



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY
SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2023 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Waddington - Chair

Councillor O'Neill
Councillor Osman
Councillor Whittle

Councillor Dawood
Councillor Porter

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32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Batool and Cllr Rae Bhatia.

Councillor Rae Bhatia joined the meeting remotely in an informal capacity.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

34. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY PLAN CONSULTATION

The Director of Estates and Building Services submitted a report on the Leicester City Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The Chair introduced the item noting that Climate Change was an ongoing priority for the Council.

An introduction to the Climate Emergency Action Plan was made by Cllr Clarke, Deputy Mayor- Climate, Economy and Culture. He thanked all involved for their work and bringing their expertise.

He noted that Leicester was demonstrably forward-thinking regarding climate action and was A-rated by the Climate Disclosure Project (CDP) and was in the

top 13% of over 900 cities globally reporting their progress to the CDP. This was a huge credit to officers. However, the city was still running behind where it wants to be and there was a need to up the pace of improvements if the necessary government support is forthcoming. The Commission now had the opportunity to help set the pace and help the Council lead the way and recognise where changes needed to be made and where others needed to be called upon to make changes.

A presentation was made by Duncan Bell, Change Manager (Climate Emergency) using the slides published with the agenda papers. The presentation covered the successes from the first action plan, the aims of the new plan and the approach to achieving the net zero ambition. The aim was to make Leicester a climate-ready city, meaning becoming net-zero by 2030 if possible, with the necessary government support, trying to reduce the impact we have outside the city as all goods and services brought into the city created carbon emissions in other places.

Other key points included:

- The plan looked at the wildlife in the city and the infrastructure in the city trying to adapt and make the city resilient as the climate changed.
- There was a need to try to link the climate change work to the wider goals of the City Council.
- Co-benefits from the climate work included improving people's health by improving the air quality in the city, making homes healthier, reducing issues in buildings with damp and mould, better insulating homes and helping the local economy to grow by helping businesses save energy.
- The Council aimed to lead by example.
- There was a need to reduce demand for fossil fuels and energy use, for example by insulating buildings and encouraging alternatives to car travel and also promoting switching from petrol and diesel vehicles to electric and switching from gas boilers to heat pumps as well as trying to make use of renewable energy sources.
- Round table discussions across different Council service areas were undertaken to identify actions which formed the basis of the consultation draft.
- A public consultation was being undertaken and a workshop had been conducted with young people.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and make comments. Key points included:

- With regard to the co-benefits of the plan it was possible that there could be scope for joint-work with Public Health.
- With regard to a suggestion about getting sports clubs in the city involved, it was relayed that since the document had been published, Active Leicester had joined the partnership. Active Leicester

coordinated a consortium of sports organisations across the city.

- In response to a suggestion that tiny forests be planted in places other than schools, the Commission were informed that six more had been planned and one of these would be in a park. Officers were considering where people would be keen to have further ones, although issues such as vandalism needed to be considered. It was noted that the Council had more than any other Local Authority in the country.
- It was clarified that the wording in the document explained that if tree-planting alone was used to neutralise carbon emissions then trees would need to be planted outside the city. There was no proposal to plant large numbers of trees outside the city. Additional measures as well as tree-planting would be used.
- Heat-pumps would not be effective in buildings that were not properly insulated. As such a retrofit process was being conducted, which included appropriate insulation measures, based on assessments made. Heat-pumps would only be installed in buildings where they worked effectively. Resource was an issue in this process. Whilst work was being done on Council house insulation, it was dependent on government grants. The Council were contributing money from rents into the process, but it was not enough.
- Concern was raised about energy efficiency in private rented homes and the need for it to be improved.
- In response to concern raised about lights being on in City Hall whilst it was empty, it was clarified that City Hall lighting was controlled by movement sensors, and as such lights would only be on if the building was occupied.
- Officers were asked to give consideration to extending the consultation period as it was suggested that many residents were unaware of the consultation and had not had a chance to participate in it. However, it was recognised that extending the consultation period would jeopardise the timescale of the Strategy Plan going to Full Council in March 2024.
- In relation to action number 1.09 Ways of Working and its target to reduce floorspace by at least 10% over 5 years, it was questioned whether this is likely to be achieved given that staff in some areas are being encouraged to return to offices. The importance of addressing the issues surrounding the climate impact caused by purchasing of products was raised.
- Concern was raised about the approval of planning applications which involved felling trees due to them being an 'inconvenience'. It was suggested that the Council needed to be more assertive about protecting what the city has.
- Referring to action number 4.02 Review of options to deliver the LTP vision via demand management and funding support, it was asked that the reasons for the references to workplace parking levies and road user charges in the strategy plan be clarified. It was clarified that, in common with a number of actions in the draft plan, this action formed a continuation of work undertaken as part of the first Climate Emergency

Action Plan between April 2020 and March 2023, during which a review of options had been started. This had included consideration of a workplace parking levy, which had been completed and concluded at the time.

