

Minute Extracts

Minute extract from the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 5 March 2020.

Revised Environment Strategy.

The Committee received a report of the Director of Environment and Transport outlining revisions to the Environment Strategy, Action Plan and Tranche 1 Carbon Reduction Roadmap. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

The Committee thanked officers for the work being undertaken and the progress being made in addressing the climate emergency as declared in May 2019 by the County Council. Arising from the discussion the following points were noted:-

- i) The Tranche 1 Carbon Reduction Roadmap focused on the County Council's own emissions under its control, as defined by Government, and reported annually in the Council's Greenhouse Gas Emissions report. This report did not include emissions from operations such as procurement, county farms, water and operational waste. Reporting on and reducing emission form such operations would be addressed as part of the Tranche 2 Carbon Reduction Roadmap and be brought to the Committee later in the year.
- ii) Leicestershire County Council had a statutory duty as waste disposal authority. As part of Tranche 2 officers would look at all disposal options and weigh up the negatives and benefits of different methods.
- iii) Work had commenced regarding biodiversity within the County Council's parks, sites of scientific interest and rights of way. This area was recognised as one requiring significant improvement.
- iv) It was noted that currently the Council, in its role as Highway Authority, could not take into account air pollution resulting from congestion and standing traffic but this would be looked into.

RESOLVED:

That the comments of the Committee be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 8 April 2020.

Draft minute extract from the Scrutiny Commission, 8 April 2020.

91. **Revised Environment Strategy and Action Plan**

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which sought its views on the draft revised Environment Strategy for 2018-2030, the supporting draft revised Action Plan and draft Tranche 1 Carbon Reduction Roadmap. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points arose:

- (i) Members noted that the Action Plan was a live document and therefore flexible enough to allow for the current circumstances arising from the coronavirus outbreak to be reflected. It was suggested that in the preamble to the Action Plan, the outbreak and impact of Covid-19 be recorded and the need for further work as a result acknowledged.
- (ii) It was highlighted that whilst the Council's current environmental ambitions remained unchanged, some of the work and timescales for targets would need to be adjusted given that business as usual was on hold in some areas due to restrictions put in place to fight Covid-19. It was noted that in addition to the Action Plan, the business cases supporting delivery of some initiatives within the Strategy would also need to be considered and refreshed.
- (iii) Members noted the comments of the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had also considered the Strategy and agreed that proceeding with the revised Strategy despite current circumstances was right and necessary.
- (iv) Members noted the carbon emissions from the Council's internal operations which fell within Tranche 1 of the carbon reduction roadmap (13,000 tonnes) was much lower than that within Tranche 2 (areas over which the local authorities would have influence) (3.6 million tonnes). Members agreed that Tranche 2 would be much harder to deliver and dependent on joint working with other organisations including District Councils and the LLEP. Members noted that those areas over which the Council was considered *not* to have influence included motorways, powers stations and airports which were under central Government control.
- (v) Members expressed the view that whilst the County Council was not responsible for monitoring air quality, this was a key environmental factor for local residents and the County Council would play its part in the design and construction of roads across the County. Members were reassured that whilst the report had focused on changes made to address the Council's declaration of a climate emergency, the Strategy itself had a total of 6 themes that went beyond climate change, air quality being one of them. These had also been updated and reflected

in the revised Action Plan.

- (vi) The impact of Covid-19 on the Council's working practices had been significant with many officers now working from home. It was acknowledged that this had reduced those driving into the office and therefore represented a positive, environmentally. It was agreed that working practices and the benefits of home working on a larger scale may present an opportunity to be looked at in future. A view was raised, however, of the need to ensure this was balanced with the needs of individual staff who might feel isolated working from home and whose mental health and wellbeing might be adversely affected as a result. It was agreed, that a holistic view of any future proposals would be necessary.
- (vii) A lot of work on biodiversity had been undertaken and the Council's Tree Management Strategy had been aligned with the Council's environmental ambitions.
- (viii) HGV transport in the County, particularly on minor routes, built up residential and rural areas was raised as a concern. Whilst technology was progressing for electric cars, this had not yet extended to commercial vehicles, lorries and HGVs. A suggestion was raised that the use of A and B roads by HGV lorries should be limited, but it was acknowledged that this would require Government intervention and new legislation. Members noted that the Council already worked with partners in addressing environmental matters arising from transport, including, for example work with the LLEP on the Local Industrial Strategy and its own environment strategies.

AGREED:

That the comments now made be submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting on 28 April.

This page is intentionally left blank