

SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE – ECONOMIC GROWTH AND COMMUNITIES

Thursday, 11th January, 2024

Present:-

Councillor Flood (Chair)

<p>Councillors Dyke Yates Jacobs Blakemore Snowdon</p>	<p>Councillors Niblock Hollingworth McClaren Kellman</p>
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*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

29 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

No declarations of interest were received.

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bagley, Ogle and Wheeldon.

31 CLIMATE CHANGE DELIVERY PLAN QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE OUT-TURN (DIGITAL PRESENTATION)

Councillor Stone, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning and Environment, provided an introduction to the subject of Climate Change and how Chesterfield Borough Council is looking at meeting its targets.

The Policy and Partnerships Manager and Climate Change Officer gave a presentation on the Climate Change Delivery Plan Quarter Two Out-turn. The Climate Change Strategy 2023 to 2030 takes the Council up to its first target of becoming a carbon neutral organisation by 2030. There are six key themes within the Strategy for its activities during 2023-2030:

- Buildings and Energy Use

- Travel
- Green Space, Land Use and Offsetting
- Communications, Engagement and Training
- Data, Monitoring and Corporate Activity
- Council Influence and Partnership Activity.

This Strategy was approved by Full Council in February 2023. It has many monitoring arrangements including through Cabinet, Scrutiny, the Corporate Leadership Team, and the Climate Change Forum. To ensure that the Strategy remains on track a delivery plan has also been developed which will be reviewed annually. The delivery plan identifies the key milestones, inputs, outputs, and measures that will need to be delivered during each year of the plan to maintain progress. The delivery plan will be reviewed annually and approved by Cabinet in March 2024.

A Performance Dashboard of critical items has been created. Eleven actions have been classified as critical because they are particularly urgent, have a disproportionate effect on council emissions, or are necessary precursors to other important actions.

In terms of Buildings and Energy, there are fourteen actions. Of these, one is rated red, three amber, eight green, one has been established and one has been removed as it has been merged into another action. There have been successes within this category:

- Three stock condition surveys (Council's operational assets) have been undertaken and the reports are currently being reviewed.
- Green Homes Grant (private sector) – good uptake and extra funding secured.
- New build council housing specification of EPC A implemented.
- Feasibility study complete on decarbonising a shared domestic heating site.

Challenges within this sector focused on the progress and pace of the stock condition surveys. Also, capacity issues regarding bidding for decarbonisation grant funding, and actioning the stock condition surveys and decarbonisation/ maintenance plans.

Discussions from Members focussed on the need for progression with the stock condition surveys. As we are now in 2024 there are 6 years left to

complete the rest so needs resolving with some speed. Assurances were given that plans were in place to progress this action which is red rated.

There are nine items in the topic area of Travel. Three of these are rated green, four amber, one has been established and for one there is no data. Successes include:

- The fleet decarbonisation plan is approved and in progress.
- 21 charge points have been installed at the depot, with additional points at Calow.
- Quotations are currently being sought for a Solar canopies feasibility study which is additional to the planned activity.

Challenges centre around there being no low carbon option for heavy vehicles. This is a fast changing environment however, and a flexible approach is required to respond to emerging technology and solutions. Also, the main focus has been on the fleet decarbonisation programme, which is now established.

Questions were asked by members about the reliance on other companies developing technologies for larger vehicles. It was reported that vehicles within the fleet are now being rotated quicker, enabling the take up of new vehicles when they emerge. Also, where our responsibilities lie with the decarbonisation of bin lorries. This was reported to be an issue for procurement due to it being an outside contractor.

In the area of Green Space, Land Use and Offsetting there are eight items. One is rated as red, three are green, two are amber and two are already established. Success within this area include:

- Significant areas of land have been identified as part of the local plan development for longer term BNG opportunities.
- Funding for tree planting has been provided via UKSPF until March 2025.
- Climate team 'consultation' and assessment is now embedded in the planning process.

