓ Thinking through policies in detail to unexpected, negative knock-on effects on carbon emissions
- ✓ Working with experts and keeping abreast of new innovations in green technology when thinking about what action to take on climate change
- ✓ Avoiding actions that have purely 'symbolic' value and have little actual impact on reducing emissions or increasing sustainability

"I've done my rankings of these policy ideas based on sustainability in the long-term and taking that into account."

These principles informed participants' view on policy ideas...

- There were comments that the tree planting programme needed to go beyond 'sounding' good and genuinely increase carbon capture

Residents felt this principle could be met by:

- ✓ Identifying what resident-oriented activities could lead to a noticeable reduction in emissions, to help them see what success their behaviour has had
- ✓ Developing actions that encourage communities to participate *soon*, to help spread an understanding of the urgency of climate change
- ✓ Seeking out an ‘easy win’ in changing individual, specific behaviour rather than focusing on an ‘all or nothing’ approach

“It’s nice to see that something is being done locally, rather than just hearing about wide scale projects”

These principles informed participants’ view on policy ideas...

- Encouraging businesses to eliminate single-use plastic was seen as an example of a focused and immediate action

When asked to vote on the principles, there were 4 which were seen as the most important

Listed in order of importance, based on participant votes:

- 1. The cost impact of actions on residents and the council should be considered**
- 2. Activities should be genuinely sustainable and/or effective at reducing carbon emissions**
- 3. The 'ask' should be appropriate to people's abilities and needs - actions should be achievable and realistic**
- 4. Behaviour change should feel voluntary and be incentivised**

05 Policies for tackling Climate Change in Wolverhampton

- Citizens' ideas
- Council policies
- City policies
- Community policies

05 Policies for tackling Climate Change in Wolverhampton

- **Citizen's ideas**
- Council policies
- City policies
- Community policies

Residents were asked to come to the first workshop with their own ideas for tackling climate change. Ideas fell into four broad areas:

-  Improving transport
-  Improving recycling
-  Incentivising 'green' activities
-  Educating citizens

What one idea could help reduce the carbon footprint or improve the sustainability of your area?	What one idea could help reduce the carbon footprint or improve the sustainability of your area?	What one idea could help reduce the carbon footprint or improve the sustainability of your area?
<p>Tell us about your idea</p> <p>I like the idea as Europe have which is the day 2/yr where people can put out furniture to be reused, collected & better linked cycle paths</p>	<p>Tell us about your idea</p> <p>More Bin. Money off your Council tax if you recycle a certain amount each week ^{year}</p> <p>£2 a box?</p>	<p>Tell us about your idea</p> <p>To start a gardening group in my area and encourage people to grow their own fruit and vegetables. Also to educate on the effects of producing too much wasted food.</p>
<p>How do you think it would reduce the carbon footprint / improve the sustainability in your area?</p> <p>I think it could reduce fly/tipping plus encourage people to recycle, house hold seeds</p> <p>More cycle paths, will make/encourage people to cycle safer.</p>	<p>How do you think it would reduce the carbon footprint / improve the sustainability in your area?</p> <p>It would help recycle alot more than we already do as cash is always an incentive.</p>	<p>How do you think it would reduce the carbon footprint / improve the sustainability in your area?</p> <p>Less waste in our local Rubbish Tips</p>

Residents spontaneously felt that transport was an area that needed to be addressed, due to its significant impact on emissions



