



Report title: CPCA Climate Change Plans

To:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Meeting Date:	28 March 2022
Public report:	Yes
From:	CLlr Michael Atkins O&S Lead Member for Climate Change & Environment
Recommendations:	The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to a) Note and comment on this Report and the Climate Action Plan 2022-2025 b) Consider whether to make any recommendations to officers and/or the Board prior to their consideration of the Action Plan and associated papers on 30th March c) Agree what future scrutiny would be appropriate in this area Voting arrangements: A simple majority of all Members

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This paper has been written to accompany the “Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Climate Action Plan 2022-2025” when it is presented to Overview and Scrutiny for consideration. It is intended to provide a helpful summary for members, and highlight key areas of risk or challenge the committee may wish to consider.
- 1.2 For the purposes of this paper, “the Region” will mean the geographical region represented by the Combined Authority.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Independent Commission reported that the region emitted 5Mt CO₂e per year (million tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent), or 6 tonnes per person in 2019, which was 25% higher than the UK average.¹ Data available at that time excluded the impact of growing crops and changes in peatland soils. A revised estimate by the government² puts emissions in 2019 at 7.2Mt., or 8.4t per person. Excluding crops and soils, the difference to the UK average is accounted for by surface transport, where there are higher emissions across cars, vans and HGVs, with high levels of ownership and a lack of public transport alternatives.
- 2.2 The region also faces significant risk from global warming, particularly flooding, summer highs and water shortages. If global mean temperatures rise by 3°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century: rainfall could be over 50% lower; regular summer temperatures of 40°C; sea level rise of one metre or more.
- 2.3 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Commission on Climate (“CPICC”) was set up by former Mayor Palmer to advise the CA how to respond to the Climate Emergency. CPICC produced an initial report in March 2021 and a full report in October 2021, both of which were accepted by the Board and current Mayor Johnson. These contain 58 recommendations.

3. Summary of current proposals

- 3.1 The CA has prepared a “Climate Action Plan 2022-2025” which will be discussed by the Board on 30th March 2022.³ It identifies 37 strategic actions across 11 themes which the CA proposes to carry out over the next three municipal years.
- 3.2 The CA has two broad levers to pull in this regard: its financial resources; and a ‘convening power’. The major capital projects proposed (which will need individual business cases and further approval in future) are:
- £2.7m development of the Waterbeach Waste Management Park to install solar panels for low-emission vehicles;
 - £2m fund to pilot retrofit programmes in private care homes;
 - £1.2m in Huntingdonshire biodiversity schemes; a further £0.3m for Logan’s Meadow in Cambridge.
 - £1m fund to invest in “Nature and the Environment”, to be administered in partnership with Natural Cambridgeshire;
 - £1m fund for ‘Net-Zero villages’, which will solicit bids from villages in the region; and
 - £1m investment in the North East Cambridge Foodbank so it can act as a distribution hub for donations.

There are also revenue implications associated with these projects, although there will continue to be demands on the existing resources of constituent authorities.

¹ 2019 figures, taken from CPICC Final Report p10.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics>

³ I have reviewed a draft version of this document which may have changed in the intervening weeks

- 3.3 Adjacent to the CA's direct work, there is £6.5m in "Sustainable Warmth" funding allocated to Cambridgeshire for 22/23, with more funding likely to be available in the future either through the local 'energy hub' GSEEH or directly from UK government. This is intending to support domestic insulation and retrofit projects. Peterborough has also secured similar funding. Peatland is also an area of national focus, and the Fens East Peat Partnership has recently been awarded a £0.8m grant directly from UK government to explore the feasibility and draw up plans for restoring areas of peatland in the Fens.
- 3.4 Turning to the 'convening power' of the CA, the proposals include the following:
- a carbon credit investment fund to channel business offset payments into local projects;
 - a communications/engagement plan;
 - Local Area Energy Plans for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (separately);
 - a retrofit procurement framework for households (self-funded and/or grant);
 - revise the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan;
 - a Green Plan for the new NHS Integrated Care System;
 - a Local Nature Recovery Strategy;
 - a Biodiversity Net Gain system;
 - mapping peatland assets; and
 - support for the Water Resources East Regional Plan.