- Speed limits were one of a suite of actions. Decisions would be taken separately on different actions.
- With regard to the retrofitting of private homes, government grants were administered through the Green Homes Grants scheme and the Home Upgrade Grants scheme, which were aimed at low-income and less energy efficient housing – with the HUG scheme focusing on homes which are not connected to the gas network. The Council's contractor for administering the schemes was EON, who then sub-contracted to installers to deliver the work.
- District Heating had been providing low cost, low carbon heating and hot water to many council tenants for many years and the heat metering project currently underway would ensure tenants paid only for the energy they used. Further ways that the district scheme could be decarbonised were being explored. This scheme saved the most carbon out of all the schemes in the city. As electricity from the grid became steadily decarbonised, the benefits of having the district heating on gas combined heat and power (CHP) would become lower and there would be a need to move it across to an electric or other low carbon fuel source.
- In terms of the involvement of businesses, the Council plan was based on what the Council could do to support and encourage them. Many private businesses would take action of their own accord. The Council sought resources to support businesses to take action, particularly those small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with less capacity to get started. If funding became available for a grant scheme the Council would be keen to look to support further business action in the city, following its very successful Green BELLE grant scheme. The Council also had a Social Value Charter for when it worked with businesses and undertaking procurement.
- Leicester Nirvana FC had worked towards reducing their carbon. They were working with the Council on this.
- It was important to have choices on transport and access to where people needed to go. Diesel was an ongoing issue on air quality.
- It was suggested that investment in infrastructure such as Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points had been made based on the anticipation of legislation on the phasing out of petrol and diesel vehicles in favour of EVs which now had an uncertain timetable. The issue of EV charging points would be considered at the next meeting of the Commission.
- It was commented that, while the action plan referred to the Council's Food Plan for actions to promote lower carbon food choices, there was very little action of that kind currently in the Food Plan. The possibility of Council catering becoming plant based was raised as plant-based food was more sustainable the rearing of cattle and associated deforestation

were a big contributor to climate change. It was also suggested that plant based catering was more cost-effective. The issue of diets and ingredients would be considered when updating the Food Plan.

- The impact of pension fund investments was highlighted and, while pension-fund divestment was not within the Council's direct control, it was noted that action by Leicestershire County Council to decarbonise pension fund investments had been actively encouraged by the City Council's representatives. This could be recognised in the new action plan.
- The merits of EV use were discussed. It was suggested that EV use could be encouraged by granting them free parking and allowing them to use bus lanes.
- It was suggested that improving the bus service, especially with regard to frequency, would encourage their use.

A presentation was made by Dr Andrew Reeves, Associate Professor, Institute of Energy and Sustainable Development at De Montfort University, representing the Climate Commission using the slides published with the agenda papers.

Key points in addition to those on the slides included:

- The Climate Commission had been convened to feed back on the Action Plan.
- The Action Plan was a commendable piece of work that demonstrated a clear understanding of the challenge. The overall focus was well-put and it had clearly set out what the scenario would look like if the goals were achieved.
- There was a good principle on how to develop climate actions, and the fairness of the actions had been considered.
- Challenges included the scale of the actions, and it was recognised that the Council was not near to what was needed. Another challenge was resourcing and how the Council could obtain the money and resources to make things happen on the scale needed.
- With regard to the recommendations (as set out on the slide), it was important to consider:
 - What the actions would look like.
 - How to quantify gaps – i.e. how to show what has been done and what needs to be done.
 - The co-benefits, linking to UN sustainability goals.
 - More systematic mapping of opportunities.
- With specific regard to the recommendation on Community Engagement, it was important to consider what overall outcomes were needed from the engagement plan and what success would look like.
- With specific regard to the recommendation on Co-benefits, a more systematic mapping of opportunities was needed.
- With specific regard to the recommendation on Capacity Building, it was

recognised that the Council Sustainability Team would not have the capacity to make all the necessary decisions, however, they could be consulted on them. There was a need to spread knowledge across different groups.

