

Minutes of the Climate Change Select Committee

**Wednesday 22nd November, 2023 at 6.00 pm
in The Council Chamber, The Council House,
Priory Road, Dudley**

Present:

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

Dudley MBC Officers:

F Mahon (Head of Energy, Sustainability & Climate Change), N McGurk (Acting
Service Director – Neighbour Delivery), K Jones (Director for Housing and
Communities) and G Gray (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Dr R Clinton (Cabinet Member for Climate Change)
Councillor D Corfield (Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm)
Mr T Weller (Member of the Public by invitation)

Together with 2 members of the public.

18 Apology for Absence

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of
Councillor M Dudley.



19 **Appointment of Substitute Members**

It was noted that Councillor P Lee had been appointed as a substitute Member for Councillor M Dudley, for this meeting of the Committee only.

20 **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.

21 **Minutes**

In referring to Minute No. 12(i) – Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure, Mr T Weller commented that public transport should be accessible and fair for all people and not just for the young.

Resolved

That, subject to the amendments and comments made above, the minutes of the meeting held on 14th September, 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

22 **Net-Zero Neighbourhood and Additional Sustainability Measures**

A report of the Director of Housing and Communities was submitted to provide an update on the progress on the Net Zero Neighbourhood (NZN) scheme at Brockmoor and to outline additional sustainability measures being taken by the Housing Directorate on existing and future schemes.

The Director of Housing and Communities provided an overview of the report and referred Members to the NZN project together with a number of schemes being carried out in conjunction with Government agencies and external energy providers that were mainly within the private sector and was aimed to increase sustainability and tackle poor energy efficiency, as detailed within the report submitted.

It was noted that several properties had signed up to undertake the retrofit to their properties within the Brockmoor area in December, that installation of Air Quality monitors and Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting had been installed on lampposts and that an Environmental competition scheme for Schools in the Dudley Borough had been launched.

In response to a comment made by Mr Weller concerning the urgency of actions to be taken within homes to make them energy efficient, the Director of Housing and Communities advised that the NZN scheme was now up and running and referred Mr Weller to the Appendix of the report submitted, which outlined timescales and the various actions that had started to take place.

Resolved

That the information contained in the report submitted, and as reported at the meeting on the update on the progress with the Net Zero Neighbourhood Scheme at Brockmoor and the additional sustainability measures being taken by the Housing Directorate on existing and future schemes, be noted.

23 Update on Carbon Reduction Plan

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change on an update on the Council's carbon reduction plan.

In presenting the information the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change outlined the key work that had been completed and it was reported that a Climate Policy Manager had started in September 2023 and that the draft Climate Action Plan had been produced and was going through the Council's approval process. The draft Climate Action Plan would be reported at the meeting of the Climate Change Select Committee in January, 2024.

It was reported that the feedback received following the Your Borough, Your Future consultation would be incorporated within the draft Action Plan and that an audit had been carried out to look into action plans established by other councils to assist in the development of generic actions and themes.

It was advised that approximately 20 meetings had taken place with key Officers to discuss and agree actions for the draft Action Plan and that a new governance process had been formed to oversee the Council's delivery of net zero, which included establishing a Climate and Sustainability Board. It was advised that the first meeting of the Climate and Sustainability Board would be held on 28th November 2023 to consider and sign off the draft Action Plan.

The proposed governance structure for carbon net zero delivery was outlined, which included submitting an annual progress report to the Strategic Executive Board together with theme-based meetings of the Climate and Sustainability Board and the Climate Action Plan Working Group, represented by key Officers.

The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change outlined further key work that had been carried out, including communications promoting free carbon literacy training for residents within the Council's newsletter and the COP28 social media campaign. Midlands Net Zero Hub had been commissioned to produce a carbon baseline for the Council's Climate Action Plan by January, 2024.

It was advised that key staff had undertaken carbon literacy training at the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and that a training plan had been developed to deliver carbon literacy training to key decision makers within the Council, starting with the Climate Change Select Committee Members in January 2024.

