

CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 16TH OCTOBER, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor K Dye in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, J Bowden,
R Downes, M Foster, A Hannan,
N Harrington, A McCluskey, O Newton,
M Rafique, M Shahzad, P Stables and
E Thomson

19 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor J Tudor, Councillor P Carlill and Councillor E Carlisle. Councillor P Stables attended as substitute for Councillor E Carlisle.

20 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

21 Notes of the Previous Meeting

RECOMMENDED – To agree the notes of the previous consultative meeting held 18th September 2023 as a correct record.

22 Open Forum

Rooftop Gardens

Denise Marsden provided a written statement which was read out to the Committee requesting that Leeds City Council (LCC) considers supporting the establishment of rooftop gardens across the city to help pollinators and to create aerial pathways.

Hydro-Electricity

Phil Gees requested information of LCC policy regarding the conversion of weirs for the generation of hydro-electricity.

The Committee noted the contents of the presentations and agreed that responses would be provided to the Open Forum speakers in due course.

Open Forum Updates

Zero Carbon Energy Markets – The Chair noted that the response to Mr J Illingworth had been circulated to CEAC Members

3G Pitches – This item was first brought to CEAC Main Committee in January 2023, with concerns raised concerning 3G pitches. The committee wrote to Sports England about this matter, raising the concerns and points identified regarding the impact on biodiversity within the city.

The committee received a copy of the latest correspondence sent by the Chair ahead of the meeting. This response is the latest update on the matter, in relation to further research undertaken by officers.

The Chair sought and received Members support for two proposals:

- That the Chair write to DEFRA in response to the work being done looking at the use of plastic pitches in relation to microplastic emissions to urge that the current national environmental policy is not downgraded relative to the policy of the EU.
- That this issue be considered by CEAC once the work by DEFRA was completed

23 Directors Update - the Director of Public Health

The Chief Officer Consultant in Public Health (Healthy Living), Anna Frearson, spoke to the Committee on the behalf of the Director of Public Health, Victoria Eaton, and provided the Committee with a verbal update which provided an overview of work to integrate the climate agenda into the Directorate's work.

Mitigating risks of poor air quality

- Establishment of an air quality and health group,
- Training for wider healthcare force
- Promoting protective behaviour
- Developing resources for populations most at risk such as those with respiratory disease

Promoting energy efficient homes

- Fixing draughts
- Energy efficient lighting
- Delivery of the Home plus scheme for vulnerable/low income households and 1181 households had been assisted under the scheme

Energy performance certificates (EPC) and life outcomes

- Data linking project (with West Yorkshire Combined Authority).
- Leeds City Council is now a part of the Marmot city programme, an international agenda to eradicate health inequality
- Mapping EPC poor ratings with outcomes which can better target funding to address issues

Food

- Promoting sustainable and healthy food
- Using planning levers around food
- Focus on creating sustainable food system in Leeds through the local plan update
- Evaluation toolkit

Active travel

- Vision zero strategy

- Active travel social prescribing pilot 2022-25 in Burmantofts, Harehills and Richmond hill – communication, urban trails, first steps to walking, learn to ride, bike libraries.

Adapting to extreme weather

- Supporting vulnerable people
- Mitigating the health costs of the cost of living
- Public health weather impact action plan

Responding to changing disease risks

- Health protection team working with UKHSA
- Regular infectious disease review and response multi agency meetings.
- Working with whole health system

The Committee discussed the following with the Chief Officer of Public Health;

- The collection of staff Electric Vehicle (EV) use data will be carried out at the corporate level
- The evaluation of the Active Travel pilot will be brought to the Committee. The Active Travel pilot notes that the lack of public toilet access can prohibit some people from active travel.
- Energy efficient homes is not within the operational scope of Public Health, and the Chief Officer of Clean Energy and Green Spaces confirmed city-wide plans for a privately funded one stop shop providing access to information and finance for green retrofitting.

RECOMMENDED –

- a) That the contents of the presentation and discussion be noted
- b) That arising from the discussions, the following matters be actioned through the appropriate CEAC Working Groups:
 - i. Further information on the evaluation of the social prescribing pilot on Harehills, Burmantofts and Richmond Hill be provided to Members when available.
 - ii. The Audit tool/evaluation toolkit be presented to a future WG meeting.
 - iii. Further detailed information on the uptake and use of Electric Vehicles by Public Health staff be provided to Members when available.

24 Working Groups Update

There had been no meetings of the working groups since the previous meeting, however the Chair reported the following;

Infrastructure, Planning and Building WG – scheduled for 8th November at 2.00pm.

Communities, Business Engagement WG – to be confirmed but likely to be held 6th November 2023.

Members were encouraged to attend all WGs and requested that invitations be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

25 Inclusive Growth Strategy Update

The Chief Officer Culture and Economy submitted a report to the Committee outlining the recently launched Inclusive Growth Strategy 2023-2030.

