

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee held on
Tuesday, 21 June 2022 at 10.00 a.m.

Chair: Pippa Heylings
Vice-Chair: Dr. Martin Cahn and Geoff Harvey

Committee Members in attendance:

Paul Bearpark
Dr. Shrobona Bhattacharya
Ariel Cahn
John Loveluck
Dr Lisa Redrup
Peter Sandford
Bunty Waters

Councillors in attendance:

Councillors Dr. Tumi Hawkins was in attendance, by invitation.

Councillors Cllr Brian Milnes was in attendance remotely, by invitation.

Officers:

Patrick Adams	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Peter Campbell	Head of Housing
John Cornell	Natural Environment Team Leader
Bode Esan	Head of Climate, Environment & Waste
Jane Green	Built and Natural Environment Manager
Eleanor Haines	Climate & Environment Project Officer
Siobhan Mellon	Development Officer - Climate and Environment
Alex Snelling-Day	Green Energy Investment Manager
Luke Waddington	Climate and Environment Project Officer

1. Apologies and Introductions

Officers and Councillors introduced themselves to the meeting.

No apologies were received as all members of the Committee were present.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Shrobona Bhattacharya declared an interest as she had started an environmental group called Serve the Planet, which would soon be registered with the charity commission.

Councillor Martin Cahn declared an interest as a member of the Wildlife Trust, an organisation which was mentioned during the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no Matters Arising.

5. MJ Award for Leadership in Responding to the Climate Emergency

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment reported that the Council had been shortlisted for the Municipal Journal's annual award for Leadership in Responding to the Climate Emergency for its Green to our Core programme. It was noted that the Chair will represent the Council with two officers at the awards ceremony on Friday 24 June.

The Chair reported that earlier in the year the Council's Green to Our Core programme had been shortlisted for the iESE's 2022 Green Public Service Award and had been awarded silver. The Chair suggested that members change their e-mail signature to include the fact that they represented a Council, which had achieved this recognition.

6. Annual Progress Review of Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature Action Plan

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment presented this report on the review of the Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature Action Plan as at the end of the 2021/22 financial year.

The Chair decided that the Committee would receive the next report on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Accounts for the Council's Estate and Operations, 2021-22 and then Committee Members would be invited to ask questions on both agenda items.

7. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Accounts for the Council's Estate and Operations, 2021-22

The Project Officer, Climate, Environment and Waste presented this report which updated the Committee on the greenhouse gas emissions for the Council's estate and operations for 2021-22. It was understood that the data was collected in line with Government guidance. It was noted that South Cambridgeshire's population had grown by 2.15% the Council's emissions had decreased by 13.1%.

Transport

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment explained that the Council's Planning Policy section could influence the transport policies that affected the District. The transport data came from the Government and was eighteen months old when received. The Development Officer, Climate and Environment did not believe that the information could be divided into public transport vehicles, private vehicles and freight but she agreed to check this and report back to the Committee. It was also hoped that officers could provide separate data on local traffic in the district and national traffic that was passing through the district, which the Council could have no real influence on.

[Following the meeting the Development Officer, Climate and Environmental ascertained that the Council has data on CO² emissions from diesel railways, road transport (subdivided into A roads, minor roads and motorways) and 'other'. For 2020 the data for South Cambridgeshire is as follows (all figures are tonnes CO₂):

Diesel railways: 3.6

Road transport

A roads 328.1

Minor road 99.9

Motorways 116.4

Other transport emission 7.0

Note that the Government considers all except Motorways to be under Local Authority influence.]

Energy use at South Cambs Hall

The Project Officer, Climate, Environment and Waste explained that the Council was reducing carbon emissions from its main office building through the installation of a ground source heat pump, solar car port and the use of lower energy LED lightbulbs. It was noted that energy use by staff who worked from home could be estimated by using the LGA accounting tool.

It was understood that the renovations at South Cambs Hall, including the installation of the ground source heat pump, would be completed by the end of the month. The Head of Climate, Environment and Waste explained that the increase in energy costs meant that the pay back period for the capital investment had reduced from around 15 years to around 10 years due to the increase in energy costs. He stated that the maintenance costs of the heat pumps were less than the maintenance cost of a conventional boiler. He agreed to arrange a tour of the building for members to see the energy saving improvements that had been implemented.

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment explained that it was difficult to find out whether the energy used by the ICT shared service could be divided by each individual local authority. She agreed to report back on this issue at the next meeting.

It noted that although the Council's electricity tariff was certified as renewable, it was not possible to determine whether the power came directly from only renewable resources.

Reducing energy use when collecting waste

The Project Officer, Climate, Environment and Waste explained that the fuel use for waste collection was accurately divided between this authority and the City Council. The Chair explained that the Committee wanted to monitor the conversion of the fleet to electric vehicles.

