

REPORT TO: C&EAC 24 September 2019

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Hawkins

LEAD OFFICER: Jane Green, Built and Natural Environment Manager

Zero Carbon Futures Symposium Report

Executive Summary

1. This report provides the C&EAC with the key findings and recommendations from the Zero Carbon Futures Symposium held by Carbon Neutral Cambridge in partnership with the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service on 21 May.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the C&EAC:

2. Notes and comments on the Zero Carbon Futures Symposium Report

Details

3. The Zero Carbon Futures Symposium was held on 21 May. It was organised by Carbon Neutral Cambridge in partnership with the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council.
4. Running a zero carbon conference to develop scenarios and learn from best practice to drive decarbonisation by 2050 is one of the measures in the Business Plan 2019-24. The Symposium fulfilled this measure.
5. A presentation giving feedback on the Symposium was given to the 8 July meeting of the C&EAC.
6. Carbon Neutral Cambridge is a campaigning organisation run by volunteers. Details of the organisation including its constitution and organising committee can be found on its website at carbonneutralcambridge.org.
7. The aim of the Symposium was to inform policy development for the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan with the aim of helping to accelerate the local transition to net zero

carbon. It was attended by 57 expert participants and speakers, of which just over half were council officers or councillors.

8. The Symposium addressed questions such as the powers (both statutory and soft power) that are available to councils and the examples that would support the use of these powers. The primary focus of the day was on the areas where councils have most influence, i.e. new build housing and energy.
9. The event report shares the views and ideas of the experts attending the Symposium and was written by Anne Miller for Carbon Neutral Cambridge. The views and ideas in the report are not necessarily endorsed by Carbon Neutral Cambridge or by partner organisations for the event.
10. The ten key findings and recommendations in the report are:
 - i. Every Local Plan in England has to have a carbon reduction trajectory in line with the Climate Act. Although to date most councils have ignored this, they're unlikely to be able to get away with it in future.
 - ii. To be amongst the leaders, Greater Cambridge's Local Plan should follow London and Reading's examples in setting a Net Zero Carbon standard for all major residential developments, i.e. requiring on-site carbon emissions to be 35% lower than specified in Building Regulations Part L (2013) with all remaining emissions offset by use of off-site renewables or payments into a local Carbon Offset fund.
 - iii. The average new home uses 40% more energy than required by Building Regulations. It would help reduce this 'performance gap' if major residential developments were required to use an approved independent assured performance service, such as National Energy Foundation's Assured Performance Process (APP) or Bioregional's Building Energy Performance Improvement Toolkit (BEPIT) to ensure the quality of design and construction.
 - iv. The ultra low energy Passivhaus standard typically reduces the energy use of a new home to 10% of that specified by Building Regulations. Evidence submitted to the Committee on Climate Change suggests this will cost no more than £4,500 for a semi-detached home, including the cost of low carbon heating.
 - v. To encourage high standards of energy efficiency Councils should require all new buildings to complete an airtightness test with an allowable permeability of no more than $3\text{m}^3/\text{m}^2$ at 50pa.
 - vi. Financial viability is no excuse for failure to meet the required standards of carbon reduction. With care in design and construction very low carbon homes can be built for modest additional cost.
 - vii. In law, the price paid for land is no reason for non-compliance with local planning policies.
 - viii. Councils should consider requiring embedded carbon calculations to encourage the use of timber in place of concrete and steel in buildings and lock away carbon.

- ix. A local Green Bond could be a useful way to attract local and institutional capital for investment throughout the Combined Authority region, to reduce both carbon emissions and inequality.
 - x. Councils, community organisations and building professionals should demand improvements to Building Regulations Part L in the forthcoming government consultation and call for the restoration of powers to local planning authorities to allow the acceleration of decarbonisation.
11. Officers from the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service intend to use the Symposium Report to inform the development of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
12. The Local Plan draft Issues & Options report includes 'tackling climate change' as a key theme. Further to this, detailed evidence will be commissioned to help identify policy options for the Local Plan, taking into consideration the findings of the Symposium Report as well as carbon footprint work currently under development for Cambridgeshire and progress amongst other local planning authorities in adopting carbon reduction policies related to net zero carbon.

Options

The C&EAC can:

13. Note the Zero Carbon Futures Symposium Report with or without comments

Implications

14. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

Climate Change

15. Ensuring that the new Local Plan includes strong policies to support decarbonisation is a key mechanism by which the Council can address the issue of climate change by supporting the transition to zero carbon by 2050.

Effect on Council Priority Areas

Being green to our core

16. Ensuring that the new Local Plan includes strong policies to support decarbonisation is a key mechanism by which the Council can fulfil its priority of 'Being green to our core'.

Appendices

Appendix A: Zero Carbon Futures Symposium Report

Report Author:

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