Overview & Scrutiny

Skills Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission

All Members of the Skills Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission are requested to attend the meeting of the Commission to be held as follows.

Monday, 25th January 2021

7.00 pm

Until further notice, all Council meetings will be held remotely. To access the meeting please click the link https://meet.google.com/udk-nhdw-sau

Officer Contact:
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Tim Shields
Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

Members:	Cllr Mete Coban (Chair)	Cllr Polly Billington (Vice Chair)
	Cllr Steve Race	Cllr Richard Lufkin
	Cllr Gilbert Smyth	Cllr Sam Pallis

Agenda

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

1	**Apologies for Absence**	**7.00pm**
2	**Urgent Items / Order of Business**	**7.01pm**
3	**Declarations of Interest**	**7.02pm**
4	**Minutes from Previous Meetings and Matter Arising** To agree the minutes of the meetings held on 22nd September 2020 & 23rd November 2020	**7.03pm**

Hackney

5	**Update on Statistics Relating to COVID** The Commission will hear statistics relating to COVID which affect the commission's remit.	**7.05pm**
6	**Cabinet Question Time** The Commission will hear from Cllr. Guy Nicholson & Cllr. Carole Williams in response to questions the commission has posed around three topics: • Town Centres, Vibrancy, & Local Jobs • Skills Gap, Education Needs & Equalities Consequences • Green Initiatives for Business	**7.10pm**
7	**Skills, Economy and Growth 2020/2021 Work Programme** To agree or amend the work programme for the remainder of 2020/21	**8.40pm**
8	**Any Other Business** Commission to raise or hear any other business not included on the agenda.	**8.55pm**

To access the meeting please click in the link https://meet.google.com/udk-nhdw-sau

Access and Information

Getting to the Town Hall

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Accessibility

There are public toilets available, with wheelchair access, on the ground floor of the Town Hall.

Induction loop facilities are available in the Assembly Halls and the Council Chamber. Access for people with mobility difficulties can be obtained through the ramp on the side to the main Town Hall entrance.

Further Information about the Commission

If you would like any more information about the Scrutiny Commission, including the membership details, meeting dates and previous reviews, please visit the website or use this QR Code (accessible via phone or tablet 'app') http://www.hackney.gov.uk/individual-scrutiny-commissions-health-in-hackney.htm

Public Involvement and Recording

Scrutiny meetings are held in public, rather than being public meetings. This means that whilst residents and press are welcome to attend, they can only ask questions at the discretion of the Chair. For further information relating to public access to information, please see Part 4 of the council's constitution, available at http://www.hackney.gov.uk/l-gm-constitution.htm or by contacting Governance Services (020 8356 3503)

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Where a meeting of the Council and its committees are open to the public, the press and public are welcome to report on meetings of the Council and its committees, through any audio, visual or written methods and may use digital and social media providing they do not disturb the conduct of the meeting and

providing that the person reporting or providing the commentary is present at the meeting.

Those wishing to film, photograph or audio record a meeting are asked to notify the Council's Monitoring Officer by noon on the day of the meeting, if possible, or any time prior to the start of the meeting or notify the Chair at the start of the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer, or the Chair of the meeting, may designate a set area from which all recording must take place at a meeting.

The Council will endeavour to provide reasonable space and seating to view, hear and record the meeting. If those intending to record a meeting require any other reasonable facilities, notice should be given to the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting and will only be provided if practicable to do so.

The Chair shall have discretion to regulate the behaviour of all those present recording a meeting in the interests of the efficient conduct of the meeting. Anyone acting in a disruptive manner may be required by the Chair to cease recording or may be excluded from the meeting. Disruptive behaviour may include: moving from any designated recording area; causing excessive noise; intrusive lighting; interrupting the meeting; or filming members of the public who have asked not to be filmed.

All those visually recording a meeting are requested to only focus on recording councillors, officers and the public who are directly involved in the conduct of the meeting. The Chair of the meeting will ask any members of the public present if they have objections to being visually recorded. Those visually recording a meeting are asked to respect the wishes of those who do not wish to be filmed or photographed. Failure by someone recording a meeting to respect the wishes of those who do not wish to be filmed and photographed may result in the Chair instructing them to cease recording or in their exclusion from the meeting.

If a meeting passes a motion to exclude the press and public then in order to consider confidential or exempt information, all recording must cease and all recording equipment must be removed from the meeting room. The press and public are not permitted to use any means which might enable them to see or hear the proceedings whilst they are excluded from a meeting and confidential or exempt information is under consideration.

Providing oral commentary during a meeting is not permitted.

Hackney

Skills Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission	Item No
25ᵗʰ January 2021	**4**
Minutes of Previous Meetings and Matters Arising	

Outline

Attached please find the draft minutes of the meetings held on 22ⁿᵈ September 2020 & 23ʳᵈ November 2020.

Matters Arising (September)

Action at 6.1.12

ACTION:	Overview and Scrutiny Officer & Chair to draft a letter to the Mayor and the cabinet member for Planning, Culture and Inclusive Economy requesting key data, metrics, and an overview for an economic resilience strategy, with a particular focus on strategies for mediating the effects of unforeseen major events akin to the pandemic.

This action is complete, and a response will be discussed in the SEG meeting following the date of response.

Matters Arising (November)

Action at 5.13.2

ACTION:	Scrutiny Officer to arrange meeting between Cllr. Guy Nicholson & Mr. McLaughlin to discuss the shop local initiatives & other avenues of assistance.

This matter is resolved.

Action at 5.17

ACTION:	Chair to speak with commission around the speed of Westminster's COVID response for business and the impact of the bid.

This matter is outstanding.

Action at 8.3

| ACTION:	Commission to follow up with Cabinet Member regarding neighborhood CIL.

This matter is outstanding.

Action

The Commission to approve the minutes or comment on required amendments.

Hackney

London Borough of Hackney **Skills Economy and Growth** **Municipal Year 2020/21** **Date of Meeting: 22/09/2020**	Minutes of the proceedings of the Skills Economy and Growth Commission held at Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, London, E8 1EA

Chair	**Cllr Mete Coban.**
Councillors in Attendance:	**Cllr Gilbert Smyth, Cllr Steve Race, Cllr Richard Lufkin, Cllr Sam Pallis, Cllr Carole Williams.**
Apologies:	**Cllr Polly Billington (Vice Chair).**
Officers in Attendance	**Head of Employment and Skills, Andrew Munk; Strategic Delivery Manager, Simone Van Elk.**
Other People in Attendance	
Members of the Public	None
Officer Contact:	**Timothy Upton** ☎ 0208 3561872 ✉ timothy.upton@hackney.gov.uk

Councillor Mete Coban in the Chair

1   Apologies for Absence

1.1   Cllr Polly Billington sent apologies.

2   Urgent Items/ Order of Business

2.1   No urgent items were raised.

3   Declaration of Interest

3.1   No declarations of interest were declared.

4   Minutes of Previous Meeting

4.1   Minutes were agreed.

RESOLVED:	**That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.**

5   Developing a Skills Offer Fit for Post-COVID-19 Recovery

5.1.1   Chair introduced the item, referring to the council's published Inclusive Economy Strategy, and highlighting the rebuilding of Hackney's economy as a focus for the commission moving forward, drawing particular attention to changing landscape of work amid the current pandemic.

5.1.2   Chair also highlighted that well-being, community aspects, and adult learning had not been sufficiently discussed thus far when thinking of the post-COVID work landscape.

5.1.3   Chair highlighted the importance of discussing the risk of residents and businesses being left behind in the occupational paradigm shift that will follow the conclusion of the COVID-crisis.

5.1.4   Chair introduces Cllr Williams at the first speaker.

5.2.1   Cllr Williams thanks chair for the introduction and agrees that talking about the council's record for employment support is a good place to start, referring to the council's apprenticeship scheme as an example of good work, particularly with their summer recruitment campaign which enjoyed double the numbers of applicants when compared to the previous year.

5.2.2   Cllr Williams recognised that the economy would take a substantial hit owing to the pandemic, and the knock-on effect on jobs will be significant, particularly when the furlough scheme comes to an end.

5.2.3   Cllr Williams advised that businesses would require a high level of support in the coming months as the impact on their businesses becomes clearer.

5.2.4   Cllr Williams highlighted the importance of Hackney's supported-employment schemes for those with special learning needs, which will be crucial to consider in the future in an economy where jobs are increasingly competitive to secure.

5.2.5   Cllr Williams advised that the profound impact on the labour market will continue and said that the impact on ethnic minority communities has been disproportionate. Cllr Williams referred to a report from LSE that highly impacted individuals could be young, black, low-paid, self-employed, or educated to a low level.

5.2.6   Cllr Williams quoted a figure that around one million (1,000,000) workers may not have jobs following their periods of furlough, stating that central government could and should do more to assist them.

5.2.7   Cllr Williams advised that the employment and skills team was reorganised at the start of lockdown to better target and deliver services to residents looking for employment, residents in their final year of education. Cllr Williams highlighted priority areas as: Information, advice and guidance, employment support and job brokerage.

5.2.8   Cllr Williams advised that the publication of the jobs and employment newsletter was moved to weekly publishing rather than fortnightly, advising that this was essential in the first phase of the council's response to the pandemic. Two industries highlighted as having vacancies at that time were in health services and supermarkets.

5.2.9   Cllr Williams advised that the job opportunities in the aforementioned newsletter were in Hackney, across the borough, and also highlighted online training opportunities.

5.2.10 Cllr Williams advised that in September, two key services were integrated: employment & skills, and adult learning. Cllr highlighted that the integration would allow the council to be better placed to implement strategies and deliver enhanced pathways to work, and that work will continue when rebuilding the economy.

5.2.11 Cllr Williams advised that the plans laid out in the previous year were interrupted by the pandemic.

5.2.12 Cllr Williams advised there is currently little data around unemployment levels, but that the ending of the furlough scheme could dramatically change those statistics.

5.2.13 Cllr Williams referenced her offline communications with the commission in terms of her recommendations for the work programme, particularly in terms of the adult-learning offer.

5.2.14 Cllr Williams called for the council to be agile in the face of the emerging challenges affecting the skills offer.

5.3   Chair thanks Cllr Williams for their input and welcomed the Head of Employment and Skills to speak.

5.4.1   Head of Employment and Skills advised the work that's being done around the adult learning offer is at the heart of the inclusive economy strategy & the rebuilding a better Hackney work.

5.4.2   Head of Employment and Skills advised the council is seeing large numbers of residents applying for Universal Credit now and large numbers on furlough, particularly in hospitality and retail sectors.

5.4.3   Head of Employment and Skills advised that it remains to be seen how the numbers applying for Universal Credit will change at the end of the furlough scheme.

5.4.4   Head of Employment and Skills advised that certain sectors such as green jobs may experience growth, but the extent remains to be seen.

5.4.5   Head of Employment and Skills advised that there has been work over summer around the experience of young people in the borough during COVID-19, particularly in terms of employment opportunities, which has aligned with some work done by the Young Futures Commission.

5.4.6   Head of Employment and Skills advised some of the key points were that young people don't see their employment challenges in isolation, some of their mental health challenges and concerns, and the relationship between the two. It was also highlighted that clear career advice and options are important moving forward, and the council and local partners are being looked to in order to provide information around that.

5.4.7   Head of Employment and Skills advised the Hackney's work opportunities, digital services and digital offer is of elevated importance now, noting that is

particularly important to ensure that any advice given is clear in respect of the skills offer and employment pathways.

5.4.8 Head of Employment and Skills advised that there was work done with partners including local further education colleges, voluntary sector organisations, and Job Centre focusing on employability support, online webinars and other digital options, which was all conducted over the summer.

5.4.9 Head of Employment and Skills advised that the work underscored the need for quality partnership working moving forward to further improve that work.

5.4.10 Cllr Williams advised that the council had, as of the previous week, signed a memorandum of understanding with London Met University which starts a new partnership to get younger people involved with employment opportunities across the borough, and that Universities with campuses in the borough are being pargeted for similar memorandums of understanding and partnership working.

5.5.1 Chair thanked Cllr Williams and Head of Employment and Skills and opened the meeting to questions, commencing with Cllr Pallis.

5.5.2 Cllr Pallis thanked the speakers so far for their reports. Cllr Pallis asked where the council sees other growth sectors coming out the pandemic and how the council could support those sectors to ensure that the skills offer capitalises on them, and also around the relationship between the work around adult education and apprenticeships, and resident participation work. Cllr Pallis referred to work conducted by the community development fund and their focus work on Hackney's estates.

5.5.3 Head of Employment and Skills responded that which sectors would experience growth as a result of the pandemic is largely unclear. In terms of how to skill up people ahead of the shift, Head of Employment and Skills pointed out that much of the funding for education is designated for low-level skills, and Hackney will need to gain an understanding and overview of how the skills network looks in the future.

5.5.4 Head of Employment and Skills highlighted that how that skill system is designed will require partnership working between Hackney Council and the learning institutions involved in the skilling up of adults.

