

# NEWHAM COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON CLIMATE CHANGE



A welcome contribution to meeting the global challenge of a sustainable future for the planet

# 1. Meeting the challenge of the Climate Emergency

**As the world contends with the global health emergency brought on by Covid-19, we must ensure that any economic recovery accelerates and scales up our response to the climate emergency facing us. The unprecedented impact of COVID-19 doesn't eradicate the magnitude of the climate crisis that we are contending with. It demands from us to put the health of people and the planet central to plans to address the economic consequences of the pandemic.**

Councils are on the frontline of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis, which is why in Newham our recovery plans will be anchored in our enduring commitment to addressing the climate emergency. That is why the Mayor and the Council welcome the report and recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change. Our thanks to all our residents involved in the Citizen Assembly, who have given their time and energy to this vital work, contributing to important areas of inquiry and working collaboratively with us to help develop and act upon this critical policy priority. The Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change is a crucial part of our commitment to extending participatory democracy in Newham so that our residents are involved in decision making and shaping the future of the borough.

Addressing the global challenge of the climate emergency and building a sustainable future is a non-negotiable priority for the Mayor and Newham Council, shaping our policies across the Council and central to our Community Wealth Building agenda and Inclusive Economy Strategy.

The Council declared a climate emergency in April 2019, and in September that year set out what we propose to do at the local level. This included adopting the objective of the UK national target of net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. This means reducing these

emissions 2050 of at least 100% of 1990 levels, whilst maintaining the shorter-term target of making the borough 'carbon neutral' by 2030.

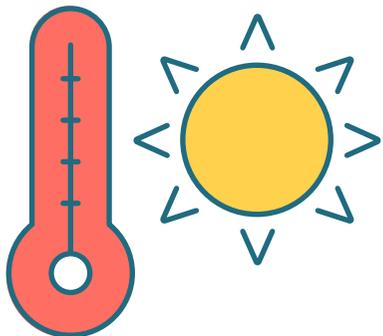
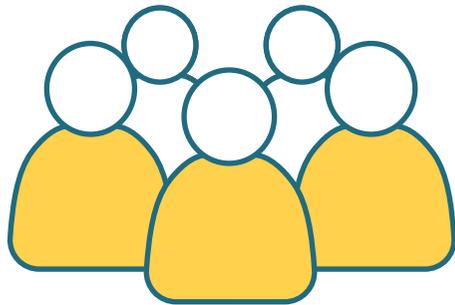
As part of our agenda to transform Newham so that it becomes a beacon of participatory democracy, the Council established a Citizens' Assembly to help us develop our plans to mitigate climate change and address the Climate Emergency. Working with our residents, both to develop our policy plans and initiating behaviour changes is vital, as achieving a world that is genuinely sustainable can only be progressed by acting together collaboratively.

The Newham Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change met in February 2020, bringing together 36 independently and randomly selected local residents for three evenings and a weekend to develop recommendations in response to the question: "How can the Council and residents work together to reach the aspiration of being carbon zero by 2050 at the latest?"

Assembly members received 14 presentations from a variety of local and national experts.

To help frame their recommendations to the Council, which would emerge from these discussions, the Citizens' Assembly considered their recommendations across the following six themes:

- 1. Education, Awareness, Action:** The Council, residents and communities are educated about the climate emergency and are clear about what we all need to do.
- 2. Technology and Energy:** Invest in technologies to create sustainable energy (underpinned by the formula – continuous knowledge + action = wellbeing + more time on the planet).
- 3. Moving Around (transport and travel):** Switch Newham towards a cleaner, greener, healthier journey.

