

## **Minutes of the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee**

**Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 at 6.00 pm  
in the Council Chamber at the Council House, Priory Road,  
Dudley**

### **Present:**

Councillor D Corfield (Chair)  
Councillor P Dobb (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors C Bayton, K Casey, R Collins, C Eccles, J Elliott, J Foster, S Henley, M Rogers and T Russon

### **Dudley MBC Officers:**

A Vaughan (Interim Director of Public Realm), G Scholes (Interim Lead for Climate Change), C King (Head of Environmental Health & Trading Standards), R Burgin (Pollution Control Officer), E Bradford (Head of Street & Green Care and Amenity Services), S Griffiths (Democratic Services Manager) and G Gray (Assistant Democratic Services Officer)

### **Also in attendance:**

Councillor R Clinton (Cabinet Member for Waste Management and Climate Change)  
Councillor S Saleem (Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm)

Together with 5 members of the public.

## **6 Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were submitted for this meeting

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## 7 **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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## 8 **Minutes**

Councillor J Foster commented on discussions and suggestions that had been made at the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2022, which were not included on the agenda for this meeting. Councillor J Foster also referred to other specific items listed for consideration in the minutes that had not been scheduled for consideration in the work programme.

The Chair advised that that the items would be considered further and incorporated within the work programme and reports to future meetings.

### **Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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## 9 **Public Forum**

The Chair reported that public involvement and engagement was significant for this Scrutiny Committee and there was a need for the public to be included in discussions held at the meeting.

A report of the Lead for Law and Governance was submitted on the ongoing arrangements for the engagement of members of the public and partner organisations in the work of this Committee.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that, as part of the Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution, all Scrutiny Committees had a Public Forum agenda item and the way in which the Public Forum session was conducted was at the discretion of the Chair of the meeting.

The Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules provided that a Scrutiny Committee may invite local residents, partner organisations, stakeholders and Members and Officers in other parts of the public sector to attend the Committee. The appointment of Co-opted Members was a more formal process, which required seeking approval of Full Council. Co-opted Members were also required to sign an undertaking concerning the Members' Code of Conduct and comply with its requirements.

The Chair and Vice-Chair had been consulted and it was proposed to adopt a flexible and open approach to maximise opportunities to achieve public and partner engagement in the work of this Committee. Residents or representatives of partner organisations with specific interests in the Committee's work may be given a standing invitation to attend meetings and speak on any agenda items at the discretion of the Chair.

Mr T Weller and Mr M Richards had been invited to attend each meeting of this Committee and both introduced themselves to the Committee.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the approach outlined in the report be noted and approved.
- (2) That the Lead for Law and Governance, following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to invite any member of the public or representatives of partner organisations to future meetings where they have a specific interest or specialist knowledge in relation to Climate Change and Environmental issues.

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## 10 **Terms of Reference**

A report of the Lead for Law and Governance was submitted to establish the Terms of Reference for the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee for the 2022/23 municipal year and to incorporate the terms of reference within the Council's Constitution.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2022 the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee had been established to provide for scrutiny of the executive functions allocated to the Cabinet Member for Waste Management and Climate Change.



The terms of reference were discussed at the first meeting of this Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2022 and it was agreed that the terms of reference would be submitted to this meeting for noting.

## **Resolved**

That the terms of reference for the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee be received and noted.

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### **11 Carbon Reduction Plan**

The Committee received a presentation from the Interim Lead for Climate Change on the Carbon Reduction Plan. In presenting the information it was reported that CLS Consultancy on behalf of Dudley MBC had carried out a baseline assessment of the corporate estates to identify where emissions could be reduced. A team had been working on eleven corporate buildings to provide information on data usage from 2019. This information would be fed into the wider Carbon Reduction Plan and an update on the information collated would be provided at a future meeting of this Committee.

An internal working group to drive forward behavioural change had been established together with the Cabinet Member for Waste Management and Climate Change. It was felt important to feed back on the work undertaken at this group in relation to the wider plan on Carbon Reduction. A review of the meetings of the working group could be submitted to this Committee for consideration after the next meeting in October.

The Interim Lead for Climate Change reported that an assessment regarding the commercial benefit of Solar PV was due to commence in October, 2022. It was noted that solar panels had been successful for residential properties and that consideration was being given to suitable commercial properties where solar panels could be installed.

