



Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee – Draft Minutes

Monday 12 June 2023

Venue:	Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon PE29 3TN	
Time:	10.00 to 12.00	
Present:	Councillor Bridget Smith Councillor Martin Goodearl Councillor Ishfaq Hussain Councillor Mike Todd-Jones Councillor Eileen Wilson Councillor Lara Davenport-Ray Councillor Lorna Dupre	Chair and Member for South Cambridgeshire District Council East Cambridgeshire District Council Peterborough City Council Cambridge City Council South Cambridgeshire District Council Huntingdonshire District Council Cambridgeshire County Council
Apologies	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson Councillor Nigel Simons Councillor Dee Laws Ms Belinda Clarke	CPCA Mayor Peterborough City Council Fenland District Council Business Board Representative

Minutes:

1	Announcements, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest
1.1	Apologies were received from Mayor Dr Nik Johnson, Ms Belinda Clarke, Cllr Dee Laws and Cllr Nigel Simons who was substituted by Cllr Hussain.
1.2	Cllr Dupre declared an interest in item 9 as Chair of the Environment and Green Investment Committee at Cambridgeshire County Council
2	Election of Vice-Chair
2.1	The Chair had received an expression of interest for the position of Vice-Chair from Cllr Davenport - Ray who was proposed by Cllr Hussain and seconded by Cllr Goodearl. There being no further nominations the matter was put to the vote and unanimously approved. <u>RESOLVED:</u> That Cllr Lara Davenport-Ray be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee.

<p>3</p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p>	<p>Minutes of the Housing and Communities Committee meeting on 13 March 2023 and Action Log</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting on 13 March 2023 were approved as an accurate record.</p> <p>The following comment was made in response to an action that was identified to request that the Audit report on the Housing Loans be circulated to the Committee:</p> <p><i>This action was considered inappropriate as no such report had been circulated to members of the Audit & Governance Committee. However, draft minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 20 March 2023 recorded that the Housing and Communities Committee had initiated a review into the housing loans which would complete the internal audit review of the whole of the Affordable Housing Programme. Cllr Van de Weyer suggested that it would benefit the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if that Committee could be consulted on the scope of the remaining review.</i></p> <p>A review of loan activities would be conducted when the matter of the remaining loan concluded as stated at paragraph 5.1 of the Housing Loans report being heard later on in the agenda.</p>
<p>4</p> <p>4.1</p>	<p>Public Questions</p> <p>No public questions had been received.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p>Affordable Housing Programme – Update on Implementation</p> <p>Azma Ahmad-Pearce, Housing Programme Manager introduced the report which updated the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee on the progress of the affordable housing programme. This was an ongoing project which was ending.</p> <p>The following points were raised in discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Members were assured that although Appendix 2 of the report showed only 47 completions to date, out of a total of 716, that, in general, the schemes were on track to meet their targets. The exception to this had been at the Girton site which, due to an issue with windows, had been pushed back to a completion date of September. b) The reason for some of the extended final completion dates given was because of Covid and the issues with supply chains. <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>1. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee unanimously resolved to note the report.</p>
<p>6</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p>	<p>Community Homes Support</p> <p>Nick Sweeney, Residential Development Manager introduced the report which asked Members to reconsider the proposal to discontinue supporting community housing groups following the engagement process.</p> <p>The following points were raised in discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) There had been a late flurry of applications that would be discussed under the next item. b) There were a number of service level issues that would need to be taken into account if the decision was to recommend continuing with provision of a support service and further grant funding. c) The service would continue until 31 July so there would be time to issue any grants approved before then. d) Eastern Community Homes had been fully briefed to publicise the availability of funding across the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with the exception of East Cambridgeshire.

- e) Officers confirmed that two awards that were authorised some time ago had not been taken up as the groups had not become incorporated and legally recognised during the two-year window that they had to meet the requirements of the grant.
- f) Officers at Huntingdonshire District Council were advocating for a review, rather than a withdrawal, citing the Great Staughton project as a success story. Cllr Davenport-Ray feedback to the Committee the officers' words which stated: *"it took time to get to the requisite point to make an application. This is why it would be so unfortunate if the funding was withdrawn when we, and possibly other groups, may be ready to make an application"*.
- g) In March the Housing and Communities Committee deferred a decision on this matter so that a full consultation could be carried out. This had been done and was evidenced in the appendices.
- h) The scheme had been in place for a long time so there had been plenty of opportunity to make applications.

