

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY AND SERVICE COMMITTEE: **MINUTES**

Date: Thursday 25th June 2020

Time: 10:00am – 11:20am

Present: Councillors L Dupre, I Gardener, J Gowing, P Hudson, P McDonald (Substituting for Councillor A Bradnam), J Schumann (Chairman), J Scutt, M Shuter, G Wilson and T Wotherspoon (Vice-Chairman).

Apologies: Councillor A Bradnam.

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were noted as recorded above.

Councillor Ian Gardener declared a non-pecuniary disclosable interest in relation to Item 6, as he was the Vice-Chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council's Planning Committee.

Councillor Jocelynn Scutt declared a non-pecuniary disclosable interest in relation to Item 6, as she was a member of Cambridgeshire County Council's Planning Committee.

Councillors John Gowing and Peter Hudson declared a non-pecuniary disclosable interest in relation to Item 6, as they were substitute members of Cambridgeshire County Council's Planning Committee.

7. MINUTES – 28TH MAY 2020

It was resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28th May 2020 as a correct record.

The Chairman welcomed the Council's provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to care homes to ensure compliance with Government legislation. At the previous meeting, a Member had raised concerns regarding the amount of PPE provided to specific care homes. The Chairman asked whether the Member could provide the Committee with more information regarding this. The Member stated that she had communicated with the resident again and established that their concern was in regards to the amount of PPE being provided to officers who were working with children. She confirmed that she would communicate with the resident further in order to identify the precise issue so she could then raise it with the appropriate officers.

8. ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE ACTION LOG

The Action Log was noted and the following points were raised:

- Minute 4 b. – An update on this action had been circulated to the Committee one hour before the meeting. The Member requested that in future, action log updates should be circulated to the Committee earlier in order to allow Members sufficient time to read the information.

9. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No petitions or public questions had been received.

10. RENEWABLE HEATING PROGRAMME (ENVIRONMENT FUND)

The Committee considered a report requesting approval for the assessment criteria for the Low Carbon Heating Programme for the Council's buildings against which individual projects could draw down investment from the Environment Fund for their implementation.

In presenting the report, the Energy Manager explained that Cambridgeshire County Council's Climate Change and Environment Strategy included a pledge to reduce its carbon footprint by 50% on 2018/19 levels, by 2023 on scopes 1 and 2. The majority of these Scope 1 (direct) emissions were produced from oil and gas heating in the Council's buildings. By replacing oil and gas fired boilers with renewable technologies such as air source heat pumps (ASHPs), she suggested that the Council could save around 1200 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year. It was highlighted that the Council had allocated £15m of the Environment Fund for this work to be completed at approximately 70 buildings owned and occupied by the Council.

There was an additional incentive to complete as many installations as possible before the closure of the non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) in March 2021, so that the Council could claim an additional source of income. In light of this, initial development work had commenced to identify a list of properties for the first batch of projects to replace oil and gas heating with ASHPs. She stated that it was preferred if work was carried out in the summer or early autumn in order to minimise downtime during the winter heating season.

A report would be presented at a future Committee meeting establishing how carbon valuation could be applied more widely across the Council.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Queried whether the cost of carbon would be reviewed if the Government reviewed its own carbon costings. The Energy Manager confirmed that this would be the case and commented that Government published forecast carbon valuation prices on an annual basis.
- In relation to table 1, raised concerns regarding the predicted timescales for obtaining planning permission and arranging electrical supply upgrades for the 19 additional projects. The Member asked whether any of the project

sites required planning permission or an electrical supply upgrade. The Energy Manager acknowledged that both these activities could take a considerable amount of time to achieve. She stated that the majority of projects would not require planning permission as they would be classed as permitted development. She commented that there were a small number of projects that would require planning permission, but this was due to other work being completed on the site. She explained that some sites would require an electrical supply upgrade. It was noted that project timetables were subject to change and those projects that did require an upgrade may be delayed. She stated that there was some flexibility in the project timetable as the RHI could be claimed until March 2021 whilst officers were aiming to complete the projects by November 2020. The Member suggested that this seemed to be an area of risk and commented further that officers should seek to resolve such risks as soon as possible to avoid delays to project completion. The Programme Director for Climate Change and Energy Investment explained that meetings were being arranged with UK Power Networks regarding risk mitigation.

- Sought more information regarding why air source heat pumps were the preferred option for most sites. The Energy Manager explained that both air and ground source heat pumps were excellent forms of renewable heating. However, ground source heat pumps required a large amount of land to install and were also significantly more expensive to install compared to air source heat pumps.
- Queried whether the assumption that the Programme was expected to achieve a simple average payback of 20 years was subject to change due to oil prices decreasing because of the effects of Covid-19. The Chairman explained that the payback period was formulated using a long term assumption on what the average oil and gas prices were going to be based on the best evidence provided.
- Sought assurance that the Programme would have sufficient funding to complete all the proposed projects. The Member requested that a briefing note be circulated to the Committee in July or August, providing an update on the programme's finances. The Energy Manager confirmed that this could be done. **(Action required)**
- Councillor Dupre, with agreement of the Committee proposed to make the report recommendations more explicit to include the role of the Strategic Property Asset Board, the delegation to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair and the referral of projects valued at £500k or more to the Environment and Sustainability Committee.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the background, progress to date, issues, challenges and opportunities regarding the set-up of a programme of renewable heating projects for Council buildings.
- b) Approve the assessment criteria for the Low Carbon Heating Programme to draw down Environment Fund investment.

