

Question: CQ17.03&04

Cabinet – 5 October 2021

Re: Agenda item 17 – Transition to a low-carbon fleet

Question submitted by: Councillor Carla Denyer

This report brings to Cabinet a decision on whether to purchase bulk vehicle fuels – petrol and diesel. In the light of the climate emergency and the council's commitment to be carbon neutral in its own operations in 4 years' time, this raises questions on how we deal with the carbon emissions from the burning of these fuels.

I note that the Council's current bulk fuel contract is with WFL UK Ltd, aka Watson Fuels. Their website advertises carbon offsetting (<https://watsonfuels.co.uk/carbonoffset>).

There are huge shortcomings of offsetting as an approach to carbon reduction – primarily: there is no 'spare' carbon reduction capacity – reducing carbon emissions or increasing tree planting in the Global South is good and should happen, but it must happen as well as the same activities in the UK, not instead of. For a summary of the other issues with offsetting, see this article by Greenpeace: <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/the-biggest-problem-with-carbon-offsetting-is-that-it-doesnt-really-work>

However, despite all this, if the Council is to continue to purchase millions of pounds worth of fossil fuels over the next few years, as this Cabinet paper proposes, then it occurs to me that offsetting may still be better than no offsetting. (Subject to details of the scheme.)

Questions:

1. Does the Council currently purchase carbon offsets for the bulk fuel it purchases from Watson Fuels?
2. Does the Council intend to include carbon offsetting in the retender?