



Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee – Draft Minutes

Monday 22 January 2024

Venue:	Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon PE29 3TN	
Time:	10.00 to 12.00	
Present:	Councillor Lara Davenport-Ray* Councillor Peter Sandford Councillor Martin Goodearl Councillor Nicola Day Councillor Mike Todd-Jones Councillor Lorna Dupre Mayor Dr Nik Johnson *Acting Chair for the meeting	Vice Chair and member for Huntingdonshire District Council South Cambridgeshire District Council East Cambridgeshire District Council Peterborough City Council Cambridge City Council Cambridgeshire County Council CPCA Mayor
Apologies	Councillor Bridget Smith Councillor Gavin Elsey Councillor Dee Laws	South Cambridgeshire District Council Peterborough City Council Fenland District Council

Minutes:

1	Announcements, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest
1.1	The Chair of the Committee, Cllr Smith was unable to attend the meeting so as Vice-Chair, Cllr Davenport-Ray took up the Chair.
1.2	Apologies were received from Cllr Smith, who was substituted by Cllr Sandford, Cllr Elsey who was substituted by Cllr Day, and Cllr Laws.
1.2	No declarations of interest were made.
2	Minutes of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee meeting on 13 November 2023 and Action Log
2.1	The minutes of the meeting on 13 November 2023 were approved as an accurate record, subject to the following amendments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That Cllr Goodearl be removed from the list of attendees as he had submitted his apologies for this meeting.• That an addition be made to minute 6.2 (j) as follows: “The LNRS steering group had representation from each of the constituent authorities, except for one East Cambridgeshire District Council which had decided not to get involved in the development of the strategy but to comment on its proposals later.”

2.2	<p>An action noted in the Log was for a report on the potential economic consequences of failing to maintain the road infrastructure to be presented at a future meeting. This would be added on to the Committee's Agenda Plan under items for future consideration.</p> <p>The Action Log was noted by the Committee.</p>
3	<p>Public Questions</p> <p>3.1 No public questions had been received.</p>
4.	<p>Combined Authority Forward Plan</p> <p>4.1 The Combined Authority Forward Plan was noted by the Committee.</p>
5.	<p>Directorate Highlight Report</p> <p>5.1 Steve Cox, Interim Executive Director – Place & Connectivity, introduced the report which provided a general update on the key activities of the Place and Connectivity Directorate in relation to Environment and Sustainable Communities, which were not covered in other reports to the meeting. It also provided information on some key developments, risks and opportunities that had emerged.</p> <p>5.2 During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Cllr Day gave an update from a Peterborough perspective and informed the Committee that Cllr Eley, the Peterborough member for the Committee, having met with the CA, would be making a direct approach to eligible care homes to see if any support could be offered in applying for funding from the CA Care Homes Retrofit programme. b) Peterborough officers had confirmed that there were no outstanding issues from Peterborough City Council (PCC) with the Cross Keys Homes sites and that the issues sat with Cross Keys Homes and their contractor. c) Officers had worked with the Care Quality Commission and the constituent Councils' care teams to identify and approach eligible properties for the Care Homes Retrofit programme. There had been a number of barriers to take-up, including capacity within the care homes, the match funding costs, and timings, which was why the deadline had been extended. A further report, outlining possible amendments to the Scheme would be brought back to the Committee at their March meeting. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>1. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee resolved to note the report.</p>
6.	<p>Affordable Housing Report</p> <p>6.1 Azma Ahmad-Pearce, Housing Programme Manager, introduced the report which updated the Committee on the progress of the Affordable Housing Programme 2017-2022.</p> <p>6.2 During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The CA did not receive the expected £41m from central Government so the original target of 2000 homes was unrealistic; however 1438 homes would be completed. b) The Housing Manager was in conversation with Heylo and hoped to bring to the next meeting confirmation of the use of a surplus fund to purchase a small number of market homes in Peterborough to convert to shared ownership. c) The Housing Manager would speak to Heylo in the next few days to confirm whether the March 2024 longstop dates cited for the Larkfleet and Vistry sites, as shown in Appendix 2, were still viable. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>1. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee noted the report.</p>

7. Climate Action Plan

7.1 Adrian Cannard, Strategic Planning Manager, introduced the report which provided an update on the refresh of the Climate Action Plan 2022-2025 and highlighted climate emission targets adopted by constituent councils.

