

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

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 at 6.00 pm  
in Committee Room 2, The Council House,  
Priory Road, Dudley**

### **Present:**

Councillor P Dobb (Chair)  
Councillor T Russon (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors C Barnett, C Bayton, M Dudley, C Eccles, J Elliott, S Henley, D Stanley and A Tromans.

### **Dudley MBC Officers:**

F Mahon (Head of Energy, Sustainability & Climate Change), G Scholes (Interim Lead for Climate Change), N McGurk (Acting Service Director – Neighbour Delivery), J Deakin (Head of Waste and Fleet Operations), N Lissimore (Transport and Highway Services – Transport Strategy Manager), S Edwards (Waste, Fleet and Licensing – Project Manager), S Cooper (Head of Corporate Landlord Services), M Yates (Project Design and Delivery Manager), K Jones (Director for Housing and Communities), M Lyons (Contractor – Interim Lead – Compliance and Building Safety) 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 and Mr M Richards (Members of the Public by invitation)

Together with 7 members of the public.



## 7 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors D Borley and N Neale.

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## 8 **Appointment of Substitute Members**

It was noted that Councillor D Stanley had been appointed as a substitute Member for Councillor D Borley, for this meeting of the Committee only.

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## 9 **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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## 10 **Minutes**

In referring to Minute No. 4 – Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24, Councillor Bayton commented that the matters arising from the action points raised in the minutes and including her request that the Grant Register be scheduled within the Programme of Meetings and Business Items.

In referring to the Minutes, Mr M Richards commented that he was of the view that the Minutes did not reflect the lengthy discussion that had taken place at the meeting regarding the Borough strategy.

### **Resolved**

That, subject to the amendments and comments made above, the minutes of the meetings held on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

That the matters arising from the Minutes be actioned and that the Grant Register be included within the Programme of Meetings and Business Items.

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## 11 **Transport Fleet Services**

A report of the Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery was submitted to provide an update on the Council's Fleet services and to consider future options for its fleet management responsibilities, commensurate with the Council's financial and environmental policy objectives.

The Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery provided an overview of the report and outlined the current vehicle replacement programme and advised that the fleet was made up of a diverse range of vehicles, the majority of which were run on Diesel fuel.

It was noted that the current strategy for fleet replacement was to maximise the service life of the vehicles with a replacement cycle of 7 to 10 years, however, there was a need for an effective fleet strategy and vehicle replacement program. It was advised that vehicles with alternative fuels were being looked into, however, the procurement of vehicles would be a big undertaking and presented its own challenges.

There were insufficient Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points, therefore, there was a need for an infrastructure to be put place in readiness for Distribution Network Operators (DNO's) together with a strategy and understanding regarding the best method to obtain vehicles with low carbon emissions.

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

- a) In response to a query raised by Councillor C Eccles, the Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery clarified that there had not been any electric vehicles purchased since Dudley had declared the Climate Change Emergency in 2020.
- b) In response to a comment made by Councillor C Barnett regarding the Waste Strategy, the Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery advised that the strategy would entail considerable planning. There were a number of factors to be considered including procurement of vehicles, ensuring not to over purchase, the capacity to charge EV's and that the Council only had capacity at present to charge 2 EV Waggon. Therefore, in view of this, it was essential that adequate infrastructure be put in place together with a proposed phased plan.

- c) Councillor C Eccles referred to the EV Waste vehicle trials and queried whether these vehicles had sufficient power to lift heavy bins onto Waggon.

The Acting Director – Neighbourhood Delivery advised that the company Lunaz was being used to carry out trials to upcycle and electrify current vehicles. The Waggon that was being trialled was charged overnight and was able to cover one and a half rounds and was returning to the depot with 35% battery life. It was clarified that the lifting of bins onto Waggon would not significantly affect the battery life during collections.

- d) Councillor C Bayton although welcomed the ongoing trials, raised concerns that Dudley had proposed to be carbon neutral by 2030 and that there had been no further information, plans or list of priorities provided regarding the strategy and requested that further information be provided regarding plans on reducing the Council's Fleet.

In response the Acting Director – Neighbourhood Delivery advised that a new Climate Change team had been established together with a newly appointed Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change, who would be working on future plans. It was clarified that all aspects of the service including the Council's Fleet, would need to be considered as a whole to identify how services could be operated more efficiently and would tie in with an overall phased plan including the reduction of the Council's Fleet.

- e) Councillor D Corfield commented positively on the progress Officers had made regarding the Council's Fleet and stated that vehicles being used were Euro 6 diesel compliant. There was a vision to reduce energy from waste and for the fleet to be self-sufficient by producing green waste such as green hydrogen to fuel and power vehicles, which provided scope to use other Council's waste and electric.

