



Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee – Draft Minutes

Wednesday 31 July 2024

Venue:	CPCA Meeting Room, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon	
Time:	10.00am	
Members Present:	Councillor Bridget Smith Councillor Lara Davenport-Ray Councillor Nicola Day Councillor Lorna Dupre Councillor Steve Tierney Mayor Dr Nik Johnson Councillor Martin Goodearl Councillor Mike Todd-Jones	South Cambridgeshire District Council (Chair) Huntingdonshire District Council Peterborough City Council Cambridgeshire County Council Fenland District Council CPCA Mayor East Cambridgeshire District Council Cambridge City Council (online attendance)
Apologies	Emma Garfield Tim Jones	Business Board Representative Business Board Representative

Minutes:

1	Announcements, Apologies for Absence
1.1	Apologies were received from Tim Jones and Emma Garfield, Business Board Representatives.
2.	Declarations of Interest
2.1	No declarations of interest were made.
3.	Minutes of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee meeting on 19 June 2024 and Action Log
3.1	The minutes of the meeting on 19 June 2024 were approved as an accurate record.
3.2	The Action Log was discussed by the Committee and the following comments were made: a) The Committee would receive an update on the Waterbeach Renewable Energy network at their October meeting. b) National Highways had provided a response to the planting on the A14 and this had been circulated to the Committee. The invite to come and present on the lessons learnt and how this would be applied to the A428 had been accepted and would be scheduled for a meeting in the Autumn.
4	Public Questions
4.1	Three public questions had been received, all of which had been published on the website and circulated to Members. The Governance Manager read out the questions in the order they had been received and a response, published on the website here Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee-31st July, 2024 , was given by the Chair.

<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p>	<p>Combined Authority Forward Plan</p> <p>The Combined Authority Forward Plan was noted by the Committee.</p>
<p>6.</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p> <p>6.3</p>	<p>Directorate Highlight Report</p> <p>The Executive Director, Place & Connectivity, introduced the report which provided an update on the key activities of the Place and Connectivity Directorate in relation to Environment and Sustainable Communities.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Government had requested all Mayoral Combined Authorities to produce local growth plans, with an initial version to be submitted by the end of August. Further development would continue in the autumn, aiming towards a 10-year plan. Weekly meetings with constituent authorities had been scheduled throughout August and beyond to facilitate this process. b) The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was now expected to be presented in draft form at the October committee meeting rather than in September. This adjustment would allow for further necessary work by the steering group. c) The Director emphasised the importance of integrating both new Government national and regional strategic initiatives with local efforts. The Committee would consider the best methods for achieving comprehensive oversight and effective input, potentially through workshops or formal reports. d) Members expressed concerns about grid capacity, noting that many renewable energy projects were on hold due to this, and highlighted the need for further investment in grid infrastructure. e) It was acknowledged that while the CPCA had made progress with the LNRS faster than in many other regions, the process has been hampered by delayed guidance from Government. A workshop would be held in September to address technical issues enabling a smooth process for the October sign-off. f) A formal 28 day consultation period with all councils on the LNRS is required and a clear programme and timeline would be circulated to ensure that councils could schedule meetings to discuss the strategy and avoid delays. g) The Mayor expressed his optimism about engaging with central government and the potential to drive sustainable economic growth similar to successes in West Midlands and Greater Manchester. h) There was still uncertainty about the exact route for funding related to Great British Energy and local plans but it is likely that Combined Authorities would be involved in its distribution. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>A. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee resolved to note the report</p> <p><u>ACTION:</u></p> <p>1. Officers to circulate a clear programme and timeline for the LNRS to ensure that councils could schedule meetings to discuss the strategy and avoid delays.</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p>	<p>Affordable Housing Programme – Update on Implementation</p> <p>The Housing Planning Manager introduced the report which updated the Committee on the progress of the affordable housing programme.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Officers confirmed that the original 2000 target had been reduced to 1,400 units due to various challenges, including COVID-19 and funding cuts. The Director clarified that the current program was focused on delivering the 1,400 homes within the available funding. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee resolved to:</p> <p>A. Note the update in this report.</p>