Reference was made to the trajectories to demonstrate reaching the target of Net Zero by 2041. It was noted that the target would be challenging and kept under review and that the grid had bought forward targets to 2035, which would need to be incorporated in all appropriate policies and strategies.

It was advised that commissioning was needed for the Wider Borough Plan to support the aspirations of the West Midlands. A clear plan and list of actions where funding was needed would be issued and funding opportunities needed to be considered. Data would be collected from the last three months to provide a baseline and commercial business cases. It was advised that each Directorate would have ownership for delivery of Carbon targets to provide a framework and to track progress.

In referring to a list of teams to deliver information, the Interim Lead for Climate Change reported that information would need to be collated in one place to create a plan and policy. The expected dates and proposed activities were set out in the presentation with a view to submitting the final draft Carbon Reduction Plan incorporating engagement and consultation outcomes to Cabinet and Council for approval by July, 2023.

Preparations would need to be made for all policies and there were important links to the West Midlands Industrial Symbiosis programme, which provided a need to consider emerging technologies. It was highlighted that the utilisation of energy was important for climate change and a Climate Emergency Strategy was in place to build a resilient Dudley.

A priority action plan had been set out to include introducing carbon offset funding, which permitted planners to request for an offset payment per tonne from developers should their developments not reach the Net Zero target.

Further actions and plans were in place, which needed to be developed along with supporting information. The Chair requested that an update on further actions and plans be submitted to this Committee at a future meeting.

The Interim Director of Public Realm advised that although the Council was beginning to establish itself and was in a position to succeed, it was noted that there were not enough facilities or funding to carry out processes and resources would need to be reinforced to match the planning process.

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



- (a) In referring to page 23 of the presentation, Councillor C Bayton commented on the use of Solar Panels on commercial properties and was of the view that there had been a missed opportunity in not fitting Solar panels to the new Duncan Edwards Leisure Centre. It was felt that there was a need for joint working and planning with appropriate departments to incorporate installing Solar panels and that sheltered accommodation would also benefit from this.

Councillor C Bayton also commented that Climate Change was an issue that every Directorate should be aware of and it was noted that there had been no mention of a link to the transport strategy, which would have an impact. It was advised that energy and solar efficiency would be included in future new builds.

- (b) In responding to questions raised by Councillor M Rogers, regarding costings for CLS consultancy and the cost of employees, the Interim Lead for Climate Change advised that the CLS consultancy had been subject to a tender process. Information regarding the cost of CLS consultancy could be provided. The Lead for Climate Change confirmed that the priority actions regarding employee costings shown in the presentation were an overview and had not been finalised and would be reported to Members once further details had been obtained.
- (c) The Cabinet Member for Waste Management and Climate Change advised that the current resources to support work was limited. Questions had been rolled out to all Directorates, however, responses had not been received to date. It was emphasised that information and cooperation was needed from all Directorates to map out what work was being carried out for Climate Change. It was noted that the commitment of the whole Council was required.

The Interim Lead for Climate Change confirmed that resources were limited and that a plan would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee to consider.

- (d) Councillor K Casey commented that it was crucial that all Directorates took carbon reduction into consideration and that it was taken seriously from the top of the organisation downwards. It was noted that the introduction of carbon offsetting was also a vital part of carbon reduction, however, should not be solely used as a means of obtaining income.
- (e) Councillor T Russon commented that new commercial buildings needed to install solar panels and suggested that an investment structure for people who manufacture solar panels would be beneficial. In responding to a question regarding infrastructure and facilitation of electric stations, the Chair made comments and highlighted that Government funded programmes and a plan for infrastructure were already in place.
- (f) Mr T Weller made comments and was of the view that Council investments should be better placed towards the reduction of carbon and suggested that investments should be focussed on resources to reduce greenhouse emissions such as solar panels and public transport rather than overground trams.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the information contained in the presentation regarding Carbon Reduction be noted.
- (2) That the Lead for Climate Change provide an update regarding the data usage from 2019, concerning eleven corporate buildings, which will be fed through to the Wider Carbon Reduction Plan.
- (3) That the Lead for Climate Change provide a review of the work undertaken of the working group established to drive forward behavioural change.
- (4) That the Lead for Climate Change be requested to provide information regarding the costings of CLS consultancy.
- (5) That the Lead for Climate Change to submit a full plan to the Scrutiny Committee once the necessary information has been obtained and the plan formulated.

