

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee. held at County Hall, Glenfield on Friday, 3 September 2021.

Mr. T. Pendleton CC
Mr. G. A. Boulter CC
Mrs. A. Hack CC

Mr. Lovegrove CC
Mrs R. Page CC
Mr. N. Chapman CC

Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr. B. Harrison-Rushton CC and Mr. M. Frisby CC

In attendance

Mr. B. Pain CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Environment and the Green Agenda

1. Appointment of Chairman.

That it be noted that Mr. T. Pendleton has been appointed Chairman of the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2022.

Mr. T. Pendleton CC in the Chair

2. Election of Deputy Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. M. Frisby CC be elected Deputy Chairman of the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2022.

3. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that the following six questions had been received under Standing Order 34 from Ms. J. Howard.

“Further to the questions we raised at the meeting of the Environment and Transport Scrutiny committee we were very pleased that both yourself and the Officers are passionate about recycling and emissions. And we would thank you for your replies and target dates given.

Please can we therefore ask the following questions to further understand your targets on recycling, and with the answers we could try and improve recycling together, as it is a matter for all of us to be aware and change our habits. Some of the additional questions are based on the Channel 4 programme on March 8th entitled ‘The Dirty Truth about your Rubbish’ details of which were forwarded to you. Others are further questions on your targets.

1. You have stated that the recycling figure you have reached is 45% and you have not yet reached your 50% target. Please can you confirm if this 45% figure is what

is collected by the collecting authorities or is the figure that is actually sent for recycling within the County.”

Response by the Chairman:

“The 45% figure is based on former National Indicator 192, defined as the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, composting or recycling. This incorporates material collected by district councils at the kerbside and material delivered by residents to one of LCC’s Recycling and Household Waste Sites.

This figure is calculated through the national WasteDataFlow system. Information on how NI192 is calculated can be found at

https://www.wastedataflow.org/documents/guidancenotes/NationalIndicators/GN31_Handbook_Definitions_1.0.pdf and

https://www.wastedataflow.org/documents/guidancenotes/NationalIndicators/GN30a_BV_PI_and_NI_comparator_calculations_Qu100.pdf”

2. “What percentage of recycling collected is rejected and sent to landfill or incineration as it is contaminated.”

Response by the Chairman

“During the 2020/21 financial year, just over 10% of the total tonnage of kerbside collected recycling was contaminated.”

3. “What audits are taken on black bag waste to determine any percentage figure of recyclable products that are contained in the waste. If these figures are not available, please can consideration be given to producing them so that improvements can be made. This will dramatically help ambient air quality from air polluting emissions from plastics in the incineration process.”

Response by the Chairman

“Audits of black bag waste are undertaken on an ad-hoc basis. The last audit took place in autumn 2018.”

4. “In reply to question 4, 5, In particular you state:

Emissions from the disposal of municipal waste are classified as Scope 3 (Other indirect emissions) i.e. emissions that are a consequence of an organisation’s actions but which occur at sources which they do not own or control under HM Government’s Environmental Reporting Guidelines (March 2019) for voluntary greenhouse gas reporting. The inclusion of these emissions is optional, please see previous answer with regard to changes in the scope of the council’s greenhouse gas emissions report.

If these reporting requirements are optional we would enquire why you would not wish to include them into your net carbon emission targets as they are part of the County’s carbon footprint. As you know Wales is setting a very good example and targeting to be a Zero Waste country by 2050.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/beyond-recycling-strategy-document.pdf>

Zero waste is where all waste that is produced is re-used or recycled as a resource without the need for any landfill or energy recovery.”

Response by the Chairman

“Municipal waste is not included in the Council’s own greenhouse gas reporting. The Council use the BEIS data to monitor the emissions for Leicestershire, which includes reference to waste related emissions. See <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/723c243d-2f1a-4d27-8b61-cdb93e5b10ff/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2019> for more details.”

5. “Please will you include us in your email list for committee papers in the future, and in particular we are very interested in the target for spring 2022 for the Leicestershire Municipal Waste Management Strategy setting out how the County intends to manage municipal waste within the County to 2050, including your technology neutral position, R1 status for incinerators, and recycling etc.
6. Regarding your policy on Carbon Capture, we are interested in your target for the end of 2021 to complete your work. Again please can you forward the relevant paper.”

Response by the Chairman

“You can sign up for email alerts about newly published agendas, reports and minutes of council meetings using the link here:- <https://politics.leics.gov.uk/mgRegisterKeywordInterest.aspx?bcr=1>. Once registered, you can choose which committees or electoral divisions you are interested in, you will then receive an email linking all the relevant items published that day.”

