

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee held on
Tuesday, 13 February 2024 at 2.00 p.m.

Chair: Pippa Heylings

Vice-Chairs: Dr Martin Cahn and Geoff Harvey

Committee Members in attendance:

Dr Shrobona Bhattacharya

Ariel Cahn

Dr Lisa Redrup

Peter Sandford

Natalie Warren-Green

Bunty Waters

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins was in attendance remotely.

Councillors in attendance:

Councillor Brain Milnes was in attendance as Lead Cabinet Member for Environment.

Officers:

Laurence Damary-Homan

Orla Gibbons

Ellie Haines

Sean Missin

Rebecca Weymouth-Wood

Democratic Services Officer

Project Officer (Climate & Environment)

Development Officer (Climate & Environment)

Procurement, Contacts and Accounts Payable
Manager

Waste Policy and Climate Manager

1. Chair's Announcements

The Chair made several brief housekeeping announcements.

2. Apologies

There were no Apologies for Absence.

3. Declarations of Interest

With respect to Minute 9, Councillor Dr Martin Cahn declared that his brother was an employee of Climate Emergency UK, which was referenced in the discussion.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

By affirmation, the Committee authorised the Chair to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023 as a correct record.

5. Public Questions

There were no public questions.

6. Greening of South Cambs Hall - Oral Update

The Procurement, Contacts and Accounts Payable Manager presented the oral update and provided information to the Committee regarding:

- Project management systems that had been introduced to enhance the project.
- A request for information system that had been put into place.
- Damaged solar panels in the car port that had been replaced, snagging in the car park which had been addressed and the electric vehicle chargers which had been comprehensively tested.
- Design rectification work that was being undertaken by the contractor to enable the chiller and solar car ports to operate concurrently.
- The identification of the need for some works to the trench heating and main Air Handling Unit 01.
- The adjustment of the low temperature hot water system and the use of winter mode in the air handling unit to reduce cold air infiltration into the building.
- The identification and carrying out of necessary works to the ground source heat pumps.
- Technical design workshops that were taking place weekly between the technical project team and the contractors to ensure that each energy conservation measure and additional works were brought to a successful conclusion.

In response to a question, Members were informed that the chiller switch controlled equipment that cooled the building in summer months and an installation issue had arisen which meant that the car port and chiller equipment could not run concurrently, which was being addressed and resolved by the project team. A question was raised on when the overall project would be completed, and the Committee was informed that problems were continuing to be identified and resolved. Given the amount of concurrent ongoing works and need for certain works to be completed before others could be started, it was not possible for officers to provide a precise estimate for the finish date of the overall project at the time, but the project team was working towards providing a definitive final completion date. Further context was provided, and the Committee was informed

that there were 11 tranches of work ongoing, dealing with numerous technical matters, and a number of contractors were involved in the overall Greening of South Cambs Hall project. Members were advised that the contractor was financially liable for some of the remedial works, such as faulty electric vehicle charger units, whilst the Council was financially responsible for others, such as the required works to the air handling units. Officers agreed to provide a written response regarding a technical question on the types of motor used in the air handling units.

The Committee **noted** the report.

7. Updates to Zero Carbon Community Grant Guidance for Applicants - Oral Update

The Project Officer (Climate & Environment) presented the oral update and informed the Committee that:

- In advance of the sixth round of applications to the Grant, opening in April 2024, the application criteria and guidance had been reviewed and clarifications to the guidance had been proposed.
- The grant themes and objectives were to remain the same, with applications invited under the theme of “reducing carbon emissions” or “community engagement”.
- With regard to applications from nature projects:
 - No nature projects had been funded in the previous grant cycle as, whilst several nature-based applications were received, they were submitted under the “community engagement category” but the applications did not adequately demonstrate how the project would engage people on climate issues or promote behaviour change.
 - The guidance was to be amended to direct “pure” nature projects towards more suitable funding sources, such as the Community Chest Biodiversity pot or the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fund for Nature.
 - Clarifications to the guidance were to emphasise the need for nature projects to clearly define themselves as community engagement or carbon reduction projects to ensure they fit the criteria.
- Following comments from the Grants Advisory Committee, the updated

guidance would request that applications involving solar photovoltaic panels provide a minimum of three quotes for panels to improve value for money.

- Regarding calculations of avoided emissions resulting from projects, the e-form for submitting applications was to be amended to request that emissions calculations use the methodology provided in the guidance, allowing for greater ease of comparison when assessing applications.