5.5.5 Head of Employment and Skills advised that himself and the present strategic delivery manager had attended a meeting earlier in the day about community halls and how the council's property assets can be best used to deliver the skills offer and prepare residents for opportunities. Head of Employment and Skills advised there is an opportunity to reduce the affects of things like digital exclusion by fully utilising such assets. Head of Employment and Skills commented that it was certainly reassuring that these conversations are taking place, whereas in years prior they had not to the same extent.

5.5.6 The present strategic delivery manager advised that the health and care sectors will experience growth and therefore investment, advising that between March and June, most other sectors sadly faced a slump in income and productivity. The delivery manager further stated that the public sector is an increasingly reliable source of employment due to the investment it continually receives.

5.5.7 Cllr Williams advised that many of the conversations she has had with other boroughs have been largely around the health and social care sectors and they are therefore likely to be substantial employers.

5.5.8 Cllr Williams pointed about that there is an expectation on the borough in terms of job provision, particularly as the borough is diverse, and particularly as minorities have been disproportionately affected by the virus. The Cllr advised there is work to be done around supporting residents toward quality employment.

5.5.9 Chair posed a question around how work around business engagement has been impacted by the economic changes during pandemic.

5.5.10 Cllr Williams advised that a significant time and human resource was used in the council's COVID-19 response, and those occupied officers who would usually be doing work with employers have been diverted away from that particular end. Cllr Williams called for a refocusing on work with employers to improve the opportunities available to residents.

5.5.11 Cllr Pallis posed a further question on resident participation, asking whether there is an opportunity to review the current policy in terms of improvements in resident participation.

5.5.12 Cllr Smyth advised that the work post-COVID must be underpinned by wellbeing, and sustainable development goals, and the climate crisis. Cllr Smyth also advised that shorter and more flexible working is likely to increase.

5.5.13 Cllr Smyth observed that in addition to nurses and clinicians, there are other roles within the health sector that will create jobs, using the examples of pharmacists, carers, and health trust managers. Cllr Smyth also advised that the supply and demand roles within the health sector would enjoy growth.

5.5.14 Cllr Smyth advised that crisis response roles, as well as policy roles, would also be on the increase, as well as roles with the green energy sector.

5.5.15 Cllr Smyth expressed hope that the sheer scale of roles that will be on the increase will leave job opportunities more plentiful than some have feared.

5.5.16 Cllr Race posed a question asking to what extent the council is lobbying the government to extend the furlough scheme.

5.5.17 Cllr Coban added a further question, asking whether the letter referenced by Cllr Williams pertaining to extension of the furlough scheme was an indicator of wider council policy.

5.5.18 Cllr Williams that those who signed the letter, including herself, certainly agree that the scheme should be extended to protect jobs.

5.5.19 Cllr Williams advised that two letters in total were signed by several Cllrs and sent to central government urging them to extend the scheme.

5.5.20 Cllr Williams advised that several similar letters had gone out to numerous ministers, but that the letters to ministers do not necessarily get responded to, making collaboration between local authorities even more essential.

5.5.21 Cllr Race posed a question asking to what extent the work around reskilling involves Cllr Nicholson, the cabinet member for Inclusive Economy, pointing out

that the adjusted skills offer for short- & medium-term relief will not necessarily be suitable long term.

5.5.22 Cllr Williams advised that the work out Inclusive Economy Strategy and Building Back Better was undertaken across the cabinet, including Cllr Nicholson, and that a significant amount of the work was undertaken collaboratively.

5.5.23 Cllr Williams also advised that the work carried about by members of the cabinet must take into account the equality priorities of the council.

5.5.24 Chair announced that there would be a five-minute break while he changed locations.

5.5.25 Chair posed a question what the implications are for reskilling, particularly considering the shift towards a greener economy.

5.5.26 Head of Employment and Skills advised there is an opportunity for the public sector to include its work in providing work placements and jobs to residents toward green jobs. He further advised that skill requirements will change as the boroughs other infrastructure becomes greener, giving an example of changing construction methods.

5.5.27 Cllr Williams advised that green-related jobs are a major strand of work within the inclusive economy strategy.

5.5.28 The present strategic delivery manager added that green jobs is also part of the council's the environmental sustainability agenda, clarifying that the work goes beyond sustainability, and how sustainability can feed into all areas of the council, including employment offers.

5.5.30 Chair posed a question how the pandemic and related skills-offer has impacted young people in the borough as well as existing schemes in place to support them. Chair also wanted to discover what part digital exclusion has played in the changing occupational environment in the borough.

5.5.31 Head of Employment and Skills advised that he is working closely with the director of IT to do work around digital exclusion, noting that it its impact is significant. Head of Employment and Skills highlighted that the COVID-19 situation forced staff and residents increasingly online, and that a face-to-face offer for workshops, learning, and other services.

5.5.32 Cllr Williams echoed that a large piece of work around digital exclusion is being carried out, lead by the mayor, and other cabinet members. Cllr Williams advised that pre-COVID, there was already a significant issue with digital exclusion in terms of access to learning and employment opportunities.

5.5.33 Cllr Williams gave an example of trainees on the supported employment program and how the council had to quickly source devices for them for their learning could continue under COVID-19 restrictions.

5.5.34 Cllr Williams expressed a keenness in developing an agile response to e-leaning moving forward, always being mindful of digital exclusion, and advised the council should be reminded that some residents have virtually no online access or capability to use the internet.

5.5.35 Cllr Williams advised that up-skilling of residents to use online services if they can is underway. Cllr Williams gave an example of Caribbean elders who are taking weekly classes online, when previously they were unable to do so.

5.5.36 Cllr Williams expressed the need for balance between moving services online, skilling residents to use online resources, without excluding those who are unable to learn or access those materials.

5.5.36 Cllr Pallis posed a question asking how many council employees are on the furlough scheme, and what the plan is to support them, also around procurement.

5.5.37 Cllr Williams advised that the furlough scheme wasn't designed with public sector workers in mind and therefore no council workers had been furloughed, but that the option for staff to enter redeployment pools is available. Cllr Williams gave the example that where libraries may have been closed, the staff may have been reassigned to the food-response to COVID, but as restrictions ease, they find themselves returning to their usual posts.

5.5.37 Head of Employment and Skills advised there is a lot of ongoing work around procurement, building on the work already done around section 106 agreements, using social value legislation to write robust clauses into contracts to ensure businesses have a framework and plan around local labour. Head of Employment and Skills advised this makes up part of the decisions around which businesses win council contracts.

5.5.37 Chair highlighted that the ever changing COVID-19 situation will see the commissions thoughts move toward clarity as things progress and moved the meeting onto the next item.

5.5.38 Chair thanks Cllr Williams and Head of Employment and Skills for their ongoing work.

6   Skills, Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission 2020/2021 Work Programme

6.1.1   Chair highlighted that the remit of the commission is largely concerns with forward thinking in terms of policy and asked the scrutiny officer for an overview of the current draft of the work programme.

6.1.2   Scrutiny Officer outlined the draft as follows:

        October: Building Back Better Post-Covid-19

        November: Developing the 15-Minute City

        January: Cabinet Question Time

        March: Repurposing Spaces to Support Entrepreneurialism

        April: Nothing scheduled.

6.1.3   Chair opened the meeting to suggestions for the program.

6.1.4   Cllr Lufkin advised that the Emergency Transport Plan will need to be looked at once it has had time to establish itself as a scheme, and mentioned as well that

supporting business and repurposing outside space are important elements to consider.

6.1.5   Cllr Race agreed, adding that the future of town centre strategies in the context of COVID and the changing landscape of work & retail, particularly with shifts in consumer behaviour and the subsequent affect on strategies.

6.1.6   Scrutiny Officer suggested that supporting businesses and repurposing space could be moved up in the programme due to their current relevance.

6.1.7   Chair agreed, adding that a serious conversation around town centres is needed.

6.1.8   Cllr Lufkin agreed than sooner rather than later would be better to look at supporting local businesses and held particular importance to the commission due to the levers they have access to.

6.1.9   Cllr Pallis advised he knows an officer in Westminster who has worked on the Soho scheme to repurpose spaces, and they could be someone to reach out to with an invite to give evidence.

6.1.10   Cllr Race highlight that there is a question around business improvement districts, noting that the Westminster scheme is largely driven by the bid, as was the Covent Garden, however Hackney has less involvement. Cllr Race wanted to know why Hackney doesn't use bids to a greater degree.

6.1.11   Cllr Smyth expressed a desire to speak about the resilience of the local economy in Hackney and how that can be strengthened again future shocks similar to the pandemic - risk assessment, planning, and a resilience strategy.

6.1.12   Chair agreed that a resilience strategy for the local economy is needed and would be something to follow up with a letter to the mayor or Cllr Nicholson asking for key data around what will be lobbied for in such an event.

6.1.13   Chair advised that external stakeholders and residents would be valuable guests to the meeting to gain insight into what will be in demand on the high street.

6.1.14   Cllr Race highlighted a conversation around which entities should have sway and access to public spaces for business. Cllr Race's view that a lot of space that could be utilised for hospitality is anchored towards bars, and gave a further example of London Fields, asking which public spaces are of value and what kind of things they could be used for.

6.1.15   Cllr Pallis asked for an update around the Inclusive Economy Strategy, stating that procurement is a particularly important aspect, and wondering if that strategy itself will return as an item in the Work Programme.

6.1.16   Chair agreed that further detail around the Inclusive Economy Strategy would be useful and asked the Scrutiny Officer to contact the relevant officers with the information that the commission has requested.

6.1.17   Cllr Pallis highlighted the need for the commission to be mindful around which levers they can access and called for metrics around the strategy when it returns as a discussion item.

ACTION:	Overview and Scrutiny Officer & Chair to draft a letter to the Mayor

	and the cabinet member for Planning, Culture and Inclusive Economy requesting key data, metrics, and an overview for an economic resilience strategy, with a particular focus on strategies for mediating the effects of unforeseen major events akin to the pandemic.

7   Any Other Business

6.1   Cllr Lufkin requested an update around the latest unemployment statistics at the commencement of future meetings.

6.2   Chair agreed adding that further statistics would be useful to better frame future discussions.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 8.32 pm

Hackney

Chair	**Cllr Mete Coban**
Councillors in Attendance:	**Cllr Polly Billington, Cllr Steve Race, Cllr Sam Pallis, Cllr Gilbert Smyth, Cllr Richard Lufkin, Cllr Guy Nicholson, Cllr Carole Williams, Cllr John Burke**
Apologies:	**None**
Officers in Attendance:	**Aled Richards, Director of Public Realm, Andy Cunningham, Head of Streetscene**
Other People in Attendance:	**Founder & Owner of the Spread Eagle public house, Luke McLoughlin**
Members of the Public:	**None**
Officer Contact:	**Timothy Upton** 0208 3561872 timothy.upton@hackney.gov.uk

Councillor Mete Coban in the Chair

1 Apologies for Absence

1.1 There were no apologies for absence.

2 Urgent Items/ Order of Business

2.1 No urgent items were raised.

3 Declaration of Interest

3.1 Cllr Race declared himself as a member of the London Cycling Campaign.

3.2 Cllr Lufkin declared himself as a member of the London Cycling Campaign.

3.3.1 Cllr Billington declared herself as a member of the London Cycling Campaign.

3.3.2 Cllr Billington announced she has recently been appointed a member of the independent advisory group for Marston Holdings who have a relevant interest in traffic management.

4 Update on Business Statistics Pertaining to COVID

4.1.1 Chair read out that overall employment rate for London is 76.5% and that the full impact of COVID-19 hasn't impacted this number yet.

4.1.2 In January 12,395 people were in receipt of Universal Credit in Hackney, and 13,125 in February. By September, this figure had risen to 31,522 people. This figure includes those on the furlough scheme who are likely to be out of work when the scheme ends.

4.1.3 Across London, as of 31st August, 557400 employments were furloughed. In Hackney this number was 18,900.

4.1.4 4,659 businesses received either small business grant funds or retail, leisure, and hospitality grant funds.

4.1.5 The discretionary grant fund went to 649 businesses and amounted to £3.4m.

5 Supporting Local Economy & Businesses

5.1.1 Chair introduced the item and speakers, referring to June's SEG meeting, which was largely around economic disruption caused by COVID, and stating that businesses are in a more precarious position now.

5.1.2 Chair advised the purpose of the item was to understand what is happening now, what further is required, and what role can the commission play in that support.

5.1.3 Chair introduced Cllr Nicholson, Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture and Inclusive Economy.

5.2.1 Cllr Nicholson recapped that there just over 22,000 businesses based in the borough, and by far the highest percentage of those businesses are microbusinesses (around 20,000).

5.2.2 Cllr Nicholson advised these businesses are crucial for employment opportunities for residents and to serve as an example of entrepreneurialism for residents to aspire to.

5.2.3 Cllr Nicholson advised that debts are emerging as one issue, clarifying that they're a direct result of the loan promotion brought forward by central government. Cllr Nicholson advised there is real concern around economic recovery and how those debts can be managed and paid back.

5.2.4 Cllr Nicholson also voiced concerns around the cost of reopening businesses when the situation allows, the cost of closing, and the loss of capital due to repeated openings and closings.

5.2.5 Cllr Nicholson advised that rebuilding these businesses and generating enough productivity that there will be a difficult and substantial outlay.

