

Second Environment Scrutiny Commission report on the Climate Emergency road map

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1 Background

On 27th March 2019 Southwark's Council Assembly resolved to call on cabinet to declare a Climate Emergency and do all it can to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030.

In order to take this forward a Climate Summit was held in July 2019, attended by councillors, officers and community representatives. The Environment Scrutiny Commission received an update on this event shortly after.

On 1 October 2019 Councillor Richard Livingstone, Cabinet member for Environment, Transport and the Climate Emergency, with the support of officers, presented the Climate Emergency Strategy draft road map to the Environment Scrutiny Commission. The Commission discussed the plan and also heard from Councillor Adam Harrison, Cabinet member for a sustainable Camden, who spoke about the wider engagement work of the council, Camden's Citizens' Assembly and Extinction Rebellion, who recently gathered views from Southwark residents.

Following this the Commission sent a report for cabinet to consider alongside the final Climate Emergency Strategy road map, which went to cabinet on 29 October.

The Commission continued to take evidence on the Climate Emergency over the next three meetings, as well as the other receive evidence on the other complimentary review on Air Quality. Three interlinking issues were particularly considered at the 4 December, 20 January and 10 March:

- Planning , Regeneration and the built environment
- Transport and the local physical infrastructure to support a transition to lower emissions
- Community Energy

On 10 March the Commission received another update on the Climate Emergency strategy development, which was intended for the Cabinet meeting of 24 March; however the pandemic measures put in place on 23 March meant this did not go ahead. Instead a virtual rescheduled cabinet meeting was held on 7 April, and this received an amended version of the report with a Coronavirus addendum setting the intention to change the engagement plans. The cabinet accepted the report recommendations; however the revised engagement plans were 'called in' by OSC on 12 May.

The 12th May Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) held the Call-in of the 7 April 2020 cabinet report: Delivering a Climate Strategy for Southwark. Concerns centred on the addendum to the report which outlines the reduced engagement following the announcement of pandemic and the intention to move more engagement post the development of the draft strategy. The OSC resolved not to refer the report back to cabinet; however it did make a number of recommendations on the engagement programme which were broadly accepted by the lead cabinet member , Cllr Livingstone. The following commitments were made to take place up to the July , when the draft report will go to cabinet :

- Online Hub – the council has commissioned and launched an online portal and a report will be produced on the interim findings at the time of the July council report.
- Partnership Steering Group – will reconvene virtually to meet monthly between now and July.
- Members Working Group – will be established.

Consultation with young people and concerted efforts to reach the BAME community, young and older people will be undertaken post July.

2 Summary of recommendations

3 Context

The start of 2020 has seen several global environmental crisis linked to climate change and environmental degradation: the bush fires of Australia, the warmest January globally, the wettest February in UK, and most disruptive of all the COVID 19 pandemic.

In 2016, UNEP's prescient Frontiers Report sounded the alarm on the rise of infectious diseases arising from animals, reporting that 60 per cent of all known infectious diseases in humans and 75 per cent of all emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic. COVID-19 is just one of many diseases now known to have crossed between animals and humans; others include HIV, MERS, SARs and Ebola. Although transmission pathways are still not fully understood and the origin of COVID 19 has not been definitively established, the UN advise protecting habitats and biodiversity will reduce the risk of further harmful zoonotics emerging.

COVID 19 has been a difficult and often tragic for most human societies, whereas for nature it has been a mixed blessing. In some places were are seeing a resurgence of flora and fauna , with sheep's invading welsh towns, and people in cities getting a welcome glimpse of cities with reduced air and noise pollution . The slower, quitter of life pace has improved many peoples ability to enjoy nature, from the ability to hear bird song to the awareness of the slow change of trees come into blossom.

The global lockdown has seen significant reduction of fossils fuel use and the spectra of oil prices going negative, and there has been a drop in the consumption of most consumer goods. At the peak of population confinement emissions dropped by 17% over 2019 mean levels.¹ However the pandemics has also seen a rise in some

¹ <https://www.uea.ac.uk/about/-/covid-19-crisis-causes-17-drop-in-global-carbon-emissions>

consumables, with an increase in medical plastic waste from PPE and single use face masks and gloves that is already posing a risk to wildlife.

While the total overall reduction in resources is likely to slow climate change and have other environmental benefits, the adverse economic consequences and consequent impact on humans are likely to be severe.