- With specific regard to the recommendation on the Circular Economy, the workings of businesses needed to be considered.
- The use of graphics in the presentation was praised and it was suggested that in comparison the draft strategy was very dense and could benefit from pictures and graphics and being more concise as this could encourage greater engagement.

The Chair thanked Dr Reeves for the presentation.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and make comments. Key points included:

- It was suggested that a 'Kite Mark' could be issued to businesses that were climate ready. Officers agreed to look into this.
- With regard to partners and getting involved with businesses, the Leicester and Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) had promoted the opportunity to join a network for businesses to look at how they could lower carbon.
- A concern was raised about the exclusion of most Scope 3 emissions from the scope of the net zero ambition for the city and the council. A reassurance was given by officers in response that it was not a question of them being concealed, and that the plan did aim to reduce them. However, it was highlighted that emissions caused by producing and transporting goods into the city were the joint responsibility of the suppliers as well as the council and others in Leicester purchasing them. It was therefore a reasonable approach for the Council to have a measurable net-zero ambition focusing on those emissions it could more significantly control while also trying to use its influence to reduce Scope 3 emissions in terms of what it bought. However, in the case of that latter it was recognised that the Council did not have as much control.
- Officers would review the report on a line-by-line basis in terms of how to respond to recommendations.
- Officers noted that there were already actions in the draft plan which addressed certain of the Commission's recommendations, notably: there was an action (7.07) in the draft plan to carry out a review of options on tackling residual carbon emissions. This could consider the merits of adopting the Oxford Principles.
- There was an action (1.18) in the plan looking at the next steps in decarbonising the council's supply chain.
- There was an action (7.06) in the draft plan for the Sustainability Team to look at updating the Climate Adaptation Risk Assessment.
- The Chair noted that the recommendations had already made a

difference to the work of the Council.

A presentation was made by Dr Jose Hernandez, Director, Head of Sustainability and Energy at Pick Everard, representing the Climate Emergency Partnership using the slides published with the agenda papers.

Key points in addition to those on the slides included:

- There had been significant engagement with the organisations involved on how to align with the Council.
- When discussing targets, it was important to focus not just on the end result but on how quickly it could be moved towards.
- There were significant challenges including the level of investment and resources required, but it was necessary to see this as an opportunity.
- There had been discussion on what could be controlled and influenced through the action plan.
- Changes announced such as EV charging and issues with private housing had been discussed and it was important to see certainty and direction.
- The five-year plan aimed to provide direction. In some cases, this would be difficult to achieve.
- Highlighted areas included:
 - Refurbishments – Consideration of new construction and the need to reduce energy and carbon in doing so. It was highlighted that refurbishment was an important option to consider before making any decision to build from scratch, as it could save a lot of ‘embodied carbon’ from being wasted by demolishing existing buildings and using new materials to build new ones. However, it was acknowledged that refurbishment was not always possible.
 - Social Value, Whole Life Carbon and Cost Analysis and Circular Economy – It was important to understand long-term impacts of proposals on carbon and cost before making decisions.
 - Reinforcement of partnerships – The Council needed to look at what had been done elsewhere and also look at the possibility of undertaking a Local Area Energy Planning project.
 - Businesses – it was important that the members of the partnership were involved and committed to mitigating climate change. It was very difficult for companies, so support would be useful.
- It was important to consider that assets might become ‘stranded’ as a result of climate change i.e. they might not be usable or adaptable in future.
- Partnership members were showcasing their commitment.
- DeMontfort University was committed to climate action, generating heat renewably and supporting public engagement activity. Staff at the University were working on ‘net-zero fashion’, work was ongoing.

- Other organisations that had made commitments included the NHS and the National Space Centre, as outlined on the slides.
- Pick Everard recognised that it was their moral duty to do their utmost. They were looking at net-zero in the city and were committed to social value.

The Chair thanked Dr Hernandez for the presentation.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and make comments. Key points included:

- The Building and Construction sector made up around 30-40% of global carbon emissions in terms of both building and the inhabiting of buildings. Operational carbon would diminish. What came from the building process was important.
- Refurbishment was key due to the lower embodied carbon content. It was recognised that this depended on how much was being done. The importance of improving existing buildings was highlighted. The reconstruction of St Margaret's Bus Station was used as an example as it had re-used the foundations and structure.

AGREED:

That the Draft City Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan be NOTED.

35. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other items of urgent business, the meeting ended at 19:45.