

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



Council Offices,
Urban Road,
Kirkby in Ashfield
Nottingham
NG17 8DA

Agenda

Scrutiny Panel B

Date: **Thursday, 22nd July, 2021**

Time: **7.00 pm**

Venue: **Council Chamber, Council Offices, Urban Road,
Kirkby-in-Ashfield**

For any further information please contact:

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01623 457317

SCRUTINY PANEL B

Membership

Chairman: Councillor Christian Chapman

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Trevor Locke

Councillors:

Jim Blagden

Dale Grounds

Caroline Wilkinson

Melanie Darrington

David Walters

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SUMMONS

You are hereby requested to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Panel B to be held at the time/place and on the date mentioned above for the purpose of transacting the business set out below.



Carol Cooper-Smith
Chief Executive

AGENDA

Page

1. To receive apologies for absence, if any.
2. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests.**
3. To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 28 January 2021. 5 - 10
4. **Scrutiny Review: Climate Change Mitigation.** 11 - 18

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SCRUTINY PANEL B

Virtual Meeting held on Thursday, 28th January, 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Christian Chapman in the Chair;
Councillors Ciaran Brown, Dale Grounds,
Trevor Locke, Phil Rostance and David Walters.

Apology for Absence: Councillor Melanie Darrington.

Officers Present: Ian Bailey, Lynn Cain, Mike Joy, Darren Wardale
and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Councillor Daniel Williamson.

SB.10 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

SB.11 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 12 November 2020, be received and approved as a correct record.

SB.12 Scrutiny Review: Climate Change

The Chairman introduced the item and reminded Members that the review had commenced in November 2020. An informal meeting of the Group had taken place the previous week, on 20 January 2021, to consider some of the Council's recent initiatives for tackling climate change and reducing the Council's carbon emissions.

The Council's Assistant Director for Assets and Investment, Ian Bailey and the Strategic Assets Manager, Darren Wardale were in attendance at the meeting to advise on how the Council was co-ordinating its approach to climate change across its many teams and service areas. Councillor Daniel Williamson, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Communications, Governance & Cross Portfolio Support was also in attendance to give an overview of the ruling Group's commitments in relation to climate change.

The Scrutiny Research Officer spoke to the Panel and informed Members that the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) had recently publicised a briefing paper regarding how local authorities could best review climate change at a local

level. It was acknowledged that the topic was far-reaching and it was in Member's interests to wisely select and focus upon areas of climate change that they could influence at a local level and offer sound, tangible recommendations to Cabinet for consideration.

Some of the questions/suggestions for Members to consider as part of the CfPS briefing paper included the following:

- how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted any current commitments for reducing carbon emissions;
- how to select pertinent, workable themes for review;
- the importance of gathering base level data to inform discussion;
- to endeavour to secure senior management buy-in to the importance of the review and subsequent recommendations;
- to engage fully with local communities including children through school educational programmes;
- to stay focussed on realistic recommendations with real value for money and impact for the local area rather than producing a wish list for global change.

Carbon Reduction Commitment – Current Picture

To enable Members to get a picture of the Council's current commitment towards climate change and reducing its carbon emissions, a presentation was given by the Assistant Director for Assets and Investment.

The Council had been committed to climate change for some time and was very aware of its importance and the need for a consistent, proactive response to reducing emissions. All decision-making processes within the Council now included a section to be completed in relation to environmental impact and a Climate Change Working Group had been operational for around a year to enable officers to consider all aspects of Council delivery against the backdrop of its effect on climate change.

Senior officers from the Planning, Waste, Environmental, Energy, Finance and Housing Teams were part of the Working Group and considered issues alongside other partners including the Local Enterprise Partnership, Midlands Energy Hub, Nottinghamshire County Council and Derby City Council.

Nottingham City Council were currently in the process of producing a Carbon Management Plan and were currently gathering baseline data and the latest available information regarding CO2 emissions arising from buildings, street lighting, transport, waste and procurement, amongst other things. Once completed the document would be invaluable to the Council to enable officers to consider the current position and in comparison, to the last five years.

