

## **Minutes of the Climate Change Select Committee**

**Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 6.00 pm**  
**At Saltwells Education Development Centre,**  
**Bowling Green Road, Netherton**

### **Present:**

Councillor P Dobb (Chair)  
Councillor T Russon (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors C Bayton, C Eccles, J Elliott, S Henley, S Keasey, N Neale and  
A Tromans.

### **Dudley MBC Officers:**

S Griffiths (Democratic Services Manager) and S Essex (Democratic Services  
Officer)

### **Also in Attendance:**

Councillor D Corfield (Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental  
Services)

Councillor Dr R Clinton (Cabinet Member for Climate Change)

T Weller and M Richards (Members of the public attended by invitation)  
Together with 6 other Members of the public

### **Introduction by the Chair**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Climate Change  
Select Committee and invited all attendees to introduce themselves.

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## 1 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor C Barnett.

It was noted that a vacancy on this Committee had been filled by Councillor N Neale.

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## 2 **Appointment of Substitute Members**

No substitute Members had been appointed for this meeting of the Committee.

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## 3 **Declarations of Interests**

No Member made a declaration of interest, in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of any matter considered at the meeting.

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## 4 **Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24**

Mr M Richards queried the change of the Committee's title. It was noted that a new structure of Overview and Scrutiny/Select Committees had been agreed at the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2023.

Councillor C Bayton expressed disappointment that this meeting did not have a full agenda of scrutiny items. The Chair advised that several substantive agenda items had been requested for this meeting, however, these had been deferred for various reasons. It had been agreed to continue with this meeting to consider the future work programme.

A detailed discussion took place regarding future agenda items and reference was made to the following points:

- Councillor C Bayton requested details on the Borough Strategy, including measurements to show Dudley's journey and how this correlated with the wider work in the Combined Authority region. The West Midlands Combined Authority had set 2041 as their target for Zero Carbon. The Council needed to work collaboratively across the Black Country and the West Midlands Combined Authority area and consider how progress and performance on Key Performance Indicators was reported back to this Committee.
- Councillor C Bayton requested that the Grant Register be included as a future agenda item and that a monitoring process be implemented. Significant funding was channelled through the West Midlands Combined Authority and it was essential that Dudley had a business plan for their share of the funds.
- Councillor C Bayton requested that consideration be given to pre-decision scrutiny to ensure that relevant items were submitted to this Committee in time for comments to be considered in advance of decisions being made by the Cabinet or the Council.
- Mr T Weller referred to the Black Country Cycle-Walk Mudway. Over several years, emails had been received from Officers indicating that overgrown vegetation would be cut back and a temporary surface laid down on the muddy and waterlogged parts in the Dudley borough. However, this work had not been undertaken and the Committee's support was requested to address this matter.
- Mr T Weller referred to a possible site of special scientific interest (SSSI) at Daniels Land, Merry Hill. The Committee was requested to support the appointment of a qualified person to carry out an ecological survey on this site. Councillor C Eccles believed that this site had been earmarked for housing and that it was the responsibility of the landowner to carry out a survey. Mr T Weller asked for an Ecology Officer from DMBC to consider this and report back to the Committee.
- Mr T Weller requested a report to a future meeting on the situation concerning the High Plateau site at Brierley Hill.
- Mr T Weller expressed a view that there should be a trial of bus/business lane on dual carriageways and that commuters should be rewarded with free bus travel to reduce car usage. This would improve road congestion and reduce greenhouse gasses.

- A member of the public asked if Members of the Committee had been required to undertake Carbon Literacy training. Whilst this was not a mandatory requirement, it was recommended that all Councillors should undertake Climate Change training. It was noted that West Midlands Combined Authority had developed training provision that could be explored further.
- Councillor A Tromans referred to citizens assemblies and the continued use of weed killers. The Chair asked that suggested agenda items be submitted to the Chair and Vice-Chair by email.
- Councillor S Henley considered that it was important for actions in the Council's strategy to be given clear timescales and implementation dates. However, it was noted that any actions to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions should be implemented immediately. General comments were made concerning the prioritisation of the Committee's future work programme to focus on achievable outcomes.
- Following a discussion on what actions local councils should be taking to achieve net zero, the Chair indicated that the Carbon Reduction Plan/Achieving Net Zero was scheduled for discussion at the November meeting. The Chair agreed for this item to be brought forward to the meeting of the Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2023.
- Reference was made to outcomes of the 'Your Borough, Your Future' survey undertaken in 2022. The Chair would request a progress update.
- In response to the progress update on the use of pesticides and maintaining the Borough's Green Spaces, the Chair advised that trials were ongoing and the January 2024 meeting would be the first opportunity to discuss the report. A member of the public asked if spraying around schools, parks and play areas could be ceased as a precautionary measure. This was, however, considered unlikely as the probable response was that the current spray was licensed in the United Kingdom. Councillor A Tromans asked for a recommendation to cease the introduction of quad bikes to speed up weed control in Dudley.
- Reference was made to work previously undertaken with West Midlands Combined Authority relating to domiciliary/care workers using electric fleet cars rather than their own. The Chair indicated that this would be covered in other agenda items such as viability of working from home, cycling and the Travel Card Scheme.

- Further reference was made to the need to focus on priorities such as reducing domestic emissions, loss of heating, fuel poverty, the issue of retrofit and supporting vulnerable people.
- Reference was made to the omission of a Nature Restoration Strategy from the Committee's agenda.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the report on the programme of meetings and potential items of business for this Committee, be noted.
- (2) That the Chair and Vice-Chair and Officers consider the comments, suggestions and recommendations as set out above in developing the Committee's work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.

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## **5 Public Forum**

The following points were raised under this agenda item:

- Mr T Weller commented positively on the inclusion of Public Forum agenda items and requested support to encourage the West Midlands Combined Authority to increase public participation in meetings.
- Mr T Weller commented that for several decades there had been a lack of discussion or votes in the seven West Midlands Councils regarding spending and progress on the Midland Metro development. He requested that this be queried with the West Midlands Combined Authority and appropriate Cabinet Member.
- In response to a query from a member of the public, it was confirmed that the composition and membership of this Committee was decided at the Annual Meeting of the Council. Seats were allocated in line with legal rules on political proportionality. Nominations were then received from each political group.
- A member of the public requested further clarity on the general policy/strategy of the borough relating to tackling climate change. For example, issues such as home energy savings, air quality, sewage and development on the green belt should be reflected in the priorities. The Chair stated that all key issues should be reflected in the Borough Strategy.

- The Chair confirmed that an action tracker would be included on future agendas for this Committee.
- Reference was made to Public Health and Emergency Planning, including provision for Climate Emergency Centres. Greater awareness was required of preparedness for emergencies and the measures being put in place. Councillor C Bayton advised that there was an Emergency Planning Team in the Council (Public Health). A member of the public commented that this team needed to be more visible.
- A member of the public suggested that the Council should promote its commitment to tackling Climate Change on the front page of the Council website.
- Mr T Weller commented on the Black Country Urban Forest project and requested an Officer of the Council report back to this Committee on the locations and number of trees that have been planted.

## **Resolved**

That the issues and comments raised during the Public Forum, as set out above, be noted and that the Chair, Vice-Chair and relevant Officers consider the points raised in developing the Committee's future work programme.

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## **6 Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8**

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

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The meeting ended at 7.25pm

CHAIR