

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY AND CARBON REDUCTION** held on Monday, 16 September 2024 at Committee Room 1, County Hall, Matlock.

PRESENT

Councillor W Major (in the Chair)

Councillors G Hickton, B Bingham, A Hayes, D Muller (substitute for S Bull), P Smith (substitute for M Ford) and D Taylor.

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor S Bull and M Ford.

Officers present: Richard Bonner (Head Of Countryside Service), Claire Brailsford (Director - Environment & Transport), Adam Lathbury, Juliette Normington (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Caroline Toplis (Programme Manager - Climate Change).

24/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25/24 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – to confirm the non-exempt minutes of the meeting of the Improvement and Scrutiny – Climate Change, Biodiversity and Carbon Reduction committee held on 1 July 2024.

26/24 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

27/24 STRENGTHENED BIODIVERSITY DUTY

Adam Lathbury, Head of Conservation, Heritage and Design introduced the report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting and provided information on the work being undertaken to ensure the Council was compliant with its Strengthened Biodiversity Duty, which was a requirement through the Environment Act 2021 and sought endorsement for the work outlined in the report.

The report highlighted the work done by the Council despite the Duty lacking any real power. The next stage therefore, required local authorities to agree specific objectives and to deliver action plans,

monitoring and development of future plans in order to comply. The first Biodiversity Report that showed how they authorities were responding needed to be published by 26 March 2026 however, no sanctions would be imposed for non-compliance.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the information provided. It was determined that there were strategies and action plans in place to combat foreign/invasive pests. Policing and planning measures were in place around off-siting, which was a developing field.

RESOLVED – to note and endorse the work being undertaken to address the Council’s Strengthened Biodiversity Duty and to work on how to participate in action plans and monitoring.

28/24 OFFSETTING THE COUNCIL’S RESIDUAL CARBON EMISSIONS

Caroline Toplis, Climate Change Manager introduced the report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, providing Committee with information on the work being undertaken to establish an approach to carbon offsetting (including nature-based solutions) to support the Council’s and county’s net zero targets. Support for the proposed next steps was also sought.

The report was accompanied by a slide presentation which highlighted the main elements of the report. The position on emissions was positive but changes were anticipated. Offsetting was seen as a controversial concept however could be positive if a series of criteria was followed. It was crucial to the net zero programme and the most cost effective.

When compared to other councils, the work already done was at a similar stage or even further forward. Emissions, however, were a bigger challenge for the county with levels falling slower than the rest of the country due to its heavy industry, so bigger solutions were required.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the information provided. It was determined that hydrogen technology was being considered for HGV gritters. Close working with planning and local authorities was improving guidance as was education and engagement with landowners through the local nature strategy and research.

The Council was close to its benchmarking numbers however there were budgetary challenges with more lobbying of central government around decision-making preferred. The Council had a clear waste management

strategy and huge improvements had been made but there was always more to be made.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the work being undertaken to establish an approach to carbon offsetting (including nature-based solutions) to support the Council's and county's net zero targets; and
- 2) Support the proposed next steps detailed in the report.

29/24 **MANAGEMENT OF ASH DIEBACK DISEASE**

Richard Bonner, Head of Countryside Services introduced the report, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, which provided comprehensive information on the work being undertaken to manage the impact of Ash Dieback Disease across Derbyshire on Council and private land.

There had been some resource and staffing issues however a project officer was now in place, working on a programme of conservation replanting. The action was being reviewed over Winter 2024.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the information provided. It was determined that the infectious stage of the disease remained within the leaves and was spread by the weather. There was no way of eradicating the disease and many affected trees were left to see if they would recover on their own however, if a tree was cleared, it was replaced by a native species whenever possible.

RESOLVED to note the work being undertaken to manage the impact of Ash Dieback Disease across Derbyshire on Council and private land.

30/24 **WORK PROGRAMME**

RESOLVED to note the work programme for the December 2024 meeting.

The meeting finished at 3.25 pm