

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee. held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 26 January 2022.

PRESENT

Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC (in the Chair)

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC  
Mr. N. Chapman CC  
Mr. M. Frisby CC

Mrs. A. J. Hack CC  
Mr. B. Harrison-Rushton CC  
Mrs. R. Page CC

In attendance

Mr. N. Rushton, Leader of the Council

27. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2021 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

28. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

29. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

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

30. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

31. 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.

No declarations were made.

32. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

33. Presentation of Petitions.

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

34. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

35. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 - 2025/26

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Environment and Transport and the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2022/23 to 2025/26 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to waste, the environment and the green agenda. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item '9' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. N. Rushton CC, Leader of the Council, to the meeting for this item.

The Committee was advised that there was an error in the numbering of some of the savings items within the report and the appendix, but that the references within the table to the title of each saving were correct and comparable.

Arising from the discussion the following points were noted:

Growth

- i. Conversion of the County Council's diesel fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil would significantly reduce carbon emissions from the fleet. The Committee was assured that the change would be done in a managed way to ensure resilience against any unforeseen circumstance, in the new financial year, subject to approval of the MTFS by Full Council.
- ii. Following the increase in kerbside collected waste as a result of the pandemic, it was queried whether there was a corresponding decrease in commercial waste. In response the Director informed the Committee that while the County Council was not responsible for commercial waste, it did handle a low level through its waste transfer stations. It was noted that commercial waste in that regard had recovered. The Department would look to capitalise on any opportunities available to it.

Savings

- iii. Through a contract renewal the existing contract for disposal of wood had been renegotiated which delivered £0.4million of savings.
- iv. The Authority had struggled for a number of years with its waste disposal resilience following the closure of the Cotesbach Mechanical Biological Treatment facility, that left it without a local all-weather solution to dispose of its waste, i.e. if a landfill site was closed due to high winds. This meant the distance needed to travel to redirect its residual waste could be greater. This would be managed through the reletting of contracts and the new Bardon Waste Transfer Station which would provide further

resilience and increased holding capacity additional to Whetstone and Loughborough Transfer Stations.

- v. The Director assured Members that the Department remained committed to progressing reuse initiatives as part of its Recycling and Household Waste sites service approach. It was noted progress had stalled as a result of staffing and market issues related to the pandemic, but that infrastructure had been put in place at some sites to facilitate it. Prior to the pandemic the item had been profiled over six years to achieve £200,000 income, however the business case would need to be refreshed and the savings reprofiled as the market recovered.

### Capital Programme

- vi. It was clarified that, in relation to the Kibworth site redevelopment, the total scheme cost was £5.5million, a portion of which had already been funded, with the remaining £2 million set out within the Capital Programme for 2022/23. The Site was expected to open Autumn 2022.

### RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and information now provided be noted;
- (b) That the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 31 January 2022.

### 36. Net Zero Carbon 2045: A Roadmap for Leicestershire

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which updated Members on the Council's response to the climate emergency, and advised on the key findings from the Net Zero Carbon 2045 roadmap and an overview of the approach to develop the Council's Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item '10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion the following points arose:-

- i. The County Council's pledge to achieve net zero across the county by 2045 could not be achieved by the Council alone. As part of the development of the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan it needed to consider its own role in place leadership to create a holistic approach to tackle climate change.
- ii. Members recognised that like the County Council, most districts had declared climate emergencies and set aside funding, or at least aspired, to address climate issues. In developing its roadmap, the Authority would work with existing partnerships, and look to support organisations such as parish and town councils that may not have the skills or experience available, which was welcomed by the Committee.
- iii. Members were assured that the Authority would consider where gaps existed in its partnership work and use other mediums, such as the potential development of a Citizen's Assembly, to engender awareness and action with the public as well as local organisations.

