

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 12 March 2025.

PRESENT

Mr. M. Frisby CC (in the Chair)

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC
Mr. N. Chapman CC
Mr. J. G. Coxon CC

Mr. D. Harrison CC
Mr. R. Hills CC
Mr. M. Hunt CC

48. Election of Vice Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr N. Chapman be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period end with the date of the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2025.

49. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2025 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

50. Question Time.

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

51. 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).

52. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

53. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

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.

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

There were no declarations of the party whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

55. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

56. Carbon Emissions in County Council Buildings

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources the purpose of which was to update the Committee on Carbon Emissions in County Council Buildings. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) In response to a Member's query as to whether the reduction in the number of buildings owned by the County Council was a contributing factor in the reduction of carbon emissions, officers reported that the measure per square metre was the same regardless of the size of the estate and that the reduction in emissions had therefore been due to measures put in place, such emissions expected to reduce further over coming years. The Director reported that if there were significant changes in assets in terms of the overall Council estate, then baselines would be adjusted and reported to the Committee through the annual report on Greenhouse Gas Emissions.
- ii) It was reported that approximately 25% of County Hall floor space was occupied by tenants and the kw energy cost per metre was still lower compared with previous years. Environment champions attended tenant liaison meetings to encourage tenants to abide by the Council's environment aims, for example, regarding recycling and energy saving. Members noted that the carbon reductions reported did not include buildings leased to tenants, who were responsible for their own energy bills.
- iii) It was noted that there was a small but efficient energy team of two staff members, resulting in a significant resource to output ratio.
- iv) It was noted that the current team of surveyors and project managers had a low carbon checklist embedded into their day-to-day operations, for example, developments and refurbishments. Members were informed that the small property energy team had, either through bidding or other means, been successful in bringing in millions in additional capital investment which had outweighed the cost of staffing the team.
- v) A Member voiced concern that the Team was reliant on external funding to be able to continue to deliver reduced carbon emissions across the Council estate. It was noted that the overall budget for decarbonisation of corporate properties was £100,000 annually over the period of the MTFS, and that although the team were reliant on external funding, it was proactive in applying for available government funding and had demonstrated its ability to deliver projects.
- vi) Members were supportive of the projects delivered but queried if there were ways to allocate the £100,000 that would be more effective in reaching the aims of carbon reduction. It was confirmed that with responsibility for the corporate estate, whether externally or internally funded, the investment had to pay back as part of the criteria when applying for funding. Benefits gained were incentives from solar, biomass, and carbon reduction, for example. Energy reduction is embedded into day-to-day

delivery of maintaining the estate, looking at opportunities for improvement, such as, changing light fittings to LEDs and replacing windows.

- vii) A Member queried whether Solar Together, a local company that supported local residents with solar installations, were in dialogue with developers to ensure that new build estates were fit for the future. It was noted that as this was a private company, the Council held no information regarding the company's dealings with developers and in any event, it was the responsibility of the district councils to liaise with developers in line with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- viii) It was highlighted that the team had delivered the 'big win' low-risk high reward schemes and that going forward there would be bigger challenges to reduce carbon emissions further. However, the team would continue to seek options available.
- ix) In response to a Member's question, it was noted that solar panel efficiency declined at around 1% each year, with lifespan at around 20 years, although this was expanding with technology advances. Other parts, such as inverters, might require replacement every seven to ten years, for which the Council took out extended warranties.
- x) A Member suggested that having renewable energy built into regulations through the planning process would be a way to make real progress and it was the responsibility of central government to introduce this.

RESOLVED:

That the Update provided to the Committee on the Council's progress towards net zero carbon emissions from its corporate properties be noted.

57. Environmental Performance and Progress Update Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport the purpose of which was to update the Committee on Environmental Performance and Progress which highlighted 16 out of the 26 indicators had been updated, where six had improved, one declined and nine stayed the same. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) A Member queried the accuracy of the data provided on air quality in the report and questioned how this had been obtained. It was noted that the data was provided from DEFRA on an annual basis and that the Director of Public Health worked closely with district councils who submitted the data in accordance with DEFRA requirements.
- ii) In response to a Member's query on the decline in business miles and the reasoning behind this, it was noted that this was likely to be as a result of the Council's new ways of working programme, with more services delivered online using technology and less travel to meetings.
- iii) It was noted that the Emissions Trading Scheme (incineration tax) was due to commence in three years time. The Council did however have to pay a landfill tax which was slightly different to an emissions trading scheme. Officers advocated from an environmental perspective that the County Council moved away from disposing waste to landfill which was arguably the poorest environmentally beneficial means to

treat waste. The Director undertook to bring a report to a future meeting of the Committee to explain the difference between the two schemes.

- iv) There were a number of changes to the waste sector being introduced by the Government, including measures to affect a change in the packaging industry, and recent guidance had been published on the upcoming introduction of food waste collections. The Council was in a good position with contracts in place for when these schemes commenced.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the latest performance update on the Key Performance Indicators to December 2024, that the Council is responsible for delivering against as part of the Strategic Plan (2024-26) be noted.
- b) That the Director be requested to provide information to the Committee on the difference between landfill and the emissions trading scheme when established.

58. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 11 June 2025 at 2.00pm.

2.00pm – 3.00pm
12 March 2025

CHAIRMAN