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment explained that the bio-fuel used in waste vehicles was ethically sourced according to international accreditation standards. It was noted that this was a controversial issue and the Chair asked for further assurances on this matter. Councillor Brian Milnes asked for assurances that palm oil was not a component of this fuel.

Councillor Paul Bearpark suggested that residents should be encouraged to compost their waste instead of putting it in the green bin, as this would reduce the amount of energy needed to collect green waste. The Head of Climate, Environment and Waste stated that a home composting scheme was available to the District's residents. He added that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough waste strategy would be renewed at the end of the year and minimising green waste could be prioritised in the new Strategy. It was agreed that this suggestion should be put on the Forward Plan and discussed at the member workshop.

Councillor Brian Milnes, Lead Cabinet Member for Environment, suggested that the Council should consider promoting In-Vessel Composting (IVC), as it was an efficient way to compost bio-degradable waste. He called for a more co-ordinated approach in dealing with waste, which involved collection by the District Council and treatment by the County

Council.

Improving the energy efficiency of housing

The Development Officer, Climate and Environment explained that the Council owned approximately 8% of the District's homes and could also influence the energy efficiency of privately rented homes through the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES). It was noted that the £8.5 million fund for more energy efficient private housing was divided across four rural districts and the city council. This authority's share of that funding was expected to help renovate approximately 100 homes.

Councillor Shrobona Bhattacharya suggested that due to advances in technology younger residents had been brought up in an unsustainable "excess" culture. It was agreed that residents needed to be encouraged to repair their goods and that this issue should be further considered at the forthcoming member workshop.

The Chair congratulated staff on achieving reductions in the Council's emissions but the downward trajectory needed to continue. She suggested that a business plan was required that could focus on transport and housing to ensure that emissions continued to decrease.

8. Update on Electric Vehicle Charge Points

The Project Officer presented this report, which updated the Committee on the electric vehicles charge points infrastructure in the District. It was noted that chargers had been installed at the Business Park in Cambourne and were due to be installed at Sheltered Housing estates in the District and the Babraham Road Park and Ride Site.

Cost of installing chargers

The Project Officer agreed to investigate reports that Ofgem were working to ensure that the cost of installing rapid chargers would not fall disproportionately on those who first paid to install the charger in a particular area.

Installing chargers at supermarkets and garages

In response to a query about the challenges in finding a location for charge points, the Project Officer explained that chargers had been installed at Morrisons supermarket in Cambourne and Tesco supermarket in Milton. Installing rapid chargers at petrol stations was also being delivered.

Chargers as revenue generators

In response to the suggestion that coverage would inevitably improve when charging points become clear revenue generators, the Project Officer stated that the Council could focus on attempting to remove barriers to revenue generation but the initial plan was to install chargers at the lowest possible cost.

Charging at home

It was noted that it was cheaper for electric car owners to charge their cars at home but charging points needed to be available for the estimated 25% of residents who were unable to do this, as they did not have access to private parking. Charger sharing was a potential solution that could be investigated at the forthcoming workshop, along with other ways to increase the number of chargers in the District.

Working with partners

The Project Officer explained that the Council was working with parish councils in trying to identify appropriate sites for chargers. Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins suggested that parish

councils would be aware of businesses that could install charging points in their villages. It was noted that the Council was working in partnership with the Greater Cambridge Partnership, the County Council and the Combined Authority on this issue, particularly regarding the challenge of grid capacity. The County Council were considering the use of electric buses and had agreed to install chargers at their Babraham Road Park and Ride site.

The Chair suggested that the Council should promote the locations of chargers in the District and help to address any areas which had no chargers. Steps could also be taken to ensure that chargers were installed in new developments such as Waterbeach and Northstowe.

The Committee **noted** the report.

9. Guidance to Parish Councils on Declaring a Climate and Ecological Emergency

The Project Officer, Climate, Environment and Waste presented this report, which updated the Committee on the guidance available to parish and town councils on declaring Climate and Ecological Emergencies. Committee members were invited to review the proposed webpage in Appendix A to the report and suggest any amendments.

Wildlife Trust

The Chair explained that the Wildlife Trust had recently carried out a survey on the biodiversity in the area and she requested this be referred to on the proposed webpage. It was agreed that the Wildlife Trust should be invited to explain their work, the data that they gather and what has been achieved in Cambourne to the Committee.

Emissions data

In response to the suggestion that targets could be expressed in terms of the number of tonnes of emissions that needed to be reduced instead of percentages, the Project Officer, Climate, Environment and Waste explained that a link could be sent to parish councils on how to calculate their own emissions. The aim was to get to net zero by 2050.

Preserving green spaces

The Project Officer, Climate, Environment and Waste recognised the importance of green spaces to local communities and its preservation could be encouraged through the Zero Carbon Communities Programme.