7.2 During discussion the following points were noted:

- a) The Chair urged fellow members to review their own net zero targets and report any changes or updates back to Adrian.
- b) Members feedback could result in a different way of representing the Chart shown at 2.7 of the report, with perhaps local authority internal emissions targets on one chart and the geographic area targets on another. However, the input of the engagement group would be needed to see how best this information could be conveyed to the public.
- c) Because so much of the CPCA area's emissions were attributed to land use and forestry sectors, particularly peat, Fenland Soil had been funded by the CPCA to lead work on monitoring this. Through their programme, the number of data monitor stations and carbon capture devices had been increased.
- d) The challenge for the CPCA area was not only how transport was managed within in but also through it. The CPCA's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) had recently been approved and this had a very good carbon assessment appendix which set out different scenarios and their different impacts.
- e) As part of the review, more of a risk-based reporting mechanism would be adopted so that whilst there may be progress on things the CPCA funded, there would also be reporting on the sector as a whole and whether it was going in the right direction.
- f) Additional work would need to be commissioned in order to provide trajectories for the next report in March.
- g) At the national level the Government had recently announced additional opportunities through their environmental stewardship funding for farmers to have an impact on carbon by converting some of their land to nature-based outcomes.
- h) There was not yet an effective carbon credit market on which to pass on the carbon footprint to the customer who was buying the product out of area.
- i) Officers had been in discussion with the Waste Partnership and some of the public services, and were intending to put on an HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) workshop to bring together some of those who were currently trialling it with others who might be interested, to discuss opportunities for reducing costs and to explore what infrastructure was needed.
- j) There was a potential market opportunity for farm vehicles as well as waste vehicles to use HVO.
- k) Having agreed with members, and after voicing his own concerns about the urgency with which work was progressing, the Mayor was asked whether he would now be prepared to revisit an earlier decision **not** to declare a climate emergency. In response the Mayor was supportive of a recommendation being presented to the Board for further discussion and exploration.
- l) PCC had declared a Climate emergency in 2019 and had set ambitious targets for the Council and City to be net zero by 2030. Declaring an emergency at that point meant that they now had a growing Climate Change team, they were one of the first councils to put out a Local Area Action Plan, and a £2 million homes project for temporary and social housing was underway.
- m) Because of the Government's push back on fossil fuel heating in homes and the banning of diesel cars until 2035, Peterborough were now recommending that its Citywide net zero target be 2040.
- n) The CPCA had set a target of 2050 because it was a coalition of councils and therefore would reach net zero at the rate of its slowest member. It was however looking at the different trajectories and exploring how things could be done faster. The challenge was whether to present an aspirational target or whether it should reflect where policy, both local and national, was at a given moment in time.
- o) There was a waste partnership that brought all the authorities together to discuss waste issues and on an on-going basis they had been discussing opportunities for collaboration on enhanced EV charging facilities as well as the use of HVO. Officers were also waiting for further clarity on the

National Waste Strategy and the approach to food waste which would have an impact on the amount that was collected and therefore the type of vehicle required.

- p) In the MTFP proposals that would be going to the Board next week there was a capital programme of £9m and a revenue programme of £2m to help constituent council partners achieve their net zero targets. The criteria for that funding would be presented to the Committee at their March meeting.
- q) The independent Climate Commission had not met recently but there was a commitment to meet this year to undertake a more detailed review. Unfortunately, due to other work demands, Baroness Brown was looking to hand over the Chairmanship.
- r) PCC and Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) would be taking into consideration their respective Climate Action Plans as well as the work of the Commission when developing their Local Plans
- s) Although East Cambridgeshire were putting a Climate Chapter into their Local Plan there were Government restrictions that hindered progress and innovation.
- t) The Chair requested that a report on Locally Determined Contributions, as referenced in paragraph 2.9 of the report be brought to a future meeting.
- u) The urgency of the Climate issue could be increased by sharing information, such as the pie chart graphs shown in the report, more widely with the public and also by sharing the Transport emissions graph with all members of the Transport and Infrastructure Committee.
- v) The Mayor and constituent council partners were encouraged to be more pro-active and use social media and the Comms team to promote the urgency of the issue.

RESOLVED:

- a) To note progress on the refresh of Climate Action Plan
- b) To note the climate mitigation targets and monitoring

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION:

RESOLVED: (UNANIMOUS)

On being proposed by the Chair, Cllr Davenport-Ray, and seconded by Cllr Goodearl, it was unanimously resolved to:

1. Recommend to the CA Board that that the Climate Commission be reconvened as soon as possible to review the CPCA's progress on their recommendations.

ACTIONS:

1. Cllr Dupre to draft a recommendation on declaring a Climate Emergency and for this to be considered for approval by the Committee at their March meeting before being formally submitted to the CA Board.
2. A report on 'Locally Determined Contributions' to be added to the Agenda Plan and brought to a future meeting of the Committee.
3. The Graphics shown in the report to be shared more widely with the public and included on the dedicated Climate Action Plan webpage.
4. The transport emissions graph shown in the report to be circulated to all members of the Transport and Infrastructure Committee.
5. An update on the Communications Strategy for the Climate Action Plan to be included in the Director's report for the March meeting.

