

OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY FORUM

Thursday, 8th September, 2022

Present:-

Councillor L Collins (Chair)

Councillors Borrell
Catt
Caulfield
Coy

Councillors Dyke
Hollingworth
Kellman
Snowdon

Rachel Appleyard, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
Katy Marshall, Policy and Partnerships Manager +
Will Rolls, Climate Change Officer +

Attended for Minute No. 27 +

20 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS INTERESTS
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

No declarations of interest were received.

21 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Blakemore, Brittain and Flood.

22 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan was reported for information.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

23 **SCRUTINY MONITORING**

The Monitoring Schedule was reported for information.

RESOLVED –

That the Monitoring Schedule be noted.

24 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY FORUM

The Work Programme was reported.

RESOLVED –

That the Work Programme be noted.

25 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENTS

The Chair reported that the next East Midlands Scrutiny Network meeting would be on 30 September, 2022 at Rutland County Council offices.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

26 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum held on 30 June, 2022 were presented.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

27 DEPUTY LEADER - CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN - INTERIM UPDATE

The Climate Change Officer and the Policy and Partnerships Manager attended the meeting to provide members with an update on actions 44 and 45 on the climate change action plan. The two actions related to the commission of reports on carbon accounting and de-carbonisation pathways which would provide an evidence base to support the development of a new climate change strategy.

To inform the strategy, consultations had taken place with all the council's service leads to understand their concerns regarding climate change. The carbon accounting report provided a detailed look at the council's finances and the costs of climate change on the budget which provided a hotspot analysis on where the most significant emissions were within the council's supply chain. The de-carbonisation pathway report assessed the climate risk and produced a series of recommendations of steps that the council could take to achieve de-carbonisation.

This evidence base had produced a set of key areas to focus on for the strategy which were: the council's electricity and gas usage, developing the vehicle fleet and offsetting emissions that could not be reduced within the timeframe.

The strategy was likely to be significantly larger than the climate change action plan and discussions were also taking place with tier 4 managers to ensure the actions would be embedded across the authority. A public consultation on the draft strategy was expected to start in November however there were a number of announcements expected from the new Prime Minister, particularly on the goal for net zero emissions, which may impact on the strategy development.

In response to a question about why a written report had not been provided ahead of the meeting, the Chair advised that, as this was an interim update in response to a specific question at the last Forum meeting, the Chairs felt it was appropriate for a verbal update. A full written update will be brought to the Forum in November to allow members to review and comment on the draft strategy.

Members commented that the Standards and Audit Committee had raised a question about why Cabinet reports only contained a brief statement on climate change implications and advised that the Committee would be asking the Climate Change Officer to attend a future meeting.

Members asked whether external consultants were being used to prepare the new strategy and the Climate Change Officer explained that an external company had carried out the research for the de-carbonisation pathways report however CBC officers were using that evidence to write the strategy. Members also enquired about which elements of financial spend were looked at when assessing the carbon footprint. The Climate Change Officer advised that a machine was used to sort through a substantial number of records and categorise those by type, a carbon

model was then used to identify a generic carbon emission for that category of work.

Members asked whether there was a Climate Change Officers network and were informed that there was a group called the Collective for Climate Action which was made up of concerned individuals who work in the public sector. Within this group was a sub-group of Climate Change Officers who met to share best practice. In addition, there was a database of all the climate change action plans in the country which was published online (<https://data.climateemergency.uk/>).

In response to Members questions about the categories used for assessing where the council's emissions came from and proportion of emissions arising from the categories, the Climate Change Officer explained that scope 1 emissions were from fuel that was burnt by the council, scope 2 emissions were from electricity and scope 3 emissions were from third parties and other supply chains. Although scope 3 contained the highest proportion of emissions, this scope relied on activities by other companies, therefore the emissions in scopes 1 and 2 were much more certain.

Members asked about whether the 2030 net zero target was achievable and what "offset" meant. The Climate Change Officer explained that offsetting is doing something that results in a negative emission: absorbing carbon from the atmosphere. Examples of this are planting trees and restoring peatland. In response to a discussion on tree planting, the Climate Change Officer explained that the best way to plant trees that stored carbon was by planting woodlands rather than orchards.

Members enquired whether the council's employees were on board with the council's climate change priorities and heard that the staff had reacted positively about the development of the new strategy.

Following the recent high temperatures, Members asked how the temperatures were affecting people and what could be done to address this. The Climate Change Officer advised that elderly and small children struggle more with regulating their temperature and often live in well insulated homes. Introducing passive cooling, such as shade sails and trees, would help to reduce temperatures.

The Chair thanked the Climate Change Officer and the Policy and Partnerships Manager for attending and answering Members' questions.

RESOLVED –

1. That the update be noted.
2. That a report be received on the development of the new Climate Change Strategy at the November meeting.

28 SCRUTINY REVIEW - COST OF LIVING

At the pre-agenda meeting, the Chairs had discussed the increasing concerns about the cost-of-living crisis and impact this was having on residents. The Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer presented a report summarising the current support available through government schemes, the council, partner agencies and organisations to address the cost-of-living crisis. The report was to inform a discussion about where support should be targeted, how the availability of support is communicated and to consider what questions scrutiny could ask when looking at future scrutiny topics.

Members reported that they were seeing an increase in cases of overcrowding where multiple people were living in a property as they could not afford the costs associated with moving to a new property including heating. Members also raised concerns that there could be an impact on the objectives in the council plan relating to housing conditions if residents were unable to afford repairs or heat their homes.

The Forum felt that communication with Members was key to ensuring that they could support their residents. It was discussed that a guide for members would be useful which could include details of the support that was available and information on where to go for certain needs such as for food or a meal.

Members suggested a number of ideas for making information available to residents including:

- Placing a noticeboard containing information near where people make payments and in shop windows for those who do not have internet access.
- Providing details of where people can get access to online services who do not have online access at home.

- Make use of community notice boards where these still exist to provide information of the support available.
- Providing Members with a crib sheet of links to websites.
- Asking the local press to include a regular section to signpost to advice and support agencies.
- Explore the re-establishment of community forums to help get information out to residents.

Members discussed how there were different challenges in different areas of the borough. Residents who were in need of support, but who had not previously claimed financial or other support, may be reluctant to do so. There was a need to break down barriers to make it clear that the agencies and organisations are there to help. Members suggested that creating publicity in a format such as “Did you know...” could help to inform residents about support in an approachable way.

As the cost-of-living crisis would give rise to lots of different needs, it was impossible to equip everyone with the level of knowledge needed to help somebody. Members discussed how important it was to make sure people could be signposted to expert assistance relevant to their needs.

Members highlighted an increasing issue of loan sharks in Chesterfield and asked for an information session to be considered as part of the member development programme. In addition, scams were circulating which told people to apply for certain grants and benefits that did not need an application.

Members discussed the impact of the rise in energy bills and ways to reduce energy usage. The current advice involves changing habits, such as using different methods of cooking, however certain sectors of the population, particularly older residents, will struggle more than others to adapt.

The Forum discussed whether a “one stop shop” could be created and suggested hosting a special advice market on one of the market days when more people were in the town centre. This would bring all the different organisations together who offer support and make it more accessible for those who might be reluctant to make contact with an advice agency.

RESOLVED –

That the outcome from the discussion be fed back to the relevant officers and the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.