

Environment and Green Investment Committee

Date: 1 December 2022

Time: 10.00am – 11.50am

Venue: New Shire Hall

Present: Councillors L Dupré (Chair), N Gay (Vice Chair), A Bradnam, S Corney, P Coutts, S Ferguson, I Gardener, J Gowing, R Hathorn, J King, B Milnes, C Rae, M Smith and S Tierney

102. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

103. Public minutes of the Environment and Green Investment Committee meeting held 13 October 2022 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record and the action log was noted.

With regard to the Action Log, it was noted that a briefing note on Grid connection challenges had been circulated on 30/11/22.

104. Petitions and Public Questions

No petitions or public questions were received.

105. Fenland Local Plan: Draft Local Plan Consultation

The Committee received a report which set out the County Council's consultation response to the draft of the new Fenland Local Plan. The new Local Plan would replace the adopted Fenland Local Plan (2014), but not the recently adopted Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Plan (July 2021).

The deadline for responses to the consultation had ended on 19 October 2022, so the consultation response was being presented retrospectively, as a technical officer response had been submitted to the District Council in advance of the Committee meeting. The District Council had indicated that it would consider any comments resulting from the Committee meeting, but it was noted that it was not legally obliged to do so.

The internal consultation undertaken within the County Council had generated responses from Strategic Waste, Energy and Climate Change, Libraries, the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority, Education, Public Health, Connecting Cambridgeshire, Biodiversity and

Greenspaces, and these were included as an appendix to the report. In addition to these technical responses, the Strategic Assets team had submitted a separate response that had been endorsed by the Corporate Leadership Team. In general, the responses were consistent with the Council's own corporate priorities, and were broadly supportive of the draft Local Plan. However, there were a number of instances where the County Council was objecting to the draft Local Plan, and these were detailed. Where an objection has been made, officers were working with the District Council towards resolving these issues before the Plan progressed to the next stage. The District Council intended to publish the Pre-submission Local Plan in January 2023 which would be the last opportunity to comment before the Plan was submitted for Public Examination. However, there were indications that this timescale may slip with publication of the Pre-submission Local Plan not taking place until July 2023.

The Committee noted supportive comments from Councillor Samantha Hoy, Local Member for Wisbech East, who had been involved in the Local Plan process and recommended that the Committee support the proposed response. Local Member Councillor Tierney also advised that he had been involved throughout the process as a District Councillor, and it was a very clear, well constructed document.

Local Member Councillor Gowing advised that he had received an email from a local GP in March, outlining his concerns about the extra load on GP surgeries. There were currently seven GP partners in March, but three were approaching retirement age, and they were concerned about the numbers on their lists and the extra strain caused by additional development.

A Member spoke favourably about the thoroughness of the report, particularly the comments from the Ecology Officer. With regard to Policy LP6 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure - she queried the presumption in favour of ground-based photovoltaics and the statement *“including commercial large-scale proposals, unless there is clear and demonstrable significant harm, or it is on BMV (best and most versatile) land unless it's peat and the scheme would protect or enhance it, or the site is allocated for another purpose”*. She asked if this meant there was an assumption that ground-based photovoltaics would protect and enhance peat land, and what the priority order was? It was also queried if there was a presumption that ground based solar was preferred to photovoltaic panels on buildings. Officers commented that panels on buildings should be favoured due to the land take of the alternative, and agreed to clarify this matter and deal with any change via the delegation, if approved.

A Member queried the statement *“considerations for wind turbine proposals should be amended so that a larger area is allocated as potentially acceptable for medium to large wind turbine developments, preferably by allocating the whole of Fenland, and thereby allowing any future proposal to be considered on its own merits”*. It was noted that the policy as proposed currently allowed wind turbine in locations where there were existing wind turbines that needed recommissioning. The comment therefore was that there was further scope for wind turbine development across Fenland, subject to the appropriate caveats and policy constraints.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) endorse the consultation response to the draft Fenland Local Plan as set out in Appendix 1; and
- b) delegate to the Executive Director (Place and Sustainability) in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee the authority to:
 1. Make minor changes to the response: and
 2. Work with Fenland District Council to resolve the issues raised at paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 of this report and where necessary to withdraw, maintain or submit further objections to the Pre-Submission version of the Local Plan.

106. Annual carbon footprint report 2021-22

The Committee considered a report on the carbon footprint for the County Council for the year 2021-22, and for Cambridgeshire as a county for 2020. It was noted that throughout the report, greenhouse gas emissions were measured using CO₂e – carbon dioxide equivalent.

Only around 5% of the Council's emissions were Scopes 1 and 2, which were direct emissions and indirect energy emissions, the majority of which came from electricity usage. The vast majority of the Council's emissions fell under Scope 3, which means these are indirect emissions from assets outside of the Council's direct control. The Council's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2021-22 for all three scopes amounted to 131,610 tonnes CO₂e (gross), which was 3% higher than the previous year, but 44% lower than the baseline year of 2018-19. The largest share of emissions (36%) was from waste, largely due to the Council's statutory duty as the Waste Disposal Authority. Members noted a breakdown of the sources of greenhouse emissions, and also trends over time. Overall emissions were in line with expectations. Significantly lower emissions had been recorded over the last two years compared to the baseline year of 2018-19, mainly due to less construction work being on site. It was also noted that further improvements had been made to the methodology, with a more accurate carbon calculator being developed for the waste sector, and this had been applied retrospectively. The Council's many renewable generating assets resulted in greenhouse gas emissions being lower than they would otherwise have been.

