

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee held on
Monday, 13 September 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

Chair: Pippa Heylings

Vice-Chair: Dr. Martin Cahn and Geoff Harvey

Committee Members in attendance:

Paul Bearpark

Sue Ellington

Councillors in attendance:

Bridget Smith

Officers:

Patrick Adams

John Cornell

Peter Gibson

Jane Green

Soraya Hashemi

Siobhan Mellon

Rebecca Weymouth-Wood

Senior Democratic Services Officer

Natural Environment Team Leader

Principal Environmental Officer –

Environmental Planning

Built and Natural Environment Manager

Scientific Officer

Development Officer - Climate and
Environment

SSWS Waste Policy Manager

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Grenville Chamberlain and Graham Cone. Councillor Sue Ellington was present as substitute for Councillor Graham Cone.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Martin Cahn declared a non-pecuniary interest as a client of the Solar Together scheme.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2021, subject to the amendment of the penultimate sentence of minute 8 to "... the greenhouse gas sulphur hexafluoride in the installation of grid infrastructure."

4. Plans for Ouse Fen and Fen Drayton Nature Reserves - Implications and Opportunities

Hannah Phillips of the RSPB gave a presentation on the Hanson Wetland Project at Fen Drayton lakes. She explained that the RSPB had restored 80 hectares of land, with plans to restore a further 300 hectares. It was noted that this tied in with the Council's objective aspiring to achieve a 20% net gain in biodiversity in the District. Hannah Phillips explained that access to the site needed to be improved and she invited suggestions from the Council on what activities could take place on the site.

In addition, Hannah Phillips stated that the RSPB wetlands site at Fowlmere was in danger of drying out and she was grateful with regards to the Council's leadership on this issue. Hope Farm, near Knapwell, demonstrated how farmers and nature could work together and was helping to reverse the decline in the number of turtle doves.

Councillor Sue Ellington suggested that the RSPB contacted the parish councils of Fen Drayton and Swavesey to ensure the support of the local residents, including farmers, of both villages and tackle the access issue together.

The Chair explained that the Council had set the aspirational net gain target of 20%, which could only be achieved by working in partnership with organisations like the RSPB.

The Built and Natural Environment Manager assured Hannah Phillips that the RSPB would receive a response following their application for Section 106 funding with respect to the Northstowe development, and explained that a report on the Section 106 funding for phase 3 of the development would be going to the Planning Committee, hopefully in October.

Hannah Phillips agreed to send a copy of her presentation to the members of the Committee. The Chair thanked Hannah for her presentation.

5. Green Homes Grants Local Authority Delivery Scheme Update

The Development Officer Climate and Environment presented this report, which updated the Committee on the delivery of home energy improvement measures to properties in the District through the Government's Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme. It was noted that the Government had withdrawn the initial consumer-direct phase of the scheme, but that the Local Authority delivery phases were still in operation, the Council was engaging with these and would continue to do so, with a new Project Officers who would be working on this starting in November.

In response to questioning, the Development Officer Climate and Environment explained that bids had been submitted to energy improvement works for eligible households in the District.

It was suggested that advice could be provided for private sector landlords.

The Chair thanked the Development Officer Climate and Environment for her report and asked that the Committee be kept informed of all developments.

6. Air Quality Update

The Principal Officer (Environment Planning) presented this report, which provided details of the Council's strategy to protect and improve the air quality in the District.

A14

The Chair expressed concern that Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) had been revoked on the A14 between Girton and Histon and if we had insufficient data on the air quality. The Air Quality Scientific Officer explained that the monitoring of the A14 area would continue.

New equipment for short studies

The Air Quality Scientific Officer explained that the Council had access to small portable

units that could monitor air quality for a short period of time. The Air Quality Scientific Officer explained that a short-term study of pollution could result in an action plan that put measures in place to reduce the pollution. These studies could also influence policies for future growth.

Harston study

The Air Quality Scientific Officer explained that it was difficult to know why there had been two high peaks at the Harston station, either local weather conditions or a fault with the sensor during settling in time was possible. It was reassuring that the air quality was at acceptable levels.

Converting taxis to electric vehicles

The Chair expressed the hope that taxi drivers would switch to electric vehicles. The Principal Officer (Environment Planning) suggested that this matter should be discussed with the Licensing section.

Councillor Martin Cahn suggested that the air quality targets were not strict enough for a rural area. He also indicated that tyre wear had a major impact on emissions.

Improving efficiency of domestic heating

Councillor Geoff Harvey suggested that air quality could be greatly improved by replacing inefficient home heating systems. The Chair suggested that Building Control be contacted about this matter.

The Chair stated that the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the more recent data. The Chair thanked the officers for their report.

7. Solar Together Cambridge Update

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment presented this report, which provided details on the progress in delivering Solar Together Cambridgeshire – the solar pv group-buying scheme led by Cambridgeshire County Council in partnership with Cambridgeshire councils. She reported that 500 households in the District were expected to continue the process to completion.

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment reported that there had been very few complaints from applicants and that she welcomed any individual feedback. Councillor Martin Cahn suggested that residents needed to be provided with advice on how to read their smart meters.

The Chair suggested that calculations should be done on how many tonnes of Carbon Dioxide the solar panels were saving. She thanked the Development Officer, Climate and Environment for her report.

8. Forward Plan and Dates of Next Meetings

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 21 September 2021, after the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, to discuss the Local Plan.

The Committee agreed to delay November's meeting by two weeks to Tuesday 23 November at 2pm, due to renovation work being carried out in the Council Chamber.

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment explained that the following items were on the draft agenda for November's meeting:

- Biodiversity SPD
- Proposals for trees protection in the Local Plan
- Zero Carbon Doubling Nature Action Plan Progress Update
- Six Trees Scheme Update
- Net Zero Council Housing Update
- Standing Items of Green Investment Update

The Meeting ended at 4.10 p.m.