- c) Request officers to refer individual projects to the Strategic Property Asset Board for evaluation, using the approved assessment criteria for the Low Carbon Heating Programme.
- d) Delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, Environment and Sustainability Committee, to approve the individual business cases for projects valued under £500k.
- e) Refer any projects valued at £500k or above to the Environment and Sustainability Committee.
- f) Approve the inclusion of a carbon savings cost into the business case to sit alongside the financial business case.

11. WISBECH MVV MEDWORTH ENERGY FROM WASTE COMBINED HEAT AND POWER PROPOSAL

The Committee considered a report introducing the Wisbech MVV Medworth energy from waste (EfW) combined heat and power (CHP) proposal. In presenting the report, the Joint Interim Assistant Director, Environment and Commercial Services stated that as this was a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) application, the proposed Project would therefore not be determined by the Council. Rather, the responsibility for accepting and examining NSIP applications rested with the Secretary of State (for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy), certain functions of which, carried out on his behalf by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). The Council would act as one of four statutory consultees in the decision making process. The role of Council as the County Planning Authority (CPA) was to scrutinise the applicant's assessment of the NSIP application, offer technical advice and ensure that adequate public consultation was carried out.

She explained that the delegation to the Executive Director for Place and Economy would only be used where absolutely necessary. The delegation was being established to ensure that the Council did not miss the opportunity to submit representations in a timely manner. It was highlighted that all responses sent to PINS would be circulated to members and substitute members of the Committee and local Wisbech County Councillors by email to ensure transparency.

The Chairman invited Councillor Samantha Hoy to speak as the Local Member for Wisbech East. Councillor Hoy informed the Committee that the statement had been prepared by herself and Councillor Tierney. However, Councillor Tierney was unable to attend the meeting today. She clarified that as this was a NSIP application, the Council did not have the authority to approve it. She commented that if circumstances changed and the Council did become the planning authority responsible for this application, then this would be made clear to the public to ensure transparency and openness.

She suggested that the majority of Wisbech residents did not support this application. She raised concerns regarding the proposed size of the incinerator and stated that it would blight the surrounding landscape. She suggested that it would have further negative impacts on air equality as there would be a significant increase in carbon production due to 300 extra lorry movements into Wisbech per day. She commented that waste would have to be shipped in from overseas in

order to keep it functioning. She was supportive of the work officers had undertaken to ensure that the Council could provide robust advice and guidance to the applicants. She suggested that the application would have a significant impact on the construction of Wisbech Rail as any connecting highway built for the incinerator would sever the railway line.

She asked the Committee to consider amending the report recommendations to ensure that where delegated powers were used, the draft response was also circulated to Local Members ahead of sign off and submission to the Planning Inspectorate.

In response to a Members question regarding the suggested amendment, Councillor Hoy clarified that the Local Members should have sight of the draft response before sign off and submission to the Planning Inspectorate. She commented that she did not want to challenge the professional advice provided by officers, but wanted to ensure that all aspects of the application had been considered.

The Chairman, with agreement of the Committee proposed that the report recommendations be amended to ensure that where delegated powers were used, the draft response was circulated to both Local Members and the Committee ahead of sign off and submission to the Planning Inspectorate.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Authorise the Executive Director: Place and Economy on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council as County Planning Authority (CPA) to submit NSIP related responses to the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the CPA and other regulatory functions of the Council, in consultation with the Chairman and / or Vice Chairman of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, only on occasions where there is not enough time for a report to be delivered to the E&S Committee.
- b) Where delegated powers are used, circulate the draft response to Local Members and members of the Environment and Sustainability Committee ahead of sign off and submission to the Planning Inspectorate.

12. INTERNAL MEMBER ADVISORY GROUP FOR GREEN PROJECT INVESTMENTS

The Committee considered a report requesting that nominations be made to the new Green Project Investments Internal Advisory Group. In presenting the report, the Programme Director for Climate Change and Energy Investment stated that the development of the Green Project Investment Internal Advisory Group would help guide officers in the development of projects which would help deliver the ambitions from the Climate Change and Environment Strategy. To deliver net zero carbon by 2050, the Council would have to develop a range of new business models which would aim to reduce carbon emissions and double biodiversity. Whilst developing new business models, there was going to be new levels of risk that needed to be understood. She suggested that developing new business models could be complex and therefore Members needed to have a good understanding of these new risks when proposals for green project investments were brought to Committee. She explained that projects concepts and the risks associated with the new business models would be brought to this Internal Advisory Group. This would help ensure that Members had a better understanding of the projects presented to them at Committee and could therefore make a more informed decision.