Councillor D Corfield also commented that there were no capabilities at present to charge EV's and that it was important that an infrastructure be established to accommodate this going forward. The trials for upcycling and recycling current fleet to EV's were welcomed and advised that should the trials be successful, the waste collection process would be looked into and that longer/double collections of waste could be considered.

- f) Mr T Weller expressed a view that the Council's fleet used for general waste could be cut back by reducing collections to once a fortnight and suggested for Members to consider this going forward.
- g) Councillor D Stanley noted that 52% of the UK's transport emissions were from privately used cars and was of the view that Members should be utilising public transport to lead by example and cut down emissions.
- h) Councillor T Russon referred to green hydrogen fuelled vehicles and acknowledged that an infrastructure that was driven by data would need to be developed to incorporate green hydrogen fuelled vehicles and to reduce the Council's fleet. Councillor T Russon also welcomed the use of Euro 6 diesel fuelled vehicles.
- i) The Interim Lead for Climate Change advised that there were a number of options for the Waste Plant to deliver low emissions, however, it was considered that the Energy from Waste Strategy and infrastructure would take time to implement, and that consideration would need to be given to the current delivery of services and costs. A Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) had been put in place and further decisions were being made to enable Council fleet to be powered locally. It was advised that further plans would be submitted, which would capture the implementation of an EV fleet.
- j) Councillor D Corfield stated that a five-year plan was being looked into to ensure the services evolved moving forward. It was noted that fortnightly collections and making recycling more efficient could be considered.
- k) Councillor C Barnett there was the need for a Waste Strategy to reduce general waste and energy.
- l) In response to queries raised by Councillor M Dudley regarding the collection of recycling waste, contamination and food waste plans, Councillor D Corfield advised that operators needed to look at waste to alleviate contamination, however, once data had been collected through the current trials of vehicles, the fleet can be specifically set up to utilise vehicles for one use.

The Head of Waste and Fleet Operations clarified that the main source of contamination was moisture from cardboard and that recyclable waste would not be collected should there be contamination. It was advised that continued work was being carried out to educate and advise residents of the type of waste that could be recycled.

- j) Councillor T Russon commented that he had attended the Environmental Services and Solutions Expo and considered that Green Hydrogen would be revolutionary and that it would be an advantage to tailor vehicles for purpose.
- k) Councillor D Corfield reiterated that the feedback from the trials of the EV's had been positive and that EV's were proving to be more efficient.
- l) The Waste, Fleet and Licensing – Project Manager commented that within the last seven years, vehicles were being re-managed to Euro 6 diesel and were being upcycled, which extended the use of the vehicles.

## **Resolved**

That the information contained in the report submitted, and as reported at the meeting on the update on the Council's Fleet Service and the future options for its fleet management responsibilities, commensurate with the Council's financial and environmental policy objectives, be noted.

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## 12 **Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure**

A report of the Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery was submitted to present the current progress on all matters associated with public Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure across the Dudley Borough.

The Transport Strategy Manager provided an overview of the report and in doing so advised that there was a need for a charging infrastructure network to be put in place.

It was advised that funding had been awarded from the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) for the purpose of installing on-street charge points for residents that wished to charge their plug-in Electric Vehicles (EV's). Following an initial assessment of potential locations, the Council had identified for the first phase of approximately 51 different locations across the Borough for potential installation of double charge points with the aim to install 284 charge points by 2025 following future phases.

A consultation exercise with Ward Members and residents had been carried out to identify priority locations for the first phase of installation and had received positive feedback.

It was noted that further requests to locate charge points within the Borough would increase following members of the public obtaining more Electric Vehicles (EV's). It was stated that charge points would be placed outside properties without driveways, as this was considered to be cost effective and would require planning control.

It was advised that work had commenced to identify suitable Council operated public car parks in Dudley together with other Black Country Authorities for the provision of suitable EV charging equipment.

Reference was made to the Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund, which focussed on community charging hub sites across the Borough. Early design options were being drawn up to deliver a future-proofed neighbourhood community EV charging hub in Enville Street, Stourbridge. Members were encouraged to advise officers of any other potential sites that may be suitable within their wards.

The Transport Strategy Manager commented that a working group had been established with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, which had carried out work to obtain the funding needed.

It was noted that there was a good geographical spread of the locations identified for charging points and that there would be further updates going forward, however, there was a need for support from Members and residents to implement charging points.

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

- a) Councillor C Eccles referred to the charge points, which allowed vehicles to be charged for a number of hours and questioned how vehicles being charged overnight and obstructing properties would be monitored.

The Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery advised that there would be some challenges with cars being parked outside properties overnight, however, it was believed that intelligence would be received from the charge points should cars be parked for a significant length of time.