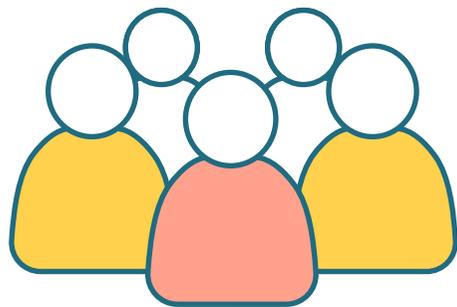
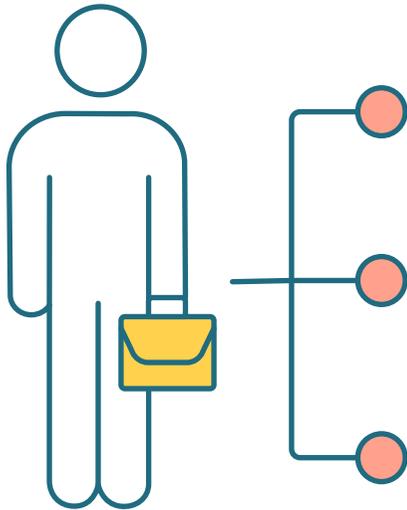
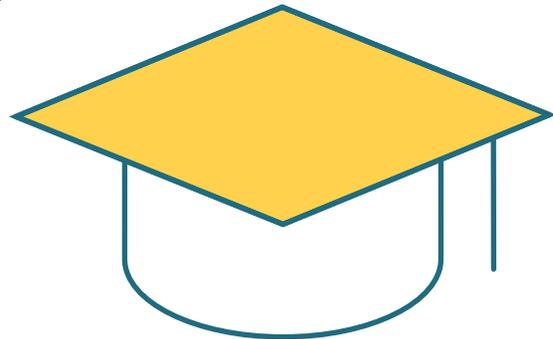




- 4. **Food and Recycling:** Newham will reduce food waste and food miles and aspire to recycle 100%.
- 5. **Environment and Outdoor space:** Newham Council with residents will transform the environment to produce a greener, more pleasant, healthier place where people will want to live, work and settle.
- 6. **Buildings and houses:** Take greater leadership and responsibility in how residential homes and businesses become more energy efficient.

The assembly also proposed some actions about ensuring accountability and our progress towards carbon zero.





# 1. Education, Awareness, Action

## The Citizens' Assembly recommended:

1. The Council shares a briefing pack which outlines the climate emergency and includes actionable advice.
2. The Council holds events to invite 'heads of', leaders and key influencers who can pass on the message to more people.
3. The Council makes data on emissions so that residents and the Council can monitor progress and hold each other to account.
4. The Council should leverage the capabilities of local institutions to educate and raise awareness while collaborating with each other to reach our goals.

## Our response:

These are hugely important and welcome proposals. Increasing awareness and education on Climate Emergency is vital so that we are working together with residents in achieving our goals. To this end, the Council welcomes and supports all of these proposals:

1. We are working to ensure more easily accessible information, including in different languages, through enhanced outreach activities with residents and through the Council website, which has been re-designed to increase its usability and improve this vital communication platform. A comprehensive communications and marketing strategy is currently being developed to upscale the visibility of the Climate Emergency agenda across the borough and with our residents.
2. We absolutely agree that events and networking with diverse stakeholders are especially important to maintain visibility of the Climate Emergency agenda locally, and promote learning, information exchange, awareness and action. Plans for a Newham Climate Summit are being developed involving residents, campaigners, leaders, key influencers and experts in the field.

3. Up-to-date emissions information will be added to the Council website, and we will work to ensure that this is communicated in the most accessible way possible. For air quality, there is a lot of data published already, including daily readings. An annual report is also published on air quality.
4. We will continue to work closely with local institutions to educate and raise awareness, and look to increase this work with a wide range of partners, including local employers, the voluntary and community sector and individual people. This proposal very much builds on what is a central part of our Community Wealth Building Strategy – to ensure sustainability is at the heart of all that we do, working with local partners.