5.2.6 Cllr Nicholson advised there has been a channel shift away from the high street towards online sales and that Hackney is becoming a borough of ecommerce, which is a concern. The council's response thus far has been centred around promotion of online platforms for local high street business to mitigate negative effects highlighting that this approach may not suit all businesses.

5.2.7 Cllr Nicholson advised there is an issue around business rates, stating that the government subsidy protects some businesses against business rate expenditure, but not all.

5.2.8 Cllr Nicholson advised that in the longer term, these business rate issues and their scale moving forward will present challenges.

5.2.9 Cllr Nicholson advised that Brexit is unlikely to be postponed or reversed, and the country is going into Brexit at a difficult economic time, stating that the economy is running 10-11% below the level it was at the same time in the previous year, and that the rebuilding phase will be lengthy.

5.3 Chair introduced Ian Williams, Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources.

5.4.1 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised his presentation would consist of a reminder about the support package pledged by London Borough of Hackney in March 2020, Business Rate Reliefs, Business Grants, Discretionary Grants, and finally Latest Announcements & Second Wave Support.

5.4.2 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised London Borough of Hackney took steps to support charity and voluntary organisations as well as commercial tenants and put through immediately application of some business rate relief.

5.4.3 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that businesses reliant on receiving money from the council were paid more promptly giving the example of within 14 days as opposed to 30 to release those payments.

5.4.4 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that the figure stated in the March press release for relief funds was £100m.

5.4.5 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that to date, the business grants paid out include 3,017 small business grants totalling £30.170m; 1,642 retail hospitality & leisure grants totalling £37.987m; 647 Discretionary grants totalling £3.462m. The total of these being £71.619m across 5,306 businesses.

5.4.6 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources noted Hackney to be one of the few local authorities to discharge all the of the discretionary funds given at short notice.

5.4.7 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources showed a slide of Business Rates relief and notes that £160-165m is the council's yearly business rates bill, highlighting that not only business pay business rates – the council pays itself a portion of these, giving the example of school and GP surgery maintenance.

5.4.8   Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised the support backable so far is just short of £160m, which doesn't include grants specific to wave two support. Ian highlighted that this figure is obviously significantly above the £100m stated in March.

5.5   Chair requested more information on support yet to come.

5.6.1   Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that the council is working through the detailed guidance provided by the government that the council will be launching details of the various, complex schemes soon via the council's website.

5.6.2   Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised more information about how the schemes will operate will become clearer soon and suggested a further, offline meeting with the commission to divulge that information, and asked the floor for questions.

5.7 Chair requested questions be moved to the end of the item and introduced the next speaker, Mr. Luke McLaughlin, founder & owner of the Spread-Eagle Pub in Homerton.

5.8.1   Mr. McLaughlin advised that the business was established in 2017, employs approx. 20 staff, and has a turnover of more than £1m pre-COVID, of that 35% is food, 65% is drink. Mr. McLaughlin also advised the business had a midnight licence during the week and a 2am licence Friday and Saturday.

5.8.2   Mr. McLaughlin advised that the main issue is cashflow to pay landlords and suppliers, and it has been a major issue, and is expected to be an issue over the coming months.

5.8.3   Mr. McLaughlin advised that adapting the businesses to COVID restrictions has been time consuming and costly.

5.8.4   Mr. McLaughlin advised that greater numbers of staff are needed for table service, adding to the cashflow issue.

5.8.5   Mr. McLaughlin advised that stocking the business with food and alcohol has been more challenging, and that the looming exit from the EU is likely to exacerbate the cost and availability of items.

5.8.6   Mr. McLaughlin advised that the yearly rent is £54k, and that 9 months are outstanding on the agreement. The business is negotiations with the landlord.

5.8.7   Mr. McLaughlin advised in terms of support rendered thus far, the business has received the rates-based grant that was well-received initially, but that, along with reserves in the bank was spent within a matter of months to keep the business going.

5.8.8   Mr. McLaughlin advised that the holiday from the repayment of that from January to March which has been deferred to next year but will total £6k.

5.8.9   Mr. McLaughlin advised there has been a reduction in VAT paid on food but that the reduction doesn't extend to alcohol.

5.8.10 Mr. McLaughlin advised that business rates had been waivered and expressed thanks to London Borough of Hackney for that.

5.8.11 Mr. McLaughlin advised that the pause of evictions comes to an end by the end of December and that the necessity to repay amounts of rent will be pressing at that stage.

5.8.12 Mr. McLaughlin advised that the business is eligible for grants equalling £2k for being closed in November, but that sum is lost in supplies of food and alcohol that needed to be disposed of and therefore insufficient for the closing and opening of the business. The total figure for that is around £4k.

5.8.13 Mr. McLaughlin advised the business has also taken out a £50k bank loan and that such lines of credit may be difficult to extend under the circumstances, and that long term rate relief could help alleviate the need for further loans.

5.8.14 Mr. McLaughlin advised he'd spoken with other landlords in preparation for the meeting and terms of support stating again that cashflow is the biggest issue and any payments to shore that up are appreciated. It was also advised that commercial rent payments are a source of pressure that need to be alleviated somehow.

5.8.15 Mr. McLaughlin advised that subsidising salaries of additional staff required to COVID would be well-received.

5.8.16 Mr. McLaughlin advised that further guidance around where and how to access funds to assist would be welcome.

5.8.17 Mr. McLaughlin advised that council-backed advertisements to spend money locally would be very welcome, and would a relaxation of licencing regulations, giving the example of increased space for patrons to drink outside the premises during summertime.

5.8.18 Mr. McLaughlin advised that many premises had to apply for a takeaway license, and extended opening hours to serve brunch, and that increased flexibility would be beneficial.

5.9 Chair thanked Mr. McLaughlin for the presentation before opening the floor to questions.

5.10.1 Cllr Race posed a question to Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources regarding whether most of the funding for various financial support came largely from central government rather than from London Borough of Hackney, and what the council did that was better or different, and what worked and what didn't in terms of allocating the funds provided.

5.10.2 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that London Borough of Hackney was very quick in terms of paying out rants and applying business rates reliefs. It was also advised that his team worked with Cllr Nicholson's & the Mayor's teams to implement rent-free periods for voluntary and charity organisations, flexibilities for 300+ commercial tenants, and close partnership work with them continues.

5.10.3 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that payments where the council buys services of businesses were sent more quickly than usual to support cashflow.

5.10.4 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that in terms of lessons learned, that in many cases the people who pay the business rates

doesn't always match the name of the establishment to which the payment relates. There is still a number paying in cash as opposed to direct debit and therefore took longer than it usually would the circumstances.

5.10.5 Cllr Nicholson added that the council also suspended commercial waste charges for businesses, storage charges and licensing charges for street traders, highlighting that the range of support packages was varied by necessity.

5.10.6 Cllr Nicholson also advised that the spending that's been done will have wide reaching implications for the council's future work.

5.10.7 Cllr Race noted that he's raised several cases for struggling businesses in his ward, and thanked Ian and Cllr Nicholson for the quick response to those enquiries.

5.11.1 Chair asked a question around the council's flexibility in terms of grant allocation.

5.11.2 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised the next wave of support from central government is quite prescriptive but that any flexibility will be utilised to maximum capacity. It was noted there isn't total autonomy but speed in allocation is where London Borough of Hackney can do best to maximise the benefits of the funding.

5.12.1 Cllr Billington requested an estimate of the difference between how much money that's been allocated by central government for grants, and how much support London Borough of Hackney has rendered without prescription from central government, highlighting the importance of knowing the ratio & how much flexibility may be required to aid microbusinesses moving forward.

5.12.2 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that of the reliefs rewarded about £3.5m was awarded to large high street supermarkets, and that the council is working towards quantifying the costs that haven't been occurred for things like reduced waste collection and the additional expenditure incurred by supporting businesses and services.

5.12.3 Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that as far as proportionality goes, it would be prudent to look at the budget of the service that's borne the brunt of losing that income rather than the total funding as broader picture.

5.13.1 Chair posed a question to Cllr Nicholson asking for a response to Mr. MacLoughlin's suggestion of a shop local advertising initiative.

5.13.2 Cllr Nicholson advised the council has gone live with a promotional vehicle to promote residents as of the last week called Love Hackney, Shop Local and contains a set of objectives which would be better divulged to Mr. McLoughlin in an offline meeting for the scrutiny officer to arrange.

5.14.1 Cllr Pallis posed a question around local highstreets asking how attrition of commercial units toward residential units can be mitigated by Council-led work.

5.14.2 Cllr Nicholson advised that Hackney is in a fortunate position in that the local plans and related policy only allows the change of commercial space use under exceptional circumstances, and generally units are replaced like for like as far

as their purpose goes. It was also advised that the priories of the administration are to protect the commerce and vibrancy of town centres in a way that should prevent drastic erosion of commercial units to residential.

5.15.1 Cllr Race posed a question around Westminster's bid asking whether the bid was instrumental in the speed of Westminster making changes to support its local businesses, and by extension whether Hackney's response could've been slowed by the absence of a bid.

5.15.2 Cllr Nicholson advised that there is no formal bid based in Hackney and that the administration takes the view that correct and efficient business support as well as public realm support is of paramount importance, and that the focus of creating area-based initiatives such as the Hackney Business Network and increased partnership working have thus far come ahead of Business Improvement Districts or the like.

5.16.1 Cllr Race also asked whether London Borough of Hackney would re-examine its town centre policies considering the changing landscape of high street use.

5.16.2 Cllr Nicholson advised the Mayor's message around flexible licencing was around maintained public health but having said that several initiatives were brought forward around the borough to assist businesses in utilising the public realm, citing the closing of streets on a one-by-ne basis as an example of that. It was highlighted too that at this stage, a right answer isn't clear due to the rapid change taking place.

5.16.3 Cllr Race advised that the commission ought to look further at the speed of Westminster's response to COVID-related business support compared to Hackney's.

5.17 Chair recommended that the conversation around the speed of Westminster's response take place offline and asked the scrutiny officer to minute as an action.

ACTIONS:	Scrutiny Officer to arrange meeting between Cllr. Guy Nicholson & Mr. McLaughlin to discuss the sop local initiatives & other avenues of assistance. Chair to speak with commission around the speed of Westminster's COVID response for business and the impact of the bid.

6 Low Traffic Neighbourhood Scheme

6.1 Chair introduced the item and the speakers.

6.2.1 Cllr Burke opened by highlighting the importance of the commission looking at this topic, nothing that it hadn't thus far been openly discussed in depth.

6.2.2 Cllr Burke advised that the history of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN's) is far reaching in Hackney, and the scheme is not the first of its kind, yet noting they've been absent in the borough for the prior 30 years.

6.2.3 Cllr Burke advised three new low-traffic neighbourhoods have been established: Hoxton West, London Fields, and Hackney Downs. They are monitored daily.

6.2.4 Cllr Burke advised that since 2009 the number of miles driven on London's roads has increased by 3.6b. It was highlighted too that while the numbers driven has increased, particularly residentially, that the number of miles on main roads has fallen. The stated reason, though multi-faceted, was given as the 10-year fuel duty freeze, the reduced cost of operating vehicles, finance packages that make it easier to own large vehicles and wayfinding technology making residential detours more viable.

6.2.5 Cllr Burke advised LTNs are an important tool to ensure that overloaded residential streets are not overlooked by policymakers.

6.2.6 In reference to online shopping increasing the use of residential roads, Cllr Burke advised that LTN's send the message that London Borough of Hackney will not tolerate the use of residential roads for the purposes of Silicon Valley corporations adding that the streets themselves were not designed for such use.

6.2.7 Cllr Burke noted that prior to LTN's, 120 modal filters were rolled out across the borough, but that they were not strategic and failed to deliver transformative changes that were required. As a result, the borough has changed the approach of delivery to these modal filters by developing highly engineered LTN's.

6.2.8 Cllr Burke stated that LTN's are an important factor in addressing congestion and air pollution as well as road safety. It was clarified that LTN's are not all that is required, and that further action would be required new road-user pricing in order to further drive down the negative effects of congestion.

6.2.9 Cllr Burke stated that it was not his belief that residents of main roads would be benefited in any way by continuing to allow free access to all motor vehicles through residential streets. It was highlighted that policy decisions around main road networks will be necessary.

6.2.10 Cllr Burke advised that discouraging traffic in peak times, increasing cycle storage, segregating bike lanes from main roads, and improved hours of operation for bus lanes and infrastructure has been put in place to further aid issues caused by congestion.

6.3 Chair thanks Cllr Burke and introduced the next speakers, Aled Richards, Director of Public Realm and Andy Cunningham, Head of Streetscene.

6.4.1 Director of Public Realm pointed out the emergency transport plan as a key document which also addresses the secretary of the state's expectation that local authorities will roll out initiatives across the borough to encourage active travel like walking and cycling.

6.4.2 Head of Streetscene referred to a provided paper under agenda item 6D which sets out the summary and outlines the emergency transport plan. There is a table (table 1) with a detail work programme of delivery of schemes.

6.4.3 Head of Streetscene highlighted that the emergency transport plan is meant to supplement the wider Hackney Transport Strategy and not replace it.

