



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4

Minutes of a meeting of the Operational Services Committee facilitated via the Zoom Video Conferencing System at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Monday 8th June 2020.

PRESENT

Cllr David Ambrose Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr Victoria Charlesworth
Cllr Lis Every
Cllr Julia Huffer
Cllr Mark Inskip
Cllr Paola Trimarco
Cllr Jo Webber
Cllr Christine Whelan

OFFICERS

Jo Brooks – Director Operations
Maggie Camp – Monitoring Officer
Richard Kay – Strategic Planning Manager
James Khan – Head of Street Scene
Angela Parmenter – Housing & Community Advice Manager
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer

OTHERS PRESENT

Paul Remington – Chairman of East Cambs Street Scene
John Hill - Managing Director, East Cambs Street Scene

3. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

A personal statement had been submitted Mr Rod Hart and was read on his behalf. It stated:

This document is so far behind the times it beggars belief, it reads like something from the 20th century, not the 21st-century when the world is facing imminent climate catastrophe.

This strategy lacks ambition, leadership, foresight, sense of urgency and vision.

This strategy contains no quantifiable targets and fails to demonstrate any clear understanding of climate science. It refers to things that do not exist (Carbon capture and storage) and contains statements that are untrue (there is an SPD on climate change).

Constant references to the date of 2050 to achieve carbon zero is 20 years too late and every single one of the world's climate scientists will tell you that.

This strategy as written clearly demonstrates that ECDC has no desire to make real commitment to climate change mitigation.

Were I reviewing this document 30 years ago my comment would be, "not a bad start but still some way to go", reviewing the document today I would say

that a total rewrite is necessary, there is a great deal of expertise within the district who I'm sure would be very willing to assist ECDC in the rewriting of a meaningful Climate Change strategy, personally I would be ashamed to put my name on a document like this in the 21st-century.

Recently a cross-party committee of MPs has reported on a green recovery strategy post Covid -19 here is the link to an article on this subject:

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/27/uk-green-recovery-covid-19-mps-climate-nature?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

On behalf of the Chairman, the Strategic Planning Manager responded:

Whilst Mr Hart's comments are noted, we must recognise that this plan is just a first stepping stone, not the solution.

The plan commits to working with all experts and non-experts on a separate district wide plan, in line with what Mr Hart suggests.

We hope, and would welcome, Mr Hart contributing further ideas and contributing to that district wide strategy.

On one specific point, the 2050 net zero target is based both on UK Law, and the UN Climate Action Summit of July 2019 which reinforced the global understanding (such as that agreed in the Paris Agreement of 2016) that 1.5°C is the socially, economically, politically and scientifically safe limit to global warming by the end of this century, and to achieve this, the world needs to work to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

A question was submitted by Kim Ashton and was read on her behalf. It said:

Will the council host a citizen's assembly to democratically agree on how best to achieve zero carbon as soon as possible?

On behalf of the Chairman, the Strategic Planning Manager responded:

The Council has not presently committed to a citizen's assembly, but is monitoring the introduction of such climate change assemblies elsewhere in the country. It is fair to say that the results elsewhere to date have been mixed, and to do it properly can easily cost upwards of £100k pa. Even within the environment lobbying sector, there are mixed views on the value of such assemblies to tackle the climate emergency. That said, the Council has not closed the door on such an option, should experience demonstrate their value.

A question was read out by Jethro Gauld on behalf of East Cambs Climate Action (CAN) Network:

CAN welcomes the climate action plan as a starting point, however, we feel the document lacks teeth. Will the council bring forward plans for the next 12 months to promote a green recovery from Covid and then build in interim targets, annual reviews of those targets and specific actions to achieve them to lay out the pathway to zero carbon locally?

On behalf of the Chairman, the Strategic Planning Manager responded:

As the Leader, Anna Bailey, states in the foreword of the Plan, recovering from Covid should very much be a green one, one which makes lasting positive change to our environment. The Plan presented today is the first of annual ones, and targets and actions will be reviewed and updated each year, with the aim of achieving zero carbon locally. Each year, we intend to give the plan more and more teeth.

