

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

THURSDAY, 2ND MARCH, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, E Carlisle, A Khan,
S Lay, A Maloney, T Smith, J Tudor and
E Thomson

64 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

65 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

66 Late Items

There were no formal late items.

67 Declaration of Interests

Members did not declare any interests at the meeting.

68 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor K Brooks and Councillor P Wadsworth. Councillor A Garthwaite attended in place of Councillor K Brooks as substitute.

69 Minutes - 2 February 2023

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held Thursday, 2nd February 2023, be approved as an accurate record.

70 Climate Emergency Annual Update

The report of the Head of Democratic Services provided an update against this target at both a council and city level. It also updates and reflects on wider changes relevant to the city's decarbonisation that have happened both regionally and nationally.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor H Hayden, Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate
- Councillor K Dye, Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) Chair
- Polly Cook, Chief Officer, Sustainable Energy & Air Quality

The Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate introduced the item and provided an overview of the extensive amount of work that has gone into Scope 1: direct emissions, 2: indirect emissions from grid-supplied energy and 3: emissions: that organisations are indirectly responsible for. The report also

touches on energy security and making homes affordable for residents in Leeds, as well as de-carbonisation schemes.

The Chief Officer (Sustainable Energy & Air Quality) provided some key highlights from the submitted report, on the delivery of next steps and successes with grant funding, with acknowledgement that funding plays an important role in meeting net zero ambitions. An update was also provided on the energy strategy in terms of energy prices and the support of ongoing expansion of decarbonisation measures across the council's buildings, the Final Food Strategy and Net Zero Housing Plan.

Board members discussed the following matters:

- Clarity on energy security. Members were informed that the council do not enter into any fixed term energy contracts.
- The position on meeting net zero ambitions by 2030 and whether the council have considered contingencies. It was noted that meeting such ambitions are dependent on technologies and buildings. Challenges were acknowledged in terms of the council's fleet, retrofitting houses, and encouraging more environmentally friendly new developments.
- Clarity on grant funding for energy efficiency schemes for the most deprived areas in Leeds. It was confirmed that schemes are available with certain criteria in terms of income and EPC ratings albeit it is limited in terms of who you can offer these low-level interventions to. It was noted there are additional schemes in the pipeline.
- Education and working with residents and young people in Leeds. A number of face-to-face events have taken place, as well as the promotion of materials across social media channels. Universities and schools have also been attended. The CEAC Chair added to this and explained work is on-going with the third sector and local organisations to work with schools and providing education packages. Children were also engaged with at the Youth Summits with climate activities. The Executive Member also added that schools have been involved with the Food Strategy from the beginning, as well as on-going work with colleges around food. The Chair acknowledged the importance of councillors discussing and engaging such matters with children across schools, as well as officers and schools on educating children.
- Clarity on the expansion of EV charging infrastructure across the city. The team are looking at options in terms of on-street charging. It was confirmed that West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) have recently announced they have additional funding for EV charging points and officers are working closely with them in an attempt to secure funding. A comment was also made in regard to lack of incentives for EVs and the importance of 'leading by example'.
- Freight and canal network. Members sought advice about potential opportunities to use the local canal network to transport freight thereby removing some lorries from the road network. It was confirmed that this has been explored but is not currently regarded as viable in Leeds, in part due to logistical challenges such as the size of modern freight containers.

- Clarity on the scope of the food survey and respondents. Officers confirmed that the council worked with 80 organisations and various groups across the city, and amendments were made as a result of comments received.
- Members raised concerns regarding policy implementation and development control in terms of new development and encouraging developers to go beyond current requirements.
- Frustrations around retrofitting new schools. It was confirmed that this is primarily due to the success of grants and value for money in terms of identifying how is best to increase renewable energy in the most cost effective way.
- Clarity on the alternative fuels including hydrogen and air & ground source heat pumps. Officers explained that no formal decision on direction has yet been made from the Government on energy sources. It is believed that hydrogen as a city approach will not be an option, although it was acknowledged that it may still be an option for some homes but more widely used for energy storage and industrial uses.
- Liaison with Climate Action Leeds. It was noted that there is a dedicated officer liaising with Climate Action Leeds on a weekly basis and they also attend CEAC meetings.
- A member commented that there is no mention of car sharing in the report. The Executive Member referred to the councils car club scheme and spreading this out more widely across the city. it was noted that there isn't a specific policy regarding car sharing, but an identified area that a future CEAC meeting can consider.
- Edible greenery in developments. Officers will look into the detail of this and provide members with information at a later date.
- Leeds Bradford Airport. The Executive Member briefly commented on the importance on receiving national aviation policy and a public transport service that is accessible and affordable for residents.
- Clarity on the scope around the council implementing a plant based diet.
- Clarity on the position of all-weather pitches, particularly in relation to rubber crumb. The CEAC Chair confirmed this issue is still being looked at and CEAC are waiting on a response from DEFRA and Sport England.
- New local rail stations. Whilst the majority wished to see more rail stations, the limitations in terms of funding were acknowledged.
- How the city can build on a 'cycling culture' and improving / implementing additional cycling lanes. Low cost solutions were put forward in terms of cycle ways and expanding on existing public footpaths.
- An update on the West Yorkshire Business Sustainability Programme. It was confirmed that communications around this are still in its early stages. Members highlighted the importance of communicating with local businesses who will receive the most benefit from this programme.

The Chair referred to a Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment, and Inclusive Growth) meeting¹ that took place to discuss hydrogen infrastructure and the work providers have been doing in the North East.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and informed Board Members of upcoming working groups in relation to the CEAC meeting where all members can attend and provide their input.

RESOLVED –

- a) To note the contents of the submitted report and comments made during discussion of this item.
- b) To identify further areas of work for consideration such as EV infrastructure across the city.

Councillor Akhtar left the meeting at 11:30am, during consideration of this item.

71 End of Year Statement

The report of the Head of Democratic Services highlights the work of all five Scrutiny Boards over 2022/23. The report also includes details of the full work programme for each Scrutiny Board for the last municipal year, with links to the associated agenda packs, minutes, and webcast recordings. The document also includes a statement from the relevant Scrutiny Chair reflecting on the key priorities for the Scrutiny Board over the last year.

Appended to the report includes a 2022/23 summary for the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED –

- a) To note the contents of the report.
- b) To approve publication of the 2022/23 summary, prior to publication on the Council's website.

72 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Democratic Services set out the proposed dates for 2023/24 for the successor Scrutiny Board and an initial draft work programme.

Appended to the report included a copy of the Scrutiny Board's recommendations and conclusions in relation to Reducing Gambling Harm.

RESOLVED –

- a) To note the successor Scrutiny Board's draft work schedule for the 2023/24 municipal year.
- b) To note and formally endorse the appended statement on Reducing Gambling Harm and approve the submission of the final document to the Executive for a formal response.

73 Date and Time of Next Meeting

¹ <https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1112&MId=11852&Ver=4>

RESOLVED – The date and time of the next meeting is proposed to be held Thursday, 22nd June 2023 at 10.30 am (a pre-meeting for Board members will be held at 10.00 am)

The meeting concluded at 12:20.