RESOLVED:

To refer the following decisions up to the next meeting of the Combined Authority Board as the vote was tied: 3 for:3 against

1. To recommend to the Combined Authority's Board that the Combined Authority discontinues providing a support service and further grant funding to community homes groups from 31 July 2023.
2. To authorise an extension of the agreement with Eastern Community Homes to provide a support service to community homes groups from 30th June 2023 to 31 July 2023 on existing terms.

7 Community Homes Grant Applications

7.1 Nick Sweeney, Residential Development Manager introduced the report which asked the Committee to consider four applications for community homes support grants that were received in May 2023. It was recommended that the Combined Authority award one grant application and decline the other three applications which officers considered failed to comply with necessary grant assessment criteria.

7.2 The following points were raised in discussion:

- a) Had the applications come in earlier then Eastern Community Homes (ECH) could have worked with them to get them into a situation where CPCA officers could have recommended them for approval.
- b) Members asked why ECH had referred applications that clearly did not meet the criteria, for example on the issue of failing to protect the benefits of the scheme in perpetuity. This made for a difficult situation for both officers and the Committee as once applications had been submitted they had to be determined.
- c) As the Housing programme had ended in 2022 there were no other workstreams that the rejected applications could be diverted to.

RESOLVED:

The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee unanimously resolved to:

1. Award a grant of £15,000 to support a community homes proposal in Great Staughton.
2. Decline an application for a community homes grant of £5,335 received from Suvanna Cohousing Ltd to support a community homes proposal in north Cambridge.
3. Decline an application for a community homes grant of £57,494 received from It Takes a City Community Land Trust to support a proposal to provide accommodation for homeless people at Hills Avenue, Cambridge.

4. Decline an application for a community homes grant of £29,654 received from It Takes a City Community Land Trust to support a proposal to provide accommodation for homeless people at Fen Ditton.

8 Sustainable Land Use Advice

8.1 Adrian Cannard, Strategic Planning Manager, introduced the report which asked the Committee to approve the development of a revised business case for the sustainable land use advice programme that aligned to the LNRS.

8.2 The following points were raised in discussion:

- a) The term 'land manager' was used in the report to encompass both tenants and landowners, and any other bodies who might have an interest in how land was managed.
- b) Officers would liaise with all the key groups that they regularly engaged with such as the Local Nature Partnership, which itself had connections with farmers, to make sure that the service designed was accessible to all.
- c) There was a piece of work being done by the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) called the Land Use Framework which was looking at land use as a whole, not just in terms of planning. Officers were in contact with the steering group undertaking this work that so that their work could be fed into the programme.

RESOLVED:

The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee unanimously resolved to:

1. Note the outcome of a consultation on the scope of a sustainable land use advice service
2. Request a business case for the advice service that aligns with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy programme of activity

9 Local Nature Recovery Strategy

9.1 Adrian Cannard, Strategic Planning Manager, introduced the report which asked the Committee to allocate funding to the Approved Budget line within the MTFP for a statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). and to delegate appropriate authority so that activity could commence as soon as possible. Quintin Carroll from the Environment Team at Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) joined the discussion online.

9.2 The following points were raised in discussion:

- a) Cambridgeshire County Council had brought across an officer, Gabriella Yeomans, to specifically lead the work on the programme and would also draw in a lot of external resource. Mr Carroll was confident that with the support of CCC's own resources, those of the constituent authorities, the support of Natural England and the support of any external consultancy, that the programme could be delivered within the timescale. The CPCA had already done some shadow working on the project and therefore was further ahead with work on the Strategy than many other authorities.
- b) The steering group included the Local Nature Partnership, a charitable organisation which advanced improvements in the local natural environment. Within their structure sat a whole range of different groups all of which could feed into the consultation process and the development of an engagement strategy.
- c) A workshop had been held in May with a wide range of interested organisations and partners to begin the work on stakeholder engagement.
- d) The Government wanted to have a UK wide suite of documents and would be looking for consistency so this could push a final publication date further out from the submission deadline of November 2024. It was not known yet how long the Secretary of State would take to review all of the 44 submissions. Officers had been told by Natural England that they did not have to wait for official Government approval and that as long as the supporting authorities were happy with the Strategy then it could start to be implemented and used as a live document.

- e) A senior advisor from Natural England had been allocated to the project to help meet the different reporting deadlines and in effect, would be checking the homework before it was submitted.
- f) Every effort would be made to iron out any issues or challenges by the constituent authorities before the Strategy was submitted.
- g) Members raised the possibility of a General Election being held between March – June 2024 which could affect not only the consultation which was scheduled for then but also future timings. Officers reassured members that there was scope in the programme to adjust timings and although there was a potential political risk that the Strategy may not get approved, if, as previously stated the work had been done and approved by supporting authorities, then it could still be implemented.
- h) The Strategy would look at other opportunities that could be delivered at the same time, for example, reservoirs for public water supply could also be used for other wider environmental benefits.