## 2. Technology and Energy

### The Citizens' Assembly recommended:

1. Initiate a housing retrofit programme to enable Council residents to receive it (free) and an optional payment plan for home owners at 0% interest, grants or subsidies, to cover insulation, glazing and boilers..
2. Harness and generate renewable power by exploring wind farms, water usage (tidal barrage), and power generation (energy co-ops).
3. Commence a solar panel scheme to reduce energy costs by making grants available for individuals, subsidies for commercial properties, and mandate it for new builds.
4. Research new and cost effective technologies to draw on best practice from other places e.g. action to increase electric car use. Work with local universities and other boroughs to explore a variety of new actions that could be taken forward.

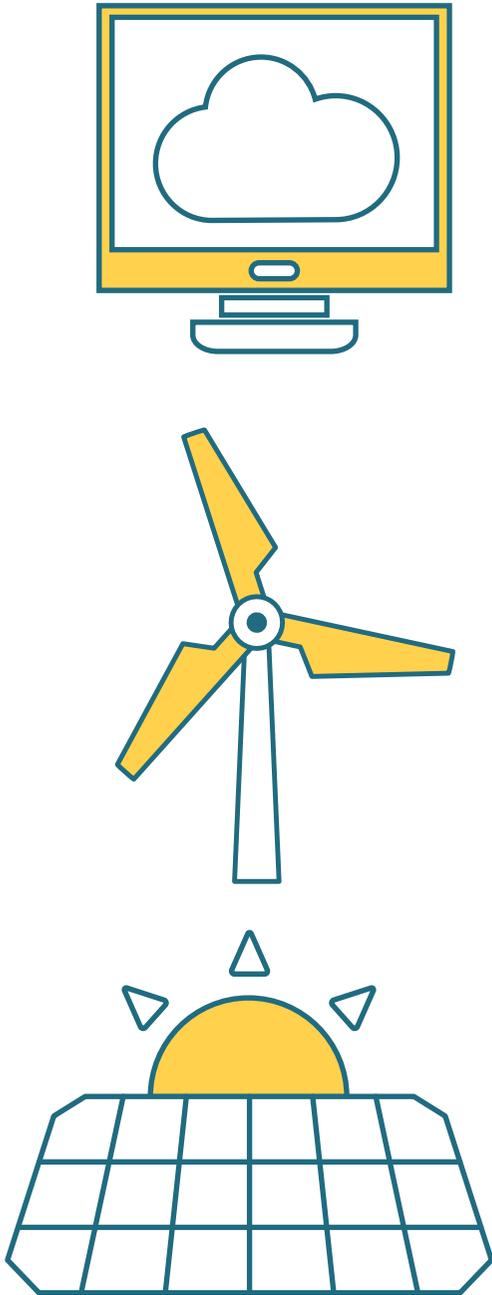
### Our response:

These proposals to help develop our future greener, cleaner energy requirements help our Climate Emergency goals and alleviate fuel poverty. We positively welcome the thinking around this, which reinforces one of our main priorities - to improve the energy efficiency for both residents and businesses, to introduce sustainable energy sources.

1. In terms of housing and energy, the proposals on improving home energy are especially important. Within the Council, the retrofitting of our domestic and non-domestic property stock is a high priority. We are keen to explore the scope for providing support to homeowners on low incomes for green energy and energy efficiency improvements and we have included plans to enhance activity in these areas in the Climate Emergency Action Plan that will

be presented to the Council's Cabinet on 14 July. The Council will also assess the practicability of providing 0% or low-cost loans to local authority residential property leaseholders, whose homes are affected by Council retrofitting programmes.

2. In terms of exploring new sustainable energy sources, we are keen to support community energy generation in the borough and propose to carry out a feasibility study of this area. We will keep under review other opportunities for alternative energy sources, including possible joint ventures with commercial partners and investments via the Council's pension fund.
3. We agree that developing our local use of solar power is extremely important. Given that the Mayor of London promotes a successful and effective scheme, Solar Together, we propose to work actively with Newham residents to encourage them to take part in this scheme, so that this can be developed locally in Newham. We will review this to make sure that the London-wide scheme is fitting our local needs. With regard to new-build properties, under the carbon positive building requirements of the London Plan, solar panels may not always be the best choice for a particular property.
4. We absolutely welcome the recommendations to engage with new and cost effective technologies, such as increasing the use of electric cars. This is vital, given the impact of toxic emissions on both climate change, but also the health of our residents. To this end we are electrifying the Council's own vehicle fleet wherever possible and supporting residents, and businesses, to do so, by increasing the number of charging points. We will also strengthen our partnerships with local stakeholders in the academic and commercial sectors, as we take this agenda forward.