There will be some opportunity to of the lockdown practices post adopt the some to the new practices we have had to utilise to reduce resource depletion in the future , and one of obvious one is the increase in remote working and consequent decrease in transport, and the uptake in cycling and walking journeys .

In rebuilding our economy post COVID 19 the UN Environmental Panel recommend 5 design principles for members states, however many of these will apply to local government :

- 1) The centrality of “green and decent” jobs and income;
- 2) Investments in public wealth and social and ecological infrastructure;
- 3) Circularity to advance sustainable consumption and production;
- 4) Responsible finance for climate stability and ecosystems integrity; and
- 5) Socially inclusive outcomes

The pandemic has rightly seen resources switch to safeguarding life locally, however the Climate Emergency remains just beyond the horizon and disruption of life under COVID 19 is a spectra of the future if we do not continue to do everything we can to avert us from the disastrous path towards the 3-4% degrees of climate change that we are presently headed towards, unless we manage to make the systemic and far reaching changes that are required.

4 Climate and Ecological emergency

In the first report scrutiny report to the cabinet the Commission recommended that the Climate Emergency also incorporates work on the wider ecological emergency. This recommendation was echoed by the Partnership Steering group, convened to inform the emerging Climate emergency strategy, who also recommended considering broadening the strategy to an “ecological emergency” as well as a climate emergency. If Southwark were to do that it would put us on the same footing as the many of the other Local Authorities who declared both a climate and ecological emergency.

The study published in the journal Nature Climate Change shows that daily emissions decreased by 17% – or 17 million tonnes of carbon dioxide – globally during the peak of the confinement measures in early April compared to mean daily levels in 2019, dropping to levels last observed in 2006

There are good reasons for looking at the boarder ecological emergency at the same time as the Climate Emergency. Environmentalists are increasingly looking at the linkages and interdependences between climate change, land use change, loss of habitat, chemical flows, soil depletion and reductions in biodiversity.

Zero Carbon Britain’s report on responding to the Climate Emergency recommends The Stockholm Institute's influential work on Planetary Boundaries. These look at the ecological boundaries that we need to remain within to for a habitable world.

Presently this work estimates that we have already exceeded the planetary boundary for loss of biosphere integrity; biodiversity loss and extinctions. The main drivers of change are the demand for food, water, and natural resources, causing severe biodiversity loss. The other boundary that has been crossed is nitrogen and phosphorus flows to the biosphere and oceans, as a result of industrial and agricultural processes.



Negative changes impact on each domain, but positive changes also build resilience. Modern research is showing the huge capacity for the biosphere to absorb carbon, and biodiverse regions are more resilient to climate change.

Recommendation

Climate Emergency is reframed to include the wider Ecological Emergency, with a commitment to work towards staying within safe Planetary Boundaries, and this shift is tested in the engagement process.

5 Restoration

Increasingly environmentalists are saying that restoration has to be part of the plan if we are to achieve carbon zero. Trees, soil, have an enormous potential to absorb carbon and if we are to reverse biodiversity loss we cannot just conserve, we need to restore. Centring restoration is an emerging approach that is gaining credence, but is less familiar than carbon reduction. Soil can hold four times the amount of carbon than in the atmosphere. Vegetation can protect citizens from the adverse impact of emissions on highways.

The FOE plan, which is referenced in the Climate Emergency strategy, recommended that council land is used to drawdown carbon (e.g. tree planting and soil carbon management). There are possibilities here in both green spaces in parks, and alongside roads and other green spaces in urban settings. These can all make both a positive difference in carbon emissions, and increasing biodiversity. Many local authorities now produce green infrastructure strategies.

Centring protecting the biodiversity and ecology of Southwark is also likely to increase social commitment and drive positive behaviour change as research shows that people care, on average, more about loss of flora and fauna, than climate change (though there is a rise in concern about both). The huge concern about loss of bees and rise in gardening that protects wildlife demonstrate the community strength feeling.

Recommendation

Include a strand in the strategy for Restoration, which includes increasing carbon absorption and improving the biosphere and link to present biodiversity plans.

6 Leadership statement, principles and data driving the engagement and emerging strategy

In the first report the Commission recommended that the engagement process start with a leadership statement from the council about the Climate Emergency and the council's approach to environmental stewardship. It was recommended that this outlined how fossil fuel burning, vehicle emissions, a denuded green environment,

loss of species, all contribute to the climate emergency and why it matters for our borough, city and planet. The Commission advised that this statement, and subsequent distribution and education in the borough, should be implemented before the rounds of engagement detailed below to ensure we have the best input from our communities.