From that starting point, the Council would be working on an updated Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan to be consider by senior management and Members as its development progressed.

A piece of work had been commissioned to gather a snapshot of the Council's current position regarding its carbon load in relation to its housing stock, its buildings and its insulation measures to date. Once completed, this would give officers a good idea of what was required to enable the Council to continue to reduce its carbon footprint over the next few years.

Members, however, did acknowledge that however committed the Council was to achieving a carbon neutral position, it would only ever provide mitigation for around 3% of the total climate position. 97% would always be outside of the Council's control and be part of a wider, global movement to tackle the climate change emergency.

The Council's current efforts to tackle climate change included the following:

- publication of the Green Homes Grant on the Council's website;
- resident surveys to enlist views on climate change initiatives;
- the Council taking an active part in Energy Frameworks;
- the Council's move to using 100% cleaner, greener electricity from April 2021;
- ensuring a commitment to green credentials and carbon reduction measures are included in renewal of leases for Council owned properties;
- production of an Environmental Charter;
- the roll out of the Green Business Scheme encouraging local businesses to adopt and commit to green credentials;
- ongoing commitment towards tree planting across the District;
- rolling programme of renewal for a greener Council vehicle fleet;
- maximum use of solar panels on Council owned buildings;
- ongoing development of cycling/walking infrastructure in town centres;
- commitment towards improving recycling for local residents including plastics and food waste;
- commitment towards improving green ratings on Council owned housing stock;
- raising the standards of cleaner, greener households targeting vulnerable residents in the District;
- to endeavour to make all the Council's housing stock carbon zero with assistance from Government funding;
- consistently seeking out additional funding opportunities for cleaner, greener initiatives;
- investment in green partnerships and technology to improve connectivity locally and nationally;
- continuing to support agile working and working from home with the resulting reduction in the use of paper within the organisation;
- commitment towards a flood protection scheme in consultation with the County Council.

Following the presentation, the Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services opened up the debate to the Panel and advised that residents were taking more interest in climate change issues and a question was due to be asked by a member of the public at the next Council meeting in relation to the Council's fleet and its plans to use electric vehicles in the future.

The publication from the CfPS had talked around the long term investment for Council's in relation to tackling climate change and the importance of raising public awareness and offering education to residents regarding ways to help reduce carbon emissions in their own households as well as contributing towards the wider cause.

The Panel would need to carefully consider their focus for the review and as part of their deliberations, be aware that the Covid-19 pandemic had greatly impacted on the delivery of many green initiatives from both the Council and also local businesses within the Ashfield area.

Members debated the issues and were of the belief that the baseline carbon emissions data, once received, would enable them to have the foundation to conduct a well-focussed and effective review. The Assistant Director for Assets and Investment reiterated that the information would be available in the final report due to be publicised by the City Council at the end of April 2021. It would hopefully be providing huge amounts of data that would inform and direct the Council's development of a targeted and effective Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for the future.

Portfolio Holder for Corporate Communications, Governance & Cross Portfolio Support

Councillor Daniel Williamson took the opportunity to advise the Panel that the Ashfield Independent Group had been committed to tackling climate change for some time which had commenced with a formal motion to Council to acknowledging and committing to the climate change emergency being faced by the planet.

Tackling climate change was a passion of his personally and the Ashfield Independent Group were working tirelessly to facilitate sustainable growth within the District. The recently adopted Environmental Charter was a step in the right direction and the Council has also recently secured £1 million pounds of funding to improve the sustainability and green credentials of its own housing stock. Councillors were also committed to replanting trees wherever possible and a further thousand were due to be planted over the coming months.

The Scrutiny Research Officer thanked Councillor Williamson for his input and commented that buy in and commitment to carbon reduction was also needed from the Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) as well as from the Councillors and the ruling Group.