Green Connect Webinars

The Project Officer, Climate, Environment and Waste explained that six Green Connect Webinars had been held this year and more would be arranged from September. Committee members were invited to suggest topics for these webinars.

It was agreed that the Committee would discuss this matter further at its forthcoming workshop.

10. Project Update: Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network (WREN)

The Green Energy Investment Manager presented this report, which updated the Committee on the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network project, which was being developed to respond to the plan to replace the diesel waste collection vehicles with cleaner vehicles including electric ones, which will require an upgrading of the infrastructure to generate the necessary electricity. It was noted that the costs would be

shared between this authority and the City Council, with additional funding provided by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

In response to questioning the Green Energy Investment Manager explained that the seasonal variances in the power generated by solar panels had been factored in. Ground mounted solar panels could be optimally positioned to generate more energy than roof mounted panels although on occasion, energy from the grid would still be required.

The Green Energy Investment Manager agreed to check that the increasing energy demands from the new town at Waterbeach would not adversely affect the project and its own demands on the grid.

It was noted that Cabinet had approved funding of the project and would be asked to consider a recommendation on the business plan later this year.

The Committee **noted** the report.

11. **An Interim Approach to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Including Offsite Provision**

The Natural Environment Team Leader presented this report, which invited the Committee to recommend the proposed interim approach of guiding principles for siting biodiversity net gain for developments within the District to Cabinet. It was noted that all planning permissions agreed by local authorities would have to deliver 10% biodiversity net gain from November 2023. The interim guidance was expected to be used before this date. Further guidance on this was expected in November 2023 from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain outside the planning area

Councillor Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, thanked the Natural Environment Team Leader and his team for their work on this. She hoped that the biodiversity offsetting would take place in the same area as the development but she warned that this could be difficult, especially with the smaller developments. The Natural Environment Team Leader explained that in cases where the bio-diversity enhancements were taking place outside the planning area, the aim would be to ensure that area enhanced was of a similar habitat to the area being developed. If this proved impossible then the bio-diversity net gain would have to be delivered locally and managed by a non-commercial organisation like a parish council or community group. A national credit system where the developer could purchase "credit" from the Government was the last and least attractive option. The Built and Natural Environment Manager added that given the size of the District and the number of developments taking place all the options were likely to be used at some point. The Natural Environment Team Leader assured the Committee that the establishment of strategic sites was preferable to identifying sites outside the development area or the developer purchasing credits.

Chalk streams

The Natural Environment Team Leader agreed that chalk streams were vital habitats that had to be managed carefully but they it was difficult to enhance their biodiversity.

DEFRA's regulations and criteria

The Natural Environment Team Leader explained that the guidelines provided by DEFRA necessitated careful consideration and a holistic approach when considering the use of brownfield sites and land that had become contaminated for biodiversity net gain. He added that the Council had already responded to a consultation on biodiversity net gain

regulations from DEFRA. It was noted that all sites would need to be assessed using the DEFRA criteria to establish the baseline data of the area before development. This was essential in calculating the percentage biodiversity net gain.

Locating sites

The Chair recommended that officers liaise with parish councils and community groups to inform them of the forthcoming legislation and invite them to identify areas that could benefit from biodiversity net gains. The Built and Natural Environment Manager explained that the Council would work with local groups to identify sites that could be enhanced but these would not always be in the same area as the development. It was agreed that site visits should be organised for members to areas that could be enhanced.

Doubling nature

It was noted that delivering on the Council's biodiversity net gain target would assist the authority in achieving its doubling nature target. The Chair suggested that this issue could be discussed at the forthcoming forward plan workshop. The Natural Environment Team Leader explained that improving habitats would contribute to achieving the doubling nature target. It was noted that training would be offered to councillors and planning colleagues on biodiversity net gain.

The Natural Environment Team Leader explained that the planning process will ensure that green infrastructure will be built through conditions on planning applications and the biodiversity net gain approach will complement the process.

The Chair thanked officers for including the aspirational target of 20% biodiversity net gain. The Chair stated that the Council had to manage expectations and recognise how difficult it will be to meet the biodiversity net gain targets on many of the smaller sites. She recommended that areas of connectivity needed to be set up before development made such connections impossible. This would involve connecting biodiversity net gain projects on small pieces of land.

The Committee **recommended** that Cabinet agree the biodiversity net gain report.

12. Forward Plan

The Committee noted that a workshop meeting would be held on Tuesday 5 July to discuss areas of key focus for the Committee.

- Green Connect/ZCC programme planning
- Food security/sustainability
- Household composting of green waste
- Developing repair workshops in the District.
- EV infrastructure plans
- How will we achieve our doubling nature aspirations?

13. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 4 October at 2 pm.

The Meeting ended at 1.05 p.m.