It was recommended that as well as outlining a clear position the statement should additionally overlay some of the wealth of information we have (council tax bands, indices of multiple deprivation, car ownership, road causality rates, air quality etc.) to fully understand who in the borough experiences the benefits and who suffers the most from our environmental actions and to integrate the principle equality, fairness and climate justice.

There the cabinet report back contained a very positive endorsement of the leadership statement; however the timescale for the production of this is unclear.

On principles the second cabinet report said the Fairer Future principles would be used, which makes absolute sense. In addition to this, under the 'Inclusivity' section, there was commitment to a Just Transition, and although there was not explicit endorsement of the principle of Climate Justice, put forward by the Commission are in effect very similar principles.

There was a further discussion on mapping out data on deprivation at the meeting on 10 March, where the Climate Emergency Director gave assurances that this was the intention.

An online survey was launched late May and this does contain an opening statement setting out the councils ambitions. This could be further improved when the draft strategy is launched for consultation with more information on carbon emissions and the relationship with deprivation.

Recommendation

The final consultation on the draft strategy must overlay information on emissions and deprivation to enable people to make informed responses to the strategy and the collective work of reducing emissions, underpinned by the commitment to an inclusive, fair and just transition.

7 Baseline data

In order to bring the commitment to a Just Transition to life and ensure an equitable transition the Commission recommend that the links between social and environmental justice are mapped, as set out above.

Baseline data will be extremely important to understand, target and measure the implementation of measures to reduce and absorb emissions.

Data on Carbon should include both emissions and consumption. It is welcomed that the joint work with London Council intends to focus on reducing the consumption of food, clothing, electronics and aviation. The Commission welcomes the survey theme on consumption and the commitment to address this as a theme in the strategy.

A net zero carbon reduction programme that omits to systematically address consumption will mean that a large part of Southwark's contribution to Climate Change would go unaddressed. Research by Leeds University shows consumption emissions make a significant part of the UK carbon budget – see more here: <http://www.emissions.leeds.ac.uk/>.

A method for bringing this information together to make intelligent choices is to utilise the 'Virtual Twin' AI programme , where the boroughs data can be imputed then recommended for actions are generated.

Recommendation

- ***Map both emissions and consumption data.***
- ***Map deprivation data and overlay this with emissions data to generate and prioritise the most effective actions that enable an inclusive, fair and Just Transition.***
- ***Investigate digital twin AI technology.***

8 Engagement

On the Borough wide engagement process warmth was expressed to the practical suggestions made in the first report, however few commitments were provided. The pandemic has further necessitated the need for a detailed programme of engagement. The Commission is pleased to see that an online questionnaire has been initiated, and the Partnership and Cross Party members groups will shortly be convened in response to the OSC meeting.

The Commissions remains convinced that a Youth Council ought to be convened given their democratic mandate in Southwark, the adverse impact on future generations of environmental degradation , and the pre-eminence of young environmentalist like Greta Thunberg and school strike movement in driving the issue up the agenda. There is an excellent Eco Councillor movement in schools that would allow for easy engagement and the council should to make the most of this network.

The Commission also think that work with more marginalised groups ought to happen sooner rather than later.

Recommendations

There are several other approaches indicated in the first Commission and OSC report that could be taken forward, even with the Covid 19 restrictions in place, these include:

- *Engagement with the Youth Council , youth environment groups , and other young people to set up an environment Youth Council*
- *Engagement with Eco Councillors in schools (primary schools are working remotely with more and more children attending)*
- *Early action to engage with communities that might not easily be able to engage digitally or where the climate change agenda has not featured peoples views equally, including BAME, older and disabled people.*

9 Partnership and strategy

The Cabinet report outlined strong partnership work with London councils, and good local engagement with local green campaign groups. The Commission would like to see more engagement with wider strategic bodies such as the GLA, TFL, as well as the business community, particular the local Business Improvement Districts (BIDS)

There are several low carbon freight initiative that the London Bridge BID are supporting , such as Peddle Me, which offer the opportunity for Southwark to be at the forefront of moving to low carbon commercial movements .

Recommendation

Engage with the local BIDS as part of the consultation strategy.