Members then went on to discuss the following:

Waste Collection and Recycling

Waste collection and recycling was an area of growth that could hugely contribute towards an ongoing reduction in resident's carbon footprints. It was noted that the provision of additional facilities for residents to recycle for example food waste and a wider range of plastics was under review at the moment nationally and it was rumoured that legislation might change to make recycling of such items mandatory.

Vegetarianism/Veganism – Growing Trend

The growing trend of vegetarianism/veganism and the move away from eating animal products had been very much in the news over the last couple of years. It was suggested that the Council could endeavour to promote awareness of this lifestyle choice and how the reduction in consumption of meat/meat products could potentially contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere.

Charging Points

The Council had already invested in the provision of electric charging points at some of its car parks and the Council main office building but some companies were now offering installation of charging points at no cost to local authorities. A note of caution was expressed that the offers were often not all they seemed, and installation of the charging points were part of a contract where the provider continued to make a profit on use.

In relation to the operation of an all-electric vehicle fleet, the provision and storage of batteries could be vastly expensive and as these types of vehicles were still in their infancy and there were many unknowns, any investment in such a fleet would need to be carefully considered before a commitment by the Council was made.

Agile Working/Working from Home

The events of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to facilitate employees working from home over the past 11 months had had an impact on the use of personal vehicles and travel to and from the workplace. This had resulted in a positive reduction in many employees' carbon footprint and so it was envisaged that working flexibly from home/agile sites would be here to stay.

To conclude, the Chairman thanked Ian Bailey and Darren Wardale for being in attendance at the meeting and their valuable contribution towards progression of the review.

RESOLVED

that further exploratory work be undertaken via an additional informal meeting, prior to the next Panel meeting on 18 March 2021, to enable Members to select the most appropriate climate change theme and facilitate the next stage of the review process.

The meeting closed at 8.33 pm

Chairman.

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Report To:	SCRUTINY PANEL B	Date:	22 JULY 2021
Heading:	SCRUTINY REVIEW: CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION		
Portfolio Holder:	NOT APPLICABLE		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present Scrutiny Panel B with further information to progress the Scrutiny Review: Climate Change Mitigation. Specifically, this report includes brief case study examples of mitigation efforts undertaken by other local authorities, further guidance from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Government Association for Councillors scrutinising climate change mitigation, and an update on efforts Ashfield District Council are making.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to;

- Note and comment on the strategic update regarding Ashfield District Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
- Discuss the examples of best practice identified in the case studies provided
- Consider work undertaken thus far and options available to further assist in climate mitigation
- Identify next steps including officers or external witnesses required, further information and any site visits.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Climate Change Mitigation was added as a topic for review to the scrutiny work programme 2020/2021 by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2020. Following the annual refresh of the scrutiny work programme in June 2021, Members approved the topic for further inclusion on the 2021/2022 scrutiny work programme.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options have been considered. Any alternative options considered will be included within the final report presented to Cabinet at the conclusion of the Scrutiny Review: Climate Change Mitigation.

Detailed Information

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL – CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

In 2019, Ashfield District Council commissioned Nottingham City Council (one of the UK's leading green Councils) to produce a draft Carbon Management Plan for Ashfield. This work included creating an all-important carbon baseline from 2015/16. This baseline is used to measure the Council's progress on carbon reduction thereafter.

Using Ashfield data, Nottingham City Council have analysed the Council's progress, examined the current carbon make up and given suggestions as to how the Council can improve.

The analysis is broken down in to 3 key emission areas which require different courses of action.

- Scope 1 - Direct (Ashfield District Council offices and fleet to provide services)
- Scope 2 – Indirect utilities (purchasing utilities for offices and communal courts)
- Scope 3 – Indirect other (Ashfield District Council investment properties, housing stock, staff commuting, purchased goods/materials)

In parallel with the work undertaken by the Nottingham City Council, Ashfield District Council has an internal working group to discuss actions and initiatives across departments that have the most direct impact on climate change. This includes officers from: Assets & Investments, Place & Well Being, Waste & Environment, Planning, Procurement and Finance.