### 3. Moving Around (transport and travel)

#### The Citizens' Assembly recommended:

1. Introduce a free park and ride scheme for schools (using electric buses) along with car sharing schemes and walking buses.
2. Introduce free parking across the borough for e-vehicles.
3. Businesses and Council to apply for grants to provide e-charging points in accessible areas across the borough.
4. Improve existing cycle lanes and walkways make them safer for use e.g. road surface, lighting and cut back vegetation enabling greater individual and group use.

#### Our response:

Encouraging healthier, more sustainable modes of transport is a cornerstone of our strategy for a greener, healthier Newham – and for meeting our climate goals. Working in partnership with our residents is absolutely crucial in this area, as the Assembly has highlighted. Ensuring the health and well-being of people in Newham goes hand in hand with the way we travel, work and move around the borough, and is something which has been especially important during the Covid emergency. To that end we welcome the approach of these proposals in seeking to encourage sustainable travel.

The Council is committed to improving our air quality and our public health and wellbeing in Newham, by supporting and enabling greater levels of active and sustainable travel. Through the implementation of low traffic neighbourhoods to deter traffic from cutting through residential areas and schemes and initiatives to support walking and cycling, we aim to make journeys on foot or by bike the preferred mode of choice for most local journeys

1. One way in which the Council works with local people to reduce traffic and air pollution is the Healthy School Streets initiative, which removes traffic from outside schools at pupil arrival and departure times by means of timed road closures, with only the emergency services and local residents permitted to use the roads during the restricted hours. These schemes improve air quality and road safety in the vicinity of the school and also encourage more sustainable journeys to school to be made on foot or by bike.

We are actively working with more schools and parents to support the development of travel plans, which identify safe routes to school that do not involve the development of safe routes to school that do not involve the use of cars and improve health through encouraging active travel while reducing harmful emissions and congestion.

Although we do not currently provide school buses for most pupils, the idea of a free park and ride scheme with electric buses is an interesting one and something we will look into, though the cost of such a scheme, if widespread, is likely to be significant and would need to be considered in the context of available public transport provision.

We are currently working as a priority to encourage people to use sustainable means of transport, something which is important as the Covid lockdown measures are lifted, to encourage travel without using cars or public transport where possible.

2. The Council very much supports free residential parking for e-vehicles and is proposing such a scheme in 2020-21. However, we think that free parking for electric vehicles across the entire borough could encourage motorised trips and congestion, as e-vehicles become more common. We will keep our policies in this area under review and continue to learn from the experience of other areas.



3. We agree that both businesses and the Council should look into applying for available grants to provide e-charging points in accessible areas across the borough, and commit to helping businesses to do this, including as part of our Community Wealth Building approach.
4. We strongly support the improvement of existing cycle lanes and walkways to make them safer for use and are taking action in this area, partly driven by the need to increase walking and cycling in the post-Covid lockdown era.

As part of our plans, following the easing of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, the Council is developing a Newham 'Green Travel Plan', which will also facilitate the work of Council staff to relieve pressure on public transport. Some of these initiatives represent an acceleration of existing approaches while others are new. They include:

- Reducing the demand for travel, by sustaining work from home opportunities.
- Identifying Newham Council staff who live within a range of walkable and cyclable distances to support them with personalised travel and route planning; and promoting guided walks targeted at residents.
- A buddy walking scheme to address personal safety concerns and make it fun while promoting staff wellbeing.
- Cycle training – much heavier promotion of an existing service, including journey buddy scheme, with regular slots across all Council locations.
- Purchasing bikes and e-bikes for staff short- and long-term use and loan.
- A fully-managed third party staff e-bikes fleet scheme, including training and maintenance.
- A borough-wide e-scooter for hire trial.