Improving transport

Improving recycling

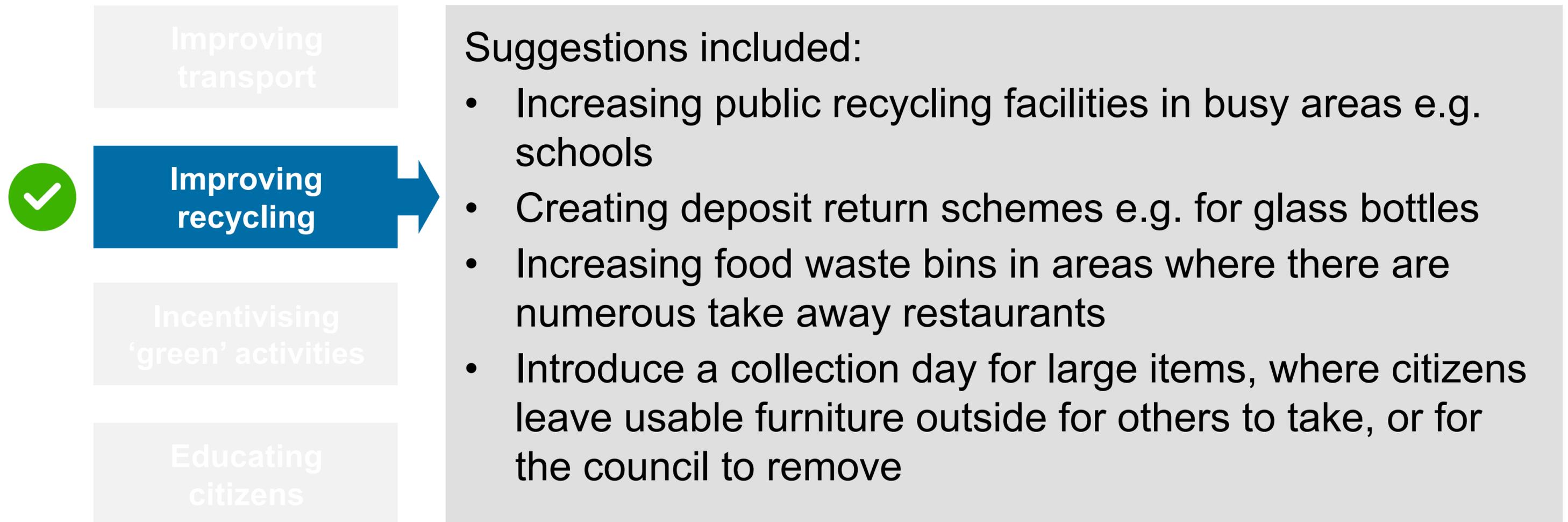
Incentivising 'green' activities

Educating citizens

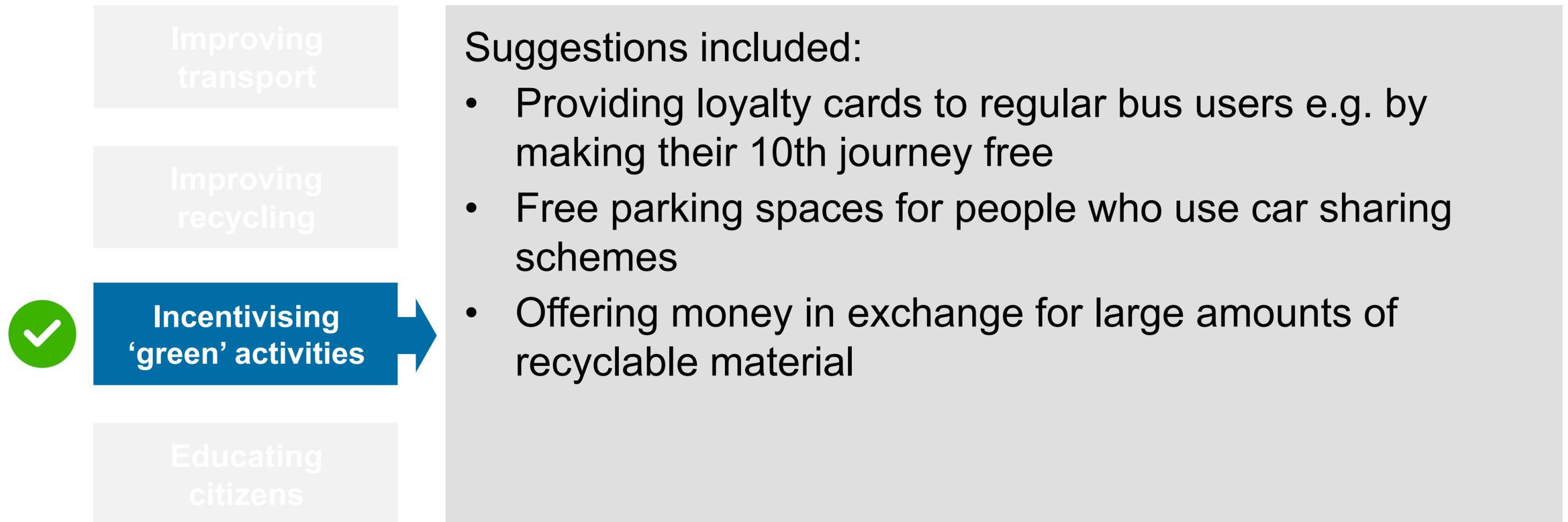
Suggestions included:

- ✓ Creating a car sharing scheme, where citizens can register via an app
- ✓ Increasing the number of cycle paths
- ✓ Improving the quality of existing cycle paths
- ✓ Incentivising greater use of public transport
- ✓ Banning diesel fuel vehicles from the local area

Residents were interested in ways they could help prevent climate change if there were more opportunities for recycling



There was a common theme that activities focused on resident behaviour would be more effective if an incentive was attached



Information and education were seen as key to giving residents tools to change their behaviour

Improving transport

Improving recycling

Incentivizing 'green' activities



Educating citizens

Suggestions included:

- Providing educational materials about climate change
- Offering information on how to volunteer to help tackle climate change
- Encouraging more sustainable food behaviour:
 - Eating locally sourced food
 - Growing your own food
 - Avoiding wastage of food and water

05 Policies for tackling Climate Change in Wolverhampton

- Citizen's ideas
- **Council policies**
- City policies
- Community policies



Residents explored 6 different actions for the Council:

Most popular policy

- Using renewable energy sources (e.g. wind power) to power the electricity in all Council buildings

This idea was seen to correspond with the principle of: *Activities should be genuinely sustainable and/or effective at reducing carbon emissions*

Runner-up policy

- Making sure all Council buildings are as energy efficient as possible

This idea was seen to correspond with the principle of: *The 'ask' should be appropriate to people's abilities and needs - actions should be achievable and realistic*

Other policies explored

- Making Council vehicles ultra-low emission
- Improve transparency around recycling

- Making sure future regeneration schemes across the city are sustainable
- Reduce printing in the council



Using more renewable energy was seen as a very effective means to reduce the council's carbon footprint

- Considering that energy contributes to 82% of the council's carbon footprint, residents felt this was the policy likely to have the most significant impact on carbon emissions
- Even if the council's overall contribution to emissions is not large, making such a major change to its own activity was seen as showing leadership

"It's a very small step isn't it, to where we want to get. But I suppose you have to make a lot of small steps to get where you want to get."

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Communicate this change to citizens to increase awareness of the city's improving green credentials
- Encourage independent businesses, local hubs and major operations in Wolverhampton to switch to renewable energy (e.g. train station)



Making sure all council buildings are as energy efficient as possible



Residents thought that energy efficient technology was an innovative way of avoiding unnecessary gas & electricity use

- The policy was seen as complementing the switch to renewable energy sources
- The use of SMART centralised management systems was seen as forward-thinking and spoke to residents' dislike of avoidable energy use (e.g. leaving lights on)
- Residents were keen for use of such technology to be monitored in a rigorous and effective way, to avoid it becoming overly automated
- Some were a little concerned by the variability of cost and impact on emissions, and wanted to ensure these were considered fully whenever energy efficient technology was used

"It sounds good, though you wouldn't want someone to be stuck somewhere without light or heat, and no one knows how to deal with it."

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Explore other opportunities for increasing energy efficiency; by learning from other countries using advanced green technology already (e.g. in Scandinavia and Japan); and conducting research in locations where the technology is already being used to see how effective it is

Making all council vehicles ultra-low emission



Residents thought shifting to ultra-low emission council vehicles was important and in line with changes elsewhere

- Transport was assumed to constitute a large proportion of the council's carbon emissions
- The policy was seen as credible following on from other councils adopting similar policies, and residents' experiences of low emission public transport in other locations
- There were some questions and concerns about the policy:
 - The risk of cyclists and pedestrians not hearing approaching electric vehicles
 - The associated cost and whether or not the technology would go out of date
 - Whether it was wasteful replacing council vehicles too quickly
 - Whether or not there was sufficient supporting infrastructure (charging points for electric cars), and what the associated costs of this were

“As long as the [quality of] service doesn't get affected, like bin collection or pothole repair, then it's positive.”

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Having louder reverse sensors on electric vehicles, giving audible alerts to prevent accidents

Improve transparency around recycling



Though unaware of potential issues with waste contractors, residents supported increasing their accountability

- Residents were not familiar with the issue of waste management companies sending recyclable material to landfill abroad
- Requiring waste management companies in Wolverhampton sign up to the End Destination Recycling Charter was seen as an effective way of ensuring they were held accountable for this behaviour
 - Residents commented that this was something which should already exist
- There was some uncertainty about how honest businesses who signed up to the Charter would be about where their recycling was going, and how this could be monitored

“It’s a difficult one to monitor to be honest. How are the Council going to make sure they’re doing what they say they’re doing, how are they going to monitor that?.”