A statement and question was read by Susan Bussell from East Cambs Climate Action (CAN) Network:

Eastcamb's Climate Action Network-CAN, comprises a group of concerned residents brought together to find practical solutions in the district to what David Attenborough refers to as 'the moment of crisis'.

One of our members, Professor Julian Allwood, is the leading author of the Absolute Zero Report published in November 2019. This report is extremely important as it is firmly rooted in science but it is also governed by a practical approach by responding to the huge challenge of decarbonisation by using current available technology's and lifestyle changes. The report explains and concludes that we cannot obey the Climate Change Act to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 by waiting to use breakthrough technologies.

Whilst Eastcamb's CAN appreciates the district council's report is the 'year one plan', time is not on our side and robust and effective measures to transition to carbon zero needs to begin within year one.

Will the council agree to consider this very important and highly influential report, copy attached with the executive summary and look at reviewing the draft plan ongoing within year one, to incorporate practical changes advised in the Absolute Zero report that applies to the council's remit, both within the council's operations and in the wider district. Eastcamb's CAN also offers whatever help and information they can give to the council in working to achieve this common goal.

On behalf of the Chairman, the Strategic Planning Manager responded:

Yes, we certainly will look at the report you circulated, and thank you for that. More generally we look forward to working with CAN to help deliver the year 1 actions, and helping us to develop new and more ambitious targets for year 2.

The Chairman had noted that a document, entitled Absolute Zero, had been attached to the question and requested that a copy be sent to Members.

A statement had been received from Margherita Cesca Nelder-Haynes, EastCambs CAN, and was read on her behalf. It stated:

As the District Council is aware, many residents are increasingly concerned about the threat to biodiversity. In support of the ethos of the Council's environmental draft plan, would the Council please agree to earmarking plots of land, whatever size, within existing green areas, for local environmental groups such as Eastcambs CAN, ECOELY and Ely XR to plant in nectar rich plants and also trees to provide shelter and habitat to bees, insects and birds and ongoing to enjoy maintenance of these plots. This would be doubly beneficial in supporting biodiversity but also serve to be therapeutic to concerned residents especially coming out of the trauma from covid.

On the provision that a rota of work would be managed to ensure social distancing. Possible locations could be on wide verges, a plot opposite Cineworld or near the Paradise Centre. Once the location/site has been identified, adequate plants/shrubs will be considered in order to provide a better restoration of the landscape and community engagement.

On behalf of the Chairman, the Strategic Planning Manager responded:

The Council very much welcomes this suggestion, and it aligns somewhat to our 11th action point which states that the council will "Undertake a thorough appraisal of the Council's land assets, and determine whether a programme of tree planting and/or meadow planting can take place on any of it. If so, commence that programme during the 2020/21 winter and spring planting season". In progressing that action, we can explore whether local environment groups can take responsibility for looking after certain plots of land, as suggested by Margherita, where it is safe and suitable for them to do so.

The Chairman thank the public for their questions and understood that the District Council would be seeking help from outside organisations and people to help achieve the Action Plan.

4. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were apologies nor substitutions.

5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

6. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 20th January 2020 and 21st May 2020 be confirmed as correct records and be signed by the Chairman.

7. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman thanked all Council staff for rising to the challenges caused by COVID-19. A full range of services had continued, even though difficulties were being faced. This would also impact services in the future, but the Council would benefit from the lessons learned during this time.

8. **ECDC ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

The Committee considered a report, V12 previously circulated, that detailed the Council's first Environment and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

The Strategic Planning Manager advised the Committee that this first Environment Plan had been prepared over the last few months, following the decision at Full Council on 17th October 2019. A large focus of the work had been to establish the impact that the Council was already having. It had already set up a public Ideas Forum and continued to receive contributions. This first Plan was a start to achieve net zero carbon and to boosting the natural environment.

The Committee thought this was a welcome first step and the responsibility of the Council to plan and deliver. A national report in 2016 stated that strong, early action was crucial and should outweigh any costs. The Council had to be aware that buildings contributed half of carbon emissions, so the Council had an important role in controlling that. Developers had not improved their standards, so negotiations had to deliver development schemes that were sustainable in design.