## 4. Food and Recycling

### The Citizens' Assembly recommended:

1. Council to drive the availability of affordable, locally grown food to reduce food miles using only biodegradable wrapping.
2. Council to work in partnership with local shops and supermarkets to reduce food waste. To implement the distribution of surplus food to those who need it.
3. Council to recycle 100% of domestic and commercial waste no later than 2030 and to stop burning recycled materials, food waste etc.
4. Council institutions including schools should be predominantly plant based by introducing a five year programme to limit non vegetarian options to once a week. **NB Recommendation did not reach 80% threshold needed to be accepted.**

### Our response:

Food and recycling are, again, absolutely essential for both the future of the planet and the health and wellbeing of residents. Again, this is something which requires partnership – both action from the Council, and change in the way we live.

Creating a healthier food environment is one of the main themes of Newham's new Health and Wellbeing Strategy, 50 Steps to a Healthier Borough. As well as working with food suppliers to provide healthier food with a lower carbon footprint, the Council also aims to build a network of trained Good Food Champions to take the good food message out into our community. It is also serving more plant-based food options in its own establishments.

### Food

1. We will work to increase the availability of affordable, locally grown food to reduce food miles, using compostable wrapping. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy has the ambition to create a more

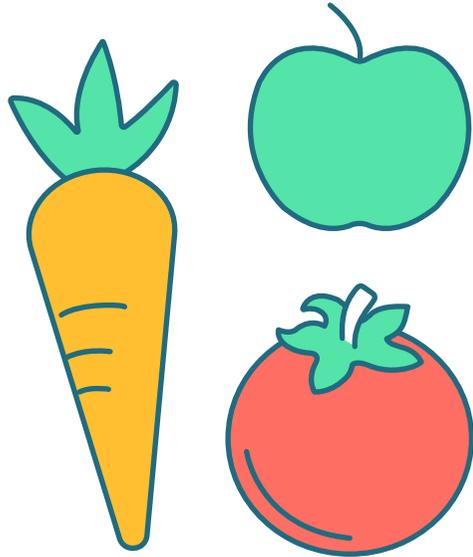
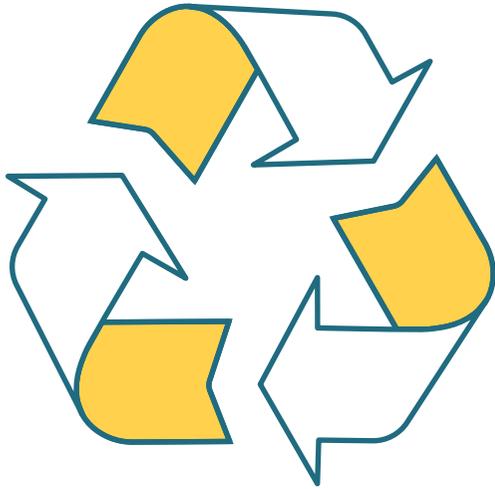
sustainable food culture in the borough through a Newham Food Partnership and to implement Newham's Good Food Retail plan to support a better food environment. We are currently developing a Food Strategy for the borough that will promote healthy and sustainable food production.

2. We are very keen to work with local shops and supermarkets to reduce food waste and to work with partners, such as the Newham Food Alliance, which is a leading example of surplus food redistribution. The partnership diverts food away from landfill to people who need it. Between April and mid-June 2020, approximately 150 tonnes of food was diverted from the waste stream. This represented a CO<sub>2</sub> saving of 570 tonnes.

The Council also believes that the promotion of plant-based food has an important part to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This is something we do in our own Council catering, and will take this further through our new Food Strategy. 70% of food waste post farm-gate is produced by households. As such the Council is focussing on reducing food waste in the home. In 2019 a trial was carried out in which residents decreased the amount of food they wasted by around 30% by following some basic tips and making some simple changes. In 2020 a borough-wide food waste campaign is being run to encourage people to share these tips and changes to help residents waste less food and save money.