- iv. Ongoing initiatives were highlighted and welcomed by the Committee, such as wildflower verges and the development of a tree nursery, as well as positive partnership work with the City Council following the funding the City had received from Government for their electric bus fleet.
- v. It was recognised that the County Council had limited resource available to it alone. Instead it needed to focus on working with other organisations and the public to show it was in their best interests financially and environmentally to take positive action towards carbon neutrality.
- vi. A member emphasised that the drive to net zero was not only about carbon reduction, but had overall health benefits too. Further commenting on the importance of a joined up approach and messaging, having noted the balance between coronavirus measures to ventilate schools and the need to heat them, which resulted in increased energy consumption.
- vii. The Committee welcomed local initiatives and good practice reported by Members, such as the local Brooksby Melton College's free Climate Change and Environmental Awareness Course, that promised to plant a tree for every course completed.
- viii. As part of the Authority's pledge to become a carbon neutral county by 2045 the County Council had promised to plant 700,000 trees, recognising their importance in providing positive benefits for the environment, clean air and biodiversity. To enable the public to monitor its progress the Council had developed an interactive tree map and form where individuals could record trees that had been planted. Members noted the Council's website also included further information on tree species and planting advice and how to get involved.
- ix. It was projected that the county could lose up to half a million Ash trees due to Ash Dieback. Of those, 140,000 were on highway verges under the Authority's ownership. To manage the disease the County Council had launched its own Action Plan through work with the Tree Council, and undertook monitoring and annual surveys whilst taking appropriate action following its risk based approach. The Director informed Members that officers also supported private landowners to help ensure they were aware of the condition of their trees and had access to relevant information on the matter.
- x. In response to a query regarding water leakage, Members were informed that the County Council had no powers to enforce water companies to resolve leakages faster and that it was the duty of the regulatory body and to scrutinise and enforce standards.
- xi. The County Council was limited in how it could respond as a consultee to planning applications to district and borough councils by the National Planning Policy Framework.

#### RESOVLED:

- a) That the report and information now provided be noted;
- b) That the comments now made be considered by Cabinet as part of its report on 29 March 2022.

37. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2020-21.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided details of the Council's greenhouse gas emissions 2020-21. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item '11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion the following points were raised:-

- i. A Member questioned the exclusion of data related to schools under local authority control, or other Council buildings such as Sure Start centres. In response the Committee noted that the report included direct emissions and purchased electricity resultant from the owned and leased assets and operations where the Council was responsible for the purchase of energy or fuel. Schools or Sure Start centres that had alternative energy arrangements were not included due to the complexity in procurement and funding arrangements. Such cases would be covered as scope 3 emissions and would be addressed as part of the Council's unmeasured emissions and wider Leicestershire emissions roadmap. The Director agreed to take away the issue and consider how potential data gaps on local authority maintained schools could be addressed as part of future reports.
- ii. Around 5,000 recycled tyres had been used as part of highway maintenance road surfacing, as a carbon friendly alternative to landfill. The initiative had been funded using cash from the Department for Transport's challenge fund to assist with Covid-19 recovery. The Council had researched the benefits which would be evidenced over the life of the scheme and were expected to last at least a decade. The County Council would continue to look where innovative low carbon technologies were possible in any major reconstructions it undertook.

The Leader of the County Council concluded the item highlighting the importance of the Authority's place leadership role in empowering organisations such as parish councils to support reduction in greenhouse gases, and evidencing benefits to residents. It was emphasised that if the County Council were to receive a County Deal it could further build on its green agenda and carbon reduction programme through its innovative enterprises.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the Greenhouse Gas Report 2020-21.

38. Environmental Performance Report 2020-21.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided details of the Council's environmental performance for 2020-21. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item '12' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion the following points arose:-

- i. The Director reported that electricity consumed per m<sup>2</sup> in County Council buildings was ahead of target, yet gas and biomass consumption had increased and was behind target. Members noted that savings in electricity were driven by the closure

of some smaller council buildings, however, County Hall remained open and staff worked throughout the building which was heated through its centralised system.

- ii. Members noted that districts had their own dispensations in relation to waste collected. In response to a query regarding Casepak not allowing comingled collection of textiles, officers would circulate figures for recycling rates, though it was recognised there were other outlets for those items.
- iii. Recycling from Leicestershire County Council office buildings had reduced as a result of the pandemic as less staff were in offices, meaning there was less waste, and the proportion of waste had changed.
- iv. In response to a query on the reduction of the percentage of household waste reused, recycled or composted it was noted over the years levels had plateaued and reduced slightly, and that work was ongoing with districts. Members noted that the Council was developing its Resources and Waste Strategy to be delivered by the Leicestershire Waste Partnership, which would include Government's target of 65% municipal waste recycled by 2035.
- v. Government intended to implement Extended Producer Responsibility for all producers of packages, putting onus on the manufacturers that packaging was recyclable, which was expected to change the dynamic of the market. The County Council would continue to monitor its own position and any impact it may have and report back to the Committee.
- vi. In response to a question on the 7% reduction in household waste per household the Director advised that reduced tonnage was likely due to gaps in service provision, as a result of the pandemic. For instance, the closure of all 14 Recycling and Household Waste Sites for a period, and districts bulky waste and garden waste collection hiatuses
- vii. The Authority awaited indicative funding allocation from Government for the Council's bus service improvement plan, however early indications led to the view that city areas could be the main focus for funding. It was hoped any funding would help the Authority influence a reduction in traffic alongside its fourth iteration of its Local Transport Plan, and the Department for Transport's decarbonising transport plan.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the Environmental Performance Report 2020-21.

39. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 1 March 2pm.