

Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 1 March 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor Riley, in the Chair.

Councillor Coker, Vice Chair.

Councillors Goslin, Hendy, Holloway, Luggier, Noble, Mrs Pengelly, Poyser and Tippetts.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Hulme, Partridge and Tofan.

Also in attendance: Councillor James Stoneman (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Governance), Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place), Peter Walker (Interim Head of Finance), Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning) and Paul Elliot (Low Carbon City Manager), Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk), Alan Knott (Policy and Intelligence Advisor), Lucy Davis (Policy and Intelligence Advisor), Jonathan Bell (Head of Development Planning) , Paul Barnard (Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Emmanuelle Marshall (Low Carbon City Officer) and Hannah Whiting (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.33 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

81. **Declarations of Interest**

Name	Minute Number	Reason	Interest
Councillor Dylan Tippetts	7	Student at the University of Plymouth.	Personal.

82. **Minutes**

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023 were an accurate record of the meeting.

83. **Chair's Urgent Business**

Councillor John Riley explained that following a virtual briefing with Committee members the previous week on Chelson Meadow Solar Farm, the item had been referred to this Committee for further scrutiny and had been included under Chair's urgent business due to time pressures relating to the project.

Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning) and Paul Elliot (Low Carbon City Manager) introduced the report and highlighted –

- a) The solar farm was on part of the old landfill site at Chelson Meadow and would help reduce the Council's carbon emissions by approximately 6%, covering 75% of the Council's electricity use as well as help protect the Council against energy price increases over a 20 year period by entering into a Virtual Power Purchase Agreement (VPPA);
- b) A joint venture would be created with Plymouth Energy Community (PEC) to build, own and manage the solar farm which would result in 50% of any surplus income returning to the Council;
- c) Joint planning permission with PEC for solar was approved with conditions in June 2022;
- d) In-principle business case had been approved at Cabinet in October 2022 for joint venture creation, loan and virtual power purchase agreement with the Joint Venture having been approved at Cabinet in February 2023 and the Loan and Virtual Power Purchase Agreement on the agenda for the March 2023 Cabinet meeting;
- e) Reiterated the recommendations that would go before Cabinet in relation to the Chelson Meadow Solar Construction Loan and the Virtual Power Purchase Agreement.

(Please note, there is a confidential part to this minute).

The Committee agreed to:-

1. Support the business case for the VPPA;
2. Support the business case for the Construction Loan;
3. Recommend that the loan agreement was in the form of a legal charge that charged both the JV lease and equipment to Plymouth City Council to ensure that Plymouth City Council has security for the loan and will be able to have an unfettered right to use the equipment and forfeit the lease in the event of a default;
4. Recommend that an Annual Review would be used as a mechanism to ensure necessary funds were ring-fenced to mitigate uncertainties in future years' energy prices that would require the Council to pay funds via the VPPA. An annual report would be brought to scrutiny showing.
 - a. the income received and the most up to date energy price projections;
 - b. a recommendation on the amount of money to be ring-fenced in any given year

With any money that was not required to be ring-fenced to be used to invest in other net zero projects.

84. **Exempt Information**

The Committee agreed to pass a resolution under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 to exclude the press and the public from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

85. **Chair's Urgent Business Part II** (Pages 9 - 10)

86. **Policy Updates**

Lucy Davis (Policy and Intelligence Advisor) introduced the item and highlighted that announcements on the following had been made between the agenda publication and the date of the meeting:-

- a) Government announced that biodiversity net gain will be introduced in November 2023 and new guidance had been published to support the approach with further support to be released in phases across Spring 2023;
- b) Government had announced its intention to extend the bus recovery grant and £2 cap on single bus fares outside of London for a further 3 months until 30 June 2023.

In discussion it was highlighted:-

- c) Councillor Tippetts asked Councillor James Stoneman (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Governance) to express to Government ministers that longer term solutions were needed, particularly with regards to bus and energy policies.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

87. **Risk Update**

Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk) introduced the item and highlighted:-

- a) The latest risk report had been to Audit and Governance Committee as well as forming part of the Budget Scrutiny Select Committee papers and had been to the other scrutiny committees in previous weeks.

The Committee agreed to note the current position with regard to the Strategic Risk Register.

88. **Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) and Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan 2022 (CCRP) Outturn Reports**

Councillor James Stoneman (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Governance) introduced the item and highlighted:-

- a) The plans had helped to focus the Council's Net Zero agenda for the city;
- b) Of the 149 actions set out across both plans, 92 had been fully achieved and a further 49 had been partially achieved with 8 had not been able to be pursued due to funding and resourcing issues.

In response to questions it was highlighted by Paul Barnard (Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure):-

- c) The bus service improvement plan would be updated on an annual basis following feedback from the Department of Transport;
- d) The bus service improvement plan had been impacted by budget setting after it had been published.

The Committee agreed to:

1. Note the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) 2022 Outturn Report;
2. Note the Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan (CCRP) 2022 Outturn Report.