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Making other improvements to recycling (as per citizens’ own ideas in this area)

Making sure regeneration schemes across the city are sustainable



Provided the approach was thought-through, ensuring regeneration schemes are sustainable was seen as ambitious and important

- It was felt that making new building developments unsustainable would be a missed opportunity and have a negative impact on the climate
- The policy was seen as appropriately ambitious, but there was uncertainty at whether or not construction companies and developers would be happy with using the relevant new technologies and methods (though participants working in the sector thought this would not be an issue)
- There was a concern about the affordability of new housing developed with this approach
- And a desire for current housing to be well looked after and kept sustainable

“Even if they do it on the new ones, which is a good thing... it should’ve been something they did before.”

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Upgrade existing buildings and houses to be more sustainable
- Offer an incentive to homeowners and landlords to encourage them to make their property sustainable
- Reassure citizens that new ‘green’ buildings will still meet safety standards

Reduce printing within the council



A reduction in excessive printing was supported, provided there is no detriment to those with lower digital access/literacy

- This was viewed as a low cost step that was very achievable
- Several noted this kind of policy was something they had already encountered, at their work or in other organisations, and that such changes were becoming inevitable
- There was discussion about older and vulnerable citizens being ‘forced’ to carry out council-related admin online, without necessarily having the ability to make this transition
- And some concerns about the security of digitisation: residents wanted to avoid information being lost or leaked

“I think the council are 10 years behind on this... We’ve been doing that for years and years. I think they’re way behind.”

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Ensuring that citizens are given an option to opt in to paper communications and activities
- Providing advice to smaller businesses on adopting a similar policy.

05 Policies for tackling Climate Change in Wolverhampton

- Citizen's ideas
- Council policies
- **City policies**
- Community policies



Residents explored 7 different actions for the City:

Most popular policy

- Increase sustainability in schools

Runner-up policy

- Encourage businesses to stop using single-use plastics

Other policies explored

- Encourage participation in the Black Country ULEV Programme
- Help roll-out the use of renewable energy
- Encourage green investment

These ideas were seen to correspond with the principle of:

Some plans should have an immediate impact in order to motivate further change

- Help install green technology
- Create an 'eco-rating' for businesses to display



Increase sustainability within schools



Focusing on school children was seen as critical, so that future generations understand the importance of climate change, and encourage others to see this as well

- This policy was seen as engaging and a low cost way to have a significant impact on the attitudes of young people in the city, as well as having a practical impact on carbon emissions
- It was felt that young people in turn had a strong influence on their parents' attitudes towards climate change
- Encouraging competition between schools and other engaging activities was felt to be an effective way of getting children involved in climate change

"It's probably the most important one, tackling that generation. Kids go first, and they motivate the older generation"

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Focusing on secondary schools in particular to encourage changes in attitude as children grow up
- A dedicated council team could go into to schools to provide updates on progress and share what other schools are doing
- Educating students on what they can do at home and offering certificates for those who do particularly well



Encourage businesses to eliminate single-use plastics



Citizens were frustrated about the excessive use of plastic packaging and therefore welcomed a policy addressing this

- Eliminating single use plastics was familiar from residents' experiences: retailers charging for plastic bags and coffee shops incentivising the use of people's own cups
- It was seen as logical to extend this idea further, particularly if businesses in other council areas are already sign up to related commitments
- There were concerns about smaller businesses being able to adapt to these changes – it was therefore felt the policy should target large businesses in particular

"In the long run, if these businesses do start using non-plastic packaging for the food, it would reduce the carbon footprint because you wouldn't be emitting those fumes."

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Emphasise to businesses the benefits they would gain from this policy, e.g. financial incentives, lower spending costs
- Suggest alternatives where appropriate, rather than leaving businesses to work this out for themselves.
- Find ways to eliminate other forms of excessive packaging (e.g. home retail delivery)

Encourage participation in the Black Country Ultra-Low Emission Vehicle Programme



Residents were positive about supporting the roll-out of electric vehicles, provided that methods for doing so were workable

- Moving inhabitants towards electric vehicles was felt to be an important step that would help reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality in the city
- There were some questions about:
 - Whether the grid would be able to support large scale electric vehicle charging at peak times
 - Whether there would be enough vehicle charging points
- And concerns about the cost of electric vehicles: some struggled to envision when they would be able to make this change
 - Some felt technology in this area was changing quickly, and did want to spend money on something which could become out of date