10 Moving to a sustainable transport system

One of the biggest potential levers the councils have on emissions is through its transport plans, particularly if partnership can be built with other London boroughs and the Mayor of London, as the lead for TFL.

The first scrutiny commission report recommended a target to drive down car use and the April Cabinet report set out a target agreed with other London Boroughs to halve petrol and diesel road journeys by 2030 and incentivise sustainable and active travel options. A concrete target is welcomed; however we think this ought to be more ambitious over a shorter time period.

The commission revisited the Movement Plan at the March where some local initiatives were presented, alongside big ticket changes planned for the Old Kent Road. While the Commission welcomed these, on the whole, there was concern that the operational activity to deliver the good ambitions of the Movement Plan lacked a coherent programme. The Commission discovered deprivation data sitting behind the plan, but this was not referred to by the officers in the meeting and there was no evidence that this is being used to drive decisions in a systematic way.

The risk is that pockets of good practice will emerge in places with the most vocal activists or large scale regeneration, but these will not necessarily be the places with the greatest need or deliver the local changes people most want. Furthermore hyper local changes are most likely to drive unintended outcomes of displaced traffic, rather than the win win outcome of traffic reducing overall. More work needs to be done to implement Low Traffic Neighbourhoods over a broader area and in conjunctions with TFL work on major roads and aligned with plans to increase public transport and active travel.

The recent announcement by the Mayor of London that main streets in the city, including between London Bridge and Waterloo, will only be open for buses, pedestrians and cyclists, and this is welcome response to the pandemic. He has asked local councils to close minor roads. An initiative such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods would be complimentary to this initiative and enable citizens to sustain the increased walking and cycling witnessed during lockdown. Measures will need to be taken to ensure people with mobility problems are catered for.

Recommendation

- ***Adopt a local target to halve petrol and diesel road journeys by 2025, and by 90% by 2030, and encourage London Council and the Mayor to do likewise.***
- ***Develop an operational plan with partners to implement this focusing on structural changes, informed by the ambitions of the Movement Plan and its associated deprivation data.***

11 Regeneration and Carbon Offsetting

Regeneration, carbon emissions and resource use

Globally building emissions and their construction together account for 36 percent of energy use and 39 percent of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions annually, according to the United Nations Environment Program. The figures for Southwark may well be higher, and this is something that should be quantified in the data report expected.

Building emissions are a combination of two things. First there is the day-to-day energy use, the 'operational carbon emissions', which refers primarily to fuel and power use of the completed building. The second is the amount of carbon generated through manufacturing building materials, transporting materials to construction sites, and the actual construction process—what is known as the 'embodied carbon' of a building.

When buildings are designed the 'operational carbon' is measured and governed by 2013 Building Regulations part L. The draft New Southwark Plan requires a 100% reduction for major residential development and a minimum of 40% reduction for non-residential development on the 2013 standards of this must be delivered 'on-site'. Where this does not happen, a financial contribution is required from the applicant to meet the target, and is used for Carbon Offsetting.

The second measure of carbon expanded is in the construction process, or 'Embedded Carbon'. This is not however governed by either law or current policy. Extinction Rebellion highlighted this weakness and that currently emissions created by constructing the new building (or demolishing the buildings that were there before) are not currently measured even though construction and maintenance can account for more than 50% of carbon emitted through the lifetime of a building².

Constructing buildings emits significant amounts of carbon emission, and there is also the related issue of the huge amounts of waste generated by regeneration; 48% of all waste in London comes from construction, excavation and demolition.³ Construction not only impacts on carbon emissions, it also impacts more widely on our ecology through the use of virgin materials (wood, mined minerals etc.) which will drive land use change and put pressure on other Planetary Boundaries.

The Commission considered two emerging and related approaches to the problem of reducing carbon and conserving resources through the whole life cycle of a building.

The first approach is outlined in the Net Zero Carbon Buildings: A Framework Definition. This report is intended as a first step towards delivering buildings that are in line with the aims of the Paris Agreement – namely net zero carbon across the whole life of a building, both operational and construction / embodied carbon. The framework has been developed by an industry task group of businesses, trade associations and non-profit organisations. The approach emphasises transparency and accountability and the use of offsets to address embodied carbon.