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## 12 Air Quality Monitoring in the Borough

A report of Interim Director of Public Health and Wellbeing was submitted together with a presentation regarding the current measures in place to monitor air quality in Dudley and proposals to improve air quality in the future.

The Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards together with the Pollution Control Officer gave a presentation to the Committee and in doing so advised that the Air Quality Strategy fitted into the Dudley Vision 2030, which connected green spaces, linking parks, nature reserves and waterways and that the strategy also corresponded into the Dudley Health and Wellbeing Strategy for longer, safer, healthier lives.

The Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards advised that the air quality was monitored by the Environmental Team and that any indication of poor air quality or bad emissions would affect climate change. However, it was important to emphasise the difference between air quality and climate change as there was an impact on health and there were legal obligations in place to monitor emissions.

It was noted that Pollutants of concern were Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and Particulate Matter (PM<sub>10</sub> or PM<sub>2.5</sub>) both of which were monitored, rather than Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). NO<sub>2</sub> levels were created from gasses that were released into the atmosphere when fuels were burned and that there had been evidence that high NO<sub>2</sub> levels could inflame the airways over a long period of time and could also affect vegetation. Further to this PM<sub>10</sub> or PM<sub>2.5</sub>, commonly referred to as coarse dust and fine dust, were created from mould spores, pollen, dust, soot, smoke and dirt and reference was made regarding how this impacted upon global warming.

The Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards gave an overview of the three methods used by Dudley to monitor Air Quality around the Borough through Diffusion Tubes, three Air Quality Monitoring Stations and Zephyr Monitors.





It was reported that there were 58 Diffusion Tubes across the Borough, which were approved by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Diffusion Tubes were cost effective, easy to use, suitable for long term trends to provide an annual average and only measured NO<sub>2</sub> gases. It was noted that Diffusion Tubes were replaced on a monthly basis and that the location of the Diffusion Tubes was crucial in providing data of NO<sub>2</sub> gasses to DEFRA.

The Pollution Control Officer referred Members to the Getting Information Simply Mapping Online (GISMO) system, which highlighted the areas where the Diffusion Tubes were located throughout the Borough. Members of the Committee raised concerns regarding the GMIS system not being optimised for accessibility on all devices and online platforms. The Pollution Control Officer would consider this and report on accessibility issues.

The Pollution Control Officer gave an overview of the three fixed Air Quality Monitoring Stations (AQMS) and in doing so advised that these were situated at Wordsley, Colley Gate and Dudley Centre. The AMQS were large expensive units that contained equipment to measure NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> gasses and required calibration and regular maintenance. The technology at the AQMS were approved by DEFRA, provided highly accurate time sensitive readings at fifteen-minute intervals and emphasis was given to the significance of where the monitors were situated. It was established that the information gathered was measured by averages rather than spikes.

The third piece of equipment used were three Zephyr units based in Netherton, which were powered by solar panels and were semi-portable. It was reported that the units were more cost effective and measured NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, CO<sub>2</sub> and Ozone+ gasses every two to fifteen minutes, however, results from the units were not submissible to DEFRA. The accuracy of the units was inadequate, had a lot of technical issues and were used for performance information to highlight problems.

In response to a question from Councillor J Foster regarding the requirements to provide information to DEFRA, how information was measured, whether the information was biased and if information would only represent areas that were good in air quality, it was advised that there were ongoing discussions on the Environmental Health Act objectives which prioritised action that was most beneficial for public health.

In referring to the National Objectives, The Pollution Control Officer reported that the objective for NO<sub>2</sub> was 40ug/m<sup>3</sup> annual average. It was advised that the objective for PM<sub>10</sub> was an 40ug/m<sup>3</sup> annual average and all sites were showing compliance. The objective for PM<sub>2.5</sub> was currently 25ug/m<sup>3</sup>, however, there was pressure from Government to drive improvement nationally and that they were considering reducing the target to 10ug/m<sup>3</sup>.

It was advised that evidence had shown that PM<sub>2.5</sub> were small particles that could get into blood stream and were caused from friction, break dust and was not caused by fossil fuels. Further monitoring was being undertaken at two additional locations. It was noted that the impact on air quality through the reduction of traffic during the Covid-19 pandemic had been significant.

The Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards advised of the work undertaken in Dudley to improve Air Quality to reduce NO<sub>2</sub> emissions and funding had been given on bus upgrades, work on Castle Gate Island area and Wordsley High Street, together with the purchase of equipment such as the Zephyr monitors, expanding the diffusion tube network and upgrading AQMS's.

A campaign had been launched in Schools for years 4, 5 and 6, who were receptive to education on air quality. The campaign provided information regarding poor air quality around schools, which affected health as well as climate change, encouraging people to switch off car engines and engaged teachers and children in their own projects. Work was being carried out to engage the public and to promote education and awareness to create information and spread the message wider.

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

- (a) In response to a question raised by Councillor T Russon, it was established that the three AQMS were situated at St James's Road, Dudley, Wordsley and Colley Gate and that Diffusion tubes shown on the GISMO system provided a lot of data, was of value, were practical and easy to use. It was advised the methods used in Dudley were directly comparable throughout the country and was consistent with national data. There was a 25% margin of error and DEFRA recognised these forms of monitoring.



- (b) In response to a question raised by Councillor C Bayton regarding air quality issues within the Netherton and Wordsley areas and what progress had been made on the action plan to tackle issues, it was advised that this was not dealt with by Environmental Health directly, however, information provided would be fed into data submitted. It was advised that Wordsley was compliant, however, information could not be measured due to impact Covid-19 had on the data. A request was made for a report of the updated data be provided at the end of the year.
- (c) Councillor C Bayton advised on work undertaken by Birmingham University to record air quality impact, which could be worth exploring for regional data and suggested that the Local Authority may benefit from this.
- (d) Councillor C Bayton was in support for the collaborative work in schools and commented that pilot schemes had been established regarding children questioning parents on what actions they were taking to help the environment and to hold them to account.
- (e) In responding to a question from Councillor M Rogers regarding the allocation of £300,000 funding on Wordsley High Street, the Pollution Control Officer advised that the funding was used for putting in place fixed Air Quality monitoring stations together with Diffusion Tubes in the High Street and installing four sets of traffic lights, which had scoop sensors to help keep traffic flow moving. It was advised that current data collected in this area could not be compared as this would include information from the pandemic, therefore, would not provide a true reading. It was advised that three years-worth of clear data was needed to be consistent.
- (f) In response to comments made by Councillor C Eccles regarding the campaign in schools and whether information could be expanded to parks and other community areas, the Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards advised that although the campaign had been initiated in schools, it was not particular to this area of education and that they would encourage any education on air quality to be expanded to different areas. It was advised that several educational posters could be obtained from Environmental Health to be distributed to parks and elsewhere.

- (g) In referring to the campaign in schools, Councillor J Elliott raised questions regarding whether the campaign was held annually, was for this academic year only and whether the scheme would be rolled out the Secondary Schools. It was confirmed that Years 4, 5 and 6 were most receptive to information given and the campaign would be done on a yearly basis. It was commented that Secondary schools were less receptive as they had less flexibility due to GCSEs. Through personal experience they found parents of younger students tended to walk children to school, whereas years 7 to 11 were more likely to be dropped off by parents. However, the Pollution Officer had designed posters and these had been circulated.
- (h) Mr T Weller made comments regarding whether consideration would be given to a reward system for parents using public transport or walking and consideration be given to ensuring that businesses or manufacturers were also contributing to protect air quality. A view was taken that Officers should be stricter on clean air zones and suggested that cameras were used to charge motorists in these areas. In response, the Head of Environmental Health advised that the comments were valid, however the Department was regulated, which dictated where resources were used. The Department could look into working with manufacturers and businesses, however, they could only provide advice on how businesses could improve their functions towards the environment.
- (i) In response to comments made by Councillor K Casey regarding looking into collaborating with businesses, working with them to combat environmental issues and looking towards best practices, the Head for Environmental Health and Trading Standards advised that the profile could be raised for businesses to become engaged and there had been work undertaken towards this. Funding had been provided to undertake help with Diamond Busses and National Express to reduce emissions.

## Resolved

- (1) That the information contained in the presentation regarding Air Quality Monitoring be noted.

