

Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Climate Change Environment & Growth

Held at 9.30 am on Wednesday 17th November, 2021 as a remote meeting via Zoom.

Present:-

Members

Councillor Harriet Pentland (Chair)

Councillor Tim Allebone

Councillor Jennie Bone

Councillor Dez Dell

Councillor Jan O'Hara

Councillor Elliot Keith Prentice

Councillor Lyn Buckingham

Officers

Ian Achurch

George Candler

Rob Harbour

Carol Mundy

Amy Plank

Iain Smith

Raj Sohal

14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Anne Lee. Councillor Lyn Buckingham was present in attendance, as a substitute.

15 Members' Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited those who wished to do so to declare interests in respect of items on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

16 Minutes from Meeting held on 20 October 2021

RESOLVED that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2021 were approved as a correct record.

17 Verbal Update on Air Quality across North Northamptonshire

The Panel received a verbal update from the Assistant Director of Regulatory Services, regarding air quality across North Northamptonshire, in response to points made at the previous meeting, held on 20th October 2021.

During discussion, the following principal points were noted:

- It was queried whether areas would need to be declared as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), under DEFRA guidelines, had they breached air

quality limits across three consecutive years. Members questioned whether air quality figures from 2020 would be considered in this decision, due to the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response, the Environmental Protection and Private Sector Housing Manager clarified that:

- 2020 figures would be considered when looking at the implementation of AQMAs. While these breaches were minor, officers would seek DEFRA guidance on how to proceed.

RESOLVED that:

The report be noted.

18 Reflections on NN Climate 21

The Panel received a verbal update from the Chair, regarding reflections from the NN Climate 21 Conference, held on 16th November 2021.

During discussion, the following principal points were noted:

- Members thanked officers for their work in supporting the Conference and acknowledged that the event had been successful in allowing for greater analysis and understanding of local climate issues.
- Members were encouraged by the level of engagement at the event and supported the decision for the Conference to be held virtually, which served to reduce the authority's carbon footprint and promoted greater attendance and engagement.

RESOLVED that:

The report be noted.

19 Community Renewal Fund - update on successful bids across North Northamptonshire

The Panel considered a report of the Head of Development, Infrastructure and Funding, which sought to provide an update regarding Community Renewal Projects in North Northamptonshire.

During discussion, the following principle points were noted:

- The consideration of 'food mileage' by the local authority, in promoting local, seasonal produce would be important in controlling emissions.
- Members were enthused by ongoing work, such as the CRF 21 construction skills programme, which promoted sustainable construction training.

In response, the Head of Development clarified that:

- North Northamptonshire Council would continue to engage with local residents in efforts to promote greener consumer buying habits and promote local produce.
- The authority would seek to procure a training provider to continue to deliver its programme of green construction.

RESOLVED that:

The report be noted.

20 Climate Change - update on future activities

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Director, Place and Economy, which sought to set out the route map of future climate change activities. The report had built on the climate framework and action plan, which had been developed by the shadow authority in March 2021 and provided an outline of activities for North Northamptonshire Council to consider and take forward.

The Assistant Director of Growth and Regeneration also outlined progress regarding the spatial planning framework and emphasised that this element of the Climate route map was critical, regarding the management and influence of future growth within North Northamptonshire.

During discussion, the following principal points were noted:

- Members expressed concern that with an increasing reduction of land available, which was suitable for development, there would not exist appropriate open spaces available for public use. Members maintained that open green spaces should be protected, as they had helped residents' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, through the promotion of outdoor exercise.
- It would be useful for Council Planning Committees to be included in the consultation of the spatial planning strategy, to provide decision-makers with greater understanding of what would need to be taken into consideration.
- It would be valuable for the Panel to receive information regarding the authority's future plans to achieve 'net zero' emissions.
- Members were encouraged to see that a new Climate Change Officer had been appointed within the authority and that carbon literacy training for Councillors would be proceeding in January 2022.
- The Panel would be interested to receive updates regarding how recent central government environmental legislation would impact climate activities and planning locally.
- Regarding the progress of the 'building homes for healthier lives' programme, members questioned how the authority had engaged with developers to promote the implementation of environmentally-friendly technology in newly-built developments.

- Regarding continued work concerning electric vehicle charging points, members expressed concern that existing legislation could, at times, restrict the implementation of such technology across North Northamptonshire and suggested this should be reviewed in future.

In response, both the Executive Director of Place and Economy and the Assistant Director of Growth and Regeneration clarified that:

- Planning work was about balance and that striking the right balance between preserving open green spaces and allowing for land development could, at times, be difficult. Nevertheless, maintaining open spaces was a good ambition and the authority would seek to achieve this balance, whilst remaining within financial confines.
- The newly appointed Climate Change Officer would attend future meetings of the Executive Advisory Panel.
- Regarding the audit of carbon management, experienced officers within the authority had helped to inform what North Northamptonshire Council would need to do to ensure it measured this correctly. While measuring the authority's carbon footprint was voluntary and not a statutory obligation, using the toolkit that the local government authority had promoted would be a useful starting point.
- There was a strong link between recent government legislation and the planning system, as it had called for reviews of the national planning policy framework. They assured the Panel that officers were well aware of the act and the potential influence it would have on the planning system and were therefore, working to understand its impact and what changes would need to be made.
- The authority had continued to carry out discussions with major developers regarding their willingness to implement more modern, cleaner technology in new homes. While certain major developers did not express a desire to adopt such technology, the authority had been encouraged by the willingness of several developers to do so.

RESOLVED that:

The report be noted.

21 Close of Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Climate Change, Environment and Growth Executive Advisory Panel would be held virtually, via Zoom, on Wednesday 8th December at 09:30am.