An overview of the carbon reduction tracker together with a list of key projects that had been delivered were presented at the meeting, which included:

- 100% green energy purchased for the Council Estate.
- 8 travel plans agreed as part of new developments or with existing employers.
- 7 new or upgraded pedestrian/cycle lanes.
- 0.96km of new cycle footpaths
- 5 new crossings for pedestrians/cyclists
- 2 new traffic signal junctions including Light Emitting Diode (LED) lamps and extra low voltage power supply.
- 23 new electric machines in Green Care, including leaf blowers and hedge cutters.
- 5 electric quad bikes for street scene operations
- 100 public recycling waste bins installed.
- Trialling electric mechanical road sweepers
- Undertaking a programme to change 30,000 streetlights to LED.
- 90% of streets lights at Lister Road Depot are now LED.
- More than 60% of maintained schools have a 20mph scheme.
- 416 solar panels installed on the roof of Duncan Edwards Leisure Centre, saving 23 tonnes of CO2 a year.

It was advised that the most reliable way to report actual carbon savings would be to carry out annual monitoring, for example reductions in business mileage as a result of car share and other schemes. It was also advised that the carbon action tracker could be reported at future meetings.

In referring to the draft Climate Action Plan for Dudley, the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change stated that there would be a three-year action plan from 2024 to 2027 with an annual review and reporting process. The Action Plan would contain climate adaptation and resilience measures together with actions that would contribute to Borough wide carbon reductions towards the Council's carbon net zero ambitions.

It was advised that the draft Climate Action Plan for Dudley would contain six strategic themes, namely Community and Business, Transport and Active Travel, Energy, Waste and Fleet, Land Use and Biodiversity, and Enabling Actions including communications and fundraising.

The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change provided a summary of the contents page of the Action Plan and referred to the importance of co-benefits; emissions data being provided; the importance of partnership working, engagement and funding as well as the requirement for offsetting residual emissions from hard to decarbonise sectors, such as commercial transport.

Examples of enabling actions within the draft Action Plan were outlined in the presentation submitted and it was explained that a corporate communications and engagement plan for the climate emergency would be developed and delivered by the end of March 2024. A funding tracker to provide Officers and Elected Members with key information regarding funding opportunities to support the delivery of projects would also be developed and maintained. It was also reported that carbon literacy training would be rolled out in 2023/24 to key decision makers in order to achieve Bronze accreditation for the Council from the Carbon Literacy Trust.

In referring to the next steps of the draft Action Plan, The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change advised that the draft Action Plan would be submitted to the Climate and Sustainability Board on 28th November 2023 and confirmed that the Action Plan would be presented to the Climate Change Select Committee on 24th January 2024.

The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change further advised that the approval process would be completed during February/March 2024, and that the climate communications plan would be produced by the end March 2024. Work would also be undertaken with key external stakeholders to develop a new climate partnership and that Dudley would lead on the development of the Borough Climate Action Plan during 2024. It was also proposed that a public consultation process for the Borough plan would be conducted during Spring/Summer 2024.

Arising from the presentation, Members asked questions and made comments. Responses were provided where appropriate as follows:-

- a) The Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery referred to the significant work that had been undertaken by the Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change team to formulate the draft Action Plan and that the key projects that were outlined would provide Members a better understanding of the scale of activity that needed to be undertaken and that all information would be shared going forward.
- b) In response to a question raised by Councillor C Bayton in regard to spending controls and the potential impact in delivering the Action Plan and what priority was given, the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change clarified that all actions within the Action Plan had already been approved and that an annual review would be carried out. It was advised that the reporting process mechanism was being developed and that delivery progress for all actions would be reported on and the information made available to this Committee.
- c) Further to a question raised by Councillor C Eccles concerning the implementation of traffic restriction policies within Dudley Town Centre and neighbourhoods being declined at a meeting of the Council and the affect this would have on the Action Plan going forward, the Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery advised that various considerations were being looked into regarding transport and that this would also be expanded upon within the Action Plan and within focus groups. It was advised that work had been undertaken to reduce the speed around schools to 20mph, which would transfer into low carbon neighbourhoods. Officers would be considering all aspects of transport and implement trials as necessary to identify whether these could be pursued and presented to Cabinet.