A Member observed electricity for streetlighting was a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Executive Director advised that the LED street lighting programme formed part of the business planning item for Highways & Transport Committee on 6 December, and such a programme would result in a considerable reduction in emissions. Another Member noted that electricity for streetlighting and buildings was the biggest proportion of Scope 1 and 2 emissions, and whilst accepting that this was offset to some extent by sourcing energy from renewable sources, there was still a reliance on fossil fuels on days

when there was little sun or wind, so there were still emissions on those days. Officers advised that this was why both gross and net emissions were reported i.e. “location based method” and “market based method” of greenhouse gas accounting. It was agreed that overall electricity usage needed to be reduced, street lighting being a good example, as this reduced both emissions and bills.

A Member observed that Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire were shown as the largest emitters, but argued that this did not give an accurate view on individual emissions, as those Districts were larger and more populous. Officers confirmed that the information provided about emissions from waste was based on the source of waste arising, not location of waste treatment facilities, and that the data for per capita emissions was available and could be analysed. It was also noted that greater emissions in Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire were partly attributable to the major transport routes (A1, A14) located in those Districts.

A Member asked if the Council had any chance of reducing the Scope 3 emissions, which formed 95% of total emissions. Officers advised that the Council could strongly influence Scope 3 emissions, e.g. through procurement mechanisms. Members’ attention was drawn to the table in the report which identified all Greenhouse Gas emissions 2020-21, by source and scope.

A Member asked how waste emissions could be reduced, observing that this was little incentive to encourage individual households to minimise their waste. Officers commented this was difficult, and there needed to be a focus on reduction and recycling, ultimately reducing the amount going to landfill. The whole waste system needed to be carefully reviewed, because as the disposal authority, the County Council has to deal with the end product i.e. the waste collected by the waste collection authorities. A PhD student was joining the team for a short period to specifically look at that system and the behavioural changes required to minimise waste in future.

In response to a question on Construction emissions, it was noted that there were a number of mechanisms being put in place, including the Net Zero by Design for capital projects, aimed at reducing fossil fuel dependency throughout the supply chain. Carbon calculators were used to monitor projects prior to and after construction. The Enabling Net Zero Programme was looking to develop decarbonisation plans for high emission areas such as buildings, waste, highways and schools.

A Member suggested that the Report should be well publicised so that residents were aware of the impact, and suggested promoting through District and Parish Councils and local newspapers.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) accept the annual carbon footprint report (attached as Appendix A) as a record of the Council’s known greenhouse gas emissions for the financial year 2021-22.

- b) publish the 2021-22 annual carbon footprint report on the Council's website.

107. Review of Draft Revenue and Capital Business Planning Proposals for 2023-28

The Committee considered a report detailing the current business and budgetary planning position estimates for 2023-2028, including the principal risks, contingencies and implications facing the Committee and the Council's resources. The report also set out the process and next steps for the Council in agreeing a business plan budget for future years.

Attention was drawn to the specific savings and risks identified for this Committee's consideration, including Emissions Directives. One of the main items was a vacancy cost saving of £112,000. There was also a small income increase for Light Blue Fibre. The broader, overarching themes of the business planning process were noted, and both the permanent and temporary budget pressures/investments required.

A Member observed that at the Budget Reference Group, it had been concluded that there was little scope to cut budget areas without causing significant damage. It had also been noted that many of the Committee's expenditure areas were capital, with a lot of projects predicted to produce significant income streams in future. The Executive Director commented that whilst welcoming some areas of the Autumn statement, much would be dependent on the provisional local government finance settlement shortly before Christmas. The Chair commented that the outcome of that finance settlement was keenly awaited, and much of the Committee's decision making was conditional on that, and as with many local authorities, Cambridgeshire faced significant challenges financially.

A Member noted that a number of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) were currently being considered, which had a major impact on officer capacity. She expressed concern that the Council was making sufficient provision to support officers to do this valuable work. The Chair advised that the Consents Working Group, co-chaired by herself and the Chair of Highways & Transport Committee, monitored and reviewed this area of the Council's work, and agreed that the Council was dealing with many major projects at the same time, which took up a huge amount of officer time.

It was resolved, by a majority, to:

- a) note the progress made to date and next steps required to develop the business plan for 2023-2028
- b) comment on and endorses the budget and savings proposals that are within the remit of the Committee as part of consideration of the Council's overall Business Plan
- c) comment on and endorses the proposed changes to the capital programme that are within the remit of the Committee as part of consideration of the Council's overall Business Plan

d) note the updates to fees and charges proposed for 2023-24.

