

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee held on
Thursday, 7 December 2023 at 2.00 p.m.

Chair: Geoff Harvey
Vice-Chair: Dr. Martin Cahn

Committee Members in attendance:

Ariel Cahn
Dr Lisa Redrup
Peter Sandford
Peter Fane

Councillors in attendance:

Councillor Henry Batchelor was in attendance remotely as Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services.

Officers:

Matthew Axton	Scientific Officer (Air Quality)
Laurence Damary-Homan	Democratic Services Officer
Connor Empringham-Green	Scientific Support Officer
Orla Gibbons	Project Officer (Climate and Environment)
Ellie Haines	Development Officer (Climate and Environment)
Luke Waddington	Project Officer (Climate and Environment)
Rebecca Weymouth-Wood	Waste Policy, Climate and Environment Manager

1. Apologies

Councillor Geoff Harvey assumed the role of Chair for the meeting and advised that the usual Chair, Councillor Pippa Heylings, was unable to attend the meeting as she was attending COP28. Prior to receiving apologies, the Chair invited the Project Officer (Climate and Environment), Orla Gibbons, to provide an update on the Local Climate Action Conference 2023 which the Council had hosted on 28 November 2023. Members thanked the Project Officer for the update and requested that a summary of the event be produced and published by the Council.

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Pippa Heylings and Natalie Warren-Green. Councillor Peter Fane was present as a substitute.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

By affirmation, the Committee authorised the Chair to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2023 as a correct record.

4. Air Quality Update

The Scientific Officer (Air Quality) presented the report. The Chair welcome the Scientific Officer to the Committee and thanked him for the depth and detail of his report. The Committee discussed the sources of emissions in the District and reviewed the context of the report, making comment and asking questions of various parts of the report:

Data monitoring

In response to a question, officers advised that the three continuous monitors, which were DEFRA approved, in the District took readings and reported data every hour, with officers having access to the data at any time. This data could be reviewed to assess the impact of specific events on air quality in the areas in which the monitors operated, and officers advised that annual reports were also produced to allow for annual analysis.

With regard to the Zephyr sensors, officers advised that data was collected approximately every 15 seconds, which allowed officers to access both granular data and averages over longer time periods. Officers advised that the Zephyr sensors were not DEFRA approved, and as such data from these sensors could not be used in annual reports to DEFRA, but officers advised that the data from these sensors was similar to that produced by the continuous monitors and that officers had a high level of confidence in the data produced by the Zephyr sensors.

Appendix A- Figure 5

Officers clarified that different sites had different monitors/sensors in place but that they all recorded particulate matter data (PM_{2.5}) over the same timeframe. The Committee was informed that the dark blue, orange and grey lines (Harston, Impington and Northstowe respectively) represented data recorded by continuous monitors, the yellow line (Girton) represented data recorded by a Zephyr monitor and that the light blue line (Wicken Fen) represented data recorded by a DEFRA background monitor. The Committee was informed that the data was broadly consistent across the sites as pollution was typically dominated by regional events and notable temporary variances between sites (such as the spike in Harston) was likely a result of a localised event.

Data from the Air Quality in England (AQE) database

A question was raised on the fact that on the [AQE database](#), no data was recorded from the continuous monitor in Harston. Officers advised that, since the new monitors had been installed, a 3rd party company was being used to collect the data and that the company had not yet provided the data gathered to AQE. Officers advised that contact had been made to the company to query this matter and request that the data was uploaded and backdated, but officers were still awaiting response.

Particulate emissions from vehicles

Discussion was held over non-exhaust emissions of vehicles and whether the increased weight of electric vehicles (EVs) could result in higher levels of non-exhaust particulate materials. Officers referred to a 2019 report from the Air Quality Expert Group showed that, at the time, 40% of particulate emissions from vehicles were from exhaust, with the remaining emissions being produced by brake and tyre wear. Officers acknowledged that increased uptake of EVs could lead to a small increase of tyre particulate emissions, but that any such increase would be greatly outweighed by the reduction in exhaust emissions and reduced brake particulate emissions due to the regenerative braking commonly utilised by electric vehicles. Officers referred to a [report from the RAC](#) which investigated the impact of increased EV usage on particulate emissions. Officers also advised that measurements of particulate matter in the region covered a variety of emission sources

and data could not identify, for example, the amount of PM_{2.5} produced by vehicle tyres on a local level.