In attendance;

Eve Roodhouse – LCC Chief Officer Culture and Economy

Fiona Bolam – LCC Head of Economic Policy

Vince McCabe, programme lead of clean growth and innovation, West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA)

Mark Casci, West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce (WNYCC)

Mark Goldstone – Confederation of British Industry (CBI)

Mattie Yeta CGI (Consultants to Government and Industry Incorporated)

Olivia Smith CGI

The Inclusive Growth Strategy was previously considered to the Committee in November 2022 during the development of the strategy.

The impact of the 2008 recession was noted as having had a large impact on health inequality in the city, and the aim for the Inclusive Growth Strategy is that economic growth in Leeds will benefit everyone.

The Chief Officer Culture and Economy outlined the framework of the Inclusive Growth Strategy, which has nine 'Big Ideas' set within three themes; people, place and productivity.

People – A focus on upskilling and reskilling in order to increase the green skilled workforce needed to deliver net zero. This will include supporting career advice services across Leeds. There is an expectation that net zero will deliver new and better quality jobs to the West Yorkshire region.

Place – Key work has included investing in places and transport, the Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS), PIPES District heating scheme, net zero homes, woodland creation, Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure and support and green spaces.

Productivity – Leeds Anchor Network, a network between the largest Leeds employers has been developed. Support for businesses and organisations is a key part of the Strategy, particularly for them to futureproof. Green finance was highlighted as a particular strength of Leeds.

Additionally the Strategy seeks to build sustainability into the tourism, major events, venues, museums, art spaces, cultural and creative sectors.

Following the Chief Officer Culture and Economy's presentation, the following external speakers were invited to speak;

Mattie Yeta provided the Committee with an overview of the Sustainability Exploration Environmental Data Sciences (SEEDS) programme at CGI. The work utilises data science with social and environmental concerns. A brief oversight of the diverse work programme CGI has undertaken was provided to the Committee, including work on Smart agriculture, green finance, water management, pollution, circular economy, violence against women and girls and other social value works. Work of particular note included the use of infrared and “Digital Twin” to provide vegetation insights. The use of AI and machine learning will continue to predict trends up to 2030, and along with green software and blockchain technologies provide growth areas for the Leeds city region. Additionally CGI is a partner within the Smart Meters programme.

The Chief Officer Culture and Economy noted that the digital sector is one of the fastest growing within the Leeds city region, with notable work including the use of banking cards to offset carbon emissions.

Mark Goldstone for CBI provided the Committee with an overview of the support businesses require to be able to adapt to the climate emergency. The CBI position is that governmental policy needs to be stable and long term. A package of support for businesses could include financial support and tax breaks, with a long term strategy for replacing the tax income from road revenues which would incentivise investment in the sector. Planning reform was also identified as key as it was reported that 40% of major infrastructure applications were delayed, and delays in processing applications for new developments to join the National Grid were also noted as having a negative impact on business growth in the region.

Mark Casci for WYNCC outlined the challenges facing the smaller businesses they support, most of which employ under 50 people. Whilst many are keen to improve their sustainability, there is a lack of quality and consistent information, as well as a frequently changing policy landscape which deters investment. Only 1 in 10 business leaders within this sector know the precise definition of climate change due to inconsistent messaging from the public sector, 78% of businesses who work with the WYNCC have already invested to become more climate friendly. The cancellation of the HS2 programme was noted as having had a notable impact on these businesses however, which has reduced the amount available for future environmental investment.

Vincent McCabe (WYCA) advised the committee of support provided by WYCA for businesses within West Yorkshire for addressing the climate emergency. WYCA has transitioned from named programmed support of businesses to a more generic approach, as tracking different programme names becomes hard for businesses to track. Small businesses are encouraged to contact WYCA for personalised support to identify climate objectives suitable for their business, and find the right package of support to deliver that. Business support includes a wraparound package of peer learning and support and signposting to relevant partner organisations such as Rural England.

Following the presentations from the Chief Officer Culture and Economy and the external speakers, there followed a discussion with the Committee, with the following highlights;

Skills – The Committee and speakers noted that developing skills within West Yorkshire has been discussed within the region for a long time, and that the conversation needs to move on. The promotion of Green skills must include both sustainability professionals who have a depth of knowledge and technical skills, as well as green skills being required amongst all workers, in a similar way to how digital skills in all sectors have expanded. Businesses are encouraged to liaise with schools regarding schools visits and engagement to help pupils understand the importance of and opportunities for green skills in the job market.

SPI Indicators – The SPI (Social Progress Index) was discussed regarding the inclusion of specific environmental indicators, and the Committee was advised that the SPI is an internationally standardised framework with data quality standards which limits which indicators can be used. A forward programme of future indicators regarding climate change will be designed when resources permit.

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) - The Chief Officer Culture and Economy advised the Chair on potential avenues for assisting with the ABCD agenda, particularly for activities such as community growing and will provide the Committee with a considered approach such as liaising with business and with colleagues in Asset Management.

RECOMMENDATIONS – That the contents of the report and discussions be noted.

26 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the date and time of the next meeting as 27th November 2023 at 2pm.