### Recycling

3. We agree that we have a lot of work to do in terms of improving the Council's recycling rates and improving our public areas across the borough, as fly-tipping in the borough has become prolific. This is a priority for the administration, and to that end, the Council is expanding its recycling services over the 2020-22 period, with an additional £640,000





already committed in the recent Budget passed at Full Council in early March. Recyclable materials will be collected more frequently and more items will be collected for recycling.

The Council is also improving how it works with residents to increase recycling, and in particular, the best ways to avoid contaminating recyclable materials with rubbish which should not be put in recycling bins, which can mean that recyclable materials have to be destroyed.

The Council has been tied to a previous waste arrangement through the East London Waste Authority, which does not fit our sustainable priorities. The next waste disposal contract will provide better financial incentives to recycle more than is currently the case, and is likely to include provision for food waste recycling.

## 5. Environment and Outdoor Space

### The Citizens' Assembly recommended:

1. Improve Newham's air quality by installing pollution monitors across the borough and by protecting trees, expanding green spaces and not allowing new buildings in existing public parks. **NB Recommendation did not reach the 80% threshold to needed to be accepted.**
2. Newham Council to produce a water strategy to initiate, encourage and support existing householders/tenants to harvest and recycle water. **NB Recommendation did not reach the 80% threshold needed to be accepted.**
3. Newham Council to prioritise how recycling contributes to the borough's energy/ CO<sub>2</sub> production policies and to incentivise (not penalise) resident involvement.
4. Newham Council planning decisions all to support biodiversity, cleaner air, 'greening' as a central priority. All new buildings to initiate green standards.

### Our response:

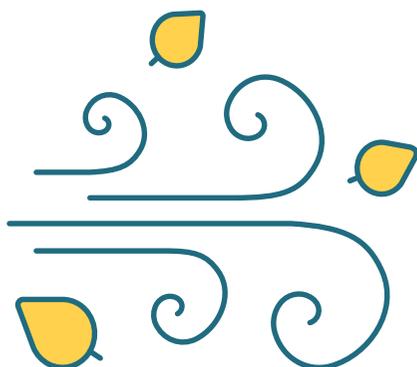
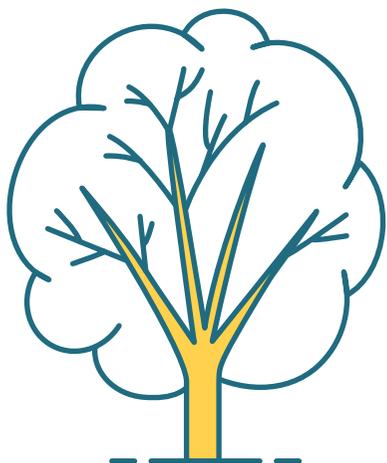
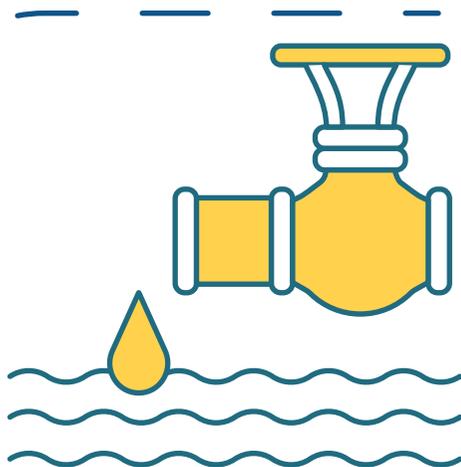
Working towards a safer, greener, fairer, cleaner borough goes hand in hand with our Climate Emergency goals. We share the aspirations and ideas put forward in this section, to improve our surroundings and create a healthier, more attractive environment for the people of Newham.

