

## Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Sustainable Communities

Held at 9.30 am on Wednesday 4th December, 2024 as a Remote meeting, via Zoom

### Present:-

#### Members

Councillor Harriet Pentland (Chair)

Councillor Tim Allebone

Councillor Jennie Bone

Councillor Melanie Coleman

Councillor William Colquhoun

Councillor Dez Dell

Councillor Jan O'Hara

#### Officers

Greg Haynes (Climate Change and Sustainability Officer)

Nicole Geary (Sustainability Manager)

David Prior (Principal Transport Planner)

Raj Sohal (Scrutiny Officer)

Surendra Wanza (Transport Strategy Manager)

Jonathan Waterworth (Assistant Director of Assets and Environment)

### 32 **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received.

### 33 **Members' Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Dez Dell declared an interest regarding active travel, since he was employed by the Brightwayz organisation.

### 34 **Minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2024**

**RESOLVED that:** The minutes of the meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2024 be approved as an accurate record.

### 35 **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) - Progress Report**

Officers provided an overview of the draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Key points included:

- **Strategic Goals:** Officers explained that the LCWIP aimed to promote active travel by creating a connected network of cycling and walking routes across North Northamptonshire.
- **Priority Routes:** Priority areas were identified, including routes linking town centres, schools and business hubs. Specific emphasis was placed on Wellingborough, Kettering, Corby and Rushden as key areas for development.
- **Funding and Delivery Timeline:** Officers outlined that funding was being sought from Active Travel England, with initial implementation expected by late 2025.

The plan included short-term wins such as improved signage and medium-term goals such as segregated cycleways.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- **Accessibility for Rural Areas:** Members queried how the LCWIP would address accessibility for residents in rural communities. Officers confirmed that rural connectivity would be improved by integrating key village links into the main network.
- **Safety Concerns:** Members expressed concern about the safety of existing cycle routes and queried whether safety audits would be carried out. Officers assured members that all new and existing routes would undergo safety assessments, with enhancements prioritising pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- **Maintenance of Infrastructure:** Members asked how the Council would ensure long-term maintenance of the network. Officers responded that maintenance agreements with local contractors would be established as part of the implementation plan.
- **Engagement with Local Schools:** Members emphasised the importance of encouraging active travel among young people and queried the involvement of schools. Officers explained that schools had been consulted and would play a key role in promoting cycling and walking through awareness campaigns.

**RESOLVED that:** The report be noted.

### **36 Climate Change Strategy - Consultation Update**

Officers presented an update on the Council's Climate Change Strategy. Key highlights included:

- **Carbon Reduction Targets:** Officers reported on the Council's progress toward its net zero goal by 2040, with a 15% reduction in emissions achieved in the past year.
- **Renewable Energy Projects:** Solar farm developments were highlighted, with the potential to supply 20% of the Council's energy needs by 2026.
- **Community Involvement:** Officers described initiatives to engage residents in sustainability efforts, including educational workshops, grant programs for community projects and public consultations.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- **Renewable Energy Expansion:** Members queried whether the Council had plans to expand renewable energy projects beyond solar farms. Officers confirmed that feasibility studies for wind energy projects were underway, with results expected in mid-2025.

- **Biodiversity Concerns:** Concerns were raised about the impact of solar farms on local biodiversity. Officers assured members that thorough environmental impact assessments had been conducted, and measures to protect wildlife habitats were included in project plans.
- **Monitoring Progress:** Members asked how the success of the Climate Change Strategy would be measured. Officers explained that a detailed monitoring framework had been developed, with annual progress reports to be presented to the panel.
- **Community Awareness:** Members queried how the council would ensure residents were informed about climate change initiatives. Officers highlighted planned outreach campaigns, including online resources and community workshops.
- **Challenges in Delivery:** Members expressed concern about challenges such as funding constraints and regulatory hurdles. Officers acknowledged these risks and outlined mitigation strategies, including close collaboration with government bodies and external partners.

**RESOLVED that:** The report be noted.

### **37 Close of Meeting**

The Chair thanked the Panel for their attendance and closed the meeting. The next meeting of the EAP Sustainable Communities would be held at 9:30am on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025.