<p>8.</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p> <p>8.3</p>	<p>Acquiring additional units for the Affordable Housing Programme</p> <p>The Housing Planning Manager introduced the report which informed the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee of Heylo's intended swap of units from the Vistry sites to Allison Homes sites. The report also sought approval from the Committee on the use of clawback from the programme to invest them into further units, which would count towards the Affordable Housing Programme.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Efforts were made to keep the units within the original area, but logistical and budget constraints led to a concentration in Peterborough. East Cambridgeshire units could not be maintained due to budget issues. b) Peterborough had several large projects and a significant housing association presence (Cross Keys Homes), making schemes more deliverable. c) The challenge of balancing geographic distribution with project feasibility was recognised. d) Officers were confident in delivering the described units, aiming to avoid returning funds to the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG). Clawback resulted from developers selling more shares to buyers than initially expected. Future small accumulations were possible but not expected to be substantial. <p><u>RESOLVED: (Unanimous)</u></p> <p>On being proposed by Cllr Smith and seconded by Cllr Day, the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee unanimously resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Note the change to the units proposed by Heylo, this being units swapped from the Vistry portfolio to the Allison Homes portfolio of 12 units B. Approve the use of clawback funding of approximately £280,000 for the acquisition of further 8 additional units in Peterborough as part of the Affordable Housing Programme.
<p>9.</p> <p>9.1</p> <p>9.2</p> <p>9.3</p>	<p>£100k Homes Fordham</p> <p>The Asset Strategy Manager introduced the report which outlined a proposal that sought to address a procedural issue and safeguard eight affordable homes that were delivered by the former £100k Homes initiative. The proposal sought to transfer the Combined Authority's (CA) responsibilities and association with these affordable homes to ECDC, without affecting any current or future homeowners.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Chair commended the detailed report following the questions and requests for additional information that had been raised at the January meeting. b) The Member for East Cambridgeshire District Council reiterated his Council's willingness to take on the project. c) Officers confirmed that in addition to the 8 Fordham '£100k homes' there were a further 4 '£100k homes' at Alexander House but these had previously been transferred into the management of East Cambridgeshire District Council d) Members highlighted the importance of oversight in closing housing programme issues, despite the enhanced oversight and controls that were now in place, and suggested that this be included in a review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>On being proposed by Cllr Goodearl and seconded by the Chair, the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee resolved (7 in favour with 1 abstention) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Submit a recommendation to the Combined Authority's Board in accordance with point 2 of the Options Appraisal, to release resale price restrictions affecting eight £100k Homes in Fordham. Each restriction is to be released at the next point of sale of each dwelling and purchasers shall immediately enter into replacement resale price agreements with the Local Housing Authority: East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC).

<p>10</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>10.2</p> <p>10.3</p>	<p>Infrastructure Delivery Framework</p> <p>The Executive Director, Place & Connectivity, introduced the report which provided a progress report on the Infrastructure Delivery Framework and set that in context with the new Government's proposals for Local Growth Plans.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The findings from the Stantec report would inform the development of the local growth plan, integrating insights on energy, water, connectivity, and blue-green infrastructure b) It was proposed that the formal report be presented in September during an informal workshop session, followed by formal consideration in October. c) The report would also be submitted to the CA Board alongside the further development of the local growth plans d) Energy and water had been identified in the STANTEC report as critical issues for the area, impacting both future growth and current needs. e) The report suggested that transport and connectivity also presented challenges . f) The Greater Cambridge area faced significant water stress, with interventions already required by the Environment Agency. g) On the electricity side, utilities claimed they had sufficient headroom for current needs but lacked capacity for future growth, highlighting cumulative impacts and points of stress. h) The Mayor confirmed ongoing efforts to meet and collaborate with MPs from all parties and lobbying as a unified body for critical infrastructure projects. i) The challenges and importance of sustainable growth in managing future development while decarbonising and enhancing nature were acknowledged. <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee resolved to:</p> <p>A. To note progress on the Infrastructure Delivery Framework and next steps.</p>
<p>11.</p> <p>11.1</p> <p>11.2</p>	<p>Climate Programme</p> <p>The Strategic Planning Manager introduced the report which provided the Committee with the background to the principles for agreeing the allocation of Climate Programme spend, the approach taken to shaping the Climate Programme, alignment with the Combined Authority's Climate Strategy and projected timetable for delivery in 2024/25 against funding and outcomes.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The bidding round would be structured to accommodate projects with varying timelines, including those that might extend into the new financial year, with the goals being to ensure the right outputs and impacts regardless of the project completion date. b) There was a £250,000 grant opportunity available for public sector organisations and community groups to apply for funding for renewable energy. A clear communication strategy was being developed alongside the implementation plan for these funds to identify the most effective means of reaching community groups. c) It was clarified that the £9 million capital allocation represented the total budget allocation for 4 years. d) The £50k designated for the East Cambridge District Council Habitat Management Plan was originally intended for biodiversity support, including surveys and action plans. Due to timing issues, the funding missed the current year's season for surveys. The proposal was now being considered for the next year's funding, aligning with the local nature recovery strategy. There was no need to reapply for this funding, and it would be addressed in future rounds of funding. An update can be provided to the next committee. e) The funds allocated for the Net Zero Villages Programme were capital funds. Grant funding agreements would be prepared, and these would include terms and conditions typical for such funding. The plan was to issue 50% of the funds up front and the remaining 50% at the end of the financial year, subject to progress. The agreements would outline milestones and provide flexibility to ensure effective use of funds. Collaboration and shared best practices across local authorities would be encouraged to minimize administration costs