108. Finance Monitoring Report - August 2022

The Committee received the October 2022 Finance Monitoring Report. Introducing the report, the presenting officer highlighted the following points:

- that there was a £1.087M overspend across Place & Sustainability Directorate as a whole;
- on the Revenue side there was a £153K overspend for Waste, and there was also an underlying risk of both an additional £700K landfill gate fee purchase and a further £250K green waste pressure for the cost of diverting waste due to BATc changes required to the Waterbeach facilities, where further analysis was taking place, and an update would be presented to the next Committee;
- there was a forecast overspend due to the income being pushed back for the St Ives Park and Ride Smart Energy Grid;
- there were delays with several energy schemes, meaning that there could be underspends in the 2022/23 financial year.

Arising from the report, a Member asked for further detail on the various energy projects being delayed, specifically whether there was a consistent pattern to the delays. For Babraham Park & Ride, delays were a result of moving from a two to three phase construction programme, to allow sufficient availability of parking spaces and their management. This has pushed the programme back and extended the construction timeline by an additional fourteen weeks. For Swaffham Prior, the delay related to connecting homes into the existing network: the Council was keen to develop the supply chain locally, and had been working with Bouygues and their sub-contractors to ensure a local supply chain was upskilled to deliver as connections were forecast over a five year period. The first wave of connecting homes had already been completed. It was confirmed that there were long lead in times for materials for some energy projects, and the nature of the problems were detailed.

A Member suggested that it would be a good time for a communications campaign on home composting, to reduce the amount being dealt with by the Council.

It was resolved to review, note and comment upon the report.

109. Environment & Green Investment Committee Agenda Plan and Training Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies and Internal Advisory Groups and Panels

The Committee noted that the Light Blue Fibre item scheduled for January would now be considered at the July Committee meeting. Members were also reminded of forthcoming

Member events which were of particular interest to the Environment & Green Investment Committee, specifically a briefing on the Fens Reservoir on 9th December (10am, New Shire Hall/virtual) and 12th December (1pm, CUSPE Policy Challenge: climate change and data - towards net zero carbon).

110. Procurement of technical consultancy to support revenue optimisation on the large energy projects

The Committee considered a report on a proposal to utilise the expertise of a specialist energy market service provider to increase revenue generation from selling renewable energy and battery storage services.

Officers reminded Members that the Council was committed to delivering against its net zero aspirations, through a number of actions and significant investment into energy generating projects which also generated income. However, energy markets were highly volatile, and policy and legislation in this field changes frequently. In order to maximise revenue and opportunities from energy markets, it was proposed that the services of a specialist energy market services provider would be sought to support renewable energy and battery storage services from the Council's large energy projects.

Arising from the report:

- a Member asked what contribution the Council was making towards the whole energy market debate, and that some people would be without electricity supply. He asked how prepared the Council was, especially given RIIO-2 (Revenues = Incentives + Innovation + Outputs) Network price controls. Officers confirmed that the Council had had discussions with UKPN around the RIIO-2 business plans, and that UKPN had been given a view on what they would receive in terms of funding for next five years. This procurement exercise was specifically concerned with securing the best price and contracts, and ensuring the Council had access to the best possible intelligence around current and potential future mechanisms, to maximise benefits to the Council. The other factor was energy security, through developing a number of private wires this offers opportunity for the Council to sell directly to customers;
- a Member asked if the intention was to make all Cambridgeshire buildings self sufficient in terms of electricity in the long term? Officers advised that a national transmission and distribution system was still required to manage demand. The government was investing in nuclear as part of the transition from coal and gas to provide baseload demand, and that renewables were part of the solution. Additionally, the development of a local energy economy is desirable to provide local resilience to the system. Local investment into renewables was advantageous, helping the Council play a role in the local energy economy. Another Member commented that there were not just national but also international system factors, for example interconnectors with France and the potential connection to Norway, where there was huge amounts of hydroelectric power;

- a Member observed that there was considerable pressure on staff and officer resources, and she was pleased to see this proposal come forward, to provide additional expertise to help officers in this complex area and maximise the market for the Council. However, she felt that a fundamental point was that there should be efforts made in tandem to reduce energy usage, by offering support to insulate homes and businesses. It was noted that a number of schemes were already underway in this regard, including Action on Energy and the Cambridgeshire Retrofit Partnership, which focused on insulation and low carbon heating solutions, and take-up had increased due to recent energy price hikes.

The Chair thanked officers and drew attention to the useful summary in paragraph 2.6 of the report, which detailed the services that could be procured, and commented she was extremely enthused by this report, and the external expertise would be very valuable.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) approve the use of the Crown Commercial Service's HELGA Framework to procure the specialist energy market services;
- b) approve the scope of the draft Optimisation Services to be procured as set out in Appendix B;
- c) note the timescales of the procurement process; and
- d) delegate authority to the Executive Director, Place and Sustainability in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Committee to enter into an Optimisation Services contract with the preferred bidder.

111. Exclusion of Press and Public

It was resolved unanimously that:

the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following item contains exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and that it would not be in the public interest for this information to be disclosed - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

112. St Ives Park and Ride Smart Energy Grid connections

Members considered a report on the St Ives Park and Ride Smart Energy Grid Connections.

It was resolved, by a majority, to approve the recommendations as set out in the report.