

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee held on
Wednesday, 12 January 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

Chair: Pippa Heylings

Vice-Chair: Dr. Martin Cahn and Geoff Harvey

Committee Members in attendance:

Paul Bearpark

Graham Cone

Peter Fane

Councillors in attendance:

Councillor Grenville Chamberlain was in attendance remotely, by invitation.

Officers:

Patrick Adams

Peter Campbell

John Cornell

Jane Green

Siobhan Mellon

Luke Waddington

Senior Democratic Services Officer

Head of Housing

Natural Environment Team Leader

Built and Natural Environment Manager

Development Officer - Climate and

Environment

Climate and Environment Project Officer

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

5. HRA Asset Management Strategy 2021-2026

The Head of Housing presented this report on the Asset Management Strategy 2021-2026 relating to the Housing Revenue Account, which was being considered by Cabinet on 7 February 2022.

In response to questioning the Head of Housing explained that no decision had been made on what technology would be used. It was expected that the Strategy

would identify new forms of technology to ensure high energy efficiency rates in the Council's housing stock. Tenants will be provided information to make the most of the available technology and benefit from it.

Improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock

Councillor Paul Bearpark stated that rising energy costs made improving the energy efficiency of our homes a priority for our residents. He suggested that residents and tenants could benefit from advice on how heating systems worked. The Head of Housing assured the Committee that officers were being recruited to offer energy advice to tenants. Councillor Martin Cahn asked how difficult it would be to improve the energy efficiency of our housing stock, which included homes made of aluminium and pre-fabricated houses.

The Head of Housing explained that needs of tenants would have to be considered alongside the possible use of sustainable energy provision. For example, some tenants wanted room temperature higher than could easily be delivered by air source heat pumps. Expectations might have to be challenged.

The Head of Housing assured the Committee that the Service Manager – Housing Assets had the skills to identify climate change related funding that would allow the Council to improve the energy efficiency of its building.

Improving biodiversity

Councillor Grenville Chamberlain suggested that the Council should consider improving biodiversity in the areas within the authority's housing estates. Improving the insulation of the homes of those most at risk of fuel poverty should be a priority.

Minor amendments

The Head of Housing explained that any amendments made to the Strategy were highlighted in the attached document. Committee members recommended the following changes:

- Page 60 of the report should clarify whether the costs were in today's money or net value terms.
- Paragraph 21 should specifically refer to climate change.
- Page 58 states that electric heating was more expensive than gas, which was no longer the case.
- Bike storage should be considered.

Councillor Pippa Heylings stated that the Council needed to consider how the Strategy would help the authority to achieve net zero carbon emissions. It was unclear what the costs were to retrofit a home and whether the strategy needed be determined before the costs were known.

Stock Condition Survey

The Head of Housing explained that the Council should carry out a comprehensive Stock Condition Survey that would identify the housing needs of the District. The figures in the report were an estimate, whilst the Stock Condition Survey would provide accurate figures. The Stock Condition Survey would determine whether it was more efficient to renovate a home or rebuilt it.

The Committee **Recommended** that Cabinet agree the Strategy, with the amendments highlighted in the report and consideration of:

- Promoting biodiversity in the surrounding estates.
- Take into account the impact both mental and physical of fuel poverty.
- That the climate implications mentioned in page 10 of the report could be expanded on.
- Apprenticeships and training hub should be considered.

6. Future Parks Accelerator - Presentation by Rob Pearce

The Committee received a presentation from Robert Pearce, the Programme Director of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Future Parks Accelerator.

Councillor Peter Fane stated that in 2000 DEFRA had launched its Community Forest initiatives and the Council should try and take advantage of these projects as they arose. Robert Pearce explained that cooperation between different partners in the public sector was important. The demand and needs of residents did not respect administrative boundaries.

Councillor Graham Cone warned that a rise in the popularity of Fulbourn Nature Reserve had brought challenges in rise in littering, anti-social behaviour and disputes relating to car parking issues. Robert Pearce recognised the challenges related to sites being overused and agreed that any promotion of a site required some form of transport strategy.

Councillor Martin Cahn asked how the Council could promote parks without a specific parks department. The Chair recognised the benefit of green spaces for residents' physical and mental health. She suggested that the Council required a Parks and Green Space Champion to ensure that green spaces were preserved despite the huge development pressure in the District.

7. Update on Plans Regarding Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure - oral update

The Climate and Environment Project Officer updated the Committee on the provision of electric charging points for electric vehicles. He explained that there had been Government funding for the installation of charging points for exclusive use by taxis in the Greater Cambridge area but all the points had been installed in the City and none in the District because, with the Council not owning any car parks, it had been difficult to find locations for charging points in the District. Two rapid chargers and 20 fast chargers were due to be installed at South Cambs Hall by the end of March as part of the Greening project. A charging point was due to be installed at the Sheltered Housing at Elms Court in Over and the possibility of installing chargers at other sheltered housing schemes was also being investigated. The Council was working with its partners to increase the use of electric vehicles in the District.

In response to questioning the Climate and Environment Project Officer explained that Milton Country Park had not proved to be a viable site for chargers as the Park

was not always open to visitors. He agreed to consider the ice rink and the recycling centre at Milton as possible locations.

The Chair stated that events were planned for Climate and Environment week starting Monday 21 February and parish councils could be consulted on charging points then. The Committee **Noted** the report.

8. **Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document**

The Natural Environment Team Leader presented this report on the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which had been out for public consultation.

The Natural Environment Team Leader explained that the website would include supporting information which could provide guidance for parish councils and other residents but there was a limit to what could be included in the SPD.

The Natural Environment Team Leader agreed to consider amending the SPD to clarify that 10 bird boxes would be provided for buildings up to 1,000 square metres in size.

Minor amendment

It was agreed that the word “until” needed to be added in paragraph 5.5.8 after the word “However”.

The Committee recognised the need to support the SPD to achieve the aspirational biodiversity gain target of 20%. The **Recommended** that Cabinet agree the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document.

That Chair suggested that the agreement of the SPD could be announced at the Climate and Environment week.

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

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday 7 March at 2 pm. The following items were on this meeting’s draft agenda:

- Update on EVCPs
- Green Investments Update
- Air Quality Update
- Cambridgeshire Solar Together

The Development Officer – Climate and Environment agreed to add an item on providing guidance to parish councils on declaring a climate emergency to the Forward Plan, to be discussed at either the next meeting or the one after that.

The Meeting ended at 4.30 p.m.
