

## **South Cambridgeshire District Council**

Minutes of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee held on  
Tuesday, 9 March 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

**Chair:** Pippa Heylings

**Vice-Chairs:** Dr. Martin Cahn & Geoff Harvey

### **Committee Members in attendance:**

Grenville Chamberlain

Graham Cone

Peter Fane

### **Councillor in attendance:**

Bridget Smith

### **Officers:**

Patrick Adams

Jonathan Bell

Peter Campbell

Emma Dyer

Jane Green

Siobhan Mellon

Trevor Nicoll

Liz Watts

Senior Democratic Services Officer

Green Energy Investment Manager

Head of Housing

Project Officer - Climate and Environment

Built and Natural Environment Manager

Development Officer - Climate and  
Environment

Head of Environment and Waste

Chief Executive

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Jose Hales.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Grenville Chamberlain declared interests as Chairman of the Caravan and Motorhome Club, which uses a site by the Cherry Hinton, within the chalk pits and Director of Cecil Instruments, which has two commercial properties adjacent to Milton Country Park.

### **3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### **4. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

#### **Fens Biosphere Project**

The Chair explained that following the Committee's recommendation, Council had passed a motion to become the first authority to support the designation of a Fens Biosphere and encourage other neighbouring local authorities to do the same.

**Retrofit software**

The Chair reported that Cabinet had agreed the Committee's recommendation to purchase a one year licence for software to assist the retrofitting of homes.

**5. Chairman's Report**

The Chair gave a summary of the achievements of the Committee, since it had been founded three years ago, including:

- Eliminating single use plastics and improving recycling at the Council's offices.
- Reviewing evidence regarding biodiversity and tree cover in the district, leading to the development and adoption of the Doubling Nature Strategy.
- Reviewing evidence around greenhouse emissions from the District:
  - Work from Cambridge University including an in-depth report on emissions from our housing sector.
  - Held a Members' workshop, which led to the development and adoption of our Zero Carbon Strategy, including targets for reductions in Council emissions.
- In line with the Zero Carbon Strategy, recommended changes to our hackney cab and taxi licensing policy.
- Identifying gaps in the current Local Plan in relation to zero carbon targets and providing input into the development of new Sustainable Design and Construction supplementary planning guidance.
- Calling for an updating of the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document, which was now underway.
- Receiving a presentation from Cam Valley Forum on the conservation of chalk streams.
- Calling for evidence to underpin strong policies on water, zero carbon and biodiversity in the new Local Plan, all now underway.
- Recommending improvements in monitoring air quality across the District
- Recommending the setting of a specific budget for climate and the environment, now in place.

The Chair thanked the officers for setting up a voluntary officer working group, which became the Green to our Core transformation board. She welcomed the fact that the Council had three officers dedicated to sustainability.

The Leader of Council welcomed the review of the Committee's work and congratulated the Chair for the Committee's achievements over the last three years.

**6. Cambridge Nature Network, presentation from James Littlewood of CPPF**

James Littlewood of Cambridge Past, Present and Future gave a presentation on how the Cambridge Nature Network aimed to restore the natural habitat in the Greater Cambridge area. He asked the Council to support the Network and its priorities. He requested that these aims be recognised in the Local Plan, the supplementary planning guidance documents and the OxCam arc framework.

The Chair urged members to watch the film on sustainable farming in the area made by Carbon Neutral Cambridge for the Council's Climate and Environment Fortnight of online events.

The Leader stated that the aims of the Cambridge Nature Network should complement the promotion of sustainability in the OxCam arc. She supported including the aims of the Cambridge Nature Network in the Council's Local Plan. She hoped that the Combined Authority would also support these priorities.

In response to questions from the Committee, James Littlewood:

- Recognised the challenges in promoting biodiversity on farmland, especially if there was a change that the land could be developed.
- Assured the Committee that the Network was working with other like-minded organisations to help achieve its ends.

Members of the Committee made the following points:

- District authorities had a duty to promote and create recreational parks.
- The Future Parks Accelerator programme could help create nature sites.
- Local neighbourhood plans could help to create green spaces.

The Built and Natural Environment Manager explained that the Council was already working with Natural Cambridgeshire and Cambridge Past Present and Future, as part of the Local Plan consultation process. It was noted that the Government's delayed Environment Bill will require local nature recovery networks to come forward and provide some of the details including on how these will be governed. The proposal would be taken into account in the Green Infrastructure evidence base which will come to Members for them to consider, alongside the many other evidence bases. As part of the Green Infrastructure evidence work, officers were looking at potential biodiversity projects, as deliverable projects will be needed if the Council goes down the biodiversity net gain route. It was noted that a small working group of officers would be meeting with partners, probably at a countywide level, to look at deliverability of specific biodiversity projects. Officers would come back with further detail as it emerged.