<p>11.3</p>	<p>f) If a council faced challenges the Combined Authority (CA) would offer support, including potential assistance from other local authorities. The second payment may be adjusted based on actual progress and cash flow needs. The aim was to balance flexibility with efficient payment processing, ensuring that funds were utilised effectively without unnecessary bureaucracy.</p> <p>g) Re- engagement with the Independent commission would be part of the broader climate change action plan review.</p> <p>h) The CA was working on detailed criteria for the allocation of funds, including eligibility, strategic fit with the climate change action plan, impact, and deliverability.</p> <p>i) It was noted that while a strict geographical allocation may not be feasible, the authority would monitor the spread of applications and adjust communications accordingly to ensure fair distribution.</p> <p>j) It was anticipated that the bidding process would start in late October, with a detailed appraisal and moderation process to follow. The CA was considering bringing in more support and exploring partnerships with organisations experienced in managing grant programs.</p> <p>k) The development of business cases for future pipeline projects was discussed. The possibility of integrating this with the bidding round and contracting external help was considered.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee resolved to:</p> <p>A. Approve strategic direction of the climate programme and progress towards delivery noting the business case approval will go through Investment Panel and Committee.</p> <p>B. Within the wider climate programme, support the launch of a bidding round this autumn</p> <p>C. Recommend to Board the allocation of funding for the Net Zero Villages programme to our constituent councils to enable local delivery according to Table 4.</p> <p>D. Recommend to Board that the remaining capital funding from the Care Homes Retrofit Programme is redeployed as part of the Climate Programme. E To note the progress on the Climate Action Plan review for 2025-30, using funds from the climate programme.</p>
<p>12</p> <p>12.1</p> <p>12.2</p> <p>12.3</p>	<p>Greater South East Net Zero Hub Update</p> <p>The Regional Director GSE Net Zero Hub introduced the report which set out the decisions made at GSE Net Zero Hub Boards since the delegation was approved and also provided an update on the Community Energy Fund.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <p>a) The Chair commended the team's progress and the impressive scope of work being undertaken.</p> <p>b) Efforts were being made to engage more community groups in the Cambridgeshire area to bid into the Community Energy Fund. The team at GSE Net Zero Hub were willing and available to support projects at the initial stages and would encourage groups to come forward.</p> <p>c) The Director clarified the difference between the stages of funding in the Community Energy Fund. Stage 1 funding was up to £40k for feasibility studies and stage 2 was development funding of up to £100k.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee resolved:</p> <p>A. To note the decisions made by the Executive Director of Resources & Performance (to 05/03/24) and Executive Director of Place & Connectivity (from 20/03/24) based on the recommendations of the Greater South East Net Zero Hub Board</p> <p>B. To note the update on the Community Energy Fund</p>
<p>13</p> <p>13.1</p> <p>13.2</p>	<p>Work Programme</p> <p>With the introduction of the new Single Assurance Framework (SAF) and the Investment Committee the Chair requested that the Committee receive a flow chart showing how decisions move through the various committees.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>A. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee Agenda Plan be noted.</p>

	<p><u>ACTION:</u></p> <p>1. Officers to produce a chart showing the flow of decisions through the different committees.</p>
<p>14</p> <p>14.1</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The scheduled September meeting date would now be used for an informal Member briefing session. The next public meeting would be in October with the date yet to be confirmed.</p>

Meeting Ended: 12.07pm