Cross-boundary particulate pollution

The challenges of managing particulate pollution across authority boundaries were discussed. Officers highlighted the importance of each local authority taking responsibility for emissions in their own area, which would create a cumulative impact on both a national and regional scale, and the need for cooperation between neighbouring local authorities through approaches such as a joint Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy.

Comparative harm of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and PM_{2.5} emissions

In response to a question on the context and harms of NO₂ emissions in comparison to PM_{2.5} emissions, officers advised that exposure to PM_{2.5} emissions were more harmful to individuals in the long term. Members were advised that PM_{2.5} emissions led to ultra-fine particles entering the bloodstream via the lungs and crossing over into other parts of the body, such as the brain, and that these particles were hard for the body to remove. As such, the cumulative impact of inhaling such particles could lead to diseases and illnesses. Officers acknowledged that NO₂ harms were also significant and that the Council would seek to tackle the harms of all emissions through air quality management practices.

World Health Organization (WHO) Air Quality Guidelines

A question was raised on the feasibility of meeting the targets of the WHO Air Quality Guidelines if the Council were to adopt them as the air quality standard to work to across Greater Cambridge. Officers acknowledged that the targets set out in the WHO Guidelines were challenging to meet, with ~99% of global population living in areas where PM_{2.5} levels exceeded the targets set out, but that it was important for the Council to pursue the targets even if they were ambitious and difficult to achieve. The Committee was advised that officers intended to set interim air quality targets which were achievable in the shorter term and could be used as a platform to progress towards meeting the WHO targets.

The Committee discussed adopting targets as challenging as those set out by the WHO Guidelines and agreed that, given the importance of the issue and the health impacts of pollution, it was appropriate to adopt such ambitious targets.

Vehicle idling and Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs)

Members discussed how vehicle idling could be tackled. With the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement Agents in the District, Members enquired as to if the Parking Agents could hand out leaflets to drivers containing information on the harms of vehicle idling in an effort to discourage the action. Officers advised that this could be possible and was an action that would be taken away for review.

The Committee discussed the recommendations laid out in the report and, by affirmation:

- a) Agreed that it had **reviewed and commented** upon the updates to the Air Quality Strategy.
- b) **Noted** the conclusions of the use of Public Space Protection Orders and agreed to **recommend** that the Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services progress with a positive engagement campaign rather than enforcement of vehicle idling.
- c) Agreed to **recommend** that the Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental

Services progress an early revision of the South Cambridgeshire District Council Air Quality Strategy as a joint Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy with Cambridge City Council, with the finalised strategy coming before Committee in Spring 2024.

- d) Agreed to **recommend** that the Lead Cabinet Member adopt WHO Air Quality Guidelines as the air quality standard to work towards across Greater Cambridge.

5. Greening of South Cambs Hall - Oral Update

The Waste Policy and Climate Manager presented the oral update on behalf of the Procurement, Contracts and Accounts Payable Manager (Sean Missin). In the update, Members were informed that:

- A technical Project Manager, alongside an Employers Agent and Clerk of Works, had been taken on board to oversee the completion of the project.
- Systems, procedures and reporting had been introduced to ensure that problems were being reported and that rectification plans were put in place to address any issues.
- The construction phase plan was being revised and detailed to closely monitor remaining works.
- Mechanical and electrical works had been checked with the client team to update the construction phase plan.
- The electric vehicle chargers had been comprehensively tested, with identified issues having been fixed and faulty units replaced at the cost of the contractor.
- The performance of electric vehicle chargers was being monitored to ensure full functionality.
- A design rectification had been proposed by the contractor to enable the chiller and solar car ports to operate concurrently, with further work being undertaken on the design prior to approval, at the cost of the contractor.
- The programme of works comprised of a number of separate works, with the focus of the team's attention at the time being on the heating system.

Members enquired as to what displays would be in place to show visitors to South Cambs Hall what the impacts of the greening project were and officers agreed to take the question away. The Committee **noted** the oral update.

Prior to the close of the meeting, Members noted that new guidance from Heritage England, which discussed the balance between the preservation of Heritage Assets and energy efficiency upgrades, had been published. A request was also made for training to be provided to Members on forthcoming changes to Biodiversity Net Gain legislation, and officers advised that future workshops for the Committee were planned with Biodiversity being the next topic to be covered.

The Meeting ended at 3.10 p.m.