6.4.4 Head of Streetscene advised that most of the schemes are still in the consultation period, that responses from residents are being captured, and that more permanent decisions need to be made.

6.4.5   Head of Streetscene advised that a significant and varied selection of information is being looked at for the consultation processes. The continuous traffic count gathered by Transport for London (TFL) was cited as a source of information, and Head of Streetscene advised that data would continue to be useful as the economy starts to reopen following COVID.

6.4.6   Head of Streetscene notes use of roads my emergency services and number of motor incidents will also be monitored.

6.5   Chair thanked Head of Streetscene & Director of Public Realm for their contributions to the meeting and opened the floor to questions.

6.6.1   Cllr Lufkin asked whether LTN's could be used to increase trading space for businesses should licencing be relaxed, as mentioned in item 5.

6.6.2   Cllr Burke responded by saying the term reimagination of public realm is interesting, and that in principle he supports it, but noted that the dense population and risk of anti-social behaviour are important factors to consider when expanding trading spaces for businesses.

6.6.3   Head of Streetscene added that there is a process within the council to look at applications from businesses wishing to trade on the public highway. One of the considerations is how much space it would utilise and what products and services would be available.

6.6.4   Head of Streetscene pointed out that emergency vehicle access must be considered when doing this to ensure that the space available to them is not reduced.

6.7   Chair read a comment from Director of Public Realm that was entered to the chat function that said there has been partnership working between council officers and businesses on this issue.

6.8.1   Chair posed a question around the level of coordination between Cllr Nicholson, businesses in the borough, and understanding the needs of businesses and LTN's – whether consultation with business has happened or is ongoing.

6.8.2   Cllr Burke responded that some of the perceived negative effects that LTN's on small businesses are in some cases false and suggested that if its agreed that town centres are seriously over-capacity that it cannot also be true that LTN's are harmful to the public & businesses. It was also said that shops and services accessible by bike or walking tend to be visited more frequently and enjoy a larger spend per square meter when compared to consumers travelling by car.

6.8.3   Cllr Burke advised that consultation is an ongoing process and advised that the only concerns from businesses that he has received via Cllr Nicholson are not about LTN's and their impact, but about how to use road closures to establish or increase outdoor trade. Cllr Burke acknowledged that this doesn't mean that all businesses support the scheme and gave the example of loading and loading as a potential source of issue.

6.8.4   Head of Streetscene gave an example of London Fields LTN's and certain issues that occurred for businesses stating that there were meetings with local businesses to ensure that any issues with the design of that LTN could be actively addressed.

6.9.1 Cllr Smyth asked whether London Borough of Hackney is looking at whether the pollution levels on main roads will be monitored as a test of success of LTN's, suggesting that the increase of pollution on main roads is a likely outcome of LTN schemes.

6.9.2 Cllr Burke responded that the literature available suggests that levels of traffic evaporation around 15% can be expected, but that people generally eliminate unnecessary journeys rather than simply driving a different route, and that use of the borough as a pass-through travel route is being discouraged.

6.9.3 Cllr Burke added that 50% of traffic is comprised of private car journeys, and 35% of that 50% are under 2km, and stated that the pressing challenges of the government's decarbonisation commitment render the change a necessary one.

6.9.4 On pollution, Cllr Burke advised that pollution is being monitored and that pollutions levels did not seem to be affected by the pandemic as one may expect.

6.10.1 Cllr Race asked about the impact on residents and how the equalities impact assessment was carried out, and how the introduction of the LTN's have been received by residents within them.

6.10.2 Cllr Burke advised the equalities assessment details are contained in the emergency plan under section 7, and that the LTN schemes are too new to definitively say what most residents within the LTN zones think and feel about the change.

6.10.3 Head of Streetscene advised the equality impact assessment was done at a high level when developing the transport strategy, and a separate one was undertaken for the emergency transport plan. They are carried out as a necessity when drafting such plans and there has been no evidence found thus far to suggest any minority groups are disproportionately disadvantaged, but the process is assessing equality of the application of the scheme it itself ongoing as an element of the reviews, and that the document is a live one.

6.11.1 Cllr Pallis posed a question to Cllr Burke asking whether a reduction in the controlled parting hours would likely see in increase in short car journeys, displacement parking and air pollution, and therefore undermine the benefits of LTN's.

6.11.2 Cllr Burke advised that the decisions around controlled parking hours lie with council officers on the basis of deferred responsibility, adding that Cllrs must not intervene in those officer-level decisions on a moral basis.

6.11.3 Cllr Burke advised that many residents requested a curtailing of the controlled parking hours and that new suggested hours have been shortened and that controlled parking is an unsung hero in terms of the reduction of pollution by discouraging short term car journeys.

6.11.4 Cllr Burke added that if the shortened hours prove harmful to residents of any given ward that is highly likely that officers will reassess the parking in those areas.

6.12.1 Cllr Pallis asked what the average bus speed was prior to LTN's and stated that the unknown impact of LTN's on bus speeds may mean its wise to pause schemes build around reducing bus lanes.

6.12.2 Head of Streetscene advised that the figures were not available at that exact moment, but the data is available and show a dip in bus speeds across the borough, but that it isn't disproportionate with other boroughs. It was stated it is too early to conclusively say LTN's have brought about changes in bus times as busses pull over and stop if they fin themselves ahead of schedule.

6.12.3 Head of Streetscene advised that he sees no reason why programs should be halted while awaiting further data as the data is so unclear at this stage.

6.12.4 Cllr Burke advised that busses has generally decreased their speeds across London over the prior decade and so its clear LTN's are not the only factor that may be influencing this.

6.12.5 Chair suggested that it would be necessary to look at the issue again once the data is clearer and richer down the line.

6.13.1 Chair posed a question on whether there is further work to be done in ensuring that the scheme is inclusive.

6.13.2 Head of Streetscene advised that it isn't a mere box-ticking exercise, that the assessment was carried out prior to the scheme's implementation, it was carried out at a high strategic level, and it continually assessed and live.

6.13.3 Chair clarified that his question was to echo the concerns of residents rather than to answer his own concern.

6.13.4 Cllr Burke advised that there is no ulterior incentive for London Borough of Hackney to implement LTN schemes, and that the process has been taxing to the point where it wouldn't have been undertaken if not necessary to achieve the wider goals of the borough, and that the assessment of the scheme will run concurrently with the scheme.

6.14 Chair thanked the speakers and drew the item to a close.

7 Minutes from Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

7.1 This item was not raised due to time and will be raised in the following meeting on the 25th of January.

8 Letters of Reply – Definition of Key Workers

8.1 Chair opened the floor to comments on the letter received.

8.2.1 Cllr Pallis asked how other local authorities are approaching the definition of key workers.

8.2.2 Cllr Williams advised the approach is based on the Mayor of London's approach and that Cllr Pallis would follow up with her offline.

8.3 Chair requested scrutiny officer include as an action for the commission to follow up with cabinet member on the neighbourhood CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy).

RESOLVED:	Commission noted and agreed upon the reply.

ACTIONS:	Commission to follow up with Cabinet Member regarding neighbourhood CIL.

9 Skills, Economy and Growth 2020/2021 Work Programme

9.1.1 Chair signposted the next meeting as the Cabinet Question time.

9.1.2 Chair advised they would circulate a plan around future meetings and engagement plans.

9.1.3 Chair requested that if there were comments from commission that they be made offline.

10 Any Other Business

10.1.1 Cllr Smyth directed Mr. McLoughlin toward government advice regarding negotiating with landlords about rent.

10.1.2 Chair advised they could pickup issues around utilisation of outdoor space with Cllr Race.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9.14 pm

Hackney

Skills Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission	Item No
25th January 2021 **Update on Business Statistics Relating to Covid**	**5**

Outline

During the previous Skills Economy and Growth meeting held on 22nd September, the Commission requested an update around certain business-related figures at the outset of all subsequent meetings to better frame the discussion to follow.

There are no invited guests for this segment, and the statistics will be read out by the chair.

Action
The Commission to note the statistics ahead of the evening's discussions.

Hackney

Skills Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission	Item No
25th January 2021 **Cabinet Member Question Time:** **Planning, Culture and Inclusive Economy** **Employment, Skills and Human Resources**	**6**

Outline
In the municipal year, the Commission holds question time sessions with the Cabinet and Senior Officers to ask questions about performance and decision-making within the Council related to their portfolio areas.

Invited Guests
Councillor Guy Nicholson has lead responsibility for: Planning, Culture and Inclusive Economy.

Councillor Carole Williams has lead responsibility for: Employment, Skills and Human Resources

The questions submitted in advance covered:

- Town Centres, Vibrancy and Local Jobs
- Skills Gap, Education Needs and Equalities Consequences.
  A report from the University of Cambridge titled "The Digital Divide: what does the research tell us?" is referenced (See 6B)
- Green Initiatives for Business
  A report from the Green Alliance titled "The Local Climate Challenge: A New Partnership Approach" is referenced (See 6C)

Action
The Commission to hold a Q&A session with Cllrs Nicholson & Williams about the services and decisions within their portfolios.

The Digital Divide: what does the research tell us?

Introduction

Good morning everyone. I'm Dr Gemma Burgess from the University of Cambridge. We partner with CHS Group on the New Horizons Programme. Thank you to the Cambridgeshire Digital Partnership for inviting me to speak today. I have decided not to use powerpoint today since we are using this online format, but just to talk to you. I will however make what I say available with links to all the sources I refer to. And in the spirit of digital inclusivity, I have only referred to online publicly available resources, nothing is behind an academic paywall.

I run the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR). We are a research centre in the Department of Land Economy at the University of Cambridge. It is our 30th anniversary this year, marking 30 years of research, policy evaluation and analysis.

Our research is dedicated to understanding and tackling social and spatial inequalities. Housing and planning sit at the heart of many wider social issues. We are an academic centre but our purpose is to carry out research that is relevant for policy and practice. We aim to provide an evidence base for making positive change with a view to reducing inequality, improving housing conditions and improving housing affordability.

Why digital exclusion and housing?

In my view digital exclusion is a new form of social deprivation, exacerbated by and contributing to existing lines of inequality and poverty, and as the world gets 'smarter', the divide gets wider. Cambridgeshire's highest-scoring reason for deprivation is housing affordability and homelessness. In our work we grapple with questions such as how do we prevent homelessness, how do we improve housing security, affordability? But we are also involved in work around digital innovation, in how we develop inclusive smart cities. For me, digital exclusion is a crucial topic that needs more attention.

What is digital exclusion, what is the digital divide?

The digital divide is the gap between those who have access to the latest technology and those who do not[1].

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[1] https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zkhykqt/revision/5

In an increasingly digital age, those who are not engaging effectively with the digital world are at risk of being left behind[2].

So much of our day to day life requires digital connectivity. This includes many jobs in today's places of work, the digital world is now a very important economic driver. We need digital connectivity to find information and to access goods and services, and, importantly, to connect with and communicate with others.

However, what we are seeing is an increasing divide between those who have access to information and communications technology and those who do not, giving rise to inequalities in access to opportunities, knowledge, services and goods[3].

Access to the internet is one component of digital exclusion. This tends to be shaped by having sufficient income to access the internet and buy the necessary equipment, by geography as we know that network coverage and high-speed broadband can vary greatly depending on where you live and there tends to be a rural/urban divide, and by IT literacy, knowing how to use technology.

But rather than think of a binary digital divide, it is perhaps better to think about digital inclusion and exclusion, a spectrum of digital engagement from internet access, to skills, to really being able to make use of online resources for beneficial outcomes.

Essential Digital Skills

It is more than just having internet access. The Department for Education produced guidance in wide consultation which states that there are five categories of Essential Digital Skills for life and work[4]:

1. Communicating - sending a message via email or online messaging service or making comments and sharing information online.
2. Handling information and content - using a search engine to look for information, finding a website

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[2] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/articles/exploringtheuksdigitaldivide/2019-03-04

[3] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/articles/exploringtheuksdigitaldivide/2019-03-04

[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework

3. Transacting - buying items or services from a website or buying and installing apps on a device
4. Problem solving - verifying sources of information online or solving a problem with a device or digital service using online help
5. And running through all of this being safe and legal online

They also produced guidance on national standards for essential digital skills[5]

So what is the scale of problem and who does it affect?

Digital exclusion is not just a generational issue. Even before COVID-19, digital exclusion was a reality for a fifth of the UK's population of all ages[6]. In 2018, 8% of people in the UK (4.3 million people) were estimated to have zero basic digital skills (being unable to do any of the activities described in the five basic digital skills). A further 12% (6.4 million adults) were estimated to only have limited abilities online (missing at least one of the basic digital skills)[7]. Although there is a pattern of declining numbers of people lacking digital skills over time it is estimated that 7.9 million people will still lack digital skills in 2025[8].

Of the eight million in the UK who don't use the internet, 90% suffer from other kinds of economic or social disadvantages. They are also more likely to be in the lowest income bracket and/or be disabled with long-standing health conditions[9].

The likelihood of having access to the internet from home increases along with income, such that only 51%[10] of households earning between £6000-10,000 had home internet access compared with 99% of households with an income of over £40,001.