RESOLVED:

The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee unanimously resolved to:

1. To accept new burdens funding of £309k from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for the preparation of a Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
2. To allocate this funding of £165k in 2023/24 and £144k in 2024/25 to the LNRS Approved Budget line of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
3. To agree the outline programme as set out in Appendix A.
4. To delegate to the Executive Director of Place and Connectivity to agree operational delivery arrangements with Cambridgeshire County Council.
5. To note the arrangements for the involvement of constituent councils.

10 Climate Action Plan

10.1 Adrian Cannard, Strategic Planning Manager, introduced the report which briefed the Committee on the Climate Action Plan 2022-2025 (CAP) and sought endorsement of specific pieces of activity being progressed as part of the Action Plan. These were a climate partnership event and the care home programme delivery.

10.2 During discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) Previously reporting on the CAP had gone to the CA Board but under a new remit it was now a key responsibility of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee.
- b) Climate risk was included as a risk to the organisation on the Corporate Risk register but would also be reported in a very specific climate risk register which was being developed. This register would dovetail into the existing arrangements for the Corporate Plan and elsewhere, and be reported to the Committee.
- c) There would be a lot of climate action activity in November as it led up to COP28. Huntingdon District Council would be holding their own climate summit then and the Climate Partnership would be holding a stakeholder event. The communication group which was made up from all of the constituent councils would be mapping and tracking the activity so that all the events fitted into the schedule and added value.
- d) Officers were looking at bringing forward community projects this year now they had additional staff capacity. Any grant schemes would be aligned with what was happening locally and any decision making for small grants would now rest with the Committee rather than the Board as they were identified in the MTFP.
- e) The Climate Working Group name was originally set by the Board but the group felt that *partnership* was a better term to reflect working together. This was approved by the Board as part of a later update report.

- f) The Chair and the Mayor were nominated members of the Climate Partnership and would be happy to update the Committee on their work.

RESOLVED:

The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee unanimously resolved to:

1. Note current progress on the Climate Action Plan
2. Support the proposal for a climate engagement event in the autumn
3. Approve the arrangements for an officer group to approve applications under the Climate Change Care Homes Programme.

ACTION:

1. A Climate Partnership update to be added as a standing item to the Committee's meeting agenda.

11 Strategic infrastructure Delivery Framework

11.1 Adrian Cannard, Strategic Planning Manager, introduced the report which asked the Committee to agree the Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Framework (SIDF) approach and to allocate budgeted Non-statutory Spatial Framework (NSSF) funding to undertake this activity.

11.2 During discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) The Oxford Cambridge Partnership, which had two workstreams on the Environment and the Economy, were undertaking a similar piece of work looking at energy and water which would tie in with the SIDF.
- b) Members asked how the CPCA could keep abreast of the many organisations, not just Local Authorities, who were undertaking projects on water and how they could avoid duplication and added complexity.
- c) The funding would add capacity to allow the CPCA to bring together the multitude of approaches and put the CA in a position where it could understand where the key pinch points were and be able to speak out and lead on the issue.
- d) It was important to realise that while physical infrastructure could be built with lower embedded carbon, demand on the infrastructure also had to be reduced.

RESOLVED:

The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee unanimously resolved to:

1. Agree the scope of activity to inform a Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Framework
2. Allocate the budget of £130k in 2023/24 to the Non-statutory Spatial Framework Approved Budget line of the MTFP to progress this work

12 Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee Agenda Plan

12.1 The Chair announced that the July meeting would be cancelled and that the single item that was due to come then would be moved to the September meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee Agenda Plan be noted.

<p>13</p>	<p>Housing Loans Update</p> <p>Nick Sweeney, Residential Development Manager introduced the report which updated and informed Members of the current position in respect of loan repayments and informed Members of a decision to extend the Final Repayment Date of a loan made to Histon Road Development LLP.</p> <p>During discussion, the following points were noted:</p> <p>a) The Chair had been fully informed of the details of the decision taken by the Board and outlined in exempt appendix C</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>1. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee note the current position in respect of the outstanding loan repayments required to fund the 2021-2022 Affordable Housing Programme.</p>
<p>13</p> <p>13.1</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The Committee had been due to meet on Monday 3 July but this date had been cancelled due to lack of business and therefore the date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 11 September.</p>

Meeting Ended: 11.42am