

Minutes of the Climate Change Select Committee

**Wednesday 24th January, 2024 at 6.00 pm
in Committee Room 2, The Council House,
Priory Road, Dudley**

Present:

Councillor P Dobb (Chair)
Councillors C Barnett, C Bayton, R Collins, C Eccles, J Elliott, S Henley, P Lee,
N Neale and A Tromans.

Dudley MBC Officers:

F Mahon (Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change), H Rayet
(Climate Policy Manager), J Deakin (Head of Waste and Fleet Operations) and
G Gray (Democratic Services Officer)

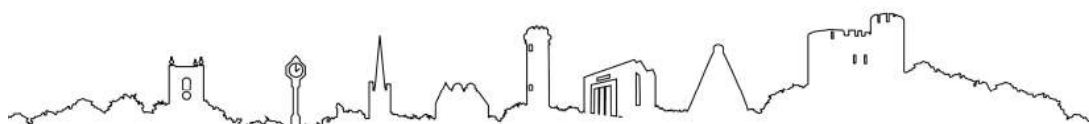
Also in Attendance:

Councillor P Harley (Leader of the Council)
Councillor Dr R Clinton (Cabinet Member for Climate Change)
Councillor D Corfield (Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm)
Mr M Richards (Member of the Public by invitation)

Together with 2 members of the public.

27 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of
Councillors T Russon and M Dudley.



28 **Appointment of Substitute Members**

It was noted that Councillor R Collins had been appointed as a substitute Member for Councillor T Russon, for this meeting of the Committee only.

29 **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.

30 **Minutes**

In referring to Minute No. 22 – Members were advised of the error of the title concerning the Net Zero Neighbourhood Scheme.

Resolved

That, subject to the amendment made above, the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November, 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

31 **Public Forum**

A Member of the public from the Friends of the Earth Community Group raised questions regarding the Dudley Climate Action Plan and the Brockmoor Pensnett Retrofit programme and queried whether further updates or progress had been made and whether information could be provided.

In response, the Chair clarified that information concerning the Dudley Council Climate Action Plan would be presented at the meeting and advised that information could be circulated including information regarding the Dudley Council Climate Action Plan and Brockmoor Pensnett Retrofit programme.

At this juncture Councillor N Neale withdrew from the meeting.

32 **Dudley Council Climate Action Plan**

A report of the Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery was submitted to recommend to approving the Dudley Council Climate Action Plan, Phase 1 (2024-2027) as part of the Council's response to the climate emergency.

The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change provided an overview of the report submitted and in doing so stated that Dudley Council had declared a Climate Emergency in 2020 and had committed to deliver a Climate Action Plan and produce a Borough Wide Action Plan within Phase 2 of the Action Plan. It was noted that actions from the Dudley Council Climate Action Plan would contribute towards the Borough wide impact.

There was a focus to achieve Net Zero by 2030 and steps had been taken within several service areas of the Council in particular the Council's Estate and Fleet Services to reduce the carbon footprint.

Members were advised that the Council had recognised they had a leadership role to produce a Council Action Plan and within Phase 1 of the Plan there was the need to set a positive example to address climate impact within the Council's own operations and services. There was also a need to provide information and advice to the public, to encourage staff to take action, and to engage with partners, residents, businesses and community stakeholders to tackle climate change across the Borough and to enable them to participate and provide feedback.

It was reported that the Climate and Sustainability Board had been established to develop and monitor the delivery of the Council's Climate Action Plan, that the Board would work with external partnerships to provide opportunities to work with businesses, however, partnership working would be included within Phase 2 of establishing the Borough Plan.

It was advised that the Council were delivering a number of actions and initiatives that were being developed and that were outlined within the report submitted.

The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change reported that the Midland Net Zero Hub had carried out work to provide information and to assist the Council in reaching the Net Zero target for 2030. It was noted that the information received identified that there was a need for Dudley to reduce emissions by a further 13,209.85 tonnes Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO_{2e}) from the amount of carbon generated from Council buildings and activities, within the baseline year of April 2022 to March 2023.