In the discussion, Members enquired as to if previous examples of successful applications under the community engagement heading could be shared with prospective applicants, with the example of including them in the Zero Carbon Communities newsletter being given. Officers provided clarity on the existing guidance around community engagement projects and agreed to take away the comment on providing examples of previous successful projects, stating that this could be incorporated into the advertising of the grant scheme and workshops with applicants to the scheme. Further Member comment was made, reflecting on the success of the Council's Local Climate Action Conference 2023 and the example of the community electric vehicle charging project led by Steeple Morden Parish Council, that providing examples of successful projects was very useful to residents and community groups.

A question was raised as to if schools could apply to the grant to support projects such as community eco-festivals. Members were advised that these projects would fit the criteria for community engagement and, whilst officers required review to ascertain if schools themselves could apply to the fund, representatives of schools could apply for school-based projects. Members noted that in previous grant cycles a school-based project led by students in Melbourn had been funded. A further question was raised on how local groups with environmental interests, such as river ecology groups which were prevalent in the district, could apply to the grant scheme given that the link between habitat/ecosystem enhancements and carbon reductions were hard to calculate. Officers advised that these sorts of groups could look to create community engagement projects that would enhance the work they were already undertaking and applications to the grant fund for these projects could be made.

Members commented that the clarifications to the guidance were sensible, useful and would help prospective applicants produce high quality applications- the Committee supported the proposed amendments to the criteria.

The Committee **noted** the report.

8. 6 Free Trees - Oral Update

The Development Officer (Climate & Environment) presented the oral update and informed the Committee that:

- The scheme continued to offer 6 smaller trees or 1 large potted tree to Parish Councils. 45 Parish Councils took up the offer in 2023/24, compared to 49 in 2022/23.

- Trees were well distributed across the district, with Teversham, Great and Little Eversden, Great Abington and Bartlow Parish Councils taking part in the scheme for the first time. Parish Councils were asked to provide photos of the trees in situ, which were planned to be used in promotional materials for the scheme.
- Feedback from Parish Councils who did not participate in the scheme cited issues finding space for the trees, sourcing consistent maintenance and watering of the trees and that they had received trees from other schemes, such as the Coronation tree fund.

In the discussion, Members commented that, with the trees provided through the scheme being spread across the district, a map showing where trees from the scheme had been planted would be valuable. In response to a Member question, officers advised that Parish Councils who took up the scheme were not required to display any materials showing that the tree was provided by the scheme, but some Parishes chose to put plaques which recognised this. A further question was asked on if feedback from Parish Councils was required and officers informed the Committee that it was not a requirement, but many had been forthcoming in feedback and a number of Parish Councils had given details on how the trees would be managed. Surveys had also been undertaken to check in on the health of some of the trees provided by the scheme.

With regard to a question on the availability of land as a constraint to the scheme, officers advised that, whilst it was difficult to assess how much land was available for planting across the district, many Parish Councils had found space for trees and the Council's Estates team had helped Parish Councils gain permission to plant on District Council owned land. A question was raised as to if it was possible for trees planted on District Council land to be later managed by the District Council once the trees had matured and officers agreed to discuss this possibility with other officers who were responsible for the maintenance of Council owned land. Members commented on successes with communicating with Cambridgeshire Council County to gain permission to plant on County Council owned land, especially alongside highways, and this was highlighted as an example of how coordination between authorities allowed for greater successes with climate action schemes.

The Committee **noted** the report.

9. **Forward Plan and Any Other Business**

The Committee was informed that the next meeting would bring a report on the Joint Air Quality Strategy and an update on the council housing retrofit project. Future meetings were to include updates on the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network and climate risk & adaptation. A member comment was made that at future workshops or meetings that addressed wider housing retrofit strategies, it would be useful to explore how heritage assets could be retrofitted for energy

efficiency, including case studies of successful retrofits of heritage properties.

A Member question was raised on if there was any data showing how South Cambridgeshire measured in comparison to other local authorities on climate matters and carbon footprint. Officers advised that benchmarking work was to be undertaken in the future but comparative data from other local authorities was not easily accessible; officers advised that available benchmarking guidance from Climate Emergency UK was being incorporated into reviews where appropriate.

Discussion was held over changes to Biodiversity Net Gain legislation, the strategies in place to support Parish Councils in the transition to the new legislation and how coordination between local authorities could support biodiversity measures in the region. Officers informed the Committee that they would share information on the new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements with Parish Councils and that information would be included in the Zero Carbon Communities newsletter.

The Meeting ended at 2.57 p.m.