The Council supported the proposals of Cambridge Nature Network in principle and agreed to continue to keep in on the agenda and to monitor progress towards implementation of its aims.

## **7. OxCam Arc Environmental Principles (Cllr BZ Smith, Liz Watts)**

The Leader reported that the OxCam Arc Leaders' plenary had agreed the environmental principles, which had to be accepted by the partner authorities. This would allow the Council to work in partnership to achieve sustainable development. There had been a compromise over the wording regarding the aim to achieve net zero carbon by 2040, which had been amended to a "target" rather than a "commitment".

It was noted that the Government wanted to progress the development and so it was important for the environmental principles to be agreed without delay. The Chief Executive estimated that it would take 18 months to implement the Strategy,

with permanent officer support from the Arc.

The Chair thanked the Leader and Chief Executive for the additional work that they had carried out on this issue.

Members of the Committee recognised the need for the different stakeholders to work together to ensure that the development in the OxCam Arc was sustainable.

The Committee expressed the hoped that the environmental principles would be agreed by the Council's partners. The Committee recommended that Cabinet adopt these principles.

#### **8. SCDC Housing Asset Management Strategy Report (Peter Campbell)**

The Director of Housing presented this item on the Housing Asset Management Strategy. He explained that this was to be agreed in time for the first quarter of 2021/22. He invited comments from the Committee on the Strategy.

In response to query regarding possible improvements to private rented homes, the Director of Housing explained that the Housing Revenues Account could not be used to finance any initiatives outside the Council's housing stock.

The Director of Housing advised that the Strategy should not be too specific on the new technologies to be used to promote energy efficiencies in the Council's housing stock.

The Director of Housing explained that the Council needed assess whether its units were too expensive to bring up to standard and so should be demolished. The Council had no control over Right to Buy, but properties could not be sold for less than the amount paid by the Council on the home in the last 15 years.

The Director of Housing agreed to consider whether the homes could be made more water efficient and would look at best practice.

The Director of Housing explained that Ermine Street Housing Ltd would produce its own Asset Management Strategy, as they were a separate company.

The Director of Housing explained that a Stock Condition Survey would be required to identify which properties needed to be upgraded and then a strategy would be agreed on how to carry out this work.

The Committee agreed with the Director of Housing suggestion that a joint working group be set up, consisting of officers, members and tenants. Councillor Geoff Harvey offered to serve on this Group.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

#### **9. ZCC Grant Update (Emma Dyer) and Presentation from Cambridge Carbon Footprint on Plans for their Net Zero Now project**

The Climate and Environment Project Officer presented this report on the progress of the Zero Carbon Communities grant funded projects funded in round one, provided an overview of the projects funded for round two and gave a brief update on the format for the soon to be launched round three. Applications for round three would be accepted from 10 May, for three months to 30 July, which was an amendment on the dates stated in the agenda on page 90.

The Committee thanked the Climate and Environment Project Officer for her hard work not just in awarding grant funding, but also the advice provided for various groups via many methods of communication, including a newsletter.

Alice Vodden from Cambridge Carbon Footprint gave a presentation on this organisation and their Net Zero Now project. She agreed to provide a link to the information about the project on the Cambridge Carbon Footprint's website, which could be sent to parish councils and residents. She confirmed that it was important to work in partnership to ensure that there was a single network, where best practice on achieving net zero could be shared.

The Development Officer – Climate and Environment explained that there was information on the Council's website on what parish councils and community groups could do at local level to attempt to help achieve net zero carbon emissions.

**10. Green Investments Update (Jonathan Bell)**

The Green Energy Investment Manager presented a report, which updated the Committee on the different opportunities for making green investments and provided a summary of the projects currently being undertaken. He was pleased to report that the County Council had signed the Energy Services Framework.

The Green Energy Investment Manager explained that the Council was still waiting for clarification from the Public Works Loans Board on the rules regarding loans for green energy projects. He was confident that the Council could justify green investments due to the benefits that they would deliver.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

**11. Review of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Independent Commission on Climate Initial Recommendation Report Focusing on Transport and Buildings (chair)**

The Chair explained that the Independent Commission would be releasing an interim report on 16 March. It was agreed that members of the Committee should review the report. The full report would not be issued until the summer. The Chair suggested that a working Group could be set up to review the full report if it became available between Committee meetings.

**12. Forward Plan and Date of Next Meeting**

The Head of Environment and Waste explained that the Resources and Waste

Strategy consultation would commence later this month and he suggested that the Committee should review this at its next meeting. It was agreed that the Committee should receive an update on signing-up to Heritage Declares an organisation that promoted energy efficiency in heritage buildings.

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 11 May at 2pm.

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**The Meeting ended at 4.20 p.m.**

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