

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee held on
Tuesday, 1 September 2020 at 2.00 p.m.

Chair: Pippa Heylings

Vice-Chair: Dr. Martin Cahn and Geoff Harvey

Committee Members in attendance:

Grenville Chamberlain

Peter Fane

Richard Williams

Officers:

Patrick Adams

Jonathan Dixon

Jane Green

Miriam Hill

Siobhan Mellon

Trevor Nicoll

Senior Democratic Services Officer

Planning Policy Manager

Built and Natural Environment Manager

Trees Officer

Development Officer - Climate and
Environment

Head of Environment and Waste

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Graham Cone. Councillor Richard Williams substituted for Councillor Cone.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2020 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

- In minute 4, under the heading “Reducing water usage in existing building” the word “washing-up” was amended to “washing”.
- In minute 9, under the heading “Zero Carbon Grants” the number “600” was amended to “60”.

4. Doubling Nature Strategy

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment presented this report that outlined the objectives and schedule for the Doubling Nature Strategy, which sought to support the increase of nature in the District, in accordance with the motion passed by Council in July 2019. She explained that the aim was to take the Strategy to Cabinet in December and that it would come back to this Committee before then.

The Head of Environment and Waste explained that the proposed policy would provide a strategic overview that could be adapted to changing circumstances, such as the new Local Plan. There were other related initiatives that were taking place in parallel to the

Strategy.

Strategy Title

There was discussion around the title of the strategy and whether Natural Capital was more appropriate than Doubling Nature. Members agreed to keep the Doubling Nature and noted that the list of areas to be covered in the Strategy (paragraph 9 in the report) included what the Council meant by doubling nature, and an explanation of the related and increased the widely-used concept of natural capital.

Achieving the aims of the Strategy

Members of the Committee expressed concern regarding the feasibility of doubling nature in the District. However, it was generally agreed that the target was aspirational and so should be kept.

Working with Planning

Members of the Committee noted that delivering the Strategy was closely linked to work of the Planning service and that considerable work was taking place, including a Green Infrastructure Opportunities Mapping report as part of the new Local Plan process.

Working with partners

Members of the Committee agreed that the Strategy should work with partner organisations, such as the Greater Cambridge Partnership to ensure that environmental damage resulting from improvements in infrastructure were minimised.

Working with external organisation and residents

The Committee noted that the National Farmers Union were considering multiple approaches to improving biodiversity, including the planting of trees. It was agreed that the Strategy should also encourage residents to do what they can to increase nature in the District.

The Committee noted the Briefing on current work by the Council on the Doubling Nature agenda on 8 September and **agreed** that a further session where Councillors could feed in their views should also be arranged.

5. Response to the DEFRA Consultation on Tree-planting

The Trees Officer presented this report to the Committee on how the Council was intending to respond to the Government's consultation on the England Tree Strategy.

Members of the Committee made the following points:

- The Council should promote continuous tree cover, by linking existing isolated woodland.
- The Council should promote more wood use in construction.
- The use of biochar and wood pellets should be promoted.
- Farmers and residents needed to be consulted to ensure that trees were planted in the correct place.
- The planting of a community forest should be considered.
- Existing trees also needed to be protected.

The Trees Officer explained that as the Council had a joint planning service with the City Council, a joint response to the consultation was being considered.

6. Planning for the Future: response to government consultation (Oral Report)

The Planning Policy Manager explained that a report would be taken to Cabinet on 19 October to agree the Council's response to the Government's proposals, which were substantial changes to the planning system that would require primary legislation. The Committee was invited to give its view, which could be included in the Council's response.

Members of the Committee made the following comments:

- This proposed centralising decision making that will impact on local people, which would be unpopular with residents.
- The proposed changes appeared undemocratic but this had been denied by the Government.
- It was important that the views of the Planning Committee were taken into account.
- The proposed "fabric first" approach to meeting building regulations should be supported.
- It was unclear how the changes would link to building regulations.
- It was unclear whether existing green belt areas would remain protected under the new rules.
- Biodiversity was linked to beauty, which could not be measured.
- It was unclear how the proposals would be amended in the future, as standards changed.
- It would be more difficult to fund infrastructure improvements if funds from the developer were paid after the development takes place.

The Built and Natural Environment Manager explained that under the Government proposals the pre-application phase would take place earlier in the process.

The Chair thanked the Built and Natural Environment Manager and Planning Policy Manager for their presentation.

7. Reviews of Housing Asset Management Strategy and New Build Technical Design Specifications

The Chair stated that Committee members wanted the opportunity to serve on the Task and Finish Group on the Asset Management Strategy. Matters to be considered included the cost of implementing energy efficiency measures and the merits of attempting to achieve a uniform standard of energy efficiency in our entire housing stock.

8. Future Funding Opportunities (Oral Report)

The Head of Environment and Waste invited the Committee to consider whether an internal bid should be made for the 2021/22 budget for more officer support to help the Council secure external grant funding.

The Committee supported this funding proposal to ensure that the Council secured the maximum amount of funding for sustainability projects. It was suggested that the dedicated support for addressing climate change and the environment could be increased. The Head of Environment and Waste explained that Leadership Team would consider all the bids before they were considered by Members.

9. Forward Plan

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment explained that the following items

would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee:

- Presentation on Future Parks Accelerator
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Zero Carbon Strategy update
- Travel Plan
- Draft Doubling Nature Strategy

The Head of Environment and Waste suggested that the Committee consider the draft Waste and Recycling Strategy in Spring 2021, before it was agreed by the Council later that year. The Development Officer, Climate and Environment explained that the Committee would receive a report on the Green Investment Strategy after it was discussed by the Investment Board.

10. Dates of Next Meeting

The Committee agreed the following meeting dates:

- 2pm Tuesday 27 October 2020 (subject to change)
- 2pm Tuesday 12 January 2021
- 2pm Tuesday 9 March 2021

The Meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.