The Strategic Planning Manager acknowledged that new developments had to make contributions, but the planning system would not be the solution for old building stock. The Action Plan would commit to a new Supplementary Planning Document to address that issue. This would come to the Committee as a draft for approval and would give the Council more control in negotiating with developers. The Local Plan 2015 had included the BREEAM standards and they were enforced. Energy and sustainability were also another policy in the Local Plan, seeking contributions to renewable energy. This was drafted six to seven years ago but the new Supplementary Planning Document would update it to national policy and current thinking. This would make buildings more energy efficient.

The Committee considered the twenty action points proposed for the year to be a good start. They requested regular updates be brought to the committee every 4 months. The updates would include problems, issues and when the initiatives had been completed. These interim reports should include reasonable targets to gauge progress. There was no reference in the report to the impact of COVID-19, so a summary should also be included in the interim reports

This report was welcomed and it had been very encouraging to receive over 200 ideas from the public. Officers should provide details to the Committee within six months of what had happened to these ideas, whether they were already in

place, those being considered for implementation and those ideas which had been rejected and why. There was great enthusiasm in the local community in taking this issue seriously. The Committee requested that Officers report to the Committee with targets for 2025 and 2030. This should help ensure the overall targets were met in 2050 or before.

The Committee was warned that the infrastructure in East Cambridgeshire was very fragile, with a lot of land under threat of flooding due to rising sea levels. This could result in climate refugees in East Cambridgeshire.

A Citizens Assembly had been mentioned as an option, so officers should explore the possibility of this and explain to Members what this would involve.

In response the Committee was informed that the production of regular reports on progress had already been considered and the Committee would receive updates every 4 months. The Council's website would be updated to provide more information on this topic for the public. Any targets had to be meaningful, so they could provide relevant information. The document itself had been broadly drafted before the COVID-19 pandemic, but this could give an opportunity to strengthen the document. The Council was already reviewing what working practices had been successful during COVID-19 and whether they should continue post COVID-19. Currently most staff were working from home, though the Council would be moving into a recovery phase.

It was resolved:

- That the Council's first Environment and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan be approved;
- That the Operational Services Committee act as champions for the Plan, helping to communicate its key messages and facilitate its delivery;
- That it seeks updates on progress with delivering the actions in the Plan, including a thorough update report approximately one year hence;
- That officers report back to the Committee in June 2021 with targets set for 2025 and 2030;
- That officers explore the possibility of using Citizens Assemblies and report back to the Committee;
- That officers report back to the Committee with details of the ideas submitted through the public Ideas Forum.

It was resolved to RECOMMEND TO FINANCE AND ASSETS COMMITTEE:

- That consideration be given to the actions outlined in the Plan, in terms of how they may be suitably resourced.

9. **DRAFT HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY 2020-2025**

The Committee considered a report, V13 previously circulated, that set out the Council's Homelessness And Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020-2025.

The Housing & Community Advice Manager advised the Committee that the Strategy had incorporated a Rough Sleeper strategy in line with Government requirements and also included the community advice service. As a result of this additional work, the team had been restructured to ensure a holistic approach was provided. The Council continued to lead on homelessness prevention and the new advice service had launched on 1st April. The team had 'hit the ground running' and, as part of the service, had been assisting people with their settled status.

The Strategy was considered a good document and Members commended the Department for continuing to provide its services during the COVID-19 situation. This had hit people hard in a number of areas, with people who had received a mortgage 'holiday' from March having to face its end during September. By the end of October the ban on re-possession would end, so there could be a big uptake of services at that time. The ban on evictions from rented property would end on 23rd August and, with people still being furloughed or self-employed, a huge increase in service demand could be anticipated. Had the Department considered this and could it report back to the Committee at a future meeting?

The Committee was informed that the Department was already considering the recovery phase and did expect a huge impact on services. It was hoped that people would approach the Council for help early on, as this would help all parties. The Council's communications team would help promote this. Government funding to accommodate rough sleepers had been received but had not yet been needed.

The Committee offered congratulations to the Department for its achievements concerning the community hubs and its work with the County Council and parish councils. The proposed Strategy was excellent and would be supported. The Committee had enormous confidence with the Housing Team, due to the fantastic work it was doing, and it knew nobody would be left rough sleeping on the streets of the district. Lots of other authorities were spending a lot of money tackling the homelessness/rough sleeper issue but this Council was doing it for no extra cost. The new advice service was well ahead of the game.