Work achieved by the internal working group so far includes:

- Staff Commuting Survey
- Waste Management Plan
- Energy Review
- Public Sector Decarbonising Bid
- Flood Protection Measures

Other key initiatives include the move to green electricity across the Council's assets, expanded use of photo voltaic (PV) power generation, biomass boilers, and external wall and general insulation on Council properties.

Of the Council's Scope 1 and 2 emissions (emissions that the Council directly control) the largest emissions are as follows:

- Fleet – 41%
- Gas usage – 39%
- Electric usage – 20%

Of the Council's Scope 3 emissions, whilst there are positives, the fact that the Council has acquired properties through the commercial investment agenda has had a net negative effect.

Overall, Ashfield District Council as an operator has reduced 26% of its scope 3 emissions since 2015/16 (mainly investment in housing stock) but increased emissions by 77% overall due to the purchase of investment/commercial properties.

At this stage (subject to wider consultation with the Corporate Leadership Team and Elected Members) the Council's overarching ambition is as follows:

- a. Ashfield District Council intends to reach net zero for Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030, and Scope 3 emissions will be continually reviewed with the target of reducing net emissions for 2050.*
- b. Ashfield District Council will work towards reducing net emissions by 14% year on year with a view of achieving net zero by 2050.*
- c. Ashfield District Council will use its influence and look to work with the wider community to reduce scope 3 emissions, whilst continuing to carry out direct actions to reduce the Council's own Scope 1 & 2 emissions.*

Proposed Strategic Actions Moving Forward:

The following strategic actions are being currently being considered as part of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

- Apply for future funding for all Scope emissions - £2m funding already secured.
- Improve the efficiency of current fleet use and consider share of electric vehicles.
- Increase the availability of electric pool cars.
- Promote more sustainable methods of employee commuting, such as cycle to work schemes, car sharing and electric vehicle charging points.
- Invest in walking and cycling infrastructure and pedestrianising the high street where possible.
- Reduce the total volume of waste generated where possible through greater reuse, and behavioural change campaigns.
- Investigate the potential to increase water reuse, for example through grey water recovery systems to reduce wastewater.
- Flood management and biodiversity.
- Tree planting.
- Support local businesses and promote good sustainable behaviours with a Green Business Scheme.
- Work with and influence community volunteers and local businesses to help with climate change mitigation to encourage an increase in ownership of community open spaces.
- Asset rationalisation and enhancement.
- Internal reviews such as procurement, waste/recycling etc.

CASE STUDIES

As part of a councillor workbook focussing on acting on climate change, the Local Government Association (LGA) have compiled a series of case studies highlighting the work of local authorities across the country towards climate change mitigation.

Kirklees Council

Kirklees Council is working to ensure all residents can afford to heat their homes. More than 50,000 homes have been improved to-date. Total benefits by 2050 are estimated to be £250 million from an initial investment of £11 million from the council plus £10 million from energy suppliers.

Devon County Council

Devon County Council have worked in partnership with local authorities to implement a package of measures to improve local resilience in 24 communities, including establishing training volunteer 'Flood Warden' groups.

Stroud District Council

Stroud District Council is working with local community flood groups, landowners, farmers and partner organisations to implement a range of measures that will reduce flood risk but also improve water quality and enhance the biodiversity of the streams and brooks in the area.

Bristol City Council

Bristol is seeking to make trips by bike the natural choice for their increasing number of commuters to tackle congestion and reduce emissions. As part of this initiative, Bristol City Council has committed to:

- Consulting on shared use routes
- Improving legibility in shared use areas to make it clearer to those on bike and foot
- Delivering improved on-street cycle parking
- Ensuring promotion of new infrastructure to employees, schools, and the wider community through new residential developments and a developed network of community groups
- Providing loan bikes, cycle training, and route planning
- Ensuring new cycling infrastructure is included in developments

Mansfield District Council

'Bee Kind' is campaign that aims to inform residents about the importance of bees on our environment to improve biodiversity in our neighbourhoods. Mansfield District Council have placed 39 planters with wildflowers around the town centre and wider district to help attract wildlife and improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

'Bee-Friendly' Bus Stops

Plant-topped bus shelters nicknamed 'bee-stops' are to be introduced in the city of Leicester. The living roofs will feature a mixture of pollinator friendly wildflowers and succulent plants, designed to help support Britain's declining bee population. Plans are also in place to fit bus shelters with solar panels and smart lighting to help manage energy use and lower the city's carbon footprint.