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[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-standards-for-essential-digital-skills

[6] https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking_with_us/whats-happening/lb-consumer-digital-index-2019-report.pdf

[7] https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking_with_us/whats-happening/LB-Consumer-Digital-Index-2018-Report.pdf

[8] https://cebr.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/The-economic-impact-of-digital-skills-and-inclusion-in-the-UK_Final.pdf

[9] https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/tackling-the-digital-divide

[10] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/articles/exploringtheuksdigitaldivide/2019-03-04

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The link between poverty and digital exclusion is clear: if you are poor, you have less chance of being online.

Digitisation and covid

Two things have happened as the pandemic has taken hold. One is the increased pace of digitisation, and the second is increased poverty and hardship.

The pandemic and its subsequent lockdowns has shown clearly that we are not all in the same boat. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has highlighted how households that were already struggling have been pushed deeper into poverty, how health and housing inequalities make some people more vulnerable than others. A study of the impact on low income households found that 8 in 10 respondents to their online survey reported a significant deterioration in their living standards due to a combination of falling income and rising expenditure. Families who responded in July and early August were less optimistic about their financial situation than those who responded in May or June[11]. This report really highlights the multitude of negative impacts the pandemic is having on families, particularly low income households, the findings and the testimonies within it are powerful so if your interested do look it up. It really shows the shock experienced by people encountering the benefits system for the first time.

To quote from the report 'Poverty in the pandemic: the impact of coronavirus on low-income families and children':

Most of the families we interviewed are already living close to the poverty line. Therefore, it only takes a relatively small fall in income or rise in living costs to push them into poverty and debt. For the minority of households who were previously on relatively high earnings and are now reliant on the social security system, the income shock has been very sudden and severe. How these families cope in future will depend on how long the crisis persists[12].

Parents told us that their children were struggling with online learning because they could not afford the technology, or that the technology they had was broken.

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[11] https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/Poverty-in-the-pandemic.pdf

[12] https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/Poverty-in-the-pandemic.pdf

Coming to my other point, the pandemic has hugely increased the rate of digitisation. Since the onset of social distancing in the UK, some semblance of normality – or at least of productivity – has been possible to maintain only because of the networks of digital technologies and platforms already in place. Lockdown has certainly served to highlight our reliance on virtual means of staying in touch. For some, the new norm might mean running a Zoom meeting from a makeshift home office, accessing education online and having a virtual GP appointment.

Increased working, learning and interacting online during the pandemic has widened the gap for those who lack digital skills or access. For the 22% of people in the UK who lack digital skills or access to appropriate technology[13], this increased shift towards the digital world has excluded them yet further.

Why do we need to tackle digital divide?
Why does digital exclusion matter?
Internet use and digital connectivity now pervades every aspect of daily life.

The Centre for Economics and Business Research have identified five areas in which individuals who acquire basic digital skills are able to benefit[14] and from which people on the wrong side of the digital divide are excluded:

1. Earnings benefits: these relate to increased earnings of between 3% and 10% through acquiring digital skills.

2. Employability benefits: this reflects the improved chances of finding work for someone who is unemployed and an increased likelihood that someone who is inactive will look for work.

3. Retail transaction benefits: shopping online has been found to be 13% cheaper on average than shopping in-store.

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[13] https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking_with_us/whats-happening/lb-consumer-digital-index-2019-report.pdf

[14] https://cebr.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/The-economic-impact-of-digital-skills-and-inclusion-in-the-UK_Final.pdf

4. Communication benefits: basic digital skills can enable people to connect and communicate with family, friends and the community 14% more frequently.

5. Time savings: these relate to the time saved by accessing government services and banking online rather than in person, estimated to be about 30 minutes per transaction.

In terms of earnings and employability benefits, the Industrial Strategy[15] identified Artificial Intelligence and Data as an important challenge and opportunity for creating good quality jobs and driving economic growth. In 2016 it was estimated that within the next 10 to 20 years, 90% of jobs will require some sort of digital skills[16] and in the Lloyds Bank research, half of those online indicated that the internet had helped them find a job[17]. This highlights that the digitally excluded will be increasingly at a disadvantage in the employment market.

New Horizons
Coming back to housing, and to the New Horizons programme. The programme is aimed at the people who are most vulnerable to running up rent arrears, to not managing their debts, to facing the prospect of a downward spiral towards homelessness. Increasing people's digital skills has proved crucial to getting them back on track.

New Horizons provides one-to-one coaching designed to help individuals to manage their money, get closer to the job market, and overcome digital exclusion. We've carried out research to understand the immediate impact of the coaching and most recently with people some time after they finished the coaching, to understand the longer-term impacts. There are a number of areas in which former New Horizons participants noted continued benefits of the coaching over a year after they finished the programme.

Most were no longer in debt, and we know that clearing debt often has a positive impact on people's mental wellbeing.

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[15]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf

[16]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/499031/Review_of_Publicly_Funded_Digital_Skills_Qualifications_2016_FINAL.pdf

[17] https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking_with_us/whats-happening/LB-Consumer-Digital-Index-2018-Report.pdf

Generally New Horizons had had a positive impact on their mental health. The mental health benefits of the coaching have been shown to be life-changing in some cases. One interviewee credited New Horizons with saving his life, as he felt that his coach had helped him to envisage a better future, and put his life back 'on track'. To quote from an interview:

"To be honest, as deep as it may sound, I don't think I would still be here if it wasn't for the help that I received from New Horizons. I really don't think I would have made it this far... [It's helped me] massive amounts." – Fergus

Improvements in their level of confidence was an area in which many former New Horizons participants saw significant benefits. For some interviewees, the programme had given them the confidence to leave their house, or to learn new skills by enrolling in courses. For some, the coaching had left them feeling confident enough to seek out volunteering opportunities or employment.

New Horizons provided participants with valuable moral support at a time in their lives when they really needed it. Some interviewees indicated that their coach helped them to feel better about themselves and their ability to make changes in their lives. Former participants often commented that they never felt judged by their New Horizons coach. They therefore felt able to ask them any questions without feeling 'stupid'. This is a key positive feature of New Horizons, as people often described their fear of feeling judged when accessing other services.

Several former New Horizons participants had continued to use the budgeting advice given to them by their coach. This can help them to keep their finances in order, helping them to avoid overspending where possible. Knowing where and when expenditures are being made can also afford former New Horizons participants peace of mind, and a sense of control over their money.

Most of the former New Horizons participants interviewed for this study were able to get online and had some level of computer skills after taking part in the programme. Many now have access to wi-fi and internet-enabled devices at home. Being online had several benefits for former participants, including:

- o Being able to search for better deals online
- o Being able to manage finances more easily via online banking
- o Having easier access to job-searching facilities

- o Being able to easily communicate with friends, family, and support groups (particularly during the coronavirus lockdown)
- o Having a confidence boost as a result of learning a new skill, and gaining an improved sense of their own digital capability

'Polly's' case is indicative of the heightened importance which digital means of communication have taken on in 2020 as a result of the coronavirus lockdown and social distancing measures. For those who have access to the internet at home, digital skills can provide an essential lifeline. To quote from an interview:

> *"The internet is a lifeline for me. Because I used to drink at the drop of a hat, and to go back to that – so I'm abstinent – to go back to that, you know, I would die. I've been suicidal. So putting a person that has mental health issues like myself into a disconnected state, you know, it really trips me out. So definitely, my ability to feel a certain confidence of using the computer. Yeah, I absolutely had to [learn to use the internet]." – Polly*

How do we tackle the digital divide?

Today is part of the solution and I very much welcome the Cambridgeshire Digital Partnership. We need practical solutions at every spatial scale from national to very local. We need to raise awareness and understanding of the nature of digital exclusion and its consequences.

We need to work together to make sure we don't leave the digitally excluded behind as we become a highly digitised society. We must prioritise the people and places who have, in some cases for many years, been left behind.

Some of this requires more action on the part of national government and needs national investment. The government's ambition to "level up" the nation by providing next-generation fibre broadband to every home by 2025 is a great ambition, but is currently expected to be missed[18], and the UK is lagging far behind other economies on broadband penetration. Full fibre broadband coverage stands at just 14% across the country as a whole,

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[18] https://www.smf.co.uk/full-fibre-broadband-for-all-target-at-risk-without-major-reform/

according to the Social Market Foundation, who warned that the country has a "mountain to climb" to hit the target for universal coverage.

The Internet Access (Children Eligible for Free School Meals) Bill 2019-21, is a Bill to place a duty on the Secretary of State to ensure that all children eligible for free school meals have a broadband connection and facilities to access the internet at home; and for connected purposes. It is a Private Members' Bill and was presented to Parliament on Monday 15 June 2020. The next stage for this Bill, the Second reading, is scheduled to take place on Friday 30 October 2020. Great. But will it be successful, how will it be operationalised, and how long will it take to reach vulnerable children?

And fast broadband alone is not enough to create digital inclusion. There are others, such as the Good Things Foundation, who will speak during this conference about the work they are doing to tackle the digital divide, and who will share with you their thoughts on what needs to change to achieve this.

We need to remember that digital exclusion is a feature of poverty.

We need to put tackling poverty at the heart of our post-pandemic recovery. We should make the benefits system less punitive. Increasing benefits, particularly for families, will help to alleviate the worst stresses of poverty, giving people the 'mental bandwidth' to tackle learning new skills. On the 30th September the Joseph Rowntree Foundation wrote a collective letter to the Chancellor supported by many organisations urging him to make the temporary £20 a week increase to the standard allowance of Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit permanent from April, as well as extend the same uplift to ESA, Income Support and JSA. Their modelling suggests that if the uplift ends as planned in April 2021, 700,000 more people will be pulled into poverty, including 300,000 children, and 500,000 more of those already in poverty will be pushed into deep poverty (more than 50% below the poverty line)[19].

We need equal access to the internet across all geographies and social groups. If access to the internet is a universal entitlement, this means that access cannot be left to the market. National and local government must find ways to ensure that all areas have equal broadband access and that internet access is subsidised or provided free for the households who cannot afford it, and do this quickly.

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[19] https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/joint-open-letter-chancellor-keep-lifeline

We need to raise digital awareness for people who cannot afford the internet, or do not understand its benefits, or are intimidated by a digital world. We need to invest in digital upskilling. We need to remember the role that libraries, community centres, education settings, volunteers and local digital champions can play in providing digital access, and ensure this support is protected and funded.

We need to fund more programmes like New Horizons that seek to tackle the intertwined challenges of digital exclusion, money management, and the skills needed to seek and move into employment.

Concluding thoughts

What we need is more research and more action.

As I said at the beginning, digital exclusion is a new form of social deprivation, exacerbated by existing lines of inequality and poverty, and as the world gets 'smarter', the divide gets wider. What does it mean to live in a Smart City if you are digitally excluded? How do you benefit from the Internet of Things if you cannot afford to access the internet?

And so, as we 'build back better' and build digital, we have an opportunity to take account of the unintended consequences of digitalisation and tackle it now, before it becomes an entrenched part of the already unequal social fabric of the UK.

The pandemic has already changed the way we interact: it looks set to have a lasting effect on the way we communicate. By putting improving digital skills at the heart of post-COVID recovery plans in the UK we have the opportunity to not only boost national productivity, but to improve the lives of millions of households at risk of being left behind in a digital world. By tackling the inequality in digital capabilities, we are future proofing our national skill set and creating resilience against poverty, exclusion and the impact of future pandemics.

Thank you very much and I'm happy to take questions.

The local climate challenge

A new partnership approach

The local climate challenge
A new partnership approach

By Philippa Borrowman, Ravina Singh and Roz Bulleid

Green Alliance
Green Alliance is an independent think tank and charity focused on ambitious leadership for the environment. Since 1979, we have been working with the most influential leaders in business, NGOs and politics to accelerate political action and create transformative policy for a green and prosperous UK.

Summary

Being at the heart of local communities, local authorities have an important role in action on climate change. They can exercise influence through transport and planning policy, and the management of land and buildings they own. Just as importantly, they understand their local communities, environments and businesses, so they are vital partners for national government in tailoring and progressing climate policy.

As pressure from the public to act on the climate crisis has risen over the past couple of years, elected leaders and council administrators have signalled that they are ready for this responsibility. Over 75 per cent of English councils have already declared climate emergencies. The majority of these have set targets for their local areas, and most are more ambitious than the national target of reaching net zero carbon by 2050.[1]

But a number of factors in play, even before the Covid-19 pandemic struck, have left councils unable to bring about the transformation these declarations aspire to. Without more expertise, funding and an enabling central government framework, they cannot begin to make the changes they want to, and consequently they are missing out on the local economic and social opportunities of doing so.

The UK political system is one of the most centralised in Europe. But there is now a chance for planned reforms to local government to empower community leaders and give them the capacity to address the climate crisis in a way that is appropriate to their local circumstances.

For this report we worked with an advisory panel of six local authorities leading on climate action, focusing particularly on transport and housing policy. In addition to seeking their advice, we conducted anonymous interviews with another 12 representatives from a wider range of authorities that have declared climate emergencies, to get a broader perspective on some of the structural issues affecting local efforts to move to a low carbon economy.