Supplementary Questions

The supplementary questions to questions 1, 3, 4 and 5 set out below were submitted by Ms Howard. The Chairman agreed to provide a written answer to these questions following the meeting.

“1. What percentage of the 45% of recycled waste collected is suitable and sent for actual recycling companies. Statistically this figure will be lower.

3. What percentage in the black bin waste audit was found to be recyclable in the audit. And what is being done about this. How are the public educated in this respect as different boroughs have different policies?

4. Can the council consider including these emissions from municipal waste in its policy

5. We are particularly interested in what measures the council have to ensure that it is not exposed to illegal processes in the disposal of the county’s residual waste in its waste management policy bearing in mind recent fines levied on operators.”

4. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

5. Urgent Items..

There were no urgent items for consideration.

6. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

All members who were also members of district councils declared a personal interest in relation Agenda Item 9, Briefing on Environment and Strategy Carbon Commitments and Agenda Item 10, the Resources and Waste Briefing.

7. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

8. Presentation of Petitions.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

9. Briefing on Environment Strategy and Carbon Commitments.

The Committee received a briefing on the Environment Strategy and the Council's Carbon Commitments. A copy of the presentation, marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were made:-

- i. Higher levels of air pollution within North West Leicestershire and Market Harborough were as a result of the location of industry as well as logistics located along the strategic road network. It was noted that North West Leicestershire's levels also included some emissions from the Airport, though not all.
- ii. Work was underway to develop Tranche 2 of the Carbon Reduction Roadmap to address the Council's wider unmeasured emissions and the approach to reduce Leicestershire's emissions. However, it was recognised that there also needed to be pressure from Government. The Council was working with UK100 in order to lobby for top down change.
- iii. Ash dieback was not the only risk to trees within Leicestershire, to which Members were assured that the Forestry Team continued to work to protect and improve the treescape within Leicestershire, which included the target to plant 700,000 trees by 2030.
- iv. Air quality was recognised as a multifaceted issue which was overseen by the Director of Public Health due to his oversight of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Members were assured that a report would be brought to the Committee as appropriate given its remit.

- v. It was suggested that the Department look to overlay the Air Quality and Biodiversity maps provided, to allow the Committee to consider any correlation between the two factors.
- vi. The Council would look at alternative fuels such as electric and hydrogen for its fleet. Part of the consideration would include availability, fit for purpose and what infrastructure would be needed to support that fleet.

The Lead Member for the Green Agenda concluded by praising the work undertaken by the Environment Team in working to reduce the County Council's emissions to 11,000 tonnes, meaning the Council was currently on track to reach net zero by 2030 . However, he emphasised that the next step to deal with the Council's unmeasured emissions and the wider county emissions would be a challenge given the Council lacked direct levers of influence in some circumstances. Ultimately it was recognised that at all levels people needed to take responsibility in recognising their own behaviour and decisions in order to combat climate change.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

10. Briefing on the Resources and Waste Strategy.

The Committee received a briefing on the Resources and Waste Strategy. A copy of the presentation marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were made:-

- i. It was queried how the Council was working with partners to ensure a smooth implementation period regarding changes proposed by Government, given the Council's role as Waste Disposal Authority and district councils' responsibility to collect waste and recycling. The Director assured Members that the County Council was communicating across its established waste partnership, and that issues posed were not a job for just one organisation. As a result, the County Council was looking to review its Joint Strategy with the Leicestershire Waste Partnership which includes the district councils and will involve engagement with the wider public.
- ii. Regarding Government's proposal to introduce mandatory food waste collection it was noted the scheme would take extensive planning, and Government had promised to meet net additional costs for. However, despite this it would create a challenge for both the County Council and district authorities.
- iii. A Member raised a concern relating to waste from construction, demolition and excavation that continued to increase, and what the Council could do to manage that given the increase in infrastructure also promoted by Government. The Director assured Members that where possible the Council would look to recycle, and reuse, as with some road schemes recycling of material could take place on site in some circumstances. Furthermore the Council was a relatively small player in the creation of that type of waste, and it was felt that even if sector activity increased it would not automatically mean the Council's waste would, as policies and behaviour change looked to reduce output of waste where possible.