- b) Councillor D Stanley raised concerns regarding anti-social behaviour targeting cars that were being charged overnight.

The Transport Strategy Manager advised that there was good national surveillance. There would always be a potential risk for cars being parked on streets at night and the Council would acquire more information once the initial first phase had been carried out.

- c) In responding to a question raised by Councillor C Barnett in relation to whether Western Power would be supplying charge points, the Transport Strategy Manager advised that Western Power had acknowledged the business plan submitted by Dudley, that viable locations had been identified based on set criteria to install charge points, however, there would be various challenges due to high costs.
- d) In response to a question raised by Councillor C Barnett regarding whether there would be significant disruption during installation, the Transport Strategy Manager stated that it had been suggested for contractors to install 2 charge points per day, which would inevitably cause some disruptions.
- e) Councillor J Elliott referred to Council offices, depots, car parks and sports facilities being equipped with charge points by 2025 and how many would be installed.

In responding, the Transport Strategy Manager advised that the main charge points would be public facing on street and that the main charging equipment would be installed for the Council's fleet.

- f) In response to a question raised by Councillor C Bayton concerning the roll out of charge points around Council stock, the Transport Strategy Manager explained that Auxiliary (AUX) sites were not targeted, that some charge points would be installed around Council flats and properties and that this would be looked into in more detail after the first phase.



- g) In responding to a comment made by Councillor C Eccles regarding measures to slow the growth of the number of vehicles in use across the Black Country, the Transport Strategy Manager stated that Transport West Midlands were responsible to manage public transport and that there were issues surrounding the loss of Bus services due to Covid 19 and fuel price increases.
- h) A query was raised by Councillor S Henley regarding whether the size of the on-street charge points would create mobility issues for disabled people.

The Transport Strategy Manager clarified that the charging points were designed to be compact with a requirement to allow the size of a double buggy to pass. It was advised that charge points could go out onto carriage ways and would be protected so they would not be damaged.

- i) Mr T Weller expressed a view that there had been a significant amount of money spent on metro trams and considered that money would be better spent towards upgrading public transport. Mr Weller also commented that young people should be rewarded with free bus travel to reduce car usage.

### **Resolved**

That the information contained in the report submitted, and as reported at the meeting, on all matters associated with public Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure across Dudley Borough, be noted.

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## **13 Environmental Impact on Council House Refurbishment**

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Corporate Landlord Services together with the Project Design and Deliver Manager on the Environmental Impact on Council House Refurbishment. In presenting the information it was reported that the refurbishment was a work in progress and that there were a number of grants that had been obtained to fund ongoing work as outlined in the presentation submitted.

It was noted that the refurbishment of the Council House had presented a number of challenges, which included the Council House being Grade 2 listed heritage status, that the building was a live operational building and civic hub, grant funding conditions, capital funding constraints including tender prices and the increase in energy costs. Reference was made to grant funding conditions and that the Council would need to report information to providers every 2 to 3 years.

The Project Design and Delivery Manager reported that the lighting upgrade had commenced prior to the refurbishment of the Council House. It was advised that existing fluorescent lighting tubes had been replaced with Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting and that 400 lamps had been changed within buildings, which provided a saving of 19 tonnes of carbon per annum.

Reference was made to the installation of Boiler Optimisers that were designed to reduce the amount of time the boiler would burn gas without affecting the temperature of the building and that the boilers were linked to the Building Management System (BMS). The BMS controlled individual room temperature and timings, which allowed for individual zones of the buildings to be controlled and adjusted daily.

It was explained that 4 air source heat pumps had been installed at 4 Ednam Road, which transferred heat from outside air into water and was used for heating the building. The heat pumps were also linked to the BMS and saved 69.4 tonnes of carbon per year.

Passive Infrared Sensor (PIR) automatic lighting had been installed by the use of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant, which detected absence in office areas and detected any presence within corridors and toilet areas to minimise leaving lights on.

The Project Design Deliver Manager referred to the installation of heat recovery ventilation and in doing so advised that the ventilation warmed incoming cold air, therefore, this provided free heat and minimal electrical use.

The Head of Corporate Landlord Services outlined other items that had contributed to the refurbishment as set out in the presentation submitted.

Reference was made to the site management and conditions to contractors whilst the refurbishments were being carried out, which included a minimum of 80% local supplier engagement.

Future initiatives were being looked into, which included electric vehicle charging points, secondary glazing, sustainable vehicle fleet and exploring new products such as thermal paint which would reduce the amount used to refurbish buildings.