1. Newham has the largest air quality monitoring network of all the boroughs in London and was the first local authority to provide Nitrogen dioxide pollution monitoring outside all schools (96 Newham primary and secondary schools in total). We have five air quality monitoring stations within the borough and a total of over 130 diffusion tube monitoring points, when combined with monitoring around City Airport. We have invested in 25 mobile air quality sensors which can be moved around the borough for

supplementary monitoring projects. Our aim is to use our local air quality data to educate and identify actions to mitigate the health impacts of high pollution on our residents. We have provided data to identify schools for the 'Healthy School Streets' programme and auditing the most polluted schools first. 59 of our schools are part of the TfL STARS project, which proposes safe travel plans to encourage students and parents to walk and cycle to/from school.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy, 50 Steps to a Healthier Newham, has a specific chapter and steps relating to the importance of improving Air Quality in the borough and also encouraging more active travel, such as cycling and walking. An important part of this is the development of local Air Quality Champions. These are residents who have volunteered to champion ideas and schemes in their communities to support these actions and to help make the behavioural change.

2. We agree with that a sustainable water supply is very important, and agree with the ideas behind this proposal. To that end, water conservation and anti-flooding arrangements will be part of the review of the Local Plan and Flood Risk Management Strategy, and we will undertake to work with residents to encourage the sustainable use of water, including conservation and collection.
3. The Council is expanding its recycling services in the coming two years and will be devising a radically different new approach to waste management, focused on waste minimisation, reuse and recycling for when its new contract begins.
4. Biodiversity and greening is central to our strategies for parks, open spaces and trees for the coming year and beyond. When we review the borough's Local Plan during 2020-21, we will ensure that the borough's planning policies represent best practice in these areas.



## 6. Buildings and Houses

### The Citizens' Assembly recommended:

1. Create a Council level finance strategy to meet demands of Newham residents to fund all changes (e.g. introduction of ground source heat pumps, solar panels, boiler replacement, wind turbine investing by 2021. Residents pay back based on savings made (via Council tax bill) so repayments linked to property (like student loans).
2. In 2020 create (by sortition method) a residents committee to partner, govern and oversee implementation of recommendations (to minimise corruption, increase efficiency and quality of decisions so they are not rashly made).
3. Introduce policies and planning for deep retrofit of all existing buildings and infrastructure to be completed by 2030 to be carbon neutral e.g. roofing spaces – introduce more greenery and solar panels and rainwater collection.
4. Overhaul Council's policy to maximise use of abandoned buildings and brownfield sites for residential housing and community use e.g. Old East Ham Fire Station, Old East Ham Police Station and East Ham Job Centre and 700 homes demolished in Beckton/ Canning Town which are still empty after 7 years.<sup>3</sup>

### Our response:

One of the central commitments of the administration is to address the housing crisis in the borough through building 1,000 new Council homes at social rent levels, alongside accelerating housing delivery through significant regeneration programmes. This is one of the biggest social home building programmes in the whole of London. It gives us a huge opportunity to create genuinely sustainable places to live. Not only this, it is an important economic driver for our Community Wealth Building plans, to create homes and jobs. In addition, we are committed to improving our existing Council stock

through retrofitting, and to taking measures to improve energy efficiency in the private sector.

Central to the plans is the adoption of the 'Passive House standard', a rigorous, internationally recognised house-building standard that focusses on energy efficiency and reducing the energy needed to run a comfortable home. In cases where properties are unable to comply fully with the more ambitious Passive House criteria, the Council is adopting the new Low Energy Building standard.

The Citizens' Assembly proposals in this area are therefore very welcome, and build upon the ideas and policies we are thinking about in order to create sustainable living, in a green environment, tying in with our plans for our public realm and planning to encourage sustainable transport to connect our communities.

In all aspects of the Council's work, we are committed to maximum transparency, greater community participation and to upholding the highest standards of conduct. The establishment of an independent Citizens' Assembly on one of the defining issues of our time is a prime example of this commitment and we fail to understand why the Citizens' Assembly should fear any corruption on the part of the Council, as seems to be suggested in the second recommendation under this theme. We consider that the implication of potential malpractice mars an otherwise excellent report.