- iv. Skip firms and other parts of the waste industry were regulated by the Environment Agency. Permits for sites such as Whetstone Waste Transfer station set out conditions for operation in relation to hours, tonnage and how long waste could remain on site. Private firms were regulated in the same way.
- v. Leicestershire County Council was technology neutral and would look at the best source and overall business case to prevent landfill as per the Government's policy position. In relation to its performance indicators, Members recognised that the Council's landfill was getting redirected to energy from waste where possible. This took time due to long-standing contracts, however once up for renewal the County Council could look at other technologies through its procurement process.
- vi. A member queried whether the increase in waste to incineration could affect recycling rates due to the calorific value of waste required by incineration, though it was noted rates had remained relatively stable in the past five years.
- vii. District councils managed waste collection differently. It was noted that generally all collected the same range of things and that the County Council worked closely with districts regarding contamination issues. North West Leicestershire District Council tended to have less recycling but lower levels of contamination due to its curb side sorting method, whereas the other district councils had higher levels of contamination due to their single recycling bin but higher levels of recycling, which evened itself out.
- viii. The Council was awaiting further information from the Government about how proposed 'producer payments' would work. A Member highlighted that orders online created far more packaging, but no extra charge, than an item bought in store, requiring a 10p bag. It was expected that through extended producer responsibility the more packaging put on the market that was unrecyclable, the more they would pay – therefore in future it was expected producers would be more sustainable in their packaging,
- ix. It was felt the Council did not put enough emphasis on reduction within the Council's Waste Strategy, in comparison to re-use and recycle.
- x. Given the impact of the pandemic the plans for re-use facilities at the Recycling and Household Waste Sites had been paused, the Department was looking again at restarting the planned service.
- xi. Members were pleased to note the positive local initiatives such as Plastic Free Oadby, a group that looked to reduce the use of plastic containers and bags in their local area.
- xii. A member queried Cabinet's decision to cut the budget for recycling education, in a time where it was more important than ever to influence good behaviour. In response the Chairman however noted there had been no reduction in recycling rates as set out in the presentation.
- xiii. Three Recycling and Household Waste sites had been temporarily closed due to the shortage of HGV drivers which were needed to empty waste at the sites. The decision also ensured that other sites could be kept open, without spreading staff too thinly.

The Lead Member for the Green Agenda concluded that it was clear the County Council played a key role as Waste Disposal Authority and that the Council was generally successful in limiting what it sent to landfill. It was emphasised that considering the Council's budget, in relation to other councils which may have undertaken a Private Finance Initiative with the Government to reduce their waste contract costs, the County Council did well. Furthermore it was recognised that the Environment Bill was a key piece of legislation that would result in a profound change of how the County Council and its partners dealt with waste, which would be eagerly awaited.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation provided be noted.

11. Environment and Waste Performance Report to June 2021.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on performance of Environment and Waste to June 2021. A copy of the report, marked 'agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion the following points were noted:-

- i. The indicators within the report were a set of national and local indicators, some of which were historic as part of previous national data sets, which the County Council still felt it should report. These indicators were then divided under the Council's Strategic Objectives to enable Members to consider whether the Council was moving in the correct direction. As a result, it monitored both Leicestershire County Council indicators and wider Leicestershire indicators which covered industry and the members of the public. The Director assured Members that they welcomed any suggestions regarding future indicators or statistics Members would like to consider.
- ii. The percentage of waste recycled from Leicestershire County Council sites (non-operational) had been impacted by a change in the mix of waste collected during the pandemic, for instance the Council no longer collecting separate food waste, due to low numbers of workers in its offices. The Council would continue to monitor the indicator and look at ways to improve it as part of new ways of working plans.
- iii. Following a query on how Leicestershire related to other authorities in its energy efficiency ratings for existing homes, it was noted that the County Council was quite low, in the third quartile. This was partly due to a large number of older homes lacking cavity insulation. Members noted that the Government's Green Homes Grant was available to help with further information detailed on the County Council's website, that all those eligible should be encouraged to take up.
- iv. Following a concern related to the increase in Leicestershire County Council fleet emissions Members were assured that the increase was due to the pandemic as a result of social distancing where two vehicles were needed to transport workers, rather than the one.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

12. Dates of Future Meetings.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that future meetings of the Committee would be held at 2pm on the following dates:-

Tuesday 9 November 2021
Wednesday 26 January 2022
Tuesday 1 March 2022
Tuesday 14 June 2022
Friday 2 September 2022
Tuesday 1 November 2022

2.00pm-4.05 pm
03 September 2021

CHAIRMAN