It was resolved:

That the Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020-2025 as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

10. **APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES & ANNUAL REPORTS**

The Committee considered a report, V14 previously circulated, that requested the confirmation of the appointment of Councillor Alan Sharp as a deputy representative on Citizens Advice West Suffolk and provided the annual reports

of Council representatives on Outside Bodies within the remit of the Operational Services Committee.

The Democratic Services Manager reminded the Committee that it had made its appointments last year, for a four-year term to ensure a period of continuity. The only change related to a new position of Deputy Representative on Citizens Advice West Suffolk, with Councillor Alan Sharp being nominated. Any issues raised by Council representatives were reported back to the relevant Outside Body.

In response to the Committee's query, the Democratic Services Manager thought that Councillor Starkey had been attending some meetings of Citizens Advice West Suffolk, but was finding it difficult to attend all. No report had been received from the Councillor but a response would be obtained and circulated.

In reply to a further question, it was revealed that not all Outside Bodies required substitute representatives and that was a matter for the individual organisation. Some preferred to see a regular representative to provide some continuity.

The Chairman then asked the Committee to confirm the new appointment and note the annual reports.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the appointment of Councillor Alan Sharp as the Council's deputy representative on Citizens Advice West Suffolk be confirmed;
- (ii) That the Annual Reports from appointed Council representatives on the activities and manner in which funding is spent by the outside bodies within the responsibility of the Operational Services Committee be noted.

11. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Director Operations proposed to supply the Committee with regular four-monthly update on progress against the Environment Plan. Apologies were offered for the delay in getting the Youth Strategy ready, as this had been significantly delayed due to officers having to deal with the impacts of the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately it may be delayed further. A report on the impact of the COVID issue on housing would be presented to Committee at its September meeting with further updates every 4 months as required. There was some question over the preparation of the six-monthly service plan updates and this situation would be checked. The Committee was also reminded that a report on the investigation of a possible Citizens Assembly would be considered at its November meeting.

The Chairman requested that reports on the impacts of COVID and updates on the Idea Forum be brought every four months, which could be included in the Environment updates.

It was resolved:

That the forward agenda plan, as amended to include additional items*, be noted.

12. **EAST CAMBS STEEET SCENE BUSINESS PLAN**

The Committee considered a report, V15 previously circulated, that detailed the East Cambs Street Scene Business Plan for 2020/21.

The Head of Street Scene advised the Committee that all employees should be commended for their work in continuing to deliver services during the pandemic. This was the third Business Plan and a lot had been achieved, with many service improvements being made during the last year. This included additional improvements for both customers and staff. Some deeply rooted issues had been corrected, which would lead to more improvements.

Next year's work related to communications and education, maintaining standards and setting realistic targets. All rounds would be re-configured to ensure as efficient service as possible and the delivery of employees training would continue. Another aim was to harness the standards used, to provide a domestic service, to explore commercial opportunities. Customer care would remain a top priority.

The Committee was advised that the introduction of a commercial trade waste, which was to be piloted in Ely and Littleport this year, had been delayed because of COVID-19. Members asked if this had an impact on ECSS's finance and were advised not. Waste vehicles contributed to the carbon footprint, so more work would go into investigating other vehicular options, such as hydrogen or solar powered vehicles, and whether it would work with the Greater Cambridgeshire partnership. It was recognised that electric vehicles were very expensive, so hydrogen powered vehicles might be a better fit. Any purchase of such vehicles had to be made when fully understanding the options. The Company was very interested at looking at alternative types of vehicle. Shared Services Cambridgeshire had purchased an electric vehicle but it was limited in endurance. There were also constraints on what was actually available, as the vehicles would need to meet local demands. In the current climate, an electric one would have to fit the service required and most alternative vehicles were suited to inner-urban areas. There was a lot of demand on the supply chain, so it was hoped that this could be tapped into. Hydrogen powered vehicles might be better than electric ones and the demand was there for them. The Government was changing its waste strategy, so the Company had to be cautious about purchasing new vehicles, as they need to match the new strategy.

It was resolved:

That the East Cambs Street Scene Business Plan 2020/21 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 6:03pm.