NEXT STEPS

At the 29 June 2021 meeting of Cabinet, the Executive were presented with a *Corporate Plan Refresh and Year End Position* report. The following was included within the report:

“The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan is nearing completion. The Council set up an Officer Working Group in relation to Climate Change, which is now well established, bringing together key officers from different departments to work collaboratively to reduce carbon emissions across its activities and the wider community through policy and promotion. This includes considering investment in ‘green’ projects as part of the commercial investment strategy. The Council is also working with Nottingham City Council in the development of the strategy and action plan, including options to reduce energy usage and carbon emissions across its built assets, due to be completed in early 2021/2022.”

As stated, the Council’s developing Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan is nearing completion. As a next step, Scrutiny Panel B should have sight of the documents to greater understand the Council’s tangible actions planned for climate change mitigation.

An additional next step Members may wish to undertake is to more closely examine the proposed climate mitigation actions set out by the Council, as detailed above. This could lead to questions such as:

- How is the efficiency of the Council’s fleet planned to be improved?
- What progress has been made regarding the use of electric vehicles?
- How does the Council plan to invest in walking and cycling infrastructure, and pedestrianising high street?
- What is the progress of internal reviews?
- How is the Council working with and influencing community volunteers and local businesses regarding climate change mitigation?
- What funding opportunities are available to the Council?

Implications

Corporate Plan:

‘Cleaner and Greener’ is one of the five key priorities set out within Ashfield District Council’s Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023. The vision for ‘Cleaner and Greener’ is set out:

“By 2023, we will create a cleaner and greener Ashfield, enabling communities and businesses to thrive in a clean and tidy district, minimising waste and recycling more.

Ashfield is pro-active in encouraging more recycling, tackling environmental crime and finding innovative ways of delivering services that are responsive to the needs of our residents, visitors and businesses.

By working with our communities and businesses, the Council is better able to understand what matters and to shape services to help people enjoy living, visiting, and working in Ashfield.”

Legal:

There are no legal implications at this stage of the review. Any legal implications identified involving any recommendations to be made to Cabinet at the end of the review will be appropriately addressed in the final report.

Finance:

There are no financial implications at this stage of the review. Any financial implications identified involving any recommendations to be made to Cabinet at the end of the review will be appropriately addressed in the final report.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	None at this stage of the review.
General Fund – Capital Programme	
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	

Risk:

Any risks and mitigation considered over the course of this review will be presented in a final report to Cabinet along with the Panel’s recommendations.

Risk	Mitigation
Climate change is not only a global risk but also a major local issue. Ashfield District Council recognised this in its Motion to Council on the 25 July 2019.	Development of a working Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, identifying initiatives to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Human Resources:

There are no HR implications at this stage of the review. Any HR implications identified involving any recommendations to be made to Cabinet at the end of the review will be appropriately addressed in the final report.

Environmental/Sustainability:

Environmental and sustainability implications are central to the Scrutiny Review: Climate Change Mitigation. Members will be examining Council policies and action plans relating to climate change and the ‘Cleaner and Greener’ agenda.

Equalities:

There are no equalities implications at this stage of the review. Any equalities implications identified involving any recommendations to be made to Cabinet at the end of the review will be appropriately addressed in the final report.

Other Implications:

There are no other implications at this stage of the review. Any other implications identified involving any recommendations to be made to Cabinet at the end of the review will be appropriately addressed in the final report.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

- Local Government Association, *A councillor's workbook on acting on climate change*, October 2017.

Report Author and Contact Officer

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