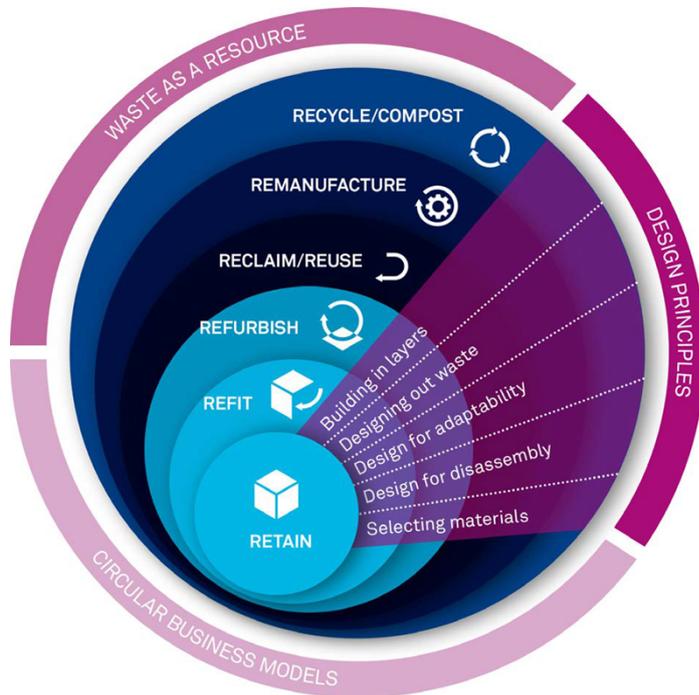
Add diagram in executive summary of the report

The second approach examined was the London Waste and Recycling Board report: London's circular economy route map. The section on Buildings recommends

² Leeds University 2017

³ Page 17 London's circular economy route map

a whole life approach to reducing the carbon and others material used in construction by increasing the ability to retro fit, refurbish, reuse or recycle:



Above: Building Revolutions: applying the circular economy to the built environment, David Cheshire (AECOM), RIBA, 2016

Ref: Building Revolutions' (2016), David Cheshire, RIBA Publishing

This circular approach is inline with the UN recommendations on the Environment and has the potential to drive the deep structural and systemic changes in our economy which will be needed to stay within Planetary Boundaries.

Embedded carbon is a huge part of our carbon emissions originating from small scale building and our larger regeneration schemes. Officers indicated there are no planning requirement on this because of wider planning law does not measure embedded carbon. This is a major challenge. Regeneration officers seemed alive to this issue, and indicated that they are considering the whole life cycle of carbon and brought the Commissions attention to regeneration initiatives that reuse existing buildings.

Given the significance of the carbon and other resources used in Regeneration, and the (imperfect) leverage the Council has through the planning process this is an area that needs more focus. Carbon in building schemes will be a huge part of Southwark carbon budget up to 2030, both the embedded carbon generation through construction and the emissions from planned new buildings.

The 7 April report on the Climate Emergency report outlined steps agreed with London Councils that that will be taken in conjunction with other London Boroughs, these include:

- Low-carbon development: Secure low carbon buildings and infrastructure via borough planning. Programme timescale: 2020 – 2022.
- Reduce consumption emissions: Reduce consumption emissions by two thirds, focusing on food, clothing, electronics and aviation. Programme timescale: 2020 – 2030.

These are welcome steps, however it is unclear if this work will encompass a joint working to drive down embodied carbon and other resources used by the construction industry through development.

Carbon Offsetting

In the Commissions first report a recommendation was made to a) eliminate or drastically reducing its use and b) ensure any offsetting funds are used effectively and produce an annual report. Cabinet thought Carbon Offsetting ought to continue but agree this ought to be reduced.

Officers said that the draft New Southwark Plan increases the amount of operational carbon to be addressed 'on site' to 40% for major non-residential development. subject to the Inspector agreeing to this. Currently, the London Plan requires non-residential development to achieve a 35% reduction. This new 40% target is one which most boroughs in London have now adopted. This will require major developments in Southwark to exceed the Mayor's target by 5%. Officers said that currently buildings achieve 34 % on average and on occasions as high as 70%, so they know the 40% target is achievable. Major residential development must meet a 100% reduction.

If we are to address Climate Change effectively generally environmentalists consider that carbon offsetting ought to be reduced to zero or as close to zero as possible.