“All the charging points and infrastructure have got to be readily available for people to make the change.. you don’t want to break down on the way to work”

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Actively encourage citizens to use public transport, such as by providing incentives
- Invest in green technology, such as solar panels and wind turbines, to power electric vehicles
- Find ways to incentivise usage (as with solar panels)

Help roll-out the use of renewable energy



Residents thought that increasing renewable energy use in Wolverhampton was ambitious and important

- This policy was viewed as having a potentially huge impact on the environment
- Residents liked the idea of using former landfill sites as potential sites for renewable energy, and had spontaneously mentioned concerns about unused council land
- It was reassuring that costs for this could come from the private sector – but there were questions about how achievable it would be for the council to motivate relevant parties to be involved

“I think this is a great idea, anything we can do to promote renewable energy is great. And I like the fact that the cost won’t be picked up by the council taxpayer.”

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- There should be a contingency plan in place, in case the renewable energy sources are not able to meet demand or are compromised (e.g. if there is a storm)
- Develop these away from view of residents, and provide details of these sites, warning and planning information.

Encourage green investment



Encouraging green investment was seen as a great way to support businesses to tackle climate change but it was hard to see if the impact would be significant

- Participants saw this as an intuitive way to help green businesses thrive and develop in Wolverhampton in the long term
 - Some said they had assumed encouraging green investment was already happening
- However, some felt the impact would be limited without a clear incentive for investors to put money into green businesses
- There was also significant concern over whether this would also mean discouraging investment in smaller businesses who are unable to be 'green' in certain areas for cost or other reasons

“For us as a charity, would we be able to afford to be green?”

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Make the incentive (financial or non-financial) for investing in green businesses clear to investors in order to maximise impact
- Support small businesses who may be struggling to become 'green' and make sure they aren't left behind in the transition

Help install green technology



Helping install green technology initiatives in the city was felt to be an ‘easy win’ for the council, but potentially not ambitious enough

- Many viewed this as a ‘common sense’ policy that would be easy to implement (as the technology exists) and have a relatively immediate impact
- There were concerns about the initial cost of the technology and how this would be funded
- There were also some specific concerns over the green technology itself e.g. streetlights only turning on when sensors were triggered, lights needing to be brighter for public service buildings such as hospitals and centralised heating systems leaving employees in buildings too hot or cold

“What is the initial cost of the tech? Where will the money come from? How will it be reinvested when making savings?”

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Create rules for landlords to meet energy efficiency standards
- Make plans for applying the green technology to the city more broadly, for example in workplaces and schools, to increase the impact
- Address concerns over how technology would be initially funded

Create an eco-rating for businesses to display



The idea of an eco-rating was welcomed, though residents had questions about how to make it work effectively

- Residents felt this could encourage businesses to behave in a more environmentally friendly way, or risk being ‘shamed’ by a low rating and that this in turn would encourage citizens to use higher-rated establishments more often
- There were some questions about how it would work:
 - Whether or not businesses would volunteer to do this
 - What the rating would measure, and how easy it would be to understand
 - How much attention residents would pay to the rating
 - Whether or not it would be harder for smaller businesses to meet the necessary standards for a good rating

“I think it would be encouraging to go into shops with a good rating.”

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Using a simple traffic light system
- The eco-rating should be directly incentivised, for example, giving businesses a reduced rent or tax if they reach a certain ‘green’ standard

05 Policies for tackling Climate Change in Wolverhampton

- Citizen's ideas
- Council policies
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- **Community policies**



Residents explored 4 different actions for the community:

Most popular policy

- Run a campaign about the risks of climate change and actions communities and businesses can take to help

This idea was seen to correspond with the principle of: *Climate change plans and activity should be communicated clearly and widely*

Runner-up policy

- Support community groups to get funding for 'green' projects

This idea was seen to correspond with the principle of: *Getting involved should be as accessible as possible, and vulnerable residents should continue to be supported*

Other policies explored

- Encourage residents to make climate change pledges
- Help communities to plant more trees



Delivering a public campaign aligned with citizens' spontaneous ideas for tackling the issue

- A public campaign was felt to be an essential 'first step' to allowing real change, as many felt levels of awareness among the public were still low (despite climate change becoming an increasingly high-profile issue)
 - As well as being important to 'spread the word', a public campaign was seen as something simple that would be accessible for everyone
- However citizens had questions around how effective this would be in practice, feeling there would be a risk not everyone would voluntarily engage with a campaign
 - It was suggested the campaign could be targeted to encourage involvement and mitigate this risk

"It's how it's delivered. Like social media, everyone uses social media. You can't send out newsletters because your contradicting yourself [with extra printing]."

