

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY AND CARBON REDUCTION** held on Monday, 4 December 2023 at Committee Room 1, County Hall, Matlock.

PRESENT

Councillor W Major (in the Chair)

Councillors B Bingham, J Bryan, S Bull, D Collins and M Ford.

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor G Hickton, A Gibson, A Hayes and D Taylor.

30/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

31/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – to confirm the non-exempt minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Scrutiny – Climate Change, Biodiversity and Carbon Reduction committee held on 18 September 2023.

32/23 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question received from Mr Karl Barrow:

The Council's decision to cut costs and implement a 'pause on and reduction of project work relating to carbon reduction including feasibility work' seems perverse. Given the effects of the Climate Emergency already self-evident in Derbyshire, what will the impacts of this decision be in terms of outcomes to mitigate and adapt to climate change?

Response provided:

Due to the Council's current financial position, the Climate Change Programme, as with all other Council services, must implement cost saving measures for this financial year (2023-24) and identify cost saving options for the next financial year (2024-25). As a non-essential spend, this means that any new spend from the Climate Change Programme budget is currently paused while these cost saving options and opportunities are identified and assessed, and as the scale of the impact is fully understood.

Ensuring the Council is a net zero organisation by 2032, or sooner, and helping the county become net zero by 2050, requires significant financial

investment. The implication of any reduction in future investment is being considered in detail and different funding approaches are being explored, particularly for areas where high levels of investment are required, such as for decarbonising the heating systems in the Council's corporate buildings. This includes identifying where the Council can secure external funding for high-investment projects, such as through the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), which has already been accessed by the Council to install a new low carbon heating system at Buxton Junior School.

Despite the current financial position, the Council remains focussed on its net zero ambitions and delivering its Climate Change Strategy. A range of no- and low-cost projects and interventions are ongoing, including energy reduction behaviour change initiatives, employee training, pilot projects in services that undertake high level of business mileage to reduce this mileage and increase the use of Electric Vehicles for business travel, the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Derbyshire, and strengthening the Council's understanding of, and approach to, climate change risk and resilience.

The Council is also involved in a range of externally funded projects with local authority partners across the region, focused on reducing Derbyshire's emissions through joint working. This includes collaboration across Derbyshire, Derby, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham (D2N2) through an Innovate UK funded two-year project to identify the most effective pathway to decarbonising each district across D2N2 and undertake consistent engagement and communication with residents and businesses on climate change matters. There is also a two-year project funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to facilitate the delivery of local approaches to home energy efficiency retrofitting advice and support. Projects such as these will ensure the Council continues to influence emission reductions across Derbyshire and maximises the opportunities offered through co-designing and co-delivering projects with its partners.

The following supplementary question was asked by Mr Karl Barrow:

The Leader admitted in the annual review that the Council would not meet emission targets and states a lack of finance being a factor. Have you looked at how other authorities have achieved this, and would you look at municipal bonds as other authorities have. As well as solar on your own buildings and solar farms to then generate income?

The response of the Chair of the Committee was:

Of course, we will do all we can to learn from best practice, we have looked at PV farms and the officers wanted a review. This has not worked in some areas and there is always a risk, and this is tax payers money. If you do

see best practice, please inform us and we will review. The County Council is committed to the net 0 energy agenda. These are challenging financial times and statutory duties take priority. The Council need to look at how we invest in net 0 and utilise the money it has got as well as look at other funding methods. It has to be careful with commercial investments and their risk profile. They will look at alternative methods of funding and other options. DCC is determine on net 0 emissions.

33/23 DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY: ANNUAL REVIEW OF PROGRESS (2023)

Caroline Toplis, Programme Manager for Climate Change, introduced the report, that gave an update to the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee for Climate Change, Biodiversity and Carbon Reduction on the Annual Review of Progress (2023).

The report was accompanied by a presentation that gave further detail into the Annual Review.

The Council had 500 street lights left to retrofit. They were hoping for completion in the next 12 months, there had been delays due to supply chain issues.

Corporate estate was a big topic of discussion within the Council. The estate was extensive to retrofit, and it was yet to be determined how to tackle effectively. There was wasted space and occupancy was under review. There was no update yet on the future use of County Hall.

RESOLVED to note:

- 1) the progress being made against the Council's net zero target of 2032, or sooner, and the county's net zero target of 2050, and the challenges being faced to reduce emissions from Corporate Property, streetlighting, core fleet and grey fleet;
- 2) the progress being made against each target and action within the Derbyshire County Council Climate Change Strategy: Achieving Net Zero (2021-2025); and
- 3) the other key projects, initiatives and schemes that are contributing to the Council's climate change and wider sustainability agenda and objectives.

34/23 REDUCING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF COUNCIL GREY FLEET MILEAGE

Alan Marsden, Head of Strategic Transport and Sustainable Travel, introduced the report, providing an update on the Council's Staff Travel

Policy, Council grey mileage trends, and setting out a forward plan of activities to further reduce carbon emissions associated with Council business travel.

The report was accompanied by a presentation that gave further detail into reducing the environmental impact of employee business travel.

The next piece of work officers would be doing was reviewing employees travel data and running pilots within children's services to better understand business travel requirements in areas of high grey fleet mileage. As well as the use of pool cars and their availability for all users.

Further development of an electric vehicle salary sacrifice scheme would be ready in the next financial year. The Council had also made it easy to arrange alternatives to travelling in your own car such as rail tickets being easy to access.

RESOLVED to note:

- 1) the current Staff Travel Policy in place and to how this is implemented to minimise grey fleet mileage;
- 2) the analysis of grey fleet mileage data and current trends; and
- 3) the proposed forward plan to further reduce carbon emissions associated with employee business travel.

35/23 BRIEFING ON THE DERBYSHIRE HIGHWAYS DECARBONISATION PROGRAMME

Neill Bennett, Assistant Director Highways Commissioning, introduced the report, providing the Committee with an update on the Derbyshire Highways Decarbonisation Project.

The report was accompanied by a presentation that gave further detail into the Derbyshire Highways Decarbonisation Project.

The committee had agreed that they wanted to do a workshop in the new year on adaption work & arrange a visit to the Highways Lab. Members were keen to learn more about adaptation work as this was an area they were questioned about from their constituents.

RESOLVED to

- 1) note the update on the Derbyshire Highways Decarbonisation Project provided.

36/23 WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24

Committee Members were encouraged to approach officers with suggestions for the work programme.