

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

Tuesday, 10th March, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor N Walshaw in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, D Blackburn,
N Buckley, P Carlill, A Garthwaite,
S Golton, J Illingworth, M Midgley,
L Mulherin, M Shahzad, P Wadsworth and
P Wray

44 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

45 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

46 Late Items

Item 10 - The report titled 'Response to the Citizens' Jury's Recommendations' was unavailable at the time of agenda publication and was published as a late item (Minute 53 refers)

47 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or other interests.

48 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors K Groves and J Bentley, and Councillors P Carlill and S Golton were in attendance as substitutes.

49 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Matters arising

Minute 41 – The Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury - September to November 2019

Members noted the earlier intention for the annual report of the Committee to be submitted to the meeting prior to Full Council in March. However, Members were advised that as the first meeting of the Committee took place in July 2019, the report would be submitted to the first meeting of the Committee in the 2020/21 municipal year, and subsequently to the Full Council meeting due to take place in July 2020.

Members noted the importance of maintaining communication with the public with regular updates in regards to the progress made to reach the 2030 carbon neutral target, and were assured that a wide range of engagement activity continues to take place to inform residents of steps taken to address the climate emergency and information around upcoming projects – including community events, social media and the ‘Leeds by Example’ website, a monthly newsletter, along with the update report submitted to Executive Board in January 2020.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held 13 January 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

Councillor Mulherin arrived at 1:10 p.m. during discussion of this item.

50 Open Forum

Elliot Kilbride, Environmental and Facilities Coordinator at Yorkshire Building Society (YBS), addressed the Committee. Mr Kilbride informed the Committee that YBS is committed to the climate emergency declared in Leeds, and has been successful in reducing internal carbon emissions by 48% since 2012. Members were advised of the extent of change implemented across the business, from waste disposal to business travel, to contribute to the challenge. Despite their continuous efforts, Mr Kilbride noted the challenge of mapping indirect emissions that occur in the company's value chain. Mr Kilbride also recognised the value of communicating with communities around environmental initiatives, and therefore sought further opportunities for partnership working with Council teams to provide a coordinated and comprehensive approach.

Paul Ellison, Managing Director at Yorkshire Design Group, addressed the Committee. Mr Ellison noted the importance of recognising the contributions that individuals and families can make to support the climate agenda, and encouraged the development of ambitious projects and strategies, such the proposals for Clean Air Day and Car Free Day, for local businesses to engage with. Mr Ellison made a number of suggestions for creative ways to engage communities, such as a temporary free bus travel scheme and pop-up forests, highlighting the need for more activities and events in the city centre.

Leah Stuart, Associate Director at Civic Engineers, addressed the Committee. Ms Stuart informed Members of a number of projects focused on providing sustainable infrastructure for communities, such as developing a car-free school in the city centre, but highlighted that a number of barriers to the success of such projects had evidenced the need for significant policy change. Ms Stuart highlighted the financial implications for the construction industry when choosing more sustainable materials, and the need for innovation within the sector that is supported by the local authority.

51 Working Groups Update

The Chief Officer for Sustainable Energy and Air Quality, Polly Cook, provided an update to Members on the progress of the working groups to the Committee as follows:

Biodiversity and Food Production

Members were advised that the group had focused on coordinating projects across the city during planting season, and had identified opportunities for closer partnership working in the future with the highways department for nature conservation projects. Tree replacement policy had been established as a key area of focus moving forward, with specific focus on the White Rose Forest strategy.

Planning, Buildings and Energy

Since the previous meeting, the group had contributed to the Council's response to the government consultation on energy efficiency standards in building regulations, and a subsequent joint letter from the Leeds City Council and a number of other UK cities to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Further to the Developer Forum held in December 2019, Members had also received further updates on work to consolidate and strengthen existing sustainable design guidance and toolkits, which will provide greater clarity to property developers as to what is expected of them. A training programme for officers and plans panel Members is also being developed.

