

PUBLIC

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY AND CARBON REDUCTION** held on 26 July 2021 at County Hall, Matlock

**PRESENT**

Councillor W Major (Chairman)

Councillors B Bingham, A Clarke, M Ford, A Hayes, T Kemp, G Kinsella, R Redfern and P Rose

Apologies were received from Councillor S Bull

Also in attendance from Place were C Brailsford, S Etchells, N Haslam (virtual) and C Toplis

**01/21      PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**Question 1 from Lisa Hopkinson:**

Does the Committee have any procedures to vet appointed members to ensure that they fully accept the scientific consensus that the climate is warming to dangerous levels and greenhouse gases emitted by human activities are the primary cause, and that the members are committed to acting to reduce emissions in accordance with the scientific consensus? If not, will the Committee consider introducing such procedures to ensure that climate deniers and those shamelessly peddling pseudoscience and misinformation, that will ultimately destroy the planet and contributes to a stalled public discourse, will not be given a voice on the Committee that is tasked with scrutinising climate change action?

**Response:**

The Committee doesn't appoint its own members, this is done by full council therefore the committee doesn't and wouldn't be able to vet its members. The Committee does however, supply background information and training to members to inform them on the topics they are discussing. This is invaluable in terms of enlightening members on the issues being discussed.

**Question 2 from Anne Thoday:**

As a Derbyshire resident I am interested in how the Council is reducing the environmental impact and carbon emissions created by its own workforce. The recently published Derbyshire County Council Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2021 pledges to 'include climate change training as part of the

induction process for all Elected Members and staff to strengthen knowledge of carbon emissions, climate resilience and net zero development.'

Two years ago in October 2019, the Corporate Environmental policy similarly pledged to 'ensure all staff are able to implement the Corporate Environment Policy Raising awareness, educating and training employees and those working on our behalf to ensure that all staff have the knowledge, skills and understanding to implement the Environment Policy.' Would the Committee investigate whether two years on this policy has been enacted and that ALL staff are now aware of the Corporate Environmental policy and that there is a suitable framework of training and procedure in place which ensures all staff are supported by the management structure to implement the policy in their work for Derbyshire County Council?

Could the Committee also consider how the impact of this is measured in terms of overall reduction in carbon emissions and environmental impact created by the work of Derbyshire County Council employees?

**Response:**

This is a new committee with the remit of reviewing and scrutinising matters relating to Climate Change, Biodiversity and Carbon Reduction. An important aspect of its overarching role will be to consider the effectiveness of measures to reduce carbon emissions from the Council's own operations, and the Committee will undertake this role using an evidenced based approach. It is not anticipated that it will be possible to link reductions in carbon emissions to single interventions such as staff training, instead it is thought that a reduction in emissions will be achieved through a combination of measures. Measures will include awareness raising, behaviour change and service redesign.

The Committee recognises the importance of raising awareness of employees, elected members, businesses, and residents. Therefore, your suggestion to track the uptake of training and the awareness of our own employees is considered a good one. It is something that the Committee can readily incorporate into its work programme.

The Council has established a range of awareness raising initiatives and there is an appetite to both expand the offer and increase uptake. Some examples are provided below and there are further proposals under consideration:

- The Council is preparing a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, and an outline of these documents is being considered by this Committee on 26th July. An important component of the strategy will be reporting and monitoring emissions.
- The formal induction process for all new members of staff includes familiarisation with the Council's Corporate Environment Policy
- Available to all staff is a short e-learning unit introducing sustainability and climate change and how it affects an officer's role at work. This 30-

minute course has been developed in-house and therefore can be easily updated to include new initiatives as they are introduced.

- Elected Member induction training now includes a training session offering an introduction to climate change. The course lasts 1.5 hours plus a pre-training exercise.
- An eight-hour Carbon Literacy Training (CLT) course was delivered at County Hall in Matlock in 2019 and it is anticipated that other staff will have access to CLT courses delivered through the Local Authority Energy Partnership (LAEP) when the course is redesigned to enable participation online.
- Approximately every three weeks, a 'Go Green' edition of the internal newsletter 'Our Derbyshire' is distributed. This provides regular updates about the Council's work on climate change and sustainability, including training.
- Our climate change team is currently developing a climate change engagement strategy, which will include internal engagement with staff on climate change and wider environmental issues.

**02/21      PROPOSAL FOR A SINGLE USE PLASTICS POLICY** The Committee was asked to consider the issues surrounding procurement and use of Single Use Plastic and proposals for a Single Use Plastics Policy and Action Plan.

Local authorities had a crucial role in addressing the global climate change crisis and action was needed to reduce carbon emissions generated in Derbyshire. The County Council was building on measures already in place by removing single use plastics from catering at County Hall and minimising use of single use plastics across all operations.

Governance of climate change within the Council had been reviewed with Theme Teams, each with a named lead officer, co-ordinating and delivering projects across departments - the Theme Lead for Single Use Plastics was Procurement, working collaboratively with Waste colleagues and with input from other relevant themes as necessary.

In the UK, it was estimated that five million tonnes of plastic were used every year, nearly half of which was packaging used just once. The low cost of plastic had encouraged the development of many single use plastic (SUP) items, often used in packaging, consumer products, cosmetics, personal protective equipment and healthcare products. Appendix 2 of the report provided a comprehensive list of SUPs used by the Council.

- There were several key issues linked to the development of a SUP policy:
- Plastic pollution was litter - the quality of our environment contributed greatly to the local economy and supported a diverse range of habitats and species which were at risk due to plastic pollution and was costly to clear up. Tiny particles, known as micro-plastics represented a real

threat to our ecosystems which contaminated the food web. By reducing or removing SUPs, the County Council was leading by example in finding alternatives to the types of SUPs that would pollute the environment if not disposed of correctly.

