

Public Question Pack

Question for the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – Climate Change, Biodiversity and Carbon Reduction

3 July 2023

Question 1 - relating to the workstream on Decarbonising the Domestic Sector, within Derbyshire CC's Climate Change Strategy 2023-25.

“A draft action plan was published in April of this year, on "Homes fit for the Future: Decarbonising Derbyshire's Housing", setting out a major multi-sector programme of work beginning in May (2023), with the Council assuming lead responsibility in many of the actions proposed. This followed an extensive consultation with Derbyshire householders and local community groups about the barriers to retrofitting. Early findings were considered by the Committee (in November of last year), when it was resolved to "co-design and co-deliver a programme of activities to support homeowners to undertake energy efficiency work".

The closing date for comments on the draft Action Plan was 5th May. It is now July 2023. A final action plan has not been published. Many of the goals set out there cannot be achieved without this, and the extensive leadership from the County Council envisaged in the plan.

What steps (beyond increasing the capacity of the Officer Team in the Climate Change Section, which is in progress) do the Committee consider are needed to ensure immediate and effective leadership by the Council of this urgent programme of work to decarbonise Derbyshire's housing?”

(From Chris Ring)

Response

“Thank you for your question, Mr Ring.

The County Council, along with Derbyshire’s district and borough councils, undertook extensive community engagement during late 2022 and early 2023 to understand the barriers that exist to Derbyshire’s homeowners undertaking energy efficiency retrofitting activities on their homes, and to ascertain the support that could be provided by local authorities and their partners to help remove these barriers.

The Homes Fit for the Future Action Plan was developed in response to the engagement findings and, following the securing of support from the Council's senior management and Elected Members, the draft Action Plan was shared with groups and individuals for comment between March and May 2023. Feedback received on the draft Action Plan has been positive and we do therefore not expect there to be any significant changes to the final version of the Action Plan, which will be signed off for delivery this summer.

The Action Plan is seen as the foundation of a long-term strategy and approach to decarbonising Derbyshire's housing. There are two crucial factors that will underpin the effectiveness and success of any approach: funding and partnership working.

In terms of funding, running in parallel to the Action Plan development, officers have been exploring funding opportunities to enable the Action Plan and any subsequent long-term strategy to be delivered. This includes a collaborative bid with local authority partners in Derby, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to help fund the provision of face-to-face and tailored retrofitting advice and support to homeowners. We are hopeful that this bid will be successful and expect to hear the outcome over the coming weeks.

In terms of partnership working, and recognising the scale of the challenge, the Action Plan needs to be delivered through joint working with residents, other local authorities and wider stakeholders. As such, officers are establishing plans for the co-delivery of many actions in the Action Plan, which also includes working with contractors, colleges and training providers to enable a growth in the domestic retrofitting supply chain in the county.

We recognise that this is an important area of work that requires urgent action locally, but that it is also a national challenge, and therefore greater action, funding and commitment is needed from national government. Through its membership of organisations such as the UK100 and the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) the Council will continue to use its influence to lobby government for greater national commitment and action."

The following supplementary question was asked:

"Does the Committee envisage that the County Council's other resources can be used to (1) engage householders in the "Homes Fit for the Future" programme of work eg via printed media such as Derbyshire Now and the Derbyshire Adult Learning Service; (2) to enlist the support of further and higher education providers in developing the "green skills" workforce; and (3) engage with local planning authorities to encourage applications to retrofit Derbyshire's Housing stock?"

The response of the Chair of the Committee was:

"Thank you for your question. Regarding publication I think we all agree that the methods suggested including going in Derbyshire Now should be utilised. As a committee we will make the request however I suspect it would have happened as a matter of course anyway.

I understand there is always a desire to be speedier on these projects however. we need to ensure they are done correctly and deliver on our aims.

Finally, to cover your last point, as a committee we are aware of the lack of capacity to deliver at scale. This needs to be a focus going forward so the Derbyshire economy has the skills and trades to adapt people's homes to reduce emissions."

Councillor Wayne Major

Chairman

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Question 2

“The 32 Priority Actions against which the Climate Change Strategy is monitored are divided into themes.

The traffic light indicators against the Low Carbon Economy Theme shows two of the actions are denoted as green and five as amber. This has not changed since the performance reports were devised 18 months ago. There are other examples within other themes, but focusing on the Low Carbon Economy theme we see there are two actions that are not within timetable and are not delivering the required outcomes.

What does it take for an action to be recorded as red – ‘unlikely to achieve timetable and/or to deliver required outcome’?”

(from Gez Kinsella)

Response

“Thank you for your question Cllr Kinsella.

We understand that the two actions referred to in the question relate to:

1. Taking forward the COVID Recovery Strategy to identify and work with high carbon commercial industries
2. Working with the district and borough councils to develop a Strategic Joint Planning Framework for Derbyshire

In these two cases, the specific deliverables referenced in the actions (the COVID Recovery Strategy and the Strategic Joint Planning Framework) have not been progressed as originally planned due to delays in national government action, including delays to publication of the Planning White Paper, which has paused the development of a Strategic Joint Planning Framework.

As a result, delivery of the required benefits and outcomes are being progressed through other mechanisms, such as the Council's work with the Minerals Products Industry on net zero, and the development of Climate Change Planning Guidance and an associated Assessment Metric. However, your comments have been taken on board and will be considered during the ongoing quarterly review and reporting of performance.

The Council's Programme Manager for Climate Change, Caroline Toplis, would be happy to meet with you separately to discuss any specific points of query."

Councillor Wayne Major
Chairman
Improvement and Scrutiny – Climate Change, Biodiversity and Carbon
Reduction Committee