1. We very much support the introduction of heat pumps, solar panels, the replacement of boilers and wind turbines. The Council's immediate focus is on our own properties in the short term, because here we can act most quickly. However, we agree that there is a need to improve energy efficiency in terms of other housing, including in the private sector and we will look to develop some ideas around if and how this can be done. The idea of a pay-back system is interesting, and we will task officers to look at this idea and see if it is feasible.



2. In line with our approach to all of the Council's work, we are very much committed to the maximum transparency and to community involvement. We are currently bringing forward proposals to extend participatory democracy through the recommendations of a Democracy and Civic Participation Commission, which the Mayor established last year, and which reports this summer. However, with regard to the Citizen's Assembly's recommendation, in law, it is not permissible for a residents' committee to have oversight or governance over the delivery of Council projects. The Citizens' Assembly on Climate Emergency forms part of the Council's approach to involving residents. We will continue to co-produce initiatives and involve local people and organisations in our response to the climate emergency, and will look at the best avenues to do this, and the idea of a residents' committee is one which we will consider, among other proposals.



3. We very much agree on the need for retrofitting, and this is a priority across all the Council's property – housing, commercial property and community and administrative buildings. During the next year, we will explore the best combination of investments for different types of property and begin to develop our investment programmes. One of the things we are proposing to do in 2020-21 is develop proposals for replacing all boilers with renewable energy alternatives over the medium-term.

4. In terms of abandoned buildings and Brownfield sites, we agree that it is vital to make the most of our own Council owned buildings and to ensure that properties are used in the best and most sustainable way. To this end, the Council is currently undertaking a thorough-going review of its own properties, and how they are used, so that we can make the best use of them for the community

## 7. Conclusions

Our thanks to all the members of the Citizens' Assembly who took the time to be part of this important work, which will be vital in developing our work to mitigate climate change. Whilst some important progress has been made, we know there is much still to be done over the coming months and years, as we make our way towards our 2030 and 2050 targets. In spite of the funding cuts that the Council has experienced in the past ten years, which represent a significant challenge, we are determined to do all we can to stop climate change, and to improve our borough as a healthy, green, attractive and sustainable place for all of our residents to live. We hope that members of the Citizens' Assembly continue to work with us to advance this important agenda, and welcome them to become part of a network of Newham-based Climate Emergency 'champions' whom the Council will continue to work with to promote learning, behaviour change and action across all our communities in the borough.

We know that there remains much more to do as we progress with meeting our 2030 and 2050 Climate Emergency targets, and we are progressing across the following areas:

- Accelerating our investment in properties for sustainable lighting, heating systems, insulation, green energy supplies and solar generation.
- Changing the way we travel, particularly in the post-Covid lockdown environment. We want cleaner air, less pollution and less traffic congestion than existed before. While public transport is reserved for essential travel at present, this is vital. Among other measures, the Council is introducing a wide range of measures to encourage and support cycling and walking.
- Increasing investment in electric vehicle charging points and 'greening' our own vehicle fleet.
- While there are constraints on what we can afford to spend, we are concerned to develop the retrofitting

of buildings. We will focus primarily on Council properties at this stage, while working with residents to access money for retrofitting through schemes such as the Mayor of London's London Power and Solar Together initiatives. Over time, we hope to do more and will lobby central government to empower and fund us and other Councils to do so.

- We will work with our residents to make changes to how we live our lives, both personally and at a community level. This behavioural change is key – through both persuasion, incentives, encouraging business to change, through market solutions and through regulation.
- Through our Community Wealth Building approach, we will make the greening of the economy an absolutely central plank of our plans for the present and the future. This includes giving local people the opportunities to develop skills and acquire new jobs in green technologies, through our Inclusive Economic Strategy, to ensure inclusive, sustainable development, encouraging green investments across the borough.

