

Agenda Item 6

Motions by Members (Standing Order No. 14)

Council – 22 September 20207

1. The Climate Emergency

North Somerset Council acknowledges and notes:

1. That in February 2019, the council declared a climate emergency, as have over two-thirds of local authorities nationally.
2. The ecological emergency, noting specifically species extinction, loss of habitat and the connectivity of habitats, decline in pollinators which are crucial to food supply, and the loss of and decline in the quality of the soil.
3. That the climate and ecological emergencies are linked and both the result of over-exploitation of the earth's resources and poor land management. However, there are other causes of the ecological emergency beyond climate change, including other forms of pollution, urbanisation, hydrological change, the proliferation of invasive species, and poor practices in agriculture, woodland management and fishing.
4. That in May 2019, the UN Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) raised the alarm about the urgent ecological emergency the world faces. The UK's State of Nature 2019 report also highlights the critical decline in biodiversity in the UK.

This council further believes that:

1. The survival of our society and economy depends absolutely on the health of the natural environment and ecosystems, providing for example clean water and air, food, and flood protection.
2. While reducing carbon from fossil fuels is the top priority for tackling the climate emergency, it is also necessary to find ways to increase carbon absorption or sequestration by the natural environment, by for example tree planting, peatland restoration, different methods of land management and improved agricultural practices that enable carbon to be drawn down into the soil on a large scale.
3. Throughout the district of North Somerset there are opportunities to increase the sequestration of carbon by trees, grassland and soil, but further work is needed, which would involve a range of stakeholders, to balance the complex set of natural environment issues, such as
4. Increasing biodiversity and protection of habitats and species, including key pollinators and other insects;
5. Increasing soil quality and quantity, reducing chemical fertilisers and pesticides and preventing soil erosion;

6. Increasing local food production, utilising local productive capacity, through less intensive agricultural methods, as a number of local producers already do;
7. Increasing flood defence, using natural flood mitigation measures;
8. Protecting our natural landscape and enhancing the natural ecosystem it provides, whilst enabling sensitive renewable energy development and enabling more people to benefit from time spent in nature.

Therefore, in addition to work already underway to address the climate emergency, this council formally declares an ecological emergency and resolves to:

1. Promote the policy as 'tackling the climate and nature emergency'.
2. Seek actively to work with partners locally in North Somerset, regionally in the West of England and beyond to drive collaborative action.
3. Use planning policy and development management to ensure the delivery of biodiversity and environmental enrichment and resist destruction of habitats.
4. Identify areas within North Somerset which would be suitable for wildlife habitat restoration.
5. Continue to collaborate with our communities, businesses and other organisations, schools, colleges etc. to improve ecological knowledge and understanding, and to encourage greater biodiversity and land management.
6. Continue to work with our partners in the West of England in improve the biodiversity of the region.

Cllr Robert Payne

2. Eviction of Private Housing Tenants under Section 21 of the 1988 Housing Act

North Somerset Council notes that:

- No fault evictions, introduced under Section 21 of the 1988 Housing Act, allow landlords to evict tenants, without having to give a reason, once the term of the tenancy has expired;
- 80% of England's 11 million renters are on tenancies with fixed terms of six months or a year; after this period has ended, landlords can evict their tenants under Section 21 without cause;
- Research indicates that Section 21 evictions are now the single biggest cause of homelessness in England; and that
- In 2017, the Scottish Government made tenancies indefinite and banned no-fault evictions.

The council believes that abolishing Section 21 no-fault evictions:

- Would help make renting homes in North Somerset and elsewhere more secure and our communities more stable, improve standards of accommodation and increase tenant confidence;
- Would further help in the council's work to tackle homelessness, which must be a priority for government at all levels; and
- Should happen as soon as practicably possible.

The council therefore:

- Welcomes the UK Government announcement in April of plans to consult on new legislation to abolish Section 21 no-fault evictions in England, and the lengthening of the notice a landlord must give of the eviction, but regrets the lack of action by Government in moving towards abolition; and
- Resolves to express to the Government its support for the abolition of Section 21, and to seek to work with organisations nationally such as Generation Rent and locally such as Weston Housing Action to bring about the swift abolition of Section 21 no-fault evictions.

Cllr Robert Payne