- (2) That the Pollution Control Officer be requested to consider the accessibility issues highlighted for various devices and platforms regarding the GMIS system.
- (3) That the Head of Environment and Trading Standards be requested to provide further data after the end of the year, specifically regarding the Wordsley area.

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13 **Progress Update on the Trial of the use of Pesticides and Maintaining the Borough's Green Spaces**

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Street, Green Care and Amenity Services on the progress of the trial of alternatives to the use of Glyphosate in maintaining the Borough's green spaces.

In presenting the information, the Head of Street, Green Care and Amenity Services outlined the tasks and maintenance carried out on green spaces by the Green Care team and the areas where weed control was being targeted. It was reported that a previous report had been submitted to the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee concerning the use of Glyphosate for weed control and the use of alternative treatments and it was advised that a trial was ongoing until the end of October. A full report with details of the trial would be provided once this had been completed.

The Head of Street and Green Care and Amenity Services outlined the alternative methods used as part of the on-going trial, including the use of Katoun Gold and Chikara, which was noted to work well. The Head of Street and Green Care and Amenity Services referenced the use of foam stream, which was a non-chemical treatment and that could be carried out all year round. However, this method was slower and involved more operatives. The public perception was that the Council was continuing to use chemical pesticides and that this method also required the use of diesel vehicles and generators.

Weed rippers, strippers, manual hoe and hand weeding were also used, which was noted to be more labour intensive.

It was advised that to get the maximum effect, resources needed to be deployed in the right place at the right time. The team were responsible for maintaining a considerable number of sites, however a one size fits all approach was perhaps not appropriate.

The Head of Street and Green Care and Amenity Services outlined that there was an increasing need and desire to work with others to achieve better outcomes, e.g. from a biodiversity and ecological perspective around wildflower planting and the no-mow agenda.

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

- (a) In response to a question raised by Councillor C Eccles regarding the visual effects of using the various methods of weed control, it was advised that once foam stream was administered the weeds would go black shortly after and that weed rippers could be used after. There were parts of the Borough that had wildflowers, but also shrub beds that were coming to an end and the approach taken was to consider what value they had before removing them. However, it was acknowledged that when these were removed, further issues could be identified.

The Head of Street, Green Care and Amenity Services advised that the budget was used on labour, vehicles and materials. The Green Care team also carried out mowing as well as spraying, which was all included within the budget. Multiple issues had to be considered before administering any weed control within the area.

- (b) In responding to a question raised by Councillor C Eccles regarding when a full report could be provided of the trial of non-chemical pesticides, the Head of Street and Green Care and Amenity Services commented that an item had been placed on the January agenda but that he could be contacted for feedback.

- (c) In response to a request made from Councillor M Rogers for a full report to be brought to this Scrutiny Committee in January showing figures and cost implications of the weed control used for the trial, the Head of Street, Green Care and Amenity Services advised that the trials were implemented to understand and get feedback and to judge if the methods worked and that this information would be contained in the January report.
- (d) Councillor C Bayton commented that it would be helpful to have an update provided and would like to see the areas trialled and how easy it was for residents to give feedback.
- (e) Councillor S Henley commented about weeds coming through on main pavements and queried whether Green Care was working with other services to tackle this. The Head of Street and Green Care and Amenity Services advised that they worked alongside Street Cleansing and Highways to align programmes to combat weed control.
- (f) In response to comments made by Councillor C Eccles regarding whether any information on issues identified from operatives undertaking work were fed back, it was advised that a worksheet was provided to input any issues, however, this process was slow and it was felt that a more modern and effective way was needed to report information.
- (g) The Interim Director of Public Realm commented that in the current climate there was a significant financial challenge faced by the Council particularly on fuel and energy costs. There was an opportunity to review the situation in January.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the information contained in the presentation regarding the progress update on the trial of the use of pesticides and maintaining the Borough's green spaces be noted.

- (2) That the Head of Street and Green Care and Amenity Services be requested to provide a full report to this Scrutiny Committee in January 2023, setting out figures and cost implications of the weed control used for the trial, what areas were trialled, how easy it was for residents to give feedback and an overview of the effectiveness of the trials.
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14 **Question under Council Procedure Rule 11.8**

A question had been received by the Chair from Councillor R Collins concerning recycling at community centres. A response was circulated to Members of the Committee at the meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm

CHAIR