- d) In response to a query raised by Councillor C Barnett regarding how the reduction of private vehicles and the reduction of the carbon impact would be achieved and measured, the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change recognised that travel actions and carbon impact were difficult to measure and that co-benefits would also need to be measured. It was advised that any funding would need to be quantified and that sustainability was also an important factor throughout the Dudley Borough as well as carbon reduction. With regard to measuring energy, it was reported that specific elements such as decarbonisation would be included within the Borough Plan, with some delivery undertaken by external partnerships.
- e) A further question was raised by Councillor C Barnett concerning the Council's position on the Climate Emergency Scorecard and whether there would be an improvement in the score in future. The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change advised that no further submission had been carried out and that there would be a right to reply as part of next year's scorecard process, however, this would take time to input to. It was advised that the Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change team would work to ensure that the score for Dudley would improve as a result of delivery of actions within the Action Plan.
- f) Reference was made to the timescales proposed in implementing the Borough Action Plan, and the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change advised that the Action Plan would be a Borough wide process and would be dependent on working with various partnerships as to when the Action Plan could commence. It was noted that the Council was facilitating implementation alongside independent partnerships with a view to maintaining self-sustainability.
- g) In responding to a query raised by Councillor C Barnett regarding the involvement of Community Groups, the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change clarified that a variety of Community Groups including Dudley Council for Voluntary Services (DVCS) and Friends of the Earth would be invited to contribute towards the Borough Action Plan when it is developed in 2024.

- h) In response to concerns raised by Councillor D Borley regarding what checks were undertaken to implement pedestrian crossings, in particular on the Stourbridge Ring Road, which would stop traffic, cause congestion and in consequence create more pollution, the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change advised that relevant Officers would need to be consulted on schemes and any concerns that may arise regarding safety issues.

The Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery advised that Air Quality monitoring was carried out by the Environmental Services team who monitor and understand where the hot spots for pollution were situated around the Borough.

- i) Mr T Weller welcomed the information provided on the update of the Council's Climate Action Plan, and suggested that there were easier ways to reduce traffic and mileage by pedestrians cycling or using commuter trains on railways.

Mr T Weller further commented that there were several railway lines that had been destroyed or converted, which was considered to have created a significant cost and suggested that a previous proposal for the Tram line to be bought to Stourbridge Junction from Flood Street in Dudley to be reinstated and considered this would be more beneficial and should be implemented.

- j) Councillor C Bayton advised that in regard to air quality, Electrical Vehicles would still create 2.5 Particulate Matter pollution from tyres and breaks, therefore, there would need to be a reduction in traffic and reducing speed. It was noted that an air quality action plan had been adopted by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), whereby mobile sensors were used, and local authorities were required to provide data to the WMCA in order to identify hot spots.
- k) Councillor T Russon considered that the wider public transport issues should be looked into and commented that monitoring of Electrical Vehicles had evidenced that these vehicles would break at a lower rate, therefore, creating lower pollution.
- l) Councillor A Tromans welcomed the information provided, and queried whether the quad bikes used for administering pesticides were Electrical Vehicles as there were none shown within the Council's fleet and whether harmful weed killer was being used. In responding, the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change advised that the plans for Glyphosate weed killer would be a separate issue from the Carbon Reduction Plan.

Councillor D Corfield advised that there were Electric Vehicles within the Council's fleet and invited Councillor A Tromans to visit the Lister Road depot to view vehicles, including the quad bikes, that were being used.

- m) Councillor A Tromans appreciated the work carried out concerning the 20mph zones at schools and the Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery clarified that 65% of the roll out for 20mph zones outside of schools had been undertaken with a view for this to be completed within the next two years.
- n) In responding to a query raised by Councillor A Tromans regarding the Cycle pathways and maps of existing routes, the Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery advised that there were several Cycle routes throughout the Borough, however, acknowledged there were many sections that were unconnected to other routes.
- o) Mr T Weller commented that there was a continuous cycle route from Saltwells/Merry Hill to Wolverhampton, which crossed through three Council authorities, which was considered to be unusable as a consequence of many sections of the route being a mud way. Mr T Weller suggested that the Greencare Team consider using gravel or clear the mud so that the cycle route could be used.