It was reported that the Dudley Climate Action Plan would be a 3-year plan with 6 themes as outlined in the report submitted. The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change explained that the Dudley Climate Action Plan was not a set document and would be formally reviewed and updated annually.

It was advised that the Dudley Climate Action Plan was a Corporate Plan, that the existing and planned projects and initiatives would be funded across key Directorates, therefore, there would not be a specific budget. However, consideration had been given to the current cost control processes and would work alongside colleagues to ensure actions were developed. It was noted that a meeting had taken place in November, 2023 to discuss actions, however, the budget review had subsequently been put in place, which would inevitably affect current plans, though colleagues were confident that the majority of initiatives within the first year would proceed.

It was noted that the Council recognised the need to address the Biodiversity Crisis alongside Climate Emergency and once completed focus would be given to the Borough Wide Action Plan to target Net Zero for 2030.

Members were advised that a communications plan would need to be established with the intention for people to understand what actions were being undertaken and to initiate engagement with residents. The Climate Change webpage had been set up in November, 2023 and further engagement work through social media had been carried out by the Climate Policy Manager. The Council were eager to involve young people with the possibility of establishing a youth citizens assembly.

The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change reported that the Climate and Sustainability Board would meet on a quarterly basis with a view to provide monitoring reports to the Climate Change Select Committee and it was advised that Key Performance Indicators and targets would be developed in due course.

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

- a) In response to a question raised by Councillor C Eccles concerning the budget restraints and how it would affect the Council's target for Climate Emergency, the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate advised that budgets would primarily be regulated through high level Officers within individual Directorates, that Officers would consult with relevant service areas should delivery be behind target and that a pragmatic and flexible approach would be needed particularly within the first year to ensure the Council were developing momentum.
- b) Councillor C Barnett welcomed the Dudley Climate Action Plan and commented positively on the work carried out. Councillor C Barnett referred to the launch of the new Climate website and it was felt that public engagement would be significant to provide residents with effective communication and guidance.

The Climate Policy Manager acknowledged that it was vital to ensure the public were engaged, encouraged and supported. It was advised that engagement would coincide with the public consultation and that the Communications Team would be working towards providing a Communications Plan for delivery to residents.

- c) In regard to Planning Policy and the restrictions on National Guidelines, Councillor C Barnett queried how the Dudley Climate Action Plan would be incorporated to ensure Developers contributed towards the Plan, whilst adhering to National Planning Policies.

In response Councillor Dr R Clinton, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, advised that several discussions with Planning Officers would be carried out to look at incorporating the Dudley Climate Action Plan with the Planning Regulations.

The Climate Policy Manager clarified that discussions had been undertaken with Planning Officers in November 2023 to consider in detail the Planning and National Policies to ensure that any actions would coincide and conform to Planning and National Policies and that Officers were content that there would be no conflict.

- d) Councillor C Barnett referred to the Council's Cycle Hire Scheme and whether the scheme had been successful and made comments in regard to the accessibility of cycleways around the Dudley Borough in that it was believed to be challenging, therefore, consideration would need to be given on the development of a network of cycleways to enable cyclists to travel around the Borough as an alternative use of transport.

In response the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change advised that the Dudley Climate Action Plan included the review of the travel policy and that any actions carried out would be based on ongoing discussions with relevant Officers. It was noted that an E-bike scheme was in place, and whilst it was acknowledged that there were challenges with the cycleways around Dudley, successful cycle routes schemes within other areas would be explored to assist in effective delivery of the cycle network.

- e) Councillor C Bayton welcomed the Dudley Climate Action Plan, however, felt that there was a lack of exposure through social media to help change the mindset and behavioural change in local residents.
- f) Reference was made by Councillor C Bayton concerning the 13,209.85 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent of emissions that had been identified by Midland Net Zero Hub and stated that consideration would need to be given for any actions undertaken and should not create further issues within other parts of the Borough or within surrounding areas.
- g) Councillor C Bayton commented on the Cycle Hire Scheme and acknowledged that there had been a loss within Dudley and other surrounding areas, however, it was considered that there was a need for understanding from residents regarding how cycling would be a valuable contribution and suggested to look at solutions to incentivise residents to take up future schemes.
- h) Councillor D Borley welcomed the Climate Action Plan and commented that there were several safety issues for cyclists on the current cycle routes within Dudley.
- i) In referring to the Climate Action Plan, Councillor D Borley expressed a view that future developing technology would need to be taken into consideration and a measured approach would be needed when establishing future schemes and undertaking any actions.

