

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

Monday, 20th March, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor K Dye in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, J Bowden,
N Buckley, P Carlill, E Carlisle,
A Garthwaite, C Hart-Brooke, O Newton,
M Shahzad, E Thomson, P Truswell and
J Tudor

12 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

13 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

The agenda contained no exempt information.

14 Late Items

There were no late items of business.

15 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

16 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Wadsworth.

17 Minutes of Previous Meetings

RESOLVED: That, subject to the correction of a date in Minute No. 10 (Leeds Local Plan Update) as highlighted by the Chair, the minutes of the formal meeting held on 23rd June 2022 be confirmed as a correct record, and that the minutes of the consultative meeting held on 23rd January 2023 be received and noted.

18 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Minute No. 7 (Open Forum) (23rd June 2022)

Following the Open Forum contribution by Climate Action Leeds, Committee Members were encouraged by the Chair to raise the opportunity of utilising the Committee's Open Forum section with any climate action groups in their wards. The Chair also highlighted that any Members of Council were eligible to join the CEAC working groups, with the Chair welcoming any wider Member participation in those groups.

Minute No. 34 (Open Forum) (23rd January 2023)

The Committee received an update on the actions which had been taken following the consideration of the 2 Open Forum items (Environmental Considerations of Planning Decisions) and (Plastic Free Fields). Specifically regarding 'Plastic Free Fields', it was noted that Sports England had been written to raising concerns about the issue of black crumb sports turfing.

19 Open Forum

Two matters were raised under the Open Forum:

The Commitment: William Eccles and Lilla Toth made a representation to the Committee concerning their organisation's objectives and purpose, which included individuals pledging to only vote for candidates who prioritise addressing the climate emergency.

It was noted that in Leeds as of November 2022 there were 338 commitments pledged. The three most popular reasons for making a pledge in Leeds were;

- 1) Protecting the planet for future generations
- 2) Valuing their connection to the natural world
- 3) Equality and public health

The Commitment made the following recommendations to the Committee;

- 1) Timely target to be set for the publication of the recently approved Climate Resilience and Adaptation Plan
- 2) Develop or refresh an appropriate, cross departmental strategy for nature recovery and climate resilience
- 3) Incorporate car use reduction into the Local Plan

The Committee discussed and suggested inviting The Commitment to the Council's Community Committees, as appropriate, following a recent successful visit to the Outer North West Community Committee.

The Committee requested that The Commitment share its report containing their full recommendations, and for an update to be provided in due course as the number of pledges made by Leeds residents increased.

Guiseley Primary School: The Committee received a video presentation with pupils from Guiseley Primary School requesting wildflower seeds.

The Committee noted that Ward Members can use money from MICE (Members Improvements in the Community and the Environment) for such matters and that individual Members were encouraged to liaise directly with primary schools in their ward areas in relation to the provision of wildflower seeds.

20 Working Groups Update

The Chairs of the Working Groups (WG) provided updates on progress made since the consultative meeting of the Committee held on 23rd January 2023.

Economy & Finance: The WG examined local monitoring of social value, such as local manufacturing where possible in Council procurement. A key steer has been developed that carbon offsetting should be a last resort regarding accreditation.

The WG also looked at the green home finance accelerator project, with the possibility of a one stop shop for retrofitting discussed, as there is a need for trusted information which the Council is well placed to provide.

Biodiversity, Food and Waste: The WG made suggestions to the Food Waste Strategy consultation regarding language and tone, and the objectives have been reprioritised.

Allotments were mentioned as needing more discussion. An increase in allotment sites need to be taken to the Infrastructure, Planning & Buildings sub group, as there are discussions to be had regarding which land allocation allotments should come from.

Food and glass collections have been discussed, with the WG noting that there are lessons to be learnt from Scotland, where there were issues with the glass collection scheme.

Infrastructure, Planning & Buildings: The WG noted that the Local Plan Update received 90% support from residents. The Local Plan Update will improve the Council's ability to influence development. The next step for the Update is for it to be considered by the Development Plans Panel.

Community & Business Engagement: The WG met with the Greenwood business group to discuss their recent success regarding recycling, single use plastics, and signposting businesses to Council support. It was highlighted that many small businesses were in a precarious position financially, and that match funding for energy efficiency measures were not always accessible to small businesses, as this requires them to raise large amounts of money for their share of the improvements. The Economy and Finance WG shall discuss this issue at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That the verbal updates from the working groups be noted.

21 **Director's Update**

The Interim Director of Children and Families provided an update to the Committee regarding how the Directorate has responded to the Climate Emergency. This was a part of a year long programme of visits to the Committee by each of the Leeds City Council's Directors.