89. **Net Zero Action Plan 2023-2026**

Councillor James Stoneman (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Governance), supported by Paul Barnard (Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Emmanuelle Marshall (Low Carbon City Officer) and Jonathan Bell (Head of Development Planning), introduced the item and highlighted:-

- a) The Net-Zero Action Plan (NZAP) was a new-style delivery plan that would replace the CEAP and CCRP and set out how Plymouth City Council would support Plymouth in becoming a net-zero city;
- b) The NZAP set out the commitment to action over the following three years to 2026 but not only tracking path for the Council to become a net zero organisation, but also by setting out how Plymouth City Council can influence others in the city to become net zero, for example, through planning policy, infrastructure provision and purchasing power;
- c) Plymouth City Council was responsible for approximately 1% of the city's emissions and was able to influence approximately 30% of the city's emissions;
- d) The CEAP and CCRP were the right approach at the time following the Council unanimously voting to declare a climate emergency at its meeting on 18 March 2019 and had enabled the Council to drive significant change and moving from these plans to the NZAP signifies a move from the emergency

response phase to an acceleration phase;

- e) The NZAP took a more strategic approach by looking at a three year period with more focused outcomes to achieve the 2030 net zero aspiration and a better approach to finance planning and would provide external funders with confidence;
- f) The NZAP had a focused four themes and 29 strategic commitments, compared to the 14 themes and 149 actions across the CEAP and CCRP;
- g) It had been a privilege to work cross party on the NZAP with Councillors Poyser, Briars-Delve and Coker.

In response to questions it was further explained:-

- h) Over the period that the NZAP covered, it was expected that the power sector in the UK would decarbonise, switching to electricity produced by renewable means in most cases and relying on the energy grid decarbonisation but also increasing the renewable capacity with projects such as Chelson Meadow Solar Farm and Heat Pumps;
- i) It was unknown why there wasn't a significant decrease in CO2 emissions, but this would be looked into and shared with members;
- j) Kerbside food waste collection was included in proposals in line with pending government legislation and guidance with more work to be done on this once the legislation has been published, which was expected by the end of 2023;
- k) A climate change decision wheel would be implemented to advise the decision making process moving forward to help balance climate to other factors such as budget in future decision making;
- l) Some decisions to benefit the environment, had also had financial benefit to the Council, but Councillor Stoneman believes they would have been made regardless as they contributed positively to the net zero target for Plymouth;
- m) The data in the NZAP had been driven by the funding that had been successfully secured by officers and so there was funding to support 1293 households by 2026 to become more fuel efficient, which could increase if funding was successful;
- n) Retrofitting would play a key role in reaching net zero rates and bids would be put in to secure funding to support more houses across the city and Councillor Stoneman was lobbying local MPs;
- o) GD3 and GD6 set out plans for local offsetting options would be developed to allow people to invest in to deliver their carbon offsetting and to continue lobbying government;

- p) External groups had assessed local council's action plans and Plymouth had ranked in the middle of the group;
- q) Important to strike a balance for the NZAP between being strategic, ambitious and realistic;
- r) Councillor Stoneman disagreed that the approach had a reduced scope and ambition and spoke about Climate Connections, a website launched in October 2022, designed to be one common point of reference for Plymouth's net zero mission, where everyone can share knowledge, activities and experiences around their net zero journey to change and improve community engagement;
- s) It was important that Councillors undertook Carbon Literacy Training, which Councillor Stoneman hoped would be available in the future;
- t) The NZAP would be monitored on an annual basis and so other ideas, such as extending the scope of decarbonising the Council's estate, could be added if funding was secured;
- u) It was important to have a realistic plan that could be delivered.

The Committee agreed to:

1. Support and endorse the Plymouth City Council Net Zero Action Plan 2023-2026;
2. Review the Council's progress towards delivering its Net Zero Action Plan on an annual basis.

For (6)

Councillors Riley, Luggier, Pengelly, Poyser, Noble and Hendy.

Abstain (3)

Councillors Coker, Holloway and Tippetts.

Against (1)

Councillor Goslin.

90. **Work Programme**

The Committee agreed to add the following items to the work programme:-

- a) Habitat Banking Vehicles;
- b) Armada Way and City Centre Development.

Agreed (8)

Councillors Riley, Coker, Tippetts, Holloway, Goslin, Hendy, Noble, Poyser and Luggier.

Abstain (1)
Councillor Pengelly.

Against (0)

91. **Tracking Decisions**

The Committee noted the tracking decisions document.

The Committee added the following items:-

- a) Regular Updates on Habitat Banking Vehicle.

The Chair, Councillor John Riley, expressed that he felt privileged to have Chaired the Committee in 2022/23 and thanked members for their contributions.

Councillor Neil Hendy thanked Councillor John Riley for Chairing the meetings and his refreshing approach to scrutiny.

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