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Make sure the campaign is distributed through as many media channels as possible e.g. social media platforms e.g. Facebook or Instagram stories, an app, partnerships with businesses and messages via council documents (e.g. information coming in the post with your council tax bill).



Citizens liked the policy on helping community groups access fundraising as they felt this would bring communities together

- Helping community groups by linking them with funding was felt to be a great way to empower these groups working 'on the ground' at the level of the community
 - It was assumed this would get more people involved in these groups, therefore bringing people together
 - This policy also felt credible as it felt achievable and cost-effective for the council
- It was suggested a wide range of community groups should be supported to ensure maximum impact and accessibility at the city level, as well as targeting groups focused on areas with big potential to reduce carbon emissions e.g. transport
 - For example, supporting groups involving children or businesses would ensure engagement was more wide ranging outside the 'usual suspects' involved in these kinds of groups

"Its about bringing people together again, getting more involved. We need more hands-on projects!"

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- To improve the sustainability of this idea there should be some thought into how groups might be helped to secure longer-term funding
- Community groups focused on transport specifically should be supported, and a wide range of groups should be involved, particularly children

Encourage residents to make climate change pledges



There were mixed views on encouraging residents to make climate change pledges, with some worried this would feel like ‘forcing’ people to take part

- Whilst making pledges was seen as something some people would like to get involved in, there was push back against the concept of a ‘pledge’ as this was felt to run counter the principle of encouraging people to make changes on a *voluntary* basis
 - Some of the example pledges like reducing heating or hanging out the washing, there was some concern certain groups like the elderly, disabled and those living in flats would be less able to take part
- There was also scepticism around how far people would stick to pledges and that an ‘all or nothing’ mentality could make them fall back into bad habits
- Being encouraged to take ‘green actions’ rather than making a ‘pledge’ was suggested as a better approach

“It could just die out after a while...and disability-wise how able are people to do these things, how easy it is for them to hang out their washing?”

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Encourage ‘green actions’ within communities
- For example, though community or city-wide days that are focused on a particular ‘green’ activity or action e.g. taking public transport

Help communities to plant more trees



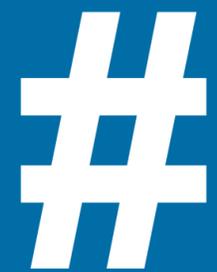
Citizens were supportive of developing a tree planting programme, but had concerns over how sustainable it would be long-term

- Citizens saw this as a straightforward way to increase carbon capture, sustain the bee population and prevent flooding
 - Planting a tree also feels like a very tangible action that can be taken immediately
- However, there were concerns about how truly sustainable this would be if large numbers of trees ever needed to be cut down
- There was also recognition that trees could not be planted ‘just anywhere’ and that some people would dislike having them planted in certain areas e.g. residential streets

“I think planting trees is good as long as it’s sustainable... We don’t want it to be a PR stunt saying, ‘we are going to plant all these trees now but cut them all down in 5 years time’.”

Suggestions for developing the policy:

- Provide an incentive to residents to get involved in tree planting, e.g. council tax reductions.
- Create more green spaces generally as opposed to just focusing on tree-planting
- Communicate about tree planting plans so residents know where these are being placed



Recap

- Summary findings

Summary findings

1

Whilst most participants saw climate change as an issue of growing importance, there is uncertainty and concern about what 'ordinary' citizens can realistically do to tackle it. There is worry about the cost impact and disruption that going 'green' will have on people's daily lives.

2

Climate change is seen as a large-scale issue that can feel overwhelming; residents therefore want to see businesses and other powerful emitters in the city play their part. Particularly after learning that council emissions are only 2% of the whole city's carbon footprint, residents wanted to understand how to influence businesses and other large emitters to change and to see them lead by example.

3

Residents were impressed by the council's ambitions for tackling climate change and the progress already made and called for wider communications around these plans. Participants were particularly impressed by the council's net zero target and wanted to see more active engagement with residents to get them involved.

4

Residents were broadly positive about the policies proposed by the council in each of the areas of council, city and community and developed key principles guiding implementation, recommending that all policies should keep the costs impact low and be as sustainable/effective at reducing emissions as possible.

Britainthinks

Insight & Strategy

Thank you

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