"Local authorities are vital partners for national government in tailoring and progressing climate policy."

What is clear from our investigation is that the chance to address climate change effectively and rebuild local economies fit for future is in danger of being missed.

Therefore, we recommend a new policy framework setting out expectations for all levels of government and including ways to overcome current barriers to decarbonisation. This should form an essential baseline for local action.

As a start, this enabling framework should also include:

Agreed methodology to monitor and report emissions under local authorities' direct control.

A single point of contact within central government focused on local authority decarbonisation.

A strategic approach to addressing in-house skills gaps within local authorities and a new national green skills strategy.

Sufficient and stable funding to allow councils to plan ahead and prevent environmental imperatives being deprioritised.

Reforms to the planning system that put sustainable housing and transport at their heart.

Introduction

By autumn 2020, over 75 per cent of councils and combined authorities in England had declared climate emergencies, with most also setting targets for their area to meet a net zero carbon goal, the majority by 2030.[2]

This huge signal of intent from across the country would have been hard to imagine just two years before, when the first local climate emergency was declared by Bristol City Council in late 2018.

Green Alliance worked closely with six local authorities (listed at the front of this report) who are at the forefront of local efforts to address climate change, to understand the measures they are putting in place and the challenges they face. We also discussed potential solutions with them.

> "We've got the transport people involved. We've got the hospital involved and we've got representatives from our port in there, as well as groups like Friends of the Earth and Extinction Rebellion, they're included too."

In our discussions with local authorities we focused particularly on housing and transport, areas where decarbonisation efforts have to increase and where local authorities can play a central role. We have highlighted some of the issues directly related to these sectors through the report. While cutting emissions from the power sector has had little impact on most people, the changes needed to buildings and transport will affect people's daily lives and are location specific. Local authorities will be important mediators and co-ordinators in this process.

To further inform our study and get a wider geographical perspective, we also conducted interviews with representatives from 12 other local authorities, some at a much earlier stage in the journey of mapping and reducing local emissions. These interviews were conducted anonymously so participants would be comfortable discussing some of the broader structural challenges they are experiencing. The interviewees were from authorities located all around England, and varied in size, tier of council and degree of urbanisation. Their voices are featured in quotes throughout this report.

Despite the many inevitable challenges of meeting local climate targets, the local authority representatives we spoke to all revealed an extraordinary level of devotion to tackling the climate crisis, even in the absence of a statutory duty to do so.

The local context

The jobs opportunity

Green Alliance research last year found that most areas were only just beginning to consider the impact climate change would have on their local economies.[3] The Covid-19 crisis has drawn attention and resources away from climate change in councils. But it has also highlighted the need to increase the resilience of local infrastructure and improve employment opportunities, including the creation of low carbon jobs.

The pandemic is causing job losses on a wide scale across the country. Over the long term, around 28,000 jobs could be lost in the coal, oil and gas industries in the North of England by 2030 as the UK moves to low carbon power.[4] But it is also estimated that, in the same timescale, new low carbon energy related jobs in this region could employ nearly 46,000 with the right policy framework.[5]

There are similar threats and opportunities in the automotive industry, as international markets move towards electric vehicles. Around 87 per cent of UK automotive sector jobs have the potential to switch rapidly to producing electric vehicles, which is significant as transport manufacturing is disproportionately located in areas of lower regional economic performance.[6]

Meanwhile, in the housing sector, estimates suggest a national programme to retrofit every home to meet energy rating EPC C by 2030 would sustain 108,000 new jobs annually, with economic benefits possible across the country.[7] Those areas hit hardest by the pandemic, with high unemployment and levels of fuel poverty, could particularly benefit.[8]

"We would probably need a capacity of about 18 or 19 people within the organisation just to deal with the plan…but if you rolled out things like retrofit, if you rolled out various initiatives that are under the plan, you're quickly into the tens and tens of people. But that's what we say about economic benefits, that's the whole point. Imagine the skills agenda, skilling up everybody to deliver retrofit programmes at scale. What a fantastic opportunity for young people and local builders."

Scope of influence

Lack of clarity in the way responsibilities are divided up between councils and central government makes it impossible to draw a line around which emissions are within a council's control. Most local authorities first aim to tackle their own emissions but, even in this case, some lack the data they need to plan and measure their progress.[9]

Councils do have direct responsibility over emissions in some sectors, such as social housing, where they own 38 per cent of England's stock. And some councils deliver waste, transport and planning services and regulate industrial and commercial activities which all have a bearing on emissions.[10]

The value of councils' soft influence should not be underestimated. Local residents' trust in their local authorities is four times higher than their trust in central government on locally relevant decisions. This means local authorities are in a better position to drive changes through their close ties with communities, education providers, businesses and others.[11]

The degree to which responsibilities are shared means there is not a clear figure for the percentage of national emissions that local authorities are responsible for. The two most quoted figures are 40 per cent or 80 per cent of UK emissions; the first dates from 2012 when emissions were distributed differently across the economy, the higher figure is based on the much looser interpretation of influence, used in government data collection.[12,13] As we illustrate below, even within transport and housing, over which local authorities do have direct influence, powers only cover certain areas and vary between different levels of local government.

A better estimate of the extent of local authorities' reach would be to establish what should be expected of them. This would also give the government a clearer picture of how to support local action to meet the national net zero carbon goal by 2050.

Local influence on transport

Domestic transport was the most polluting sector in the UK in 2019. It was responsible for a third of all UK carbon dioxide emissions, a proportion which has increased since 1990 as emissions from the power sector have fallen.[14] With the exception of district councils, local authorities are involved in local transport planning, provision and maintenance of non-trunk roads, and planning and delivery of parts of the public transport system. Central government is responsible for the wider policy framework, including the regulation of vehicles, taxation and, in most areas, public transport policies. Bus routes are overseen by transport commissioners, with limited local authority powers to direct where they should run. Rail services are largely managed centrally.

Local influence on housing

Greenhouse gas emissions from dwellings in England have only fallen by around 15 per cent in the past decade. The government has an ambition to retrofit all homes to reach energy rating EPC band C or above by 2035. But only around 30 per cent of homes are currently at this level so this will be a stretching target to meet.[15] Furthermore, even if EPC C is reached it will not be sufficient for housing to play its full part in meeting the net zero goal.

District, borough and unitary councils are responsible for local planning and building standards, and the delivery of housing targets, but within a framework set by national government. Local authorities have been discouraged from setting more stringent requirements for house builders in their areas and have been encouraged to focus on housebuilding targets in preference to other issues. Similarly, the refurbishment of existing housing, beyond that still owned by local authorities, is largely dependent on central government policy and funding.

Emissions from housing and transport in England are not falling fast enough

Greenhouse gas emissions from residential property, energy supply and transport in England, 1990-2018[16]

MtCO$_2$e
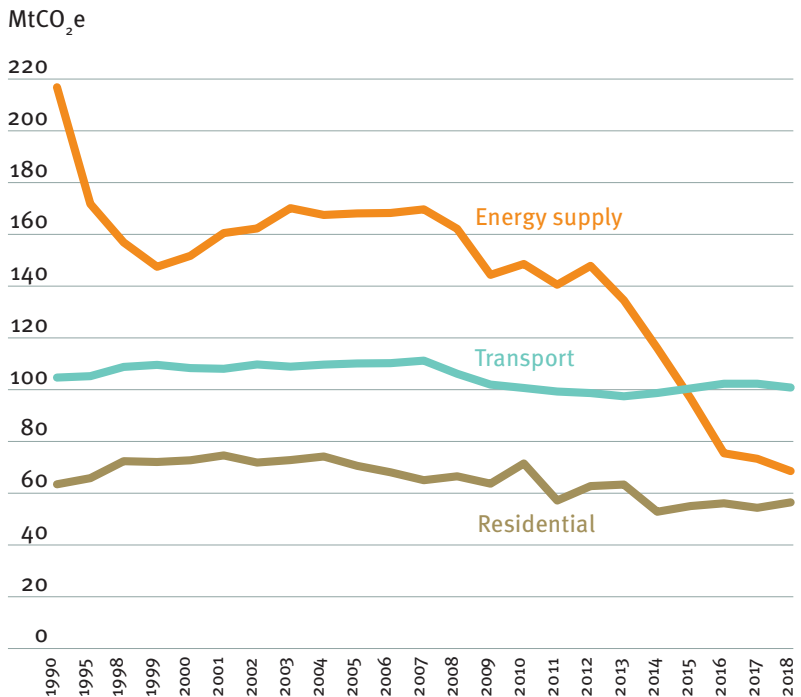
Ability to meet targets

Local authorities are already seeing the impacts of climate change on their local communities. For some, this was the trigger for declaring a climate emergency. One interviewee reported that local flooding had been so bad that people were travelling along local roads by boat which "starts to bring it much closer to home". Another described the cross party support for their climate emergency due to concerns that "if we get two degrees of warming, hot days are going to be the norm, and goodness knows what a [really] hot day or a cold day are going to be like, or a wet day. That was the driver."

"Unless we get more funding and more powers and there's a genuine appetite from government, it'll be almost impossible for local authorities to meet their own targets."

However, asked whether they thought their councils would meet their targets, most of our interviewees thought it would be unlikely. "No, absolutely not," one said. "Forget rhetoric, it's reality. Something's got to change to achieve it." Among the rest, declaring an emergency was generally seen as a political statement and not something that could realistically be met within current budgets. There was some uncertainty as to what the eventual outcome of the declarations would be. The reason for this is that so much is out of local authorities' control, both in terms of the levers they have to reduce emissions and their ability to act.

Some of the broad challenges holding local authorities back will be explored further in the next section, with a particular focus on transport and housing.

"Some of us wanted the more pragmatic approach, which was maybe a later target date. We know that 2030 is very, very difficult unless we get a significant amount of funding and resources."

Barriers to local action

Lack of capacity and expertise

Properly addressing climate change at the local level will require knowledge and action across all council activities, as well as skilled and empowered central co-ordinators, and local people and businesses that can implement policies. The lack of these was one of the biggest concerns for the councils we spoke to.

For some, even having the staff available to instigate a climate strategy and roll it out to other departments is a challenge; one interviewee noted that some of their neighbouring local authorities did not have a single sustainability post.

"One of the challenges was we've always said our environment credentials are super important but we found it quite difficult with austerity and having to cut left right and centre," said one, "our ambition was to be green but, in practice, it was getting more and more difficult because we were having to cut all the non-statutory services. One of the first challenges was as simple as convincing my colleagues that we would protect our very, very, very small sustainability team of two officers and that, if we cut that team, it would be very, very difficult then to bring them back."

"Our vision is not to have a small army of people working on climate change, but to have everybody across the authority tooled up with the skills and knowledge needed. It's fair to say we're in the foothills of that journey."

Beyond local authority staff, upskilling the construction sector is a particular priority. Just delivering the Committee on Climate Change's recommendation of installing 19 million heat pumps a year by 2050 to decarbonise domestic heating will require considerable increases in the number of heat pump installers annually, reaching a 40 fold increase from a 2020 baseline by 2035.[17] "There's always a lag as well, in terms of people's ability to take on board new technology," one interviewee told us. "It took about ten years for gas installers to recommend gas condensing boilers."

To overcome this, one interviewee was working with local colleges to train up young people by pairing unused council properties with construction students and allowing them to learn how to retrofit properties in a practical setting. And, in Birmingham, West Midlands Combined Authority is helping to support the development of a 1,150 home neighbourhood of sustainable buildings using offsite construction methods. This is leading to new training courses and apprenticeships alongside new jobs.[18]

Squeezed budgets

Cuts in central government funding, council tax freezes and other rule changes have reduced the net spend per person by councils by 23 per cent over the past decade.[19] The need to protect adult and child social care has meant services related to climate and the environment have seen much more substantial reductions. The pandemic has only exacerbated the situation, putting some councils on the brink of bankruptcy.

> "For me, the reality is, we ain't got any money to do this, we're trying to find different ways of doing it, but the government can make a big difference with a little bit of help."

Some local authorities are seeking new sources of income. For instance, Warwick District Council was due to hold a referendum on increasing council tax to meet its climate emergency target before the coronavirus crisis, and a group of London authorities have used tax increment financing, essentially borrowing against future tax revenues, to finance infrastructure improvements. Others, including one of our interviewees, are considering new private-public partnerships and a few councils have used local crowdfunding arranged by the Abundance funding platform. However, these approaches require upfront skills, resources and political confidence not available to all. As one local authority representative told us: "financial instruments are tricky. It just feels slightly alien to me and my small team."

Several of the councils we spoke to had costed their full climate emergency plans, with others working out costs on an ongoing basis, but it was clear that current funding patterns and practices are not sufficient. "We can afford to do 25 per cent, 35 per cent, of it", one respondent said. Another explained that they had fully costed their net zero plans at around £1.5 billion, equivalent to their entire discretionary spend up until 2030. One council without a fully costed plan felt a project by project basis "might be more palatable to members... rather than terrifying them by saying it's going to cost £50 million".

> "We are dependent on what we get from the government and for over a decade now it's been reduced funding we've been getting... We've had to do more with less."