Transport

Members were advised that the group had recently focused on active travel alongside alternative fuel infrastructure, with input from the Living Streets charity around local walking initiatives and community group support. The group are planning to review best practice walking strategies at future meetings. In regards to the alternative fuel strategy, the group gathered initial feedback and will continue to develop. The group also sent a letter to Leeds Bradford Airport with a number of questions, however the response stated that they did not collect data on some of the areas of interest, and therefore a letter would be sent to all airlines located within the airport requesting further data.

During discussions, Members noted the intention for Leeds Bradford Airport to be invited to the first Committee meeting of the next municipal year.

52 Climate Emergency Business Engagement

The Chief Officer for Sustainable Energy and Air Quality submitted a report that introduced a presentation from representatives of the West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, providing some key facts on business engagement with the climate emergency in the region.

Mark Goldstone, Head of Business Representation and Policy at the West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, was in attendance and provided a verbal presentation to the Committee, highlighting the following:

- Most local businesses are looking to respond to the challenge of making their practices more sustainable, however in recent survey, only 50% of businesses thought it would be useful to measure their carbon footprint.

Reasons for this included lack of resource, and limited understanding of the procedures and also of the benefits to their company;

- Businesses require information and positive incentives to be compliant, including a phased introduction and implementation period of any new policies. Mr Goldstone also noted that the Chamber would like to contribute to formal consultations on changes, due to their membership of over a quarter of the employed population;
- Businesses require consistency across Yorkshire local authorities, to avoid confusion and enable compliance.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- Members noted the need for steer from national government to introduce positive incentives, and that a Developers Forum had been established to provide insight to the industry for lobbying activity;
- Members recognised the concerns of businesses in regards to stranded assets, particularly for carbon intensive industries, and were advised that the Bank of England were undertaking analysis of business assets and financial resilience;
- Members were concerned to hear about the increased business rates for companies who retrofit their estates with sustainable features. However, Members also noted the importance of communicating the long term benefits of investment and funding streams available for businesses.
- There was some discussion around the potential for a devolution deal for the region, and Members were conscious that plans need to balance economic and climate impact.

The Chair noted the importance of working with the Chamber to pool expertise as the business sector responds policy changes to tackle climate change in coming years, and coordinate opportunities for 'quick wins' for local businesses.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted.

53 Response to the Citizens' Jury's Recommendations

To consider the report of the Director of Resources and Housing that provides a formal response to the Citizens' Jury's recommendations from the Council's perspective.

The Director of Resources and Housing, Neil Evans, introduced the report and highlighted the key messages throughout the report. It was noted that since publication of the report, it had been announced that £6m would be invested in local tree planting, utilising land holdings and specifically The Arium. Whilst recognising that the growth of aviation is not compatible with a zero carbon target, the Director noted that the Leeds Bradford Airport only accounts for 1.4% of air travel, and therefore steps taken in isolation for Leeds would not be appropriate without a clear national aviation strategy. Members were advised that this has been a matter continuously raised with central government by the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- In response to a query around feedback to the Citizen's Jury on the responses set out within the report, Members were advised that the Jury are no longer a meeting body, and therefore the decision was taken to respond to recommendations through publicly available reports submitted to the Committee. It was also requested that the West Yorkshire Combined Authority be included in future reporting to ensure that transport matters are covered by all relevant decision makers;
- In relation to Recommendation D, Members sought clarity on the use of crowd-funding as a means of financing solar PV systems on Council buildings. Members were advised that a variety of funding sources are being explored for community projects to make use of a mixed economy, but in the main, for in house council projects we will continue borrow at very low rates;
- Members raised concerns with vegetation management around rail tracks, and were advised that work is ongoing to ensure that processes adhere to the recommendations set out within John Varley's independent report to the Department for Transport on Network Rail's approach to vegetation management.

RESOLVED –

- a) That future reports include input from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in relation to the transport recommendations;
- b) That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted.

Councillor S Golton left the meeting at 2:50 p.m. during discussion of this item.

54 Any Other Business

The Chair noted that the next meeting had been arranged to consider the support provided to schools and the views of children and young people. The Chair advised that the open forum would not take place at the next meeting, to allow children and young people to contribute to the meeting and share their ideas in a less formal and more child friendly format.

55 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place Monday 27 April 2020 at 5:00 p.m.