8.	Joint Chalk Streams Programme
8.1	Adrian Cannard, Strategic Planning Manager, gave a verbal update on the Chalk Streams Programme.
8.2	Key points highlighted included the following:

- a) Chalk Streams were a rare habitat, with most of the world's chalk streams being in the UK. The joint Chalk Streams Programme was a project to support the ongoing health of chalk streams which had suffered because of the warmer summers due to climate change and because of the impact of the use of the water aquifer for public water supply.
- b) The project would look at a number of smaller measures to protect habitats on the chalk streams and was based on work done by the Wildlife Trust, and Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Councils.
- c) A project lead had been appointed and an evidence base had been collated in order to prioritise the long list of projects.
- d) The programme would not solve the challenges faced by chalk streams in Cambridgeshire but it would demonstrate how positive impacts could be made and there were other partners, including the water companies, who were looking to invest in the project.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the verbal update on the joint Chalk Streams Programme.

9 £100k Homes, Fordham

10.1 Nick Sweeney, Residential Development Manager, introduced the report which sought to regularise management arrangements of eight leasehold homes in Fordham that were delivered in accordance with the former £100k initiative.

10.2 During discussion the following points were noted:

- a) Councillors would have liked to have seen more advice on the benefits and risks of either of the options presented.
- b) The principle of the £100k homes scheme was questioned and councillors felt that with only eight of them, they were not in any way a solution to the overall housing problem.
- c) A possible option 3, whereby the CPCA would continue to manage the reallocation process had been discounted as no list was maintained by the CPCA and there were no officers in post with this responsibility.
- d) East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) managed other £100k homes and therefore had the resource in place to manage the scheme which was also based in ECDC.
- e) The freeholder of the homes was a Housing Association who could consider buying out the owners at the point they wanted to sell which could then extinguish the lease so they could start again.
- f) The most straightforward type of affordable housing option would be a shared equity arrangement with a standard lease whereby residents could staircase and buy shares in the property at stages during their tenancy.
- g) If the homes were to be changed to social housing, there could be a financial gap with grant funding needed to subsidise the change.
- h) The member for ECDC proposed the adoption of option 1 as it was essential to protect the local connection and discount as the residents of Fordham had been promised that these houses would be kept in perpetuity.
- i) The CPCA had not provided any funding or loans for this development.
- j) The Executive Director proposed that option 1 could be considered in the scope of option 2, as outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: (UNANIMOUS)

The recommendations, as set out in the report, were set aside and instead, on being proposed by the Chair, Cllr Davenport-Ray, and seconded by Cllr Dupre, it was unanimously resolved to:

1. Ask officers to explore all the options available for the £100k homes including; more conventional types of affordable housing units, social rents, retention by the CPCA or replacement agreements with the Local Housing Authority East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC). The report, to be presented at a future meeting of the Committee, should examine the pros and cons of each option and the views of current homeowners and officers at ECDC should be taken into account.

<p>10</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>10.2</p>	<p>Budget and Performance Report – November 23</p> <p>Tim Greenwood, Finance Manager, introduced the report which provided an update of the financial position for 2023/24 and an analysis against the 2023/24 budget up to the period ending November 2023.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Members queried the variance shown for the Net Zero Hub Core shown in Table 1 and the expected underspend as stated in paragraph 3.3 of the report. This was probably due to an issue of timing as a receipt of grant from Government was to be expected at some point. Officers would check this budget line and come back to the Committee to confirm. b) The finance paper at the next meeting in March would show an updated revenue and capital expenditure up to January 2024, with the outcome of the MTFP being reported at the following meeting in June. c) The Chair requested an update on the Net Zero Villages Programme. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the financial position of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Division for the financial year 23/24 to November 2023. <p><u>ACTION:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officers to provide a written response to the Committee on the expenditure and funding of the Net Zero Hub Core.
<p>14</p> <p>14.1</p>	<p>Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee Agenda Plan</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee Agenda Plan be noted with the addition of the following items, as discussed in the meeting: <p><u>March meeting:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and proposed recommendations to Board on declaring a Climate Emergency • Update on Care Home Retrofit Programme • Update on Net Zero Villages Project • Revisions to the Climate Action Plan <p><u>June meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes from the MTFP <p><u>For future Consideration – yet to be allocated:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally Determined Contributions • £100k Homes • Drought Affected Roads • Local Area Energy Plan • Update on the Waterbeach Solar Panels and Charging Project • Rural Communities Energy Fund
<p>17</p> <p>17.1</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 11 March 2024.</p>