Spending has fallen significantly in all areas relevant to climate action

Local government net spending per person by service, and change per service[20]
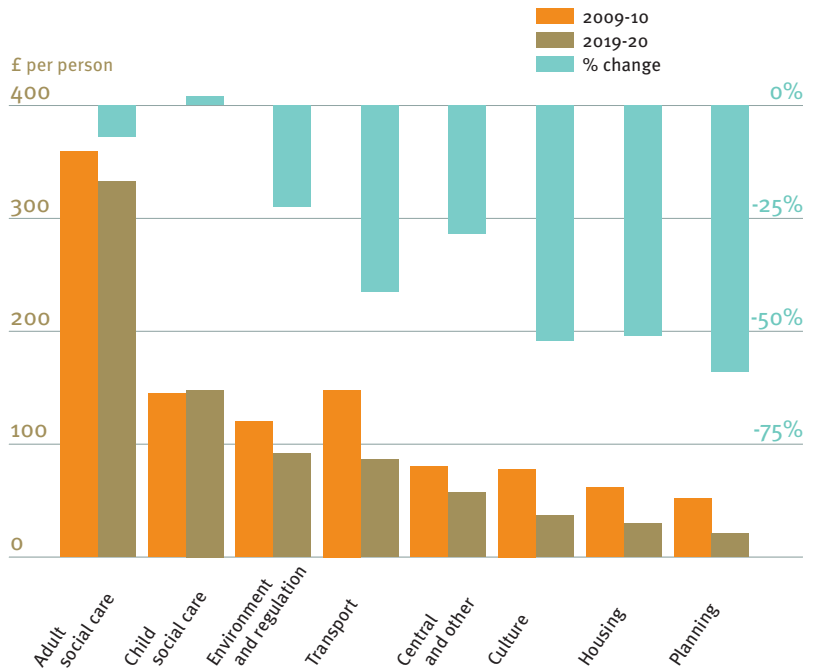
Small transport budgets

While there are specialised funds available to support local authorities in developing sustainable transport solutions, budgets have generally been small compared to road and rail funding. Funds are time limited, making the amount inappropriate for some uses and councils have to put considerable time and effort into bidding for them.

Buses

The bus network does not function as it should to support the decarbonisation of transport, with a poorly managed system leading to long term decline. Largely run on a commercial basis, nearly 60 per cent of bus funding came from fares before the pandemic.[21] Local authorities can support socially valuable bus services where they are not commercially viable but have been increasingly forced to cut their spending. Some central government funding to compensate bus companies for concessionary travel is directed through local authorities but this does not always match expenditure, which risks a deficit, and other dedicated funding sources are not consistently available. There have been regular calls for a new approach to bus funding to try and address declines in services and, in February, the government committed to a review. Additional funding has been made available to

support bus services during the pandemic. It has been estimated that withdrawing this too soon might cut bus mileage by more than 30 per cent.[22] Once services are lost they will be hard to recover.

Walking and cycling

Annual local authority spending per person on walking and cycling had hovered at £6 per head in the four years before the pandemic and total public spend was not even tracked in official statistics (see below). However, the government's enthusiasm for supporting walking and cycling during the pandemic could be transformative. Much of the £2 billion now being directed towards active travel is being funnelled via local authorities and is a four-fold increase in ringfenced funding for England. Previously, funding came from a range of ringfenced and non-ringfenced sources.[23,24] Nonetheless, this amount would need to be committed across the UK every year to reach the funding levels achieved in other countries like the Netherlands.[25]
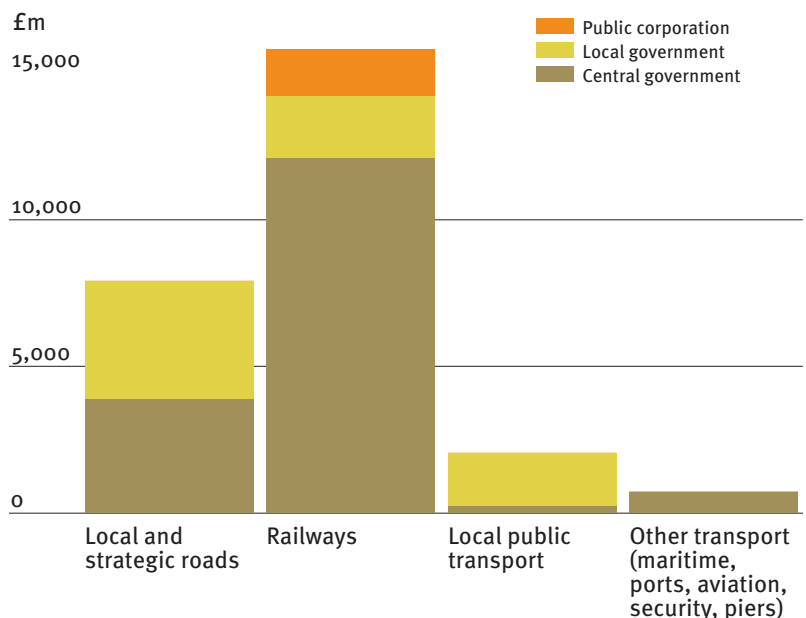
Electric vehicles

Accessing funding for installing electric vehicle charging points has been difficult for some councils, especially those in rural areas where there is currently a poor business case, due to lower population density and higher grid connection costs.[26] However, there is a strong need for electric vehicle infrastructure in rural areas, where around 73 per cent of trips are taken by car, either as a driver or a passenger.[27]

Local authorities have significant financial responsibility for roads and public transport in their areas

Total transport expenditure in England, 2018-19[28]

£m

Legend:
- Public corporation
- Local government
- Central government

X-axis categories: Local and strategic roads · Railways · Local public transport · Other transport (maritime, ports, aviation, security, piers)
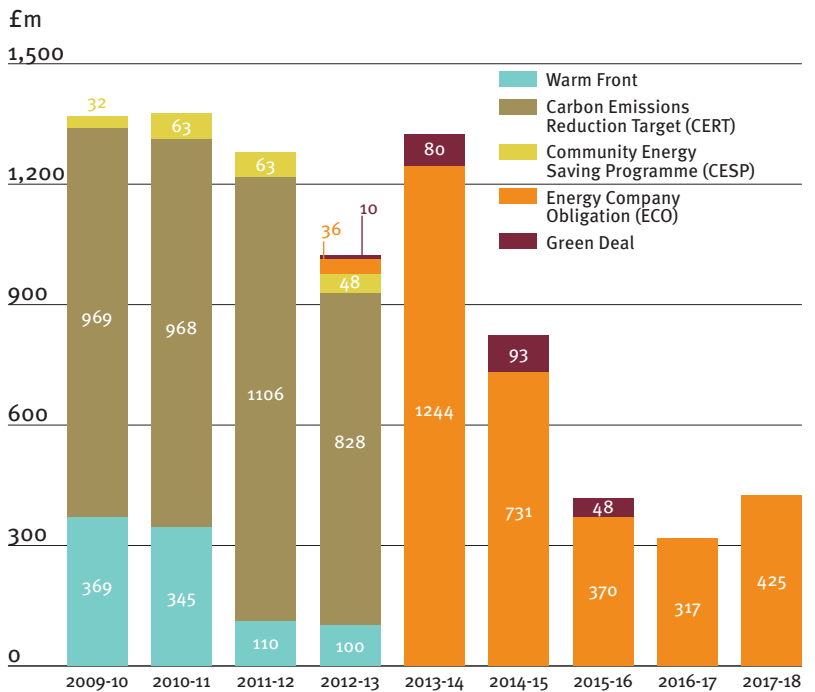
Y-axis: 0, 5,000, 10,000, 15,000

Inconsistent funding for housing improvement

Public spending to improve housing energy efficiency in England has continually decreased over time, with no flagship national policy since the end of the Green Deal in 2015. Annual public spending on energy efficiency is now only £8 per head in England, compared to £35 in Scotland, £23 in Northern Ireland and £17 in Wales. [29] This lack of commitment has depleted supply chains and reduced the skills base just when they are most needed.

Funding for home energy efficiency has fallen by two thirds since 2009

Support in England on energy efficiency measures for homes, 2009-18[30]

£m

Legend:
- Warm Front
- Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT)
- Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP)
- Energy Company Obligation (ECO)
- Green Deal

Year	Warm Front	CERT	CESP	ECO	Green Deal
2009-10	369	969	32		
2010-11	345	968	63		
2011-12	110	1106	63		
2012-13	100	828	48	36	10
2013-14				1244	80
2014-15				731	93
2015-16				370	48
2016-17				317	
2017-18				425	

The £2 billion package for domestic energy efficiency, including the Green Homes Grant, announced in the summer of 2020 will begin to fill this gap, but only if it is the start of a reliable long term retrofit programme. It is recommended that the Treasury should invest a further £7.8 billion in home energy efficiency over the next four years to fulfil the government's manifesto pledge. On top of this, £5.8 billion should be allocated to heat pump deployment, drawing from the £100 billion infrastructure budget for this parliament.[31] Further support is required to build supply chains and bring costs down for more innovative methods of whole house retrofit, which can make homes low carbon by installing a number of measures in one step.[32]

Local authorities were assigned £500 million of the £2 billion to fund energy efficiency measures for fuel poor households. This is a significant sum but this level of support needs to be available over the long term in a form that is predictable for councils if energy efficiency is to be improved across the country in a place appropriate manner. By comparison, Leeds City Council's 2017-30 Affordable Warmth strategy estimates the cost of ensuring all the city's homes reach a decent standard, with everyone able to stay warm, will be £1 billion.[33]

"The government might offer what might seem like a massive amount of money, but by the time you've divided that up by every local authority, or by every successful competitive bidding process, we might get a small proportion of what we actually need to transition our housing stock. It's mainly ancient and in need of a full fundamental change."

National policy is limiting local ambition

Councils cannot hope to decarbonise their local areas without the backing of ambitious national policy frameworks. More than that, these policies need to be designed with local partnership in mind and delivered from Westminster in a way that local authorities can interact with.

Local authorities we spoke to often struggled to engage with multiple central policy makers, initiatives and funding pots with different objectives, distributed across government. In the case of energy efficiency, for example, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) examines cross-cutting issues such as metrics, fuel poverty and wider energy policy. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) works on planning, building standards and heritage, and the Treasury focuses on spending.

> "I think that government can be far more progressive than they are and it wouldn't even cost them that much money to do it. Clearly, you need leadership and you need legislation to be able to back that up. That has to then be able to be filtered down and put in place on the ground."

The absence of central government co-ordination and strategy was mentioned most frequently by local authorities in reference to the planning and delivery of new homes, an issue that impacts both transport and housing emissions.

The current National Planning Policy Framework has a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In practice, sustainability considerations are often superseded by more immediate development needs. As one local authority representative highlighted, the planning system has "been about volume, dominated by car oriented development". Another reiterated this: "...things are looked at the wrong way round, first thing talked about is where the main roads go, can you get access, is there money to pay for it? Way down the list are more sustainable transport movements and sustainable locations."

Others raised concerns about the ability of their planning teams to factor decarbonisation into local plans and stand up to developers, and they doubted the Planning Inspectorate had a grasp of what was necessary to achieve net zero emissions.

Barriers to integrated local transport

Access to sustainable transport is rarely a consideration for developers keen to take advantage of the uplift in value they can gain from greenfield sites, rather than grappling with more complex brownfield sites which are more likely to have existing public transport links.

This is exacerbated by pressure to find enough sites to meet the targets for new homes imposed on local authorities, which can overrule transport considerations in establishing local plans. Between 2015 and 2017, more than half of the planning permissions for the 220,000 new homes within twelve of England's city regions were over two kilometres from a railway station and only 20 per cent were within an easy walking distance of 800 metres.[34, 35] Without accompanying investment in public transport, this locks in dependency on cars. As one local authority said, the planning system must be thought of "in a holistic way, more so than we have done in many years".

"In the current system, car free developments will struggle to get support, in part because there is a lack of confidence that alternative transport solutions will be put in place. This perpetuates our current approach focusing on the car."

Limited local powers over bus and rail services in most areas is a major barrier to developing coherent local transport services which properly serve local communities with common timetables, pricing structures and ticketing systems. There have been efforts to restore some of the controls lost when bus services were deregulated in the 1980s but these have had limited effect. Greater Manchester Combined Authority aims to solve this by reintroducing franchising but this might not be suitable for all areas.

The central appraisal tool for transport projects, Web-based Transport Analysis Guidance (WebTAG), is also problematic as it prioritises economic considerations, particularly journey times, over emissions reductions or broader sustainability objectives. Consequently, it favours roads, further increasing the reliance on private transport.[36] The transport modelling tools used should be more sophisticated, moving away from the focus on car movements and, as one interviewee said, instead considering "movement in all its forms, linking that [with] what it means in terms of carbon reduction".

Lack of clarity around housing standards

Efforts to build greener housing were undermined by the ending of the Zero Carbon Homes standard in 2015. Although the government plans to restart this agenda with its forthcoming Future Homes Standard, trust in the system has been damaged and will take time to recover.