The Chairman stated that the creation of Internal Advisory Groups for the Commercial and Investment Committee had been successful.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- In light of the Covid-19 situation, suggested that green projects should be closely connected to the economic recovery process. The Chairman agreed and stated that it was important for the Council to continue to focus on generating clean energy and creating sustainable communities.
- Suggested that this Committee was the most important as all decisions taken by the Council did have an impact on the environment. The Chairman agreed and explained that the work of the Committee underpinned the majority of the Council's business and would add significant value to it.

The Committee agreed to nominate Councillors: Lorna Dupre, Ian Gardener, John Gowing, Jocelynn Scutt and Tim Wotherspoon to the Green Project Investments Internal Advisory Group.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on Appendix A: the Draft Terms of Reference for the Internal Advisory Group; and
- b) Nominate Councillors: Lorna Dupre, Ian Gardener, John Gowing, Jocelynn Scutt and Tim Wotherspoon to the Green Project Investments Internal Advisory Group

13. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Chairman reported that officers had been asked to bring a report on the Covid-19 response to date for those services for which each Policy and Service Committee was responsible. A similar report would be brought to each future meeting until further notice.

Given the rapidly changing situation and the need to provide the committee and the public with the most up to date information possible, the Chairman reported that he had accepted this as a late report on the following grounds:

1. Reason for lateness: To allow the report to contain the most up to date information possible.
2. Reason for urgency: To enable the committee to be briefed on the current situation in relation to the Council's response to Covid-19 for those services for which it was responsible.

Introducing the report, the Executive Director for Place and Economy drew the Committee's attention to the information found within the report and highlighted the actions taken by Place and Economy (P&E) to respond to Covid-19. He explained that the key highlights in activity within P&E were intertwined between the remit of this Committee and the Highways and Transport Committee. A total of 65 officers from P&E had been redeployed via the Covid-19 Coordination Hub. He commented that these officers had been doing excellent work and also stated that the officers who had not been redeployed, had been picking up additional workloads and were working incredibly hard. He acknowledged that it had been a challenging couple of months but noted that it was important that P&E helped resource the Coordination Hub. He explained that the majority of officers had now returned to their normal post, 17 officers were still redeployed, but there was a phased programme underway to bring them back to their normal posts.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Thanked the officers who had been redeployed via the Covid-19 Coordination Hub.
- Stated that she had not been contacted regarding the proposed pop up cycle lane in her division. The Executive Director for Place and Economy explained that the Head of Transport and Infrastructure Policy and Funding was working on a delivery programme to ensure that all local members were fully informed of this work.
- Requested more information regarding the financial figures found within the report, as they differed from the figures found within the Covid-19 report being presented to Health Committee on the 25th June 2020. The Executive Director for Place and Economy confirmed that he would take this away. **(Action required)**
- Congratulated officers on the successful reopening of the Household Recycling Centres (HRCs)

- Raised concerns regarding the introduction of a booking system for the HRCs in Alconbury, Thriplow and Alconbury. The Member queried whether this booking system would be used for all the HRCs in Cambridgeshire. The Joint Interim Assistant Director for Environment and Commercial Services confirmed that there were no plans to introduce a booking system across all the other HRCs in Cambridgeshire. He explained that the booking system had been introduced as traffic engineers had raised concerns regarding the possibility of cars queueing on the highway to access the HRC. He suggested that it would not have been possible to operate these sites safely without a method of controlling its use by residents. The long diversions in these areas had also started to cause concern for both local residents and businesses. He stated that the Milton and St Neots HRCs were the busiest sites and therefore a booking system would be introduced from 29th June 2020. He explained that AMEY had been asked to reassess their operating plan to establish whether the capacity of these two sites could be increased. It was noted that officers were trying to get the HRCs back to normal service.
- Suggested that it was important to ensure that this booking system was communicated effectively to the public. The Joint Interim Assistant Director for Environment and Commercial Services acknowledged that some residents had been turning up to the HRCs without booking a time slot. He stated that the HRC and traffic operatives had showed a degree of flexibility regarding this and had been allowing this individuals to use the HRC, but had been advising them to book a slot in the future. He stated that they had seen an increase in the percentage of slots being booked which showed that the public were becoming more aware of the new system.
- Sought assurance that this booking system was temporary and would be reviewed. The Executive Director for Place and Economy confirmed that it would be kept under close review and that the booking system was introduced to try and mitigate the additional pressures on HRCs. The Chairman agreed that these arrangements should be reviewed and stated that this system should not become the norm.
- Drew attention to the psychological impact of the Covid-19 lockdown measures on some members of the public, highlighting incidents that had occurred at HRCs. The Chairman agreed and requested that any residents who were using the HRCs be patient and show consideration for site operatives. He commented that officers were doing a fantastic job in ensuring that that the HRCs could remain open. He stated that any abusive behavior towards site operatives would not be tolerated.
- Informed the Committee that residents in Alconbury supported the introduction of the booking system at their HRC.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus.

**14. ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN,
TRAINING PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES AND
INTERNAL ADVISORY GROUPS AND PANELS**

It was unanimously resolved to:

Note the Committee Agenda Plan

Chairman