

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee. held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 20 October 2022.

PRESENT

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

Mr. R. G. Allen CC

Mr. Max Hunt CC

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC

Mr. C. A. Smith CC

Mr. M. Frisby CC

In attendance

Mr. B. Pain – Cabinet Lead Member.

13. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2022 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

14. Question Time.

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

15. 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).

16. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

17. 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.

18. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

19. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.

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

20. Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an overview of the findings of the public consultation on the draft Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan and set out the final versions of the Strategy and Action Plan, along with the 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan.

The Committee also considered a supplementary report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided a full summary of the consultation findings. A copy of the reports, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman explained that an enquiry had been received from a member of the public, asking how transport emissions would be reduced, given that they were amongst the biggest contributors to overall carbon emissions in the county but had low deliverability scores. The enquiry had not been received in time to be included under the agenda item 'Question Time', but he had asked officers to provide a response in their introduction to the report.

In response to the enquiry, the Director advised that tackling transport emissions in the UK was one of the most challenging areas to address in order to become net zero. Transport emissions were decarbonising at a much slower rate than other emissions sources. Actions to address this would be set out in the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), which presented a vision for the future, and the Electric Vehicle Strategy, which had carbon reduction at its heart and was focused on accelerating changes and supporting the development of the charging infrastructure. The Council, as well as focusing on reducing its own carbon emissions, also intended to encourage and support partners to deliver reductions in their emissions.

Arising from discussion of the Strategy and Action Plan, the following points were raised:

- (i) The reserve funding pot of £450,000, allocated by the Cabinet in September 2019, had not been spent yet due to costs to date being covered by the overall departmental budget. This meant it would be available to fund delivery of some of the actions in the Net Zero Strategy. It was confirmed that the funding was still earmarked for this purpose, however, members were reminded of the challenging financial circumstances facing the Council and the upcoming budget process. Going forward, it was intended that the clean, green agenda would be business as usual and funded via departmental budgets rather than through a specific financial reserve.
- (ii) It was confirmed that 1400 was the cumulative response rate for the consultation, made up of several different consultation channels.
- (iii) The trial of hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) in large highways vehicles was ongoing. There were plans to extend the trial to the fleet of waste vehicles. Work was also ongoing to consider procurement issues and the capacity of the market. The Committee was pleased to learn that HVO achieved a 95% emissions reduction when compared to white diesel and supported the continuation of the trial.

- (iv) Electric vehicles (EV) within the County Council's fleet were both leased and owned by the Council. EV batteries are still a relatively new technology so end of life solutions which include recycling and reuse change rapidly.
- (v) The planning application for the solar farm at Quorn had recently been permitted. It was hoped that work would start onsite during the following year. The business case for the solar farm was robust and had been strengthened through the recent rises in energy prices. In addition, it would provide a stable source of energy for the County Council. It would generate sufficient energy to power 3000 homes.
- (vi) A member suggested that the Action Plan was lacking a trajectory for the actions and queried why such a difficult and long-term strategy had been attempted. In response, the Cabinet Lead Member acknowledged that the Strategy was difficult, and subject to political and economic volatility, but reminded members that the Council was largely working towards national targets or those identified through the Council's membership of particular groups. The Council would work in partnership with other organisations to deliver the targets. It was also confirmed that there would be five year planning cycles with an annual report on the delivery of the Action Plan.
- (vii) A member queried the meaning of a just and fair transition to net zero. The Director provided the example of domestic retrofitting; some people could afford to improve the insulation of their home and could access a collective purchasing scheme to enable them to do so. For those that could not afford it, Green Living Leicestershire was a scheme funded by Central Government which gave those most in need access to measure which would improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- (viii) In response to criticism from a member that the actions, whilst praiseworthy, were not SMART, the Cabinet Lead Member advised that whilst some future actions would inform detailed business cases, each action was clearly defined and that timescales, costs, carbon savings and how deliverable each action was thought to be were all set out in the Action Plan. However, the County Council would not be able to deliver the actions alone. Its knowledge and evidence bases would be used to help others to deliver actions.

RESOLVED:

That the comments now made be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 25 October 2022.

21. Environment and Waste Performance Report to June 2022.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Environment and Transport which provided the latest performance update on the key performance indicators that the Council was responsible for delivering against the Council's Strategic Plan (2022-26). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:

- (i) The Director undertook to provide a written response to the Committee regarding a query as to whether the fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4) would include reference to air pollution.
- (ii) It was clarified that 'new' and existing' with regard to the percentage of domestic properties with an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C+ referred to the age of the buildings and whether they were new builds or older houses. The Council did have a retrofitting strategy and it was suggested that improving performance in this area would be a useful area of focus for officers.
- (iii) The strong performance with regard to the number of trees planted was welcomed. However, given that the summer had been hot and dry, it was queried whether the trees were monitored once they had been planted and whether they had all survived. The Committee was advised that the Council had not directly planted all the trees but the Director would undertake to provide a written response to the Committee with regard to monitoring arrangements.

RESOLVED:

That the latest performance update be noted.

22. Dates of future meetings.

The Committee noted that future meetings would be held at 2.00pm on the following dates:

10 November 2022  
19 January 2023  
2 March 2023  
7 June 2023  
14 September 2023  
2 November 2023.

2.00 - 3.15 pm  
20 October 2022

CHAIRMAN