In response the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change acknowledged that a flexible approach would be essential to the Climate Action Plan to consider new evolving technology together with any changes within Government Policies. It was advised that pilot schemes and trials would be carried out that would provide a measured approach.

- j) Councillor C Eccles commented that there had been very few opportunities for local community groups to be involved and contribute to the Climate Action Plan and considered that local community groups should be utilised going forward. In referring to Biodiversity, Councillor C Eccles advised that there were several established local groups who were eager to be involved within their own area.

In response the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change advised that the Public Consultation would provide an opportunity to discuss with local community groups and stakeholders.

- k) In response to a query raised by Councillor C Eccles concerning the retrofit initiative in that the main focus was on the Council's Estate and Tenants and queried whether private properties would also be community funded, the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change explained that information would be explored further within the Borough Plan.
- l) In responding to a question raised by Councillor C Barnett regarding community engagement, the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change clarified that plans would be discussed regarding community engagement within the next phase of the Borough Plan, however, it was recognised that a strategy and plan would need to be put in place. It was noted that Schools were being consulted, that there was an aim to establish a Youth Council and that educational talks on recycling were being carried out within Schools, however, there would be scope to develop and broaden other environmental subjects communicated to children to engage with students on Climate Change issues.
- m) Councillor C Barnett referred to the group Copenhagenize and advised that they had developed significant information that could be utilised for developing cycle networks around the Dudley Borough.

In response the Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change recognised that there was a vast amount of experience available throughout the country that could be used as a starting point and that discussions would be carried out with various groups to consider best practices.

- n) Councillor C Barnett emphasised the importance of engaging and educating children concerning Climate Change.

The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change commented that it was essential to involve children with educational material to help engage other students within schools.

- o) Councillor R Clinton commented that there had been an emphasis from the West Midlands Combined Authority to use local manufacturers to produce supplies for solar panels, heat pumps, insulation together with various other materials and it was considered it would be an opportunity to diversify the industry within the Dudley Borough and reduce the carbon footprint.
- p) Mr M Richards commented positively on the Climate Action Plan and welcomed the regular updates that would be provided to future meetings, however, considered that the Action Plan was primarily focussed on the Council Estate rather than local residents and advised that it was essential to mobilise the local population by providing regular communication and relevant information to residents.

The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change clarified that the communications plan would be implemented to engage the public and further engagement would be carried out within the second phase of the Borough Plan.

- q) Mr M Richards commented further on the Biodiversity Emergency and raised concerns regarding species disappearing leading to ecosystems breaking down should no action be taken.
- r) Councillor D Borley expressed a view that consideration would need to be given to any decisions and actions made that would affect the local transport and the local economy. The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change clarified that the local economy would be considered within the next stage within the Borough Plan, that consultations would be carried out with local stakeholders and businesses and that there would be a focus on creating green jobs together with retrofit schemes.

Resolved

- a) That the Dudley Council's Climate Action Plan, Phase 1 (2024-2027) set out in Appendix 1 of the report submitted outlining how the Council would work to reduce carbon emissions from the Council's operations and activities and influence carbon reduction boroughwide, be received and noted.
- b) That an annual update of the Climate Action Plan to review the data and evidence, monitor progress and insert new actions to further reduce the Council's carbon footprint towards achieving its ambition to reach carbon net zero by 2030, be included as a future agenda item on the work programme for the 2024/2025 municipal year.

33 Climate Change Select Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business

Councillor C Bayton requested that a report on Biodiversity Net Gain be included as a future agenda item on the work programme for the 2024/2025 municipal year.

Resolved

That a report on Biodiversity Net Gain be included as a future agenda item on the work programme for the 2024/2025 municipal year.

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

34 Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8

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

The meeting ended at 7.00pm

CHAIR