Extinction Rebellion were critical of 'net' zero as a concept , as this allows new building to pay to pollute long into the future, and can give the impression that initiatives are much greener than they actually are . They critiqued the latitude given to Elephant Park, formerly the Heygate estate, is an example. They told the Commission that this development was initially touted as a flagship environmental project incorporating a new 100% renewable energy plant. However, the developer, Lendlease, decided however that this was not financially viable and was permitted by the terms of their planning application to simply convert the carbon reduction targets that would have been achieved through renewable energy, into a recalculated offset payment. That development will now generate just 3% of its energy needs through solar panels and the rest through fossil fuels, but the increased offset payments mean that it is still described as 'zero-carbon'.

Officers agreed it is better to meet energy targets 'on site' and assured the Commission they will be reviewing practices. They are also considering doubling the amount of carbon charged, i.e. increasing the amount developers have to pay.

As well as driving down the use of Carbon Offsets, clarity on the use of offset funds is also important, to ensure that are transparently apportioned and well used. Councils such as Islington use Carbon Offsets to invest capital in Community Energy.

Presently, according to a GLA report, Southwark has not spent any of its Carbon offsets since at least 2016, although it has a total of £1.694, 824 carbon offsets in the pipeline; the majority of which are due to be verified and paid post construction.⁴

The Commission requested a report quantifying the amount of Carbon Offset and their use, which is due to come to the 17 June meeting.

Recommendations:

- ***A focus on reducing 'on site' carbon emissions to at least 40% for major non-residential development and 100% for major residential development through regular monitoring***
- ***Reduce embodied carbon and conserve resources in construction, by utilising the work of the London Waste and Recycling Board work on the Circular Economy and the Net Zero Carbon Buildings: A Framework Definition.***
- **Double carbon offset payments**

12 Community Energy and Local Energy

Community led renewable energy is a manifesto and council plan commitment the council has struggled to take forward, and last year this was subject to a scrutiny review by the previous scrutiny commissions with the Environment remit. The first Commission report encouraged the use of community energy at the earliest opportunity to help build community engagement and confidence in our resolve and commitment. In response the cabinet said the council is taking forward the proposal

⁴ Twenty-three LPAs reported that no carbon offset payments have been spent since 1 October 2016. Southwark reported that the first release of funds would take place in summer 2019. £229,388 has been calculated and will be collected post-construction, and a further £1,465,436 has not yet calculated as a post construction testing approach is being taken and will be verified at that point.

for community led renewable energy, however the report cited challenges in developing sustainable energy projects on our estates. The report assured the Commission that cabinet are looking at a range of ideas to take the work forward.

Following this cabinet response a session on Community Energy was held at the 10th March meeting. Repowering London outlined how community led renewable energy is based on facilitating a decentralised model of empowering communities and community benefit companies. As well as the more obvious benefits of carbon reduction there are also the social benefits that come from visible solar projects in the community and the cooperative model that is used, and the ability of local community energy projects to mobilise and enthuse people.

At the meeting the Commission heard that the previous technical evaluation of three community energy pilots on Southwark estates had concentrated on the narrow question of economic value, rather than considering the more intangible social benefits. The pilots were also conducted during a challenging moment in the funding for solar as the FIT programme was ending, and the future funding model was uncertain.

The Repowering London highlighted these actions and opportunities to improve viability:

- The new finance model allows for a mixture of capital investment
- Carbon Offsets have been used to pump prime schemes in other local authorities
- Community buildings, such as schools and community centres, can be good sites for solar schemes as energy use is in the day, improving economic viability, and the social outcomes from working with schools children are also high

We hope the presentation by Repowering London and subsequent discussion will enable some fresh thinking about how to take this forward, post FIT, and note the commitment to prepare a report on this for summer 2020.

Local Energy

At the Commission meeting on 10th March the Cabinet lead, Cllr Richard Livingston, also indicated that the council would be seeking to maximise local energy projects on our estates, which is welcome.

Lambeth have commissioned an organisation to carry out a GIS spatial analysis of every Lambeth property to calculate Solar PV potential and carbon savings with a view to carrying out feasibility studies in due course. Likewise Tower Hamlets are identifying all roofs in their ownership that could be fitted with bio solar (green roofs and solar combined) and have set aside £500,000 to implement this.

Recommendation:

Bring back a report to scrutiny in September which:

- **Considers the viability of supporting community schools to adopt community energy , as a first stage in rolling out Community Energy.**
- **Considers investing a proportion of our Carbon Offset funds into Community Energy**
- **Sets out a plan for mapping and identifying viable PV's sites in Southwark**