

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee held on
Tuesday, 30 June 2020 at 2.00 p.m.

Chair: Pippa Heylings

Vice-Chairs: Dr. Martin Cahn & Geoff Harvey

Committee Members in attendance:

Graham Cone

Peter Fane

Councillors in attendance:

Dr. Shrobona Bhattacharya and Bridget Smith

Officers:

Patrick Adams

Geoff Clark

Siobhan Mellon

Trevor Nicoll

Senior Democratic Services Officer

Neighbourhood Services Manager

Development Officer - Climate and
Environment

Head of Environment and Waste

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Jose Hales.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2020.

4. Presentation by Cam Valley Forum on the Let it Flow report

The Committee received a presentation from Stephen Tomkins and Dr Alan Woods of the Cam Valley Forum. The priority of the Forum was to restore natural flows in chalk streams, which had been reduced by the over-abstraction of water for human consumption.

It was recommended that

- Water be taken from downstream and from alternative sources, such as Grafham Water, South Lincolnshire and the Cambridgeshire/Norfolk border.
- Local sewage works be upgraded to allow treated waste to recharge aquifers.
- New developments should be water neutral.
- Rainwater harvesting be increased, leaks be fixed and water consumption be reduced by providing all residents with smart meters and introducing hosepipe bans during the day.
- The Government pass legislation to protect chalk streams at source.

The presentation concluded by asking the Council to support their proposals.

Members of the Committee asked questions

Water neutrality in new developments

Alan Woods explained that he expected developers to work with water companies to build homes that reduced water usage and costs. He hoped that policies from the Government and Local Authorities could also improve water efficiency. He agreed that Section 106 or CIL payments from developers should be used to improve water efficiency. He concluded that technology from Scandinavia showed that water could be stored without stagnation.

Reducing water usage in existing buildings

Stephen Tomkins recognised that retrofitting existing buildings was expensive, but water butts could be installed and washing-up water could be used to water plants. He suggested that what was required a “culture change” for all residents to conserve water.

Better storage of rainwater

Stephen Tomkins explained that only 3% of the areas rainfall was supplying the residents’ taps and this needed to be improved. It was suggested that farmers could build small reservoirs on their farms, which would conserve water and save money.

The Chair thanked Stephen Tomkins and Alan Woods for their informative presentation and agreed that the Council needed to look at ways of supporting the objectives of the Cam Valley Forum.

5. Presentation on Cambridge Climate Change Charter

Paul Taylor-Armstrong, Climate Change Officer from Cambridge City Council gave a demonstration of the Cambridge Climate Change Charter and its carbon footprint calculator. He explained that the calculator worked for businesses and residents and provided suggestions on how carbon emissions could be reduced. It was noted that the calculator could be used to provide general high-level data on participants from the District, that would be compliant with the GDPR rules.

Councillor Shrobona Bhattacharya suggested that certificates could be awarded to participants who successfully reduce their carbon emissions. She also suggested that chartered buses to business parks could reduce the need for residents to rely on their cars.

The Committee agreed to ask officers to work with the Cambridge City Council and explore the possibility of jointly running the Cambridge Climate Change Charter.

6. Stock Modelling for Zero Carbon and Improvements to Energy Efficiency Across SCDC Housing Stock

The Neighbourhood Services Manager presented this report on the efforts made to improve the energy efficiency of existing Council housing to reduce carbon impact and running costs. He explained that the report from Savills recommended improvements that could reduce the housing stock’s carbon emissions from 11,000 tonnes to 2,200 tonnes a year. The report recognised that it was not cost effective to improve some of the older homes up to the expected standard. The reports recommendations would take 4-5 years to implement.

Members of the Committee asked questions.

Impact on tenants

The Neighbourhood Services Manager explained that some tenants were opposed to replacing gas heating with more sustainable technology such as a fitted heat pump and the Council had to work with tenants when introducing improvements. Convincing elderly and vulnerable tenants of the benefits of these changes could be challenging and less intrusive improvements may be considered.

Older properties

The Neighbourhood Services Manager reported that some of the Council's properties were over 100 years old and improving all homes on a minimum standard was not cost effective.

Benefits of updating housing stock

The Neighbourhood Services Manager explained that the Council needed to update its housing stock, which presented an opportunity to not just improve its efficiency, but to improve the health and wellbeing of our tenants and save on costs.

Wider stock survey

The Neighbourhood Services Manager explained that the Council needed to decide how to conduct a wider survey of the current housing stock.

The Committee welcomed the report and the efforts being made to reduce the carbon emissions of the Council's housing stock. The Committee recommended that the Council carries out a stock survey. The Committee agreed that this issue should come back to the Committee.

7. Solar Together Cambridgeshire

The Development Officer for Climate and Environment presented this report, which outlined plans for Solar Together Cambridgeshire – a solar pv group-buying scheme which the Council is promoting in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council and neighbouring city and district councils.

It was noted that the plan was to launch the scheme on 1 September. Residents would be able to register and pay a deposit online.

In response to questioning, the Development Officer for Climate and Environment explained that there was a rigorous screening process for installers, which allowed contracts to be awarded to the cheapest supplier, as the quality was guaranteed.

The Committee recommended that this initiative be promoted to parish councils and via social media.

8. Biodiversity and Natural Capital Strategy (Oral update)

The Development Officer for Climate and Environment updated the Committee on the Biodiversity and Natural Capital Strategy, which Council would be asked to adopt at its meeting in November. It was noted that an online briefing session would be held on 13 July from 5pm to 6pm, to update members on the progress being made in relation to the Local Plan and work with other groups.

It was understood that there was cross party support for this Strategy and the Committee **NOTED** the report.

9. Green to our Core Project Update

The Development Officer for Climate and Environment updated the Committee on the Green to Our Core Project and the status of its 13 initiatives.

Travel to Work

The Development Officer for Climate and Environment explained that the forced introduction of working remotely due to Covid-19 would obviously influence the Travel to Work Plan.

Sites for EV points

The Development Officer for Climate and Environment reported that sites had been identified at Cambourne and Sawston, but unfortunately the site at Histon had been rejected as too expensive due to connection issues. The delay in the project was due to Covid-19 and the funding was still available. The Development Officer for Climate and Environment agreed to find out if planning permission was required.

Zero Carbon Grants

The Development Officer for Climate and Environment stated that a successful webinar had generated 600 expressions of interest in the scheme. She agreed to ask if the Communications team could promote it on the Council's website.

The Committee hoped that the reduction in carbon emissions due to the lockdown could result in changes that realised permanent reductions. The Committee **NOTED** the report.

10. Forward Plan

The Committee agreed to discuss the following issues at its future meetings:

- Biodiversity National Capital Strategy
- Community forest and tree planning
- Greenhouse gas commission report (October)
- Travel Plan
- Update on work on heritage homes

11. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to hold its next meeting on Tuesday 1 September at 2pm.

The Meeting ended at 4.30 p.m.
