

SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 15 MARCH 2021**STRATEGIC PROPERTY ENERGY STRATEGY****MINUTE EXTRACT**

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources regarding the revised Strategic Property Energy Strategy for 2020 – 2030 and accompanying action plan. A copy of the report marked agenda item 8 is filed with these minutes.

In presenting the report the Director emphasised that the Property Energy Strategy was essentially a sub-strategy of the Council's overarching Environment Strategy which the Council had approved last year. The latter looked holistically at the Council's approach across all service areas whereas the Property Energy Strategy set out work that would be specifically undertaken to reduce carbon emissions and deliver other environmental benefits across its own property portfolio.

Arising from discussion the following points were made:

- (i) The Strategy was welcomed and the ambitions and targets identified in the action plan supported, particularly as this included tangible results that would be measured over time. Members agreed that the Council should act as an exemplar of what could be achieved and agreed the planned Strategy worked to ensure this.
- (ii) Progress against the previous Strategy was also welcomed. A Member suggested that this work should be promoted to show how committed the Council was to delivering its net zero carbon target and to encourage partners to do the same.
- (iii) Given that the County Council itself only accounted for 1% of the total emissions generated in Leicestershire, the need to work jointly with others was emphasised. Whilst the Council's own strategy and delivery to date had been good, it did not have control over a number of factors that would be key to reducing carbon emissions across the County. Members noted that consideration was being given to how the Council might influence others to also take steps reduce their emissions.
- (iv) A member raised concerns that growth and increased housing numbers would inevitably increase carbon emissions across the area and said the County and district councils and the private sector would each need to play their part to address this. It was further suggested that as more

people were now working from home, promoting and encouraging energy efficient homes would be increasingly important and necessary.

- (v) A member expressed concern that some of the Council's emissions had been exported to staff over the last year because of increased working from home. Whilst it was recognised that this was difficult to measure and monitor, members agreed that steps to help staff should be considered, particularly as this would likely have a cost impact. Members acknowledged that many staff now had reduced travel costs, but it was not clear if this outweighed increased energy costs particularly over the winter. The Director acknowledged there was more the Council could do to support staff. The approach had so far been to provide information and advice and to alert staff to government grants and initiatives which may be of benefit, but members were reassured that further consideration would be given to more practical steps which the Council could take.
- (vi) Members emphasised the need to ensure other Council policies took sufficient account of environmental impacts to ensure all activities of the Council worked to deliver its net zero carbon target by 2030. Members acknowledged that wider work was being undertaken across departments and with partners which was managed through the Council's Strategic Environment Team. Members noted that this work would be monitored by the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (vii) In response to a question, the Director confirmed that carbon emissions from the Council's water consumption was low and measures to reduce this further were disproportionately expensive. On balance therefore, these had not been prioritised and instead, more cost-effective interventions that would have a greater overall impact had been selected. Members were reassured that whilst no specific targets for reducing water consumption had been included in the Strategy, opportunities would still be considered, and steps taken where appropriate. The Director emphasised that the Council's water consumption was already quite low.
- (viii) A Member questioned how much the County was affected by emissions generated in the City and whether the City also had similar plans and strategies in place to address this. The Director advised that the report related to the County Council's assets only and did not therefore include data relating to the City's assets or emission levels. However, members noted that the City Council had also committed to reduce its emissions and therefore had its own strategies in place to deliver this. The Director confirmed that where appropriate joint projects were undertaken with the City e.g. the purchasing of energy, park and ride and electric transport initiatives.
- (ix) A Member asked if the County and City Council had a joint transport strategy and highlighted that reducing transport into the City whilst positive, did have a negative effect on neighbouring areas that needed to be accounted for. The Chairman asked that the Director of Environment and Transport be requested to provide further information to the member

on this issue which fell outside the remit of the current report.

RESOLVED:

That the comments now made by the Commission be report to the Cabinet at its meeting on 23rd March for consideration.

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