Some of the key work undertaken within the Children and Families directorate included;

Voice of Children and Young People:

- The February 2020 Leeds Youth Summit for Climate was attended by 114 students from 17 secondary schools. The students worked with elected councillors and decision makers to develop a young people's toolkit to communicate opportunities for young people to get involved in combatting climate change, and to have their voice heard.
- The climate emergency toolkit for children and young people which was developed at the summit has been promoted online and with a flyer. The intention is that children and young people can feel empowered and supported to take action, which will have a beneficial impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

- The directorate has supported school leaders to promote high quality climate education.
- July 2022 was the tenth anniversary of child friendly Leeds and using participation feedback of 80,000 children across the city, climate change was added to the Child Friendly Leeds wishes for the city.
- There have been ten youth community summit events.
- Get Creative For Climate in August 2020 in which primary schools were invited to produce a short video presentation on climate action. The three winning videos were shown at the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee in January 2021.

Children's social work, early help and residential:

- The Service has created climate awareness as a regular agenda item in its work by communicating ways in which colleagues can make both the workplace and their home lives more environmentally friendly.
- Hybrid working has reduced the amount of car journeys colleagues have to take.
- Asset and building sharing with partner organisations reduced the use of resources.
- The Committee received an overview with specific examples of the ongoing work towards decarbonisation in residential care services.

Learning Services:

- There has been an increase in the amounts of meetings taking place virtually, including headteacher meetings.
- An increase in web based online learning.
- The Headteachers toolkit is now accessed as an electronic document, which also means that it can be updated regularly.
- The My Health, My School survey included a section on climate change. This showed an 11% decrease in children knowing where to get advice on how to contribute to climate action and this knowledge has fed back into the Directorate's work.
- The Leeds School Uniform Exchange has facilitated and encouraged second hand uniform use and has reduced the stigma of wearing second hand clothes amongst pupils by engaging them on climate change.

Resources:

- Around £1million has so far been match funded by the directorate to assist schools install climate related improvements such as heat pumps.
- School allocation funds from the Department for Education have had some used for decarbonisation schemes.
- Schools have been supported to transition towards carbon neutrality, such as with guidance on how to save energy and decrease water usage.
- The Assets and Access team will release new premises development plans to further develop the estate priorities.

- Work within the Transport and Inclusion Team within Education has supported children with complex needs to utilise travel option other than private hire.
- The directorate is a part of the wider corporate approach to commissioning, whereby social value including climate action is required from potential providers.

After the presentation the Committee discussed the work of the directorate with the Director. Highlights included;

Responding to Members' comments, the Committee received an update regarding the work being undertaken, both corporately and by the directorate in terms of auditing the environmental impact of the directorate's estate, which included liaison between the directorate and schools.

In response to a Member's question, the Committee received further information on the holistic approach that was being taken to ensure that an appropriate balance was struck when discussing environmental matters with young people, so that it also incorporated economic and social factors.

The reference of the Climate Emergency in the refreshed Children and Young People's Plan and the 12 Child Friendly 'Wishes' was highlighted, whilst Members also specifically welcomed the value of the uniform exchange programme.

In conclusion, the Director offered to circulate to Committee Members the written information used as part of her presentation to the Committee, should Members find this useful.

RESOLVED: The Committee thanked the Director for attending the Committee and noted the verbal update.

22 Climate Emergency Annual Report

The Chief Officer (Sustainable Energy and Air Quality) submitted a report initially considered by Executive Board on 15th March 2023 which provided a summary on the range of activity which had taken place in the past year to address the climate emergency.

The Chief Officer provided an overview of the annual report to the Committee. The annual report presented a position statement on both the Council's and the city's emissions. There has been a 37% reduction in energy use within the Council since the climate emergency declaration, however the Chief Officer noted that the Council's emissions represent a small proportion of the city's overall emissions.

It was noted by the Committee that future plans for addressing the climate emergency include developing engagement with different financial products, including partnership working with Lloyds Bank. The Council is now a signatory of the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission. In addition to partnership working and the actions being taken in Leeds, the dependence on

having the correct national policy in place was highlighted, together with the fact that Leeds would continue to work to influence national policy wherever possible, either directly or through its networks.

Members received an overview on the work which had been undertaken to update the Leeds Food Strategy which has been updated to incorporate residents' views.

The Council also received an 'A' grade in the Carbon Disclosing Project (CDC). As a result next year's annual report will be moved to September so that the data capturing for both the annual report and the CDC can be undertaken jointly.

Following the Chief Officer's overview was a discussion with the Committee. Highlighted details included;

The Chief Officer gave details on the references to private sector funding and clarified that this was in relation to larger scale investment, for example from pension funds rather than on an individual company basis. Private sector investment is required to transition from a grants-based model. The Council has not undertaken specific work to estimate the cost of not addressing the climate emergency, however, there has been some work done by the Treasury on the cost nationally and the Treasury has recognised that as a country it will cost us more to deal with the consequences of climate than to reduce our emissions in the first place. The possibility of working with partners within the University to develop localised statistics was discussed.

The Chief Officer acknowledged that the city is not on track to meet the net zero ambition by 2030 due to factors outwith our control, such as national policy.