- Disposal of waste plastics – it was recognised that all waste had a value and could be used elsewhere however, there was a need to develop alternatives through supporting research and innovation and to develop the circular economy to ensure SUP was not an end product but part of a cycle. The UK Government estimated that 4.7 billion plastic straws, 316 million plastic stirrers and 1.8 billion plastic-stemmed cotton buds ended up in landfill every year. Replacing these items with alternatives that were biodegradable or recyclable was a major technological and economic challenge – Appendix 3 of the report provided the difference between recyclable, biodegradable and compostable plastics.
- SUP was found in many products, with recyclable or readily biodegradable alternatives not always being available. Products that were available were often more expensive and the Council recognised the impact on Council finances, providing staff with guidelines on acceptable levels of increased cost.
- Plastic contributed to climate change - fossil fuel production chemicals were used to make almost all plastics therefore, by reducing or removing SUPs, the County Council was helping to reduce the demand for fossil fuels, thereby reducing the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

The UK Government published its *25-Year Environment Plan* in 2018, with a target to “achieving zero avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042” and in 2018 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published *Our waste, our resources: A strategy for England* which set out several plastic waste reduction reforms including a plastic packaging tax, introducing a Deposit Return Scheme and consistency in household and business recycling collections in England. Successive UK Governments had also signed-up to many international agreements aimed at reducing plastic in the marine environment.

It was important the Council played its part in these agreements, therefore the development of a Sustainable Procurement Policy would be considered in the context of SUPs. A draft outline Single Use Plastic Policy for the Council and suggested key actions were set out in Appendices 4 and 5.

Committee members asked questions following the presentation around local authority suppliers and procurement. It was recognised that keeping costs down and tackling the amount of waste generated by the public and the Authority was a challenge. In view of the pace of changes in this area, the Committee requested that the Policy was reviewed on an annual basis as opposed to every three years.

**RESOLVED** – that the Committee (1) support the further development of a the Single Use Plastics policy based on the initial draft.

2) recommend that the policy is reviewed annually Members proposed an amendment to the review period to annually from three years; and

**03/21**      **CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**      The Committee was provided with an update on the development of the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (developed by consultants, Arup) to outline the priority actions identified and to provide information on the governance structure and proposed plan for delivering the actions within the Strategy across the Council.

In November 2019, the Council approved its Carbon Reduction Plan ('the Plan') and the Derbyshire Environment and Climate Change Framework ('the Framework') following publication of its Climate and Carbon Reduction Manifesto in May 2019. The Plan set out how the Council could reduce emissions from its own estate and operations to net zero by 2032. The Framework set out an approach for all local authorities in Derbyshire to work together to reduce county-wide emissions to net zero by 2050.

Work over the last few years on reducing greenhouse gases had seen a 55% reduction in emissions from the Council's property (excluding schools), streetlighting, core fleet and grey fleet and the Council had worked closely with partner organisations to further develop the approach and actions set out in the Framework. A lot more had to be done to remain on target to meet the ambition of being a net zero Council by 2032, or sooner, and for the Council to fully play its role in ensuring the county was net zero by 2050.

A series of workshops identified future steps needed to be undertaken to take the agenda forward as well as the development of an overarching strategy and action plan. Consultants, Arup, were commissioned and, through engagement had produced a Strategy and Action Plan to direct the associated programme of work for the Council in the short, medium and longer term.

The report went on to outline the structure of the Strategy which contained 28 priority targets across five key themes which committed the Council to playing its role in delivering net zero buildings, expanding local renewable energy generation, changing transport choices, generating green jobs and preventing waste being sent to landfill; these were presented in Appendix 2 to the report. These actions were supported by over 120 supplementary actions, initiatives and projects, which it was anticipated the County Council would either lead on or support.

The Strategy covered the period 2021-25 and would be reviewed and updated fully in 2025 to provide a Strategy beyond 2025. The targets set for each area would be revised as further studies were carried out and new priority

actions and completion of existing actions were identified. The Strategy would also be complemented by the production of a Natural Capital Strategy and a strategy to build the resilience of Derbyshire to a changing climate.

The report detailed programme management and governance which included the establishing of a Climate Change and Environment Programme Board (CCEPB) to provide strategic oversight and direction for the delivery of the programme, make recommendations around the commissioning and resource implications of priority projects and initiatives and provide assurance that the programme was aligned with the Strategy and the Council's carbon reduction targets.

Theme Teams were being established, each led by a Theme Lead to oversee the projects and activities relevant to their strategic theme. A Theme Leaders Group ('the Group'), comprising of the Leads, and the Programme Manager, would co-ordinate activities across the themes. The Programme Manager would provide the link between the Group and the CCEPB. Identified themes and their respective Leads were listed.

The Strategy was undergoing a final detailed review which would then be shared and presented to CMT and shared with the Committee. It was intended that the Strategy would be presented to Cabinet in October 2021, with a view to it being launched and published shortly after, potentially as part of Derbyshire Country Council's activities around the UN Climate Change Conference 2021 (COP26).

Committee members asked questions following the presentation, specifically around how the strategy would be embedded across the organisation, how the strategy would be resourced and the approach to public consultation. It was suggested that short term interim targets should be introduced to monitor the effectiveness of the strategy and to ensure the Council was on track to meet its targets in the long term.

**RESOLVED** – that the Committee (1) support the priority actions within the Climate Change Strategy;

(2) note the intention to present the Strategy to Cabinet in October 2021 and to launch and publish the Strategy shortly thereafter;

(3) support the governance structure that had been established to deliver the programme of work; and

(4) request that the final draft of the Strategy be brought to the Committee for its consideration.

**04/21**      **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**      **RESOLVED** – for the Committee to meet on 16 August 2021 to discuss a work programme for 2021-22.