Challenges have been around the lack of resource and capacity to implement a woodland management programme. Also, the management of residual emissions and offsetting approaches are challenging for all authorities and wider sectors, not just this Council.

Members discussed checking the available land audit in order to identify areas suitable for tree planting. It was noted that tree planting should be seen as a bonus rather than an answer to the issue of offsetting. However, it was recognised that enhancing the local environment involves local people; planting trees can grab interest therefore it is very important. Certain issues surrounding re-wilding of grass verges and the planting of trees to help with flooding issues are better discussed with the Parks and Open Spaces team as it is more in their remit than that of the Climate Change team.

It was noted that the shadow price of carbon (the term used to describe the monetary cost of reducing or reversing the environmental damage caused by the release of one additional tonne of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere) could be used to inform policy decisions and is calculated based on the social cost of carbon. If the Council continues to emit carbon at the current rate, costing this at the current rate would result in additional costs of £1.18M per year by 2030 (not including market forces and inflation).

There are seven items in the area of Communications, engagement and training. Four of these are green, two are amber and one is already established. Successes included:

- The Climate Change Forum has met twice and completed Fresk training and workshops on developing their own action plan and the Council's Delivery Plan.
- Community Grants Fund (UKSPF and CIL Neighbourhoods) has criteria and scoring that includes climate considerations.
- Approximately 3000 people on the mailing list for the newsletter.

The only challenge had been the up-take of training from employees and members. There would be a members top-up session in mid-April with the hope that all members would then be trained.

In the area of Data, monitoring and corporate activity there are five items. Two are green, one amber and two are already established. It was reported that all of these activities are progressing well. It was noted that the Climate Change Impact Assessment tool developed by CBC has been widely used by other authorities and an international request had been received for more information on it. The only challenge reported was in the delays experienced in receiving bills for energy usage.

Council Influence and Partnership Activity has four items which are all rated green as all activities are progressing well. CBC remains an active participant in the Vision Derbyshire partnership and has been engaging in a number of key Derbyshire wide projects. These projects however are expected to be folded into activity in the new combined authority as it becomes operational. Grants of up to £20,000 will be available from Decarbonise (a UKSPF project) to businesses looking to reduce their carbon output. The Accelerator team, which includes a business advisor, will work with businesses to develop the projects following energy audits carried out through the project. This is delivered in partnership between the Chamber and Economic Development Team. The only challenge experienced in this area has been in terms of partnership working with Derbyshire County Council, as they have paused all of their Climate change related activity and spend.

It was reported that as critical items had now been highlighted, it enabled attention to be focused on them. In line with Council Plan monitoring, directors now receive a summary of updates from their directorate before quarterly reports are finalised. There is a limit to the capacity and resources for some activity due to current budget challenges. The lack of national framework for local government climate change activity is challenging, as is the lack of a national funding framework for local government climate change activity.

Members discussed how the scrutiny of climate change would continue going forward. There was a consensus that joint meetings of the scrutiny committees would be beneficial to explore certain areas of concern and that progress reports would still be presented before going to Cabinet and Full Council. The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning and Environment hoped that scrutiny members could help move the agenda forward.

Members thanked the officers for the report and asked that they returned to present the formal report prior to it going to Cabinet.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the formal report be presented to this committee prior to going to Cabinet.

32 SCRUTINY PROJECT GROUPS PROGRESS UPDATES

This is a standard agenda item. Both committees will look at this separately in their own meetings.

33 SCRUTINY MONITORING

This is a standard agenda item. Both committees will look at this separately when they next meet.

34 FORWARD PLAN

It was noted that there are new items on the updated Forward Plan. Members were encouraged to take the time to read this document thoroughly.

35 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE - ECONOMIC GROWTH AND COMMUNITIES

This is a standard agenda item. This will be discussed at the separate meetings of the Scrutiny Select Committees when they meet next.