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

- a) In response to a query raised by Councillor C Bayton in regard to secondary glazing at the Council House, the Head of Landlord Services advised that the Council House was a Grade 2 listed heritage building and funding had been requested previously, however, it was unsuccessful.
- b) The Head of Landlord Services commented that the main focus had been on refurbishing the Council House, however, work had been undertaken on some older buildings, which had provided their own challenges. It was noted that 3-5 St James's Road building would be earmarked for future work.

It was noted that there were 10 main offices, 2 of which were old schools and consideration would need to be given going forward to reduce building stock.

- c) In responding to a query raised by Councillor C Barnett concerning whether the current boilers were being converted to accommodate alternative power sources, the Head of Landlord Services advised that the boilers that had been retained were gas boilers, however, it was considered that it may be possible that the boilers could be run on alternative gas power such as hydrogen.
- d) Councillor C Barnett referred to what extent employees were working from home rather than traveling to work at Council offices, the Head of Landlord Services explained that there was an Estate Strategy in place, which would continue to evolve, and that data available to measure staff coming into buildings, when and where they logged on and it was found that the majority of staff were using agile working, in particular colleagues who lived outside of the Borough.

It was noted that 3-5 St James's Road and 4 Ednam Road buildings were not completely occupied on a day-to-day basis and it was felt that this would need to be rationalised. It was considered that hubs or drop in workspaces would be more beneficial.

- e) In responding to a question raised by Councillor C Eccles regarding whether there was a need for 4 Air Source heat pumps together with the Boiler Optimisers, the Head of Landlord Services clarified that heat pumps and boiler optimisers were installed as a back up should one source fail to generate heat.
- f) Further to a question raised by Councillor C Eccles regarding the possibility of installing Photovoltaic (PV) solar panels on Council buildings rather than the use of Heat Pumps or Boiler Optimisers, the Head of Landlord Services advised that not all Council buildings were structurally suitable to take Solar Panels.
- g) Councillor D Stanley commented that the Council House building was unique in its design and character and any future refurbishments, in particular the installation of windows, would need to be in keeping with the style of the building.
- h) In response to a comment made regarding obtaining materials locally, the Project Design and Delivery Manager commented that the majority of materials were being sourced within the Borough, however, there had been issues where some materials were not made within the Borough therefore these would need to be sourced abroad.
- i) Mr T Weller commented positively on the alterations made to the refurbishment buildings and raised a question regarding second glazed windows being installed at the Council House. In response the Head of Landlord Services indicated that they would need to consult with Pilkington Glass regarding second glazing, however, consideration would need to be given to the issues surrounding the Grade 2 listed Heritage status and the installation of new windows at the Council house would need to be done sensitively.

## **Resolved**

That the information contained in the presentation submitted, and as reported at the meeting, on the Environmental Impact on the Council House Refurbishment, be noted.

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

**Resolved**

That the Chair requested that the report for Net-Zero Neighbourhood and Additional Sustainability Measures be deferred to the next meeting of the Climate Change Select Committee.

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15 **Climate Change Select Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business**

**Resolved**

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

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16 **Public Forum**

A member of the public welcomed the information provided at the meeting in particular the information regarding the Council House refurbishment. The member of the public raised concerns regarding the lack of progress made on action plans since Dudley had declared the Climate Change Emergency in 2020 and it was considered that a clear plan be put in place, which outlined any impact on the public.

In response Councillor T Russon commented that work was being undertaken by Officers to obtain relevant data to include within the action plan and once data had been collated information could be provided on areas that would need to be considered.

Mr M Richards raised concerns on the progress made since Dudley had declared the Climate Change Emergency and considered that there was a lack of engagement with residents on Climate Change and reducing carbon footprint. Mr Richards expressed a view that, given the significant population of the Borough, residents would be open to implement changes should information and guidance be provided.

In response the Acting Service Director – Neighbour Delivery advised that there were discussions around fleet and other significant work, which included street lighting and travel schemes, which would be included within the action plan. The Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery acknowledged that engagement with the public was essential and there was a need for different areas, including websites and social media to be looked into to help improve communications and educate residents.

The Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change clarified that a new team had been established, which were continuing to work on websites, information and that engagement activities would be included within the action plan.

Mr Richards commented that due to the Climate Change emergency, it was believed that residents would respond to clear information should it be rolled out to the public.

Mr T Weller suggested that the free magazine sent out to residents be utilised to provide information on Climate Change and educate residents on how to reduce their carbon footprint.

In responding to a query raised by Mr T Weller regarding the tramways, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change advised that any outcomes would be put to the Cabinet meeting and could be discussed under Public Forum at these meetings.

A member of the public commented positively regarding the information presented on the Council House refurbishment and considered that it was imperative that any action plans should focus on the outcomes and impact on the Climate Change emergency.

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17 **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 8.05pm

CHAIR