Resolved

That the information contained in the presentation submitted, and as reported at the meeting, on the update on Council's Carbon Reduction Plan, be noted.

24 Climate Change Select Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business

Councillor C Bayton requested that the inclusion of Biodiversity be included as a future agenda item.

Resolved

That the Climate Change Select Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business, as outlined in the report, be noted.

25 Public Forum

A member of the public raised concerns regarding the dangerous pedestrian crossing from Greenfield Avenue Stourbridge and of speeding cars that were causing pollution and impacting the air quality. They also considered that the accessibility to the subways at Stourbridge Ring Road should be reviewed.

In responding Councillor D Borley advised that he was aware of the pedestrian crossing mentioned and the accessibility issues to some subways, however, considered that other subways at the Stourbridge Ring Road were easier to use and advised that there was no easy solution to prevent speeding motorists.

In response to a query from a member of the public concerning cycle lanes impacting the traffic plan and cycle paths, the Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery advised that measures that were being implemented with regard to traffic and cycle lanes this year would be within the key project.

In responding to comments made, Councillor C Barnett agreed that the design of the access to the subways was unsatisfactory, and that it would be the choice of the cyclist to use cycle lanes on busy traffic routes. It was considered that cars were prevalent, and the work undertaken by the Climate Change team should help towards reducing ongoing traffic issues.

Mr T Weller referred to the demolition of the multi-story car park at Pool Road in Halesowen and suggested that it would be preferable to build flats that were energy efficient or houses with Solar Panels.

In response, the Chair clarified that the information had only recently been announced, therefore, this could be looked into further once additional information had been received.

In responding to a question raised by a Member of the Public in relation to the extent of the climate emergency issues considered by the Select Committee, the Chair advised that the Committee was newly established and would be considering the items set out in the Action Plan and taking any actions that were deemed necessary.

Councillor Dr R Clinton also commented that once the Climate Change and Sustainability Board had been established, several issues would be addressed allowing for broader answers to questions going forward.

Questions pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8 were raised by Councillor A Tromans. Responses were received as follows and circulated to Members at the meeting of this Committee:

- How many homes within Dudley Council's housing stock currently have an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or higher?

"Historically Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council have reported that 75% of homes have an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or above. However, a full stock condition survey is currently underway and as part of this programme the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating is being assessed and a full Energy Performance Certificate is being undertaken and lodged. The Survey Control Services (SCS) surveys will be completed by April 2024, after which the most up to date position will be reported, but initial indications from surveys and Energy Performance Certificate being produced to date indicate that 53% of our homes achieve an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or above.

Energy Rating Banding ▾	No. of properties within banding	% of surveyed properties in the banding
B	65	1.38%
C	2462	52.32%
D	1982	42.12%
E	175	3.72%
F	16	0.34%
G	6	0.13%
Grand Total	4706	100.00%

Average SAP rating	68.02
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- Is there a plan of works to upgrade homes within Dudley Council's stock that do not currently have an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C, and if so, how will these be prioritised?

The Standard Assessment Procedure and component data being gathered as part of the full Survey Control Services project are being combined with historical investment data to develop the investment needs across the stock, as the position in relation to the properties sitting in Band C and above has altered since the last investment plan. The properties sitting in Band D which offer the greatest prospects of improvement will be prioritised, with any additional resources from grant funding being used to improve those properties in Band E

- Does the Borough have any plans to apply to the Social Homes Decarbonisation Fund for wave 2.2 or any subsequent rounds of funding?

An application is being prepared for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund based on the findings of the Survey Control Services exercise, the authority has until 19th January, 2024 to make the submission and any successful grants must be spent by 31st March, 2025.

The meeting ended at 7.25pm

CHAIR