Key risks

- 3.5 In conversation with officers, three key risks in relation to the Action Plan were identified. Many of the schemes will require third parties to bid for funding or to take part in a pilot, and the success of these schemes will therefore depend on the quality of the bids received.
- 3.6 In the current and previous municipal years, the CA has not expanded internal staff capacity to this area, which has impacted work to date. Use of consultants and partnership working with constituent councils has supported the work, although this put a reliance on staffing resources from constituent councils. The current transformation programme is an opportunity to consider the staff resourcing required. Climate considerations are now reported in Board reports so mainstreaming climate thinking also requires a successful induction process across the organisation.
- 3.7 Finally, there is a significant political, engagement and capacity risk around the current cost of living crisis and higher inflationary environment. In particular:
- households may not have the resources to invest in costly retrofit or micro-generation schemes, even if the monetary returns on these investments have improved;
 - councils are facing huge demands on their resources which may affect their ability to contribute to this programme; and
 - the public may struggle to engage with distant benefits and risks when under stress in the present.

4. Opinion of lead member

- 4.1 I thought it might help the committee to share my own thoughts on the programme and its future activities – these are my own views rather than of any political group/council etc. – so as to provoke some constructive debate.

- 4.2 The full CPICC report is a substantial piece of work and an excellent start to understanding the climate emergency and how it affects the region. The ambition contained within the document, however, is challenging in the context of local government in the region. In particular, the complexity of the various tiers of local authority, including a wide variety of existing partnerships across geographies and capabilities, does not lend itself to instant and unified action. In some instances, for example in Waste, the recommendations do not take full account of current contractual arrangements, or how these are dependent on the UK-wide regulatory environment.
- 4.3 The strategic fit for the CA itself is also challenging. In terms of geography, the area it covers is large enough for there to be much to do, but too small to fully encompass issues such as peatland and water stress. This necessitates yet further partnerships across the East of England, and also trying to fit direct UK government intervention into the Region's strategic plan.
- 4.4 In terms of resources, notwithstanding the £10m set aside in the recent budget round, the CA is small, and it has lacked sufficient staffing (to date) to make the best possible progress. The CPICC report suggests investment of c. £700m *per year* through the 2020s is needed across the region to transition to a low carbon future, to put the current budget in context.
- 4.5 The CA is therefore correct, I think, to frame its capital projects as pilots/pump-priming/enabling work, with a view to 'crowding in' capital investment from private and other public sources. This does mean, however, that the transition to a low-carbon economy is significantly out of the hands of local democratic bodies, and is unlikely to happen quickly. I fear this will fall short of the expectations that have been established in the public CPICC consultations and report.
- 4.6 Turning to the specific projects, there is much to be commended in the proposals, particularly the focus on biodiversity (in which the Region is sorely lacking), and the clear emphasis on achieving cut-through with the public consciousness (e.g. through high-profile retrofits of care homes). It is notable that the work on Transport is less advanced than other areas, when the Region is such a distinctive (poor) outlier in this category. I expect that more substantial proposals will come forward after the LTCP refresh.
- 4.7 A final issue I think worthy of debate is whether the CA would do better to abandon its current, and commendable, all-encompassing approach to the climate emergency, and focus its limited resources on achieving fast and notable success across a smaller segment of themes or total emissions. This would risk a lack of Regional coordination or progress on other themes, which would have to be delegated up to the UK government or down to constituent councils/partnerships but would avoid any chance of having "little to show" in two or three years' time.

5. Next steps

- The Action Plan is due to be debated by the Board on 30th March.
- Individual business cases will go to the Board for each capital project in accordance with the timelines indicated.

- 5.1 Overview and Scrutiny may wish to return to this issue later in 2022, perhaps with the

participation of members of the CPICC panel, to review the strategic action plan, how it corresponds to the CPICC's recommendations, and the outlook for the remainder of the 2022-25 period.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 None

7. Legal Implications

7.1 None

8. Background Papers

8.1 [O&S Meeting – November 2021](#)