The annual report was noted as not discussing buses in much detail as this is largely managed by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, but the Chief Officer agreed to include more on this subject in next year's report. The Committee discussed the reduction of some buses within the park and ride scheme, which particularly affects residents within the Outer South area. The Chief Officer to present further statistics on this to the Transport working group. The possibility of inviting bus operators to the Committee in the next municipal year was discussed.

The Committee was informed by the Chief Officer that the Council has little power to deal with the rise of wood burners, or the impact that has on local communities.

The Committee presented a variety of views on the financial costs and benefits to be had by addressing the climate emergency.

Engagement within Leeds communities for the climate emergency was noted as being a concern for the Committee, particularly as inner city residents are the most deprived, and the most at risk to climate related harm. The Open

Forum was noted as not having had a diverse range of groups attend in the past municipal year.

The Committee continued the discussion regarding finance for small businesses from earlier in the meeting, and the Chief Officer informed the Committee that the new minimum energy efficiency standards for landlords may mean that rent for small businesses will go up, but that this will mean they will not need to pay the upfront costs of these improvements themselves.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Climate Emergency Annual Report as submitted to the Executive Board on 15th March 2023 be noted.
- b) That the contents of the report and the comments made during discussions on the Climate Emergency Annual Report be noted.

(Councillor Garthwaite left the meeting at 2.22pm).

23 Update on climate-related council communications

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources which provided an update on climate-related council communications over the 2022-2023 municipal year.

The Senior Policy & Communications Officer from the Sustainable Energy and Air Quality team (SEAQ) delivered a presentation providing an update on the use of communications and engagement to support the council's climate action to the Committee.

Highlights of the presentation included;

The Communications team sits within Sustainability Energy and Air Quality, and works with colleagues across the council to assist with climate related communications. The role of communications at SEAQ is not to duplicate work that has already been carried out by colleagues across the Council, instead it is to co-ordinate, ensure dialogue and provide support. The Council already had a large amount of communication assets which have been built upon.

The work has three main purposes;

1. Enable – the successful delivery of climate related projects and policy. As government funding is often time sensitive, it was highlighted that effective communication is key to ensuring all parties, including residents maximise the opportunities available to them, such as being made aware of, and utilising such time limited funding.
2. Explain – Communicating different climate related concepts to communities with a variety of methodology.
3. Engage – Engagement informs policy, with communication being a two way street between residents and businesses with the Council. Internal engagement has built on that work, such as by identifying the 70 council

officers with weather resilience related roles and supporting them to incorporate climate change into their business continuity plans.

Some highlights of 2022 include;

- 11 climate newsletters
- 68 press releases, with work featured in the BBC, ITV, Yorkshire Evening Post and Leeds Live
- 7,600 impressions monthly on Twitter
- 3,700 visits to the Leeds By Example website
- Secured an A Grade from the Carbon Disclosure Project
- Hosting and attending climate events

Communication priorities for 2023 were set out;

- To engage new commercial customers to Leeds PIPES (Providing Innovative Pro-Environment Solutions).
- To promote uptake of retrofit new scheme for homes off the gas grid.
- To explain the Council's climate mitigation and adaptation policies link together more accessible way.
- To promote awareness of environmentally friendly food.
- To support colleagues and partners with climate related communications.
- To explain how the Council is continuing to lead by example.
- To engage services across the council to implement climate adaptation actions and improve climate literacy

After the Senior Officer's presentation, the Committee had the following discussion;

The Senior Officer shared research that trying to dispel misinformation can actually embed it further, and therefore the role of Communications is to preferably provide high quality information ahead of time as a 'prebuttal', which is complicated by the way mass media has become increasingly fragmented and algorithmically driven. The importance of continuing to build upon existing and social networks was highlighted, in order to reach as large an audience as possible with the aim of reducing the impact of misinformation by communities receiving key messages from the Council, or another trusted source first. The Senior Officer explained that there are several internal steps which would need to take place to make a communication responding to an incident, including fact verification.

In considering such matters, Members discussed the need for clear and accessible communications to be delivered in this area, with the importance of looking to dispel rumour and myth being highlighted. A co-ordinated approach towards communications in relation to the climate emergency across Council services and with partners was also emphasised, with the work ongoing in this area being noted. Members' comments around the need for communications to be agile and responsive to developing issues, whilst also striking the correct tone was acknowledged.

The Committee discussed various approaches to tone within Council communications, with some favouring trialling more engaging forms and others preferring a more neutral approach.

The Communications team approach has been to attend and support climate related events when asked to in the past year, however in the next year they will proactively offer to assist at events, such as the youth summits.

The Chair recommended that the Committee specifically endorse the progression of the priority detailed within the presentation regarding internal engagement and the improvement of climate literacy across the Council, with the Business & Engagement working group supporting this work programme, as appropriate.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the contents of the report and presentation regarding climate-related council communications be noted together with the comments raised during the discussion.
- (b) That the progression of the priority within the presentation around internal engagement and the improvement of climate literacy across the Council be specifically endorsed and supported via the Committee's Business & Engagement working group.

24 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that the dates and times for the next Municipal year had not yet been confirmed.