A number of well-resourced local authorities have defied government pressure not to apply their own, more ambitious, buildings standards, including Guildford Borough Council which requires an additional 20 per cent carbon emissions reduction.[37] For others, introducing higher standards is extremely difficult with limited resources, and they are unlikely to win against Planning Inspectorate decisions. The Future Homes Standard and forthcoming planning reforms could even formally ban councils from going beyond national standards.

> "At the moment, it's suggested that we do not put in any terms of guidance on energy efficiency in property development because the building regulations will cover it. But, lo and behold, building regulations have stayed the same. How long do we wait before we introduce our policies?"

There are several other problems with the current system, including considerable differences between the theoretical method used to assess building performance and their actual operational performance, with average emissions over 2.5 times higher than estimates suggest.[38] Housebuilders have also been able to build to outdated standards by starting work and then pausing. Using this technique, the UK's three biggest house builders in the UK, Persimmon, Taylor Wimpey and Barrett, were able to build more than half of their homes in 2018 to standards that pre-dated 2013 building regulations.[39]

National buildings policy ignores the carbon embodied in construction too. The Greater London Authority is beginning to address this by mandating lifecycle assessments for some building projects but the Future Homes Standard may actually prevent other authorities following suit.[40]

A new framework and support

Local authorities have shown themselves to be enthusiastic partners in the effort to take action on climate change. It is also clear they are well placed to tackle some of the sources of emissions that have proved most challenging to address. But their efforts are being hampered by a range of factors including limited powers over their local emissions, unsupportive central government policies, and limited skills and resources within local authorities and communities.

"There needs to be a proper green agenda in my view, which actually gives incentive, gives money, gives targets, gives authorities the chance to be ambitious about things."

There is still a chance for central government to capture the undeniable local enthusiasm to do more, and the impetus to futureproof the economy which has emerged as a result of the pandemic. Together these could be at the heart of a new local economic strategy. If done well, this would allow each local area to work to its strengths and achieve its decarbonisation targets, with support from central government.

To achieve this requires a central framework, developed jointly by local and national leaders, which clearly delineates the role of local government in meeting the net zero carbon goal and supports them in doing it their way. This should be accompanied by an agreed central methodology to monitor and report on emissions in areas under local authorities' direct control, with a single point of contact in central government.

In addition to the need for a central framework, we make recommendations in the rest of this chapter on addressing the skills gap, funding and planning reform. These measures on their own will not be enough to meet net zero but will create a baseline for further action.

A strategic approach to the skills gap

Our local authority interviewees recognised some cases where government initiatives have provided invaluable resources and support for them on complex projects which many would have not been able to manage in-house. The Local Energy Hubs developed by BEIS, for example, have benefited many local authorities, assisting with developing business cases, accessing funding and procurement processes.[41] There was, unsurprisingly, an appetite for more help like this.

Specific gaps identified were in housing energy efficiency retrofit, low carbon heating, planners' ability to factor in low carbon transport, and the wider skills and confidence needed to develop low carbon economies, find new sources of revenue and make the most of private sector income.

The recent launch of a carbon literacy toolkit for local authorities, co-funded by BEIS and Greater Manchester Combined Authority, will help councils support employees in beginning to incorporate net zero into their everyday practices. However, these kinds of provisions cannot replace specialist in-house knowledge which requires adequate local authority funding to develop.

> "We definitely need to upskill our staff. It would be much cheaper for us to have experts within the council than to be commissioning it from consultants."

As well as upskilling local authority teams, a national green skills strategy and range of training and retraining schemes are needed to enable local areas to futureproof their local industries and attract new low carbon businesses. Training should be tailored to the geography of localities with the help of local authorities.

To make this possible, the government should increase investment in the Local Energy Hub system to both support more local authorities and expand its scope to a broader range of issues. This investment should be equitably shared out across all regions, working with current local authority structures to ensure every region can benefit equally from the increase in investment. It should also explore other opportunities to train local officials, recognising the significant skills gaps that exist.

Sufficient and stable funding

Funding mechanisms for local authorities should be reformed to ensure consistent and predictable funding streams and increase capacity to meet all priorities. Environmental policies cannot continue to be deprioritised, and should have more reliable sources of funding.

It is good to see clarity around the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in the 2020 Spending Review. This will help to replace the £8.4 billion European Union regeneration funding that supported local projects targeting new infrastructure, environment, enterprise and social cohesion.[42] Specific, long term measures such as these will be highly beneficial to local authorities.

> "We need to move away from a transactional relationship, waiting for central government to give us permission or to give us a pot of money."

There is also a role for central government in aiding access to private funding. The Local Energy Hubs mentioned have helped local authorities to pool together small scale, fragmented energy projects to build one larger scale, attractive opportunity for investors. The 180 projects currently in the pipeline are valued at £850 million, with over half of this from private sources. With further support, this could increase to 500 projects valued at £1.8 billion. As these projects are 'shovel ready' they could be rapidly rolled out as part of the Covid-19 economic recovery plan.[43]
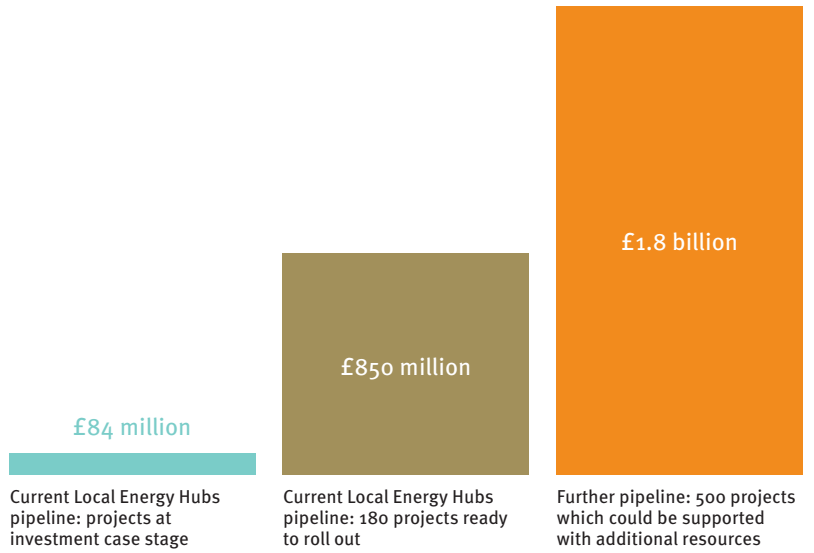
> "We are so dependent on government that we'd want to have a bit more independence and flexibility and guaranteed sources of income."

Local government reforms must enable councils to meet all the obligations placed on them, and fulfil their agreed role in addressing climate change. All sources of local and regional funding should have the objective of a low carbon transition embedded in their design. They should offer local authorities predictable revenue to support long running programmes, targeting greater resilience and sustainability across all jurisdictions under their control.

Realising the potential of the Local Energy Hubs project pipeline

£84 million

Current Local Energy Hubs pipeline: projects at investment case stage

£850 million

Current Local Energy Hubs pipeline: 180 projects ready to roll out

£1.8 billion

Further pipeline: 500 projects which could be supported with additional resources

Planning reform

Throughout our conversations with local authority representatives, it was clear that planning is an important area in which central government frameworks could be much more supportive of local action. In their current form, they fail to act as a driver for sustainable housing, often resulting in homes which are both car dependent and built to low energy efficiency standards.

National government and local authorities should be jointly responsible for ensuring all new housing developments are designed and built to the best low carbon specification, while encouraging lifestyle changes for residents, for instance by facilitating more walking, cycling and public transport use, and installing smart systems that enable them to use as little electricity as possible.

The government's 'Planning for the future' white paper references net zero, but neither this nor any other environmental considerations are right at its centre in the same way speed, digitisation and beauty are.

> "How meaningful will this threat – I call it a threat rather than a promise – to reform the planning system turn out to be? The government seems to do it every other year and make the system more complex and slow rather than quicker. There seems to be a big gap between the rhetoric and the action."

There are several aspects that are likely to make it harder for local authorities to put net zero at the heart of communities and avoid development on poorly connected greenfield sites. These include considerably less ability to impose their own conditions on development through local plans, reduced approval processes in some areas and relaxed rules around permitted development, which could facilitate more demolition and rebuilding when renovation would be lower carbon, more resource efficient and potentially better for communities.

Decarbonisation objectives must be embedded at the heart of the new planning system to ensure new developments have minimal environmental impact, both in their construction and use. These objectives should also be adopted by the Planning Inspectorate. Similarly, local authorities need support to go over and above nationally set building standards if they wish to, to foster local skills and supply chains for low carbon construction. And, the transport appraisal system WebTAG should be reformed to focus on more sustainable travel.

Conclusion

For all their ambition and enthusiasm, local authorities will struggle to make good on the pledges they have made to address the climate emergency because they lack so many of the powers needed to manage emissions. There is not even a good source of data showing the scale of the emissions under their collective control. Many of those that have declared emergencies still do not have costed decarbonisation plans and, even if they do, they do not have the staff, funds or powers to take the action necessary.

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated conversations about the future of local economies and their resilience to climate change and other crises. It has also shown that many of the climate challenges faced today are regional, and the government must consider how local government structures should be reshaped to allow for more local economic strategies.

What is clear is that local authorities cannot act alone. The monumental task of retrofitting all of England's housing stock to the highest possible standard, while building a transport system which no longer prioritises polluting vehicles, will take ambitious national leadership. Local authorities, guided by national policy, need the flexibility to do what works best for their areas and communities.

The government should seize the opportunity of the local enthusiasm demonstrated by climate emergency declarations. A new net zero framework would help to raise ambition essential for the upcoming COP26 summit in November 2021, increasing domestic action by supporting emission reductions in local communities. This framework, agreed between local authorities and central government, would establish expectations on both sides and help to plug some of the gaps local authorities have faced to date, and could also help to shape the planned local and regional government reforms.

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Hackney

Skills Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission	Item No
25th January 2021	**7**
Work Programme 2020/2021	

Outline

Attached please find the latest iteration of the Commission's Work Programme. Please not this is a working document and is regularly updated.

Action

The Commission is requested to note the updated work programme and make any amendments necessary.

Overview & Scrutiny

Skills, Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission
Rolling Work Programme June 2020 – April 2021

All meetings take place at 7.00 pm in Hackney Town Hall unless stated otherwise on the agenda. This rolling work programme report is updated and published on the agenda for each meeting of the Commission.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and officer contact	Description, Comment and Action
Mon 8th June 2020	Impact of COVID-19 on Local Business	Chief Executive Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Sonia Khan Simone van Elk	Commission to hear from local businesses to better understand the shifting financial reality for them since COVID
	Impact of COVID-19 on Local Residents	Chief Executive Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Stephen Haynes Sonia Khan	Commission to hear from residents to better understand life since COVID.
Mon 20th July 2020	Skills, Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2020/2021	Chief Executive Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Sonia Khan Stephen Haynes	Commission to meet, discuss, and agree upon the year's work programme.
Tue 22nd Sept 2020	Developing a Skills Offer Fit for Post-COVID-19 Recovery	Chief Executive Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Sonia Khan Stephen Haynes	*Commission to discuss Hackney's future skills offer and examine what role the commission can play in the development of the skills offer.*

Mon 19th Oct 2020 (Cancelled)	Repurposing Spaces to Support Entrepreneurialism **(Cancelled)**	Chief Executive Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Sonia Khan Stephen Haynes	Commission to discuss what kind of industries may be able to repurpose space, and discuss how best to encourage and assist these endeavours **(Cancelled)**
	Supporting Local Economy **(Cancelled)**	Chief Executive Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Sonia Khan Stephen Haynes	Commission to meet and discuss how the commission can support the local economy through the pressures of COVID **(Cancelled)**
Mon 23rd November 2020	Update on Business Statistics Pertaining to COVID	Chief Executive Directorate Sonia Khan Suzanne Johnson Overview and Scrutiny Timothy Upton	Commission to hear numbers around grants, furloughs, GDP, and unemployment numbers to frame the meeting's subsequent discussions.
	Supporting Local Economy and Businesses	Chief Executive Directorate Ian Williams Stephen Haynes Overview and Scrutiny Timothy Upton	Commission to discuss what support has been extended to businesses, the issues businesses and the local economy faces, and discuss further avenues of support.
	Low Traffic Neighbourhoods	Chief Executive Directorate Sonia Khan Stephen Haynes Overview and Scrutiny Timothy Upton Neighbourhoods & Housing Aled Richards	Commission to hear and discuss the initial progress, struggles and benefits of the low traffic neighbourhood scheme.
Mon 25th January 2021	Cabinet Question Time	Mayor's Office	Cabinet question time.

Wed 10th March 2021	Building Back Better Post-COVID-19	Chief Executive Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Sonia Khan Stephen Haynes	Commission to discuss how best to cultivate an inclusive, greener economy when building back better post-Covid-19
	Resilience Strategy	Chief Executive Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Sonia Khan Stephen Haynes	Commission to discuss the council's resilience strategy with a focus on how that's changed since the pandemic.
	Economy Strategy	Chief Executive Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Timothy Upton	Commission to discuss the council's economic strategies moving forward.
April